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SOUTH AFRICA AND THE TRANSVAAL WAR

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THE QUEEN LISTENING TO A DISPATCH FROM THE FRONT.
From the Picture by S. Begg

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SOUTH AFRICA
AND THE
TRANSVAAL WAR

BY

LOUIS CRESWICKE

AUTHOR OF “ROXANE,” ETC.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

IN SIX VOLUMES

VOL. IV.—FROM LORD ROBERTS’ ENTRY INTO THE FREE STATE TO THE BATTLE OF KARREE

EDINBURGH: T. C. & E. C. JACK

MANCHESTER: KENNETH MACLENNAN, 75 PICCADILLY

1900

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FEBRUARY 1900.

12-13.—General French, following up Hannay's movement, crossed Riet River, and next day with a strong force marched twenty-five miles into the Free State, seized Klip Drift on the Modder River, occupied the hills to the north, and captured three of the enemy's laagers, with supplies.

13-14.—6th (Kelly-Kenny's) Division on north bank of the Riet River at Waterfall Drift.

14.—Lord Roberts advanced to Dekiel's Drift.

15.—General French reached and relieved Kimberley, captured Boer laager and supplies, and forced the enemy to withdraw.

The Boers evacuated Majersfontein and Spyfontein, retreating to Koodoosrand Drift.

16.—General Kelly-Kenny, in pursuit of Cronje retiring east with 10,000 men on Bloemfontein, captured 78 waggons with stores, 2 waggons with Mauser rifles, and 8 waggons with shell belonging to Cronje's column.

Capture of Cingolo Hill by Sir Redvers Buller's force.

Lord Roberts occupied Jacobsdal.

Flight of Cronje's force and occupation of Majersfontein by the Guards.

17.—Cronje's force overtaken and surrounded at Paardeberg. General Brabant engaged the enemy near Dordrecht.

Successful reconnaissance by Colonel Henderson from Arundel.

18.—Severe fighting at Paardeberg, where Cronje was being gradually surrounded.

Capture of Monte Cristo. General Lyttelton's Division, by a brilliant converging movement,

drove the Boers across the river.

19.—Capture of Hlangwane by the Fusilier Brigade. The Boers evacuated the hill, and left a large camp behind them.

Bombardment of Cronje's position began. Boer reinforcements driven back.

Cronje asked for armistice, but Lord Kitchener demanded his surrender; Cronje refused, and was then bombarded heavily.

Reoccupation of Dordrecht. General Brabant entered the town in the morning, the Boers taking to flight.

20.—General Hart occupied Colenso.

Lord Roberts defeated Boer reinforcements at Paardeberg.

21.—5th Division crossed the Tugela at Colenso.

23.—Advance on Ladysmith continued. The Boers' position at Grobler's Kloof attacked.

The cordon round Cronje began to close in.

Captain Hon. R. H. L. J. de Montmorency, V.C. (21st Hussars), killed while doing magnificent work with his Scouts near Stormberg.

26.—Finding the passage of the river near Colenso commanded by strong entrenchments, Sir Redvers Buller sent his guns and baggage back to the south side of the Tugela, and found a new crossing.

26-27.—Colesberg and Rensberg, having been evacuated by the Boers, were occupied by General Clements, while Jamestown was occupied by General Brabant.

27 (on anniversary of Majuba, 1881).—Cronje, with 44 commandants and other officers of all grades, and over 3500 men, surrendered unconditionally to Lord Roberts. [Pg viii]

Sir Redvers Buller's force captured the Boer position at Pieters. This action opened the road to Ladysmith. Boers retired north to Ladysmith.

28.—Relief of Ladysmith after 120 day's investment.

MARCH 1900.

1.—Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener visited Kimberley and attended a meeting in the Town Hall.

2.—Cronje and his staff, having been moved to Simonstown under a guard of City Imperial Volunteers, were put on board H.M.S. *Doris*, and sent to St. Helena.

3.—General Buller formally entered Ladysmith.

Skirmish near Osfontein. General French came in contact with a Boer force, who tried to get away, but were held to their position by the British force.

4-5.—General Brabant advanced from Dordrecht against Labuschagne, and was completely successful.

5.—General Gatacre occupied Stormberg without opposition.

