

On 2nd November 1899 the town of Ladysmith in South Africa was surrounded by enemies. No food could be taken into the town because of the enemies. No one could leave the town because of the enemies. The people in the town began to get very hungry. How did this happen?

The British were fighting in South Africa against enemies called the Boers. Boer means farmer. Many years before, the Boers had come to South Africa from Holland. British people came to South Africa too. There was trouble between the British people and the Dutch people from Holland. Sometimes the Dutch ruled parts of South Africa and sometimes the British ruled parts. Where British people rule, slavery is never allowed. The Boers did not like this. They made slaves of the black people who lived in South Africa but when the Boers lived in a part that the British ruled, slaves were not allowed. This was one of the things that made the Boers angry.

Then it was discovered that under the ground in parts of South Africa there was gold. Many people came from Britain to dig up the gold. The Boers did not want to be gold miners. They were farmers. The Boers did not like the British people who came to South Africa looking for gold. The Boers called them "Outlanders" or foreigners. They treated them badly. A war began between the British and the Boers. The British thought they would easily win. The Boers were only farmers, after all, not proper soldiers. But the British were wrong. The Boers were strong fighters. Soon in three towns there were British

soldiers with Boer enemies all round them. The Boers were stopping anything going into the town or coming out of the town. The soldiers could not get out: they were caught. Ladysmith was one of these towns.

Now the British armies began to be defeated. What could they do? The British asked for help. They asked men from other parts of the world where the British ruled to come and help them fight the Boers. Men came from Canada and Australia and other places to help the British in South Africa. If you look at a map you will see how far they had to come.

The British sent a very clever soldier to be General, or leader of all the soldiers, in South Africa. His name was Lord Roberts but the soldiers called him "Bobs". Bobs was only a little man but he was very brave. Bobs had another brave man to help him called Lord Kitchener. Together they led the British soldiers and the soldiers who had come to help from other places.

But it was not until February that the British and their friends were able to drive away the Boers from Ladysmith. How pleased the poor starving people inside the town were to see them! Can you work out how many months they had been stuck in the town?

It was another two years before the war ended. The Boers were very tough men and they would not give up easily. At last they decided not to go on fighting and fighting and fighting but to let the British rule

South Africa. The war came to an end. Another five years passed. Then the British allowed the part of South Africa where most of the Boers lived to rule itself. This part was called the Transvaal. The first Prime Minister of the Transvaal was one of the Boers who had fought bravely against the British in the War. His name was Louis Botha and he made a promise that the British King, Edward VII would be king of Transvaal and he would rule Transvaal for the king.