

**THE OUTSPAN:
TALES OF
SOUTH AFRICA**

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The Outspan: Tales of South Africa by J. Percy Fitzpatrick

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**THE OUTSPAN:
TALES OF
SOUTH AFRICA**

THE OUTSPAN

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THE OUTSPAN

TALES OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ames
BY
J. PERCY FITZPATRICK
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1897

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**NOTE.—FOR THE ORIGINALS OF
CERTAIN CHARACTERS.**

A person of my acquaintance was once referred to in an up-country newspaper as 'Mr. Chimage.' He wrote to the editor, explaining that his name was not 'Chimage,' but 'Schimmelovitch'; and the editor in making the correction added, 'He has only himself to blame for the fact being known.'

J. P. F.

THE OUTSPAN.

'THERE is no art in the Telling that can equal the consummate art of the Happening!'

It was a remark dropped by a forgotten someone in a prospector's hut one night, years and years ago, when we had exhausted snakes and hunting, lucky strikes and escapes, and had got away into coincidences. One of the party had been telling us an experience of his. He was introduced on the day he arrived to a man well known on the fields. It seemed quite impossible that they could have met before, for they compared dates and places for ten years back, and yet both were puzzled by the hazy suggestion of having seen the other before, and, in our friend's case, of something more definite. His remark to the other was :

'I can't help feeling that I saw you once in a devil of a fright somewhere—or dreamt it, I suppose!'

But this first feeling faded quickly away, and

TO MY
APPROXIMATE
2 The Outspan

was utterly forgotten by both. Later on they shared a hut near Rimer's Creek, and afterwards, when houses came into vogue, they lived for several years together, while the first impression was lying buried, but not dead.

One day, in the process of swapping yarns, the other man was telling of the 'narrowest escape he ever had'—and all due to such a simple little mistake. A ticket-collector took the tickets at the wrong end of a footbridge. Instead of collecting them as the passengers from the train *went on to* the bridge, he took them as they were *going off*. The result was that the crowd of excursionists was too great for the little bridge, and it slipped between the abutments, carrying some two hundred people into the river below, the narrator being one of them. It was then that the dormant idea stirred and awoke—jumped into life—and our friend put up his hands as he had done fifteen years before, when the little bridge in Bath dropped, and gasped out:

'My God! you were the other chap that hung on to the broken rail! *That's* where we met!'

That was what prompted the forgotten one to say after we had lapsed into silence:

'There's no art in the Telling that can equal the consummate art of the Happening!'

And I only recall the remark because it must be