7.—Lord Roberts dispersed Boers near Poplar Grove.

General Gatacre reached Burghersdorp.

8.—General Clements occupied Norval's Pont.

10.—The Boers dispersed near Driefontein, fifteen miles east of Poplar Grove.

11.—Presidents Kruger and Steyn received reply from the Prime Minister refusing to entertain their absurd overtures for peace.

12.—General French (with cavalry, R.H.A., and Mounted Infantry) arrived before Bloemfontein, and captured two hills which command the railway and town.

General French captured the railway near Bloemfontein.

General Gatacre approached Bethulie.

13.—Lord Roberts occupied Bloemfontein. His despatch ran:—"The British flag now flies over the Presidency vacated last evening by Mr. Steyn, late President of the Orange Free State. The inhabitants gave the troops a cordial welcome."

14.—General Pretyman, C.B., appointed Military Governor of Bloemfontein.

15.—General Gatacre occupied Bethulie.

Boers attacked Colonel Plumer's camp and were repulsed.

16.—Fighting at Fourteen Streams.

19.—Lord Kitchener occupied Prieska, and received the submission of rebels.

20.—Rouxville occupied by Major Cumming.

21.—Smithfield occupied by British troops.

23.—Party of English officers shot near Bloemfontein.

27.—General Clements occupied Fauresmith, and arrested the landrost.

Death of General Joubert.

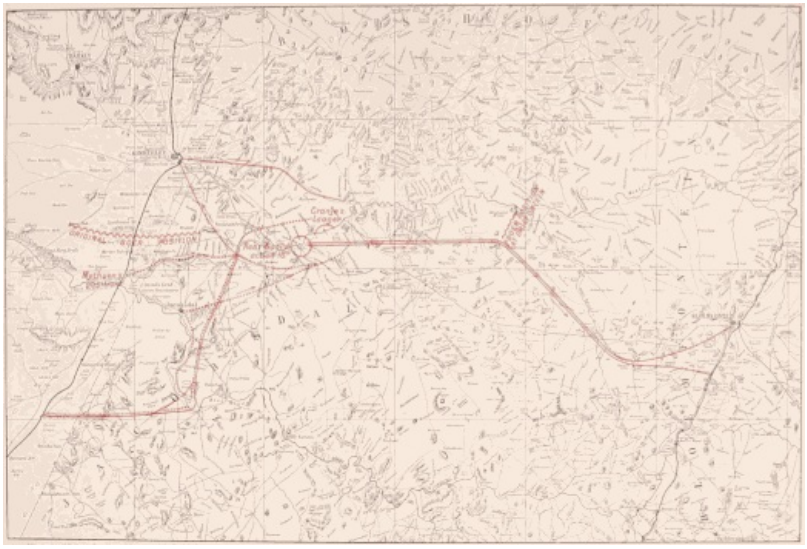
29.—Action at Karree Siding. Boer position taken.

Wepener occupied by Brabant’s Horse under Colonel Dalgety.

30.—Colonel Broadwood with Cavalry Brigade and two batteries Royal Horse Artillery at Thabanchu retired on waterworks pressed by the enemy.

31.—Loss of convoy and six guns at Koorn Spruit.

Action at Ramathlabama for the relief of Mafeking, and Colonel Plumer’s small force repulsed by the Boers.



MAP ILLUSTRATING THE MOVEMENTS FOR THE RELIEF OF KIMBERLEY AND THE CAPTURE OF BLOEMFONTEIN

EDINBURGH AND LONDON T. C. & E. C. JACK.

SOUTH AFRICA AND THE TRANSVAAL WAR

CHAPTER I

THE TURNING OF THE TIDE

February 27, 1900.

“Storm, strong with all the bitter heart of hate,
Smote England, now nineteen dark years ago,
As when the tide’s full wrath in seaward flow
Smites and bears back the swimmer. Fraud and fate
Were leagued against her: fear was fain to prate
Of honour in dishonour, pride brought low,
And humbleness whence holiness must grow,
And greatness born of shame to be so great.

The winter day that withered hope and pride
Shines now triumphal on the turning tide
That sets once more our trust in freedom free,
That leaves a ruthless and a truthless foe
And all base hopes that hailed his cause laid low,
And England's name a light on land and sea."

