

and the little flag flew still, almost all day and all night, and the Colonel's brave signalmen stood at the corners of the platform, right against the sky and waved their signals. In some furious gales, such as we often get in the great heat, we could see the Tower rock, and would watch it, expecting it and its great red flag would be hurled to the ground. At the worst moment, a man could be seen running lightly up the ladder, and up sprang the little blue flag. The Colonel was there. I cannot describe the feeling of security it gave to us. But the Colonel had all to see to. His first care was water. Our reservoir could hold out for six weeks (it is needless to say our mains were cut off when the rails were torn up) and as we were at once allowed we felt secure, no one thinking it possible that relief could tarry more than a fortnight. But there was a different and an awful thought in his mind, who knew the unreadiness of the country, and who thought of 50,000 people in the heat of an African summer, with no water but what they could get from a few old wells supplied by surface water, and mostly brackish. In the possession of De Beers Company, out at Wesselton, is a magnificent spring, so Wesselton was fortified, underground store-rooms were filled with food for 300 men for 90 days, in case of their being cut off, and with the help of our great statesman Mr. Rhodes, who had come up to our help a few days previously, an enormous spout of water soon poured into the Reservoir. As the Reservoir was incessantly shelled for four months it was a better thing to have this noble stream, which could be turned any way, rather than our river water, which could be poisoned, as other rivers have been this summer, and which, having to be brought twenty miles, was unuseable without a reservoir. Then, of course, there was an army to raise. What were 400 of the bravest men over such an area? But in a week or two, what with our own Volunteers, the Colonel's Town Guard, which consisted of nearly every able-bodied man in the town, and Mr. Rhodes' Light Horse, made up of young men and lads—our defenders were 4,000. Then began fortifications, and, alas, those terrible sorties, when brave men rode out to drive back the Boers who were coming too near or trying to plant guns on rising ground overlooking the town—a few tens or a few hundreds in the face of thousands, and who came back again each time victorious, but a few indeed. One gets used to anything in time, but I shall never forget the moment, when sitting writing in this chair at this window, I looked up and saw three cart loads passing, piled up, with our own townspeople, killed at Carter's Ridge, wounded on the field, and cruelly murdered in the short darkness before dawn. One man had 40 bullets in him. Nor shall I ever forget when in the afternoon those poor bodies passed again—gun-carriage after gun-carriage, wagon after wagon, cart after cart—Colonel Turner's piled with white flowers—though no one knew there was one in the parched up town, the same glorious flag, with its Holy Cross over each; our colonel walking as chief mourner; the slow drawl of the bands; and then the long, long, procession of mourners. What a work the hospital nurses had had. Well, bit by bit times got worse, 50,000 people soon exhausted the fresh meat in the town, and every old horse or donkey which could stand on its four legs was wanted for military service, so our 4 ozs. of meat became 4 ozs. skin, bone and gristle, mostly bone. As soon as we were closed in,

the shopkeepers, with some notable exceptions, began to run up the price of necessaries. Down came a proclamation from the Colonel fixing the price of all necessaries. That proclamation saved the lives of tens of thousands. Then all luxuries were commandeered for the sick and infants, taken into the military stores and only issued by Doctor's orders. Then all gardens were taken over, there only were alive a few at Wesselton, and a permit given twice a week for vegetables. Then we set our teeth. Of the crowds waiting for permits—the weary walking about for rations—for the tradesmen had no horses left to send bread, &c., round with—the miserable shifts to which we were driven to eke out our bits and scraps; of the hunger and death and dying all round us, I need not speak. Enough has been said. The pitiful little coffins were always being carried along to the cemetery—an endless chain. And of the awful bombardment with 100 pounders I don't like even to think. Our brave district nurses, one of whom has since been called to her reward in the military hospitals of Bloemfontein, went about their work all day regardless of danger. I used to feel thankful when one after another they came safe home again. One had to throw herself on her face in the road as the horrible thing flew over her and exploded in front of her. Another was washing a baby when a shell exploded in a room next her and killed a man. Two others were at work in a house when one fell close in front and burrowed 8ft. deep in the macadamised road. Round this house, they fell repeatedly within a few yards. In the road just outside, a splinter weighing 7lbs. flew across the yard, and went through a stable belonging to the next house. We left it for some days and camped out under the verandah of an outlying stone house, protected by a railway embankment. To try and save fuel, from the first all lights had to be out at 10.30, then at 9.30. Of course, there was none for electric lights. The town itself was in darkness. During the last week some 4,000 or 5,000 people took refuge in the mines. Several thousand were packed, squeezed together under a railway bridge close to us. It would nearly fill a volume to describe that bridge. They were mostly a wild sort of people who don't appear much at other times. They appointed magistrates amongst themselves, who drew up a code of regulations, which they posted up on the pillars, and then they proceeded to rule with a rod of iron. All these people and many others, all in the mines and refuges, depended entirely on Mr. Rhodes for support—quite expected him to feed them. He drew their meat rations and doubtless paid for them, made them up into his splendid soup, and served it out to them from De Beers drays and great huge cauldrons. He collected their bread rations—and doubtless paid for them too—and took them round. The few remaining De Beers cows were all milked for the children and babies—poor babies—whose mothers were far too ill fed to supply them—all through the town. The grapes out of the vineyards, which are grown for De Beers workpeople were cut in bushels, and bushels, and bushels, and given to the starving people; so they lived and died with the shriek of hundred-pounders over-head—the awful crash right and left—in expectation of a fearful death every moment, with measles and scarlatina and typhoid—under the bridge—with messages from the Colonel continually coming, that it was no protection if a shell hit it—it would go straight through—burst amongst

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