—Algernon Charles Swinburne.

THE VOTE OF CENSURE

The terrible events of the month of December had produced a disquieting effect upon the public mind. Agitated questions were asked on all subjects connected with the series of catastrophes, and the replies were so unsatisfactory that one and all became sensible that the actions of those in power were not sufficiently in unison with public sentiment, and even the keenest supporters of the Government numbly experienced a loss of confidence in those at the helm. It was felt that some one must be to blame for the miserable condition of affairs, the hideous series of defeats that had made Great Britain an object of ridicule on the Continent. For the forwarding of our troops "in driblets," for the ineffectiveness of our guns in comparison with Boer weapons, for the uselessness of the carbine in competition with the Mauser, for the scarcity of horses, for the preparedness of the Boers, for the unpreparedness of the British, for the under-estimation of the strength of the enemy, and for many other things which tended to bring about the national [Pg 2] disaster, various members of the Government were blamed. Charges of incapacity were levelled at the Secretary of State for War, the War Office, and the Committee of National Defence. Even the stoutest Tories were found declaiming against the attitude of lethargy—flippancy, some said—adopted by those in whose hands the fate of the nation rested. Mr. Balfour, in certain speeches somewhat ill-advisedly delivered at a critical moment, had contrived almost to wound people who were already deeply wounded by humiliation and anxiety. His mood had not been in sympathy with the public mood. He had endeavoured to brush away the stern problems facing him by minimising their seriousness, by affecting to believe that the Government was, like Cæsar's wife, beyond reproach. His attitude implied that the Cabinet could do no wrong, and that the misfortunes and errors (if errors there were) were due to a concatenation of circumstances for which neither the Government at home nor the generals abroad could be held responsible. In consequence of this attitude, on one side Mr. Balfour was blamed, on another, Mr. Chamberlain. The Colonial Secretary was accused of the policy of "bluffing with a weak hand," while the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as was inevitable, came in for his share of obloquy. It was the cheeseparing principle that was at the bottom of it all; cheeseparing and red-tape were responsible for debility and delay of all kinds, and political inertia had undoubtedly spelt defeat. The clamour was reasonable and just. It was felt that prudence and energy should have served as fuel to stoke the engine of public affairs, not as a brake to be put on in the face of disaster. On all hands the public of one consent cried for a new broom and "a great co-ordinating guiding mind," and the universal clamour awoke the Government to a consciousness that there are times and seasons in the history of nations when party recriminations and crystallised party etiquette must give way before the stress of a great national need—the need to preserve at all costs the honour and the reputation of the Empire in face of the whole world.

Accordingly, the opening debate of the Session was one which cannot be passed over. The Queen's Speech struck a note of decision that was at once comforting and in sympathy with her people. Thus it ran: "I have witnessed with pride and the heartiest gratification the patriotism, eagerness, and spontaneous loyalty with which my subjects in all parts of my dominions have come forward to share in the common defence of their Imperial interests. I am confident that I shall not look to them in vain when I exhort them to sustain and renew their exertions until they have brought this struggle for the maintenance of the Empire and the assertion of its supremacy in South Africa to a victorious conclusion." [Pg 3]

The Earl of Kimberley commented on the ignorance of the Government regarding the military preparations that for years had been going on in the Transvaal, and indulged in criticisms which might have been weighty had his hearers not been tickled by the strange irony of fate which converted into critic one of the authors of the humiliating drama which had been left to shape itself from the disastrous *scena* of 1881.

To these criticisms the Prime Minister—somewhat broken by domestic bereavement—offered but a weak and depressing reply. "How," he asked, in regard to the Boer preparations, "could the Government know what was going on?"

> "I believe, as a matter of fact, though this must not be taken as official, that the guns were generally introduced in the boilers of locomotives, and that the munitions of war were introduced in piano-cases and tubs. But we had no power of search, we had no power of knowing what munitions of war were sent out. We certainly had no power of supervising their importation into the Transvaal. It is a very remarkable peculiarity of the public opinion of this country that people always desire to eat their cake and have it. They rejoice very much with a spirit of complacency that we have a very small Secret Service Fund. Information is a matter of money and nothing else. If you want much information you must give much money; if you give little money you will get little information; and considering the enormous sums which are spent by other Powers, not

least by the Transvaal Republic, in secret service—which I was told on high diplomatic authority has been £800,000 in one year—and comparing this with the ludicrously small sums which have for a great number of years been habitually spent by English Governments, it is impossible for us to have the omniscience which the noble Earl seems to regard as a necessary attribute of Her Majesty's Government."

Further on he said:

"We must all join together to exercise all the power that we can give in order to extricate ourselves from a situation that is full of humiliation and not free from danger, though I do not say the danger may not be easily exaggerated. Many a country has commenced a great war with difficulties of this kind. We have only to look back at what the Northern States of America went through at the opening of the Civil War to see how easy it would be to draw a mistaken inference from the reverses which we have met at the opening of this war. We have every ground to think that if we set ourselves heartily to work and exert all the instruments of power we possess we shall bring this war to a satisfactory conclusion. I think we must defer the pleasing task of quarrelling among ourselves until that result has been obtained. We have a work that now appeals to us as subjects of the Queen, as Englishmen, and it must throw into shadow the ancient claims which party expediency has on the action of all our statesmen."

This speech concluded, Lord Rosebery suddenly sprang up, and delivered himself with thrilling emphasis of sentiments which went at once to the heart of the nation. Deeply he deplored the Prime Minister's speech, which made it hard for "the man in the street" to support the policy of [Pg 4] the Government.

The country, he insisted, had a right to know if there was adequate information given to the Government before the crisis of the Transvaal affair, or even sufficient to guide them in their diplomacy or their negotiation. "That is a point which the nation will insist on knowing, whether in this House or the other. If you had not sufficient information, dismiss your Intelligence Department, dismiss Mr. Conyngham Greene and your consular agents wherever they had touch with this matter—at Lourenço Marques or elsewhere. If you did know of it, you have a heavy responsibility to bear. The noble Marquis asks, 'How could we see through a deal board?' I suppose he meant by that to allude to the pianoforte cases in which, with more knowledge than he gave himself credit for, he unofficially states that the ammunition was brought into Pretoria."

Passing on to the question of Secret Service money, he declared that the Government was in possession of a very commanding majority in the House, and that if they had the responsibility of Government they were bound to ask for what funds, whether Secret Service or other, which they might think necessary for the safety of the Empire.

"They cannot," he pursued, "devolve that responsibility on others by speaking of the working of the British Constitution. I ask noble Lords to analyse the speech of the noble Marquis, which is still ringing in their ears. It is the speech of a Minister explaining a disastrous position. He practically has only given two explanations of that situation. They are, first, that the Government had not enough Secret Service money to obtain information, and, secondly, the mysterious working of the British Constitution. I suppose that there are foreign representatives in the gallery listening to this debate, and I suppose that the speech of the Prime Minister will be flashed to-night all over Europe, and Europe, which is watching with a keen and not a benevolent interest the proceedings of our armies in South Africa, will learn that the causes of our disasters are one avoidable and the other inevitable. The avoidable one is the inadequate amount of the Secret Service Fund, and the inevitable one the secular working of the British Constitution."

Leaving the question of unpreparedness, he came to the great point, and asked what the Government intended to do.

"There is a paragraph in the Queen's Speech which I rejoice to see, of a somewhat didactic character in its first sentence, but not without interest in its second. 'The experience of a great war must necessarily afford lessons of the greatest importance to the military administration of the country. You will not, I am convinced, shrink from any outlay that may be required to place our defensive preparations on a level with the responsibilities which the possession of so great an Empire has laid on us.' The noble Marquis made no reference to that paragraph, except to say that he does not think we shall see compulsory service in the life of the youngest peer present. I do not affirm or question that proposition, but I can say I do not think it is so immeasurably remote as [Pg 5] the noble Marquis considers that some form of compulsory service may have to be introduced to meet the growing exigencies of the Empire. I am sure that neither from this nor from any other sacrifice will the nation recoil to preserve the predominance of our Empire. We have sent away from our island a vast mass of troops which usually garrison it. Situated as we are in the centre of a universe by no means friendly to us, that we should not have a hint from the First Minister of the Crown what military measures the Government propose to take in face of the disasters we have met with, and what sacrifices we must inevitably be called on to make to redress them, is one of the most extraordinary features of the working of the British Constitution on which the

noble Marquis has laid such great stress. I agree with him in saying that the country will carry this thing through. It will carry it through in spite of all the impediments, both of men and of methods, that have shackled it in the past; but I venture to say that it will have to be inspired by a loftier tone and by a truer patriotism than we have heard from the Prime Minister to-night."

Mr. Balfour, in the House of Commons, was as damping to popular hopes as the Prime Minister in the House of Lords. Regarding the all-important subject of the under-estimation of the Boer strength, he somewhat airily said:

"It will be asked, How comes it, then, that this great under-estimate of the Boer strength was made if we knew approximately what the Boer armaments were, and what Boers were likely to take the field? I do not know that I have got any very satisfactory answer to give to that question. It is a purely and strictly military problem, and, as history shows, it is a kind of problem very difficult to answer satisfactorily. You can gauge the military strength of a European nation with a fixed army, with all their modern military apparatus, and with all their military statistics at your disposal; but when you come to problems of States whose military organisation is not of that elaborate kind, great mistakes have been made in the past, and I doubt not great mistakes will be made in the future. They certainly have been made by almost every military nation of whom we have any record. But if this is regarded as an attack upon the military experts of the War Office, it is surely an unfair attack, because soldiers, who are not especially given to agreeing with one another, were absolutely unanimous upon this point. I do not believe you will be able to quote the opinion of a single soldier of any position whatever, or of no position, delivered before, say, July 31 or August 31 last, indicating any opinion which will show that the force which we in the first instance sent out would not be amply sufficient, or more than amply sufficient, for all purposes. (Cries of "What about Butler?") The right hon. gentlemen put a question to me about Sir W. Butler. We had not the slightest trace at the War Office in any communication, public, semi-public, or private—no communication of any sort, kind, or description, which indicated that in Sir W. Butler's opinion the force we sent out was not sufficient —I was going to say doubly sufficient—for any work that it might be called upon to perform."

Indeed, the whole tenor of the speech was generally regarded as unsatisfactory and dispiriting. It was felt that, as Lord Rosebery expressed it, the Government must be left to "muddle through" somehow. People who hung anxiously on the lips of the Government for definite statements regarding future resolute action were disappointed, and waited wearily the conclusion of the debate. [Pg 6]

On February 1, Sir Charles Dilke drew vigorous comparisons between the present and former campaigns. In regard to our lack of artillery he said:

"All our generals had told us that direct artillery fire had failed against the Boer entrenchments. It had been known for years past that direct artillery fire would be likely to fail against strong entrenchments; yet we sent twenty-one batteries of field-artillery to South Africa before the first one of the three howitzer batteries was despatched. It was one of the strongest charges which he and others had brought against the War Office for some years, that our army was more badly supplied with field-artillery than any other army in the world. It was not even comparable with the field-artillery of Switzerland and Roumania. In regard to our guns, the Leader of the House had stated in a speech at Manchester that we had guns in South Africa sufficient for three army corps of regular troops. He should like to know on whose authority the right hon. gentleman made that statement. The first force sent to South Africa from India was supplied with guns, not on that scale, but still in fairly decent and respectable measure. The forces of Lord Methuen and Sir Redvers Buller fell altogether short of even the scale adopted for the Indian Contingent. Both these generals had themselves called attention to their deficiency in this respect. We had not even now got artillery on anything like the scale laid down by the right hon. gentleman, and we could not have it in South Africa, because we had not got it in the world. In these circumstances he could only characterise the statement of the Leader of the House as entirely erroneous and misleading, and altogether a blunder. With regard to the batteries which were even now being sent out, many of them were manned by reservists and by garrison artillerymen, who had had no experience in the handling of modern field-guns."

Proceeding to the question of lack of cavalry, he argued:

"With regard to cavalry as with regard to artillery, the first force was well supplied, but the forces of Lord Methuen and General Buller were very deficient in that respect. In that connection the First Lord had made an attack on the critics of the War Office. He said they had not seen, or if they had seen had not insisted on, a novel fact in the present war, namely, that for the first time in the history of the world they had seen an army composed entirely of mounted infantry. The right hon. gentleman had only to read Sir William Butler's 'Life of General Colley,' where he would find very marked attention drawn to that matter. As to the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, of which the right hon. gentleman was a member, though he himself had been spoken of as the author of

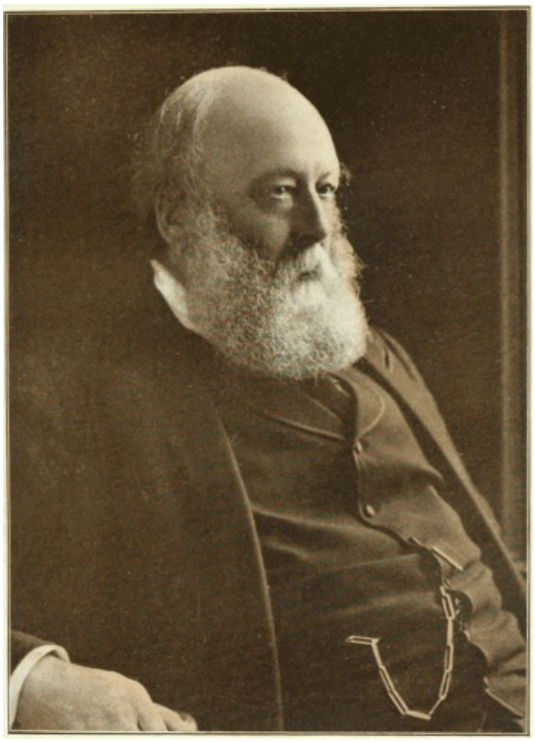
that body, he must admit that it had failed. It was instituted after a correspondence in which he himself, his hon. friend (Mr. Arnold Foster), and Mr. Spenser Wilkinson took part, and it was not new to the present Government. It was instituted in the time of Lord Rosebery's Government as a Committee of the Cabinet, but it had been proclaimed to the world in the time of the present Government. It had failed on account of the slackness of those who attended the deliberations of the Committee. It had not been worked as the authors of the proposal thought it might have been worked in the [Pg 7] interests of the Empire. The Committee ought to have foreseen these difficulties with respect to mounted men; they were foreseen by military men. Though political differences occurred between Sir A. Milner and Sir W. Butler, Sir A. Milner consulted General Butler on the military aspect of the situation, and General Butler's opinions were known to the Government, or should have been. They were known to Sir A. Milner at any rate and were not concealed by him when he was in this country a year ago. According to his (Sir C. Dilke's) information, which reached him immediately after the statement had been made to Sir A. Milner, General Sir W. Butler declared that 60,000 men would be required in Cape Colony and 25,000 men in Natal. Leaving that, however, what was the attitude of the Cabinet with regard to the need for cavalry? They telegraphed to the Colonies to refuse mounted men. They gave their reasons in the telegram of October 3: 'In view of the numbers already available, infantry most and cavalry least serviceable.' On December 16 they telegraphed to the Colonies, 'Mounted men preferred.' After all the loss of life that had taken place, and the months of checks and reverses, they had discovered what competent soldiers had discovered before the war, and must have told them, that mounted men were essential for a campaign of this kind."

In reply, the Under-Secretary of State for War made the first telling and apposite statement which had been furnished for the Government during the course of the proceedings. His exposition was straightforwardness itself. Though merely the mouthpiece of the Government, Mr. Wyndham gave utterance to definite statements which created a very favourable impression throughout the country, and served at once to wipe away the taste of foregone pronouncements. He said:

"Every one to his dying day would look back with regret on the great many disasters which had followed, but no one could ever know what would have happened if the other course had been adopted. It was very easy to conceive that if Sir G. White had not stayed at Ladysmith and Sir R. Buller had not gone to his relief disaster might have been developed in another line, and that there might have been that universal rising of the Cape Dutch which, thank Heaven, had not occurred. When it was stated that Lord Methuen had not sufficient cavalry and artillery with him, it must be remembered that Lord Methuen was hurried off to the Orange River, and, as a matter of fact, he arrived on the frontier in fewer days than the German army reached the French frontier, and he had not with him the cavalry, which had been diverted for the relief of Ladysmith and other purposes. On the morrow after Nicholson's Nek three more battalions were sent from home, though none had been asked for, and Lord Landsowne offered a sixth division. In reply, he was told that preparation was desirable, but that there was no immediate need for its despatch. The situation was again changed by the reverses at Stormberg and Magersfontein and the check at Colenso. Thereupon the sixth division was ordered to embark without any communication from South Africa, and at the same time the seventh division was ordered to be mobilised. On December 15, the day after his check at Colenso, Sir R. Buller asked for the seventh division, the mobilisation of which had already been ordered, and for 8000 mounted irregulars from this country. [Pg 8] Lord Landsowne replied that the seventh division would embark on January 4, which it did. Next day the first step was taken in connection with the raising of the Imperial Yeomanry, and volunteers were invited to come forward in order to fill the places left vacant by the raising from each battalion of one company of mounted infantry. The patriotism of the Militia was also appealed to, and fourteen battalions were now serving in South Africa, while others were on the way. A great military authority once said, 'When a battalion is asked for, send a brigade.' That had been the course pursued by Lord Landsowne."

In regard to the number of our guns, Mr. Wyndham continued his argument in the following terms:—

"As the right hon. baronet had pressed for information with regard to the number of guns which had been despatched to South Africa, it would not be out of place to tell the House that we had sent and were sending 36 siege train heavy guns; there were already there 38 mobile naval guns, and in addition to these there were 36 5-inch howitzers carrying a heavy shell charged with 50 lbs. of lyddite, in all 110 guns, some of them with a range of 10,000 yards, and all capable of throwing heavy shells. Besides these there were 54 horse-artillery guns and 234 field-artillery guns, in all, counting the howitzers, 324 guns capable of accompanying troops in the field. Including the two mountain batteries, there were altogether 410 guns in South Africa, without reckoning the guns that were going out with the Volunteers and the Colonials, which would bring the number up to 452."



THE MARQUIS OF SALISBURY, K.G.

PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN SECRETARY.

Photo by Russell & Sons, London.

Then taking the subject of mounted troops, he went on:—

> "On the question of mounted troops, it had been said that the Government announced to the world their conviction that unmounted troops were the kind of troops most suitable to South African warfare. The word 'mounted' was never used. However, he would not insist on that, but he did think that those who had quoted this opinion so often should consider when they were used, because then they would see that they gave no indication that the Government held the opinion attributed to them. As a matter of fact, since the outbreak of the war the Government had sent out a larger proportion of mounted troops than was usually contemplated, because they believed that mounted troops were especially suited to go to Africa. The time at which the phrase was used that infantry was most wanted and cavalry least wanted was on October 3, before the ultimatum was sent, before the war began, and at a time when Sir R. Buller was satisfied that an army corps, a cavalry division, and the necessary troops for the line of communication, giving 50,000 men in addition to the 25,000 already in South Africa, was an adequate force. When the question of the Colonial Contingents was first raised, Queensland offered 250 and New Zealand 200 mounted infantry, and the 108 New South Wales Lancers then in this country volunteered, making in all 558 mounted men. No specific offer was received from the other Colonies, but they expressed a wish that they might be allowed to take some part in the campaign. He thereon consulted Sir R. Buller as to the number that should be asked for in order that each Colony might be represented more or less in proportion to their respective populations. Sir Redvers stated that it would be easier to give the Colonial troops an immediate place at the front if they were invited to contribute manageable units of 125 men each. If the original offers of the Colonies had been accepted, there would have been 1375 more mounted men at the front at an earlier date, when no one contemplated that the force sent out would be insufficient for its task. The Colonial Legislatures have not changed their note in consequence of the disappointments and reverses which have been experienced, but have made further offers—an example which might well have been followed nearer home. Altogether there had been accepted from the Colonies 2075 unmounted and 4678 mounted men. The proportion of mounted to unmounted troops in South Africa at four different periods were: In the original garrison, 7600 unmounted and 2000 mounted; on October 9, the day of the ultimatum, 12,600 unmounted and 3400 mounted; on January 1, 83,600 unmounted and 19,800 mounted; while the total number of troops in South Africa, not including the Fourth Cavalry Brigade, were 142,800 unmounted and 37,800 mounted, and in the next fortnight or three weeks there would be out there 180,600 of all arms."

[Pg 9]

Sir Edward Grey said:—

> "He was giving the right hon. gentleman some instances of the value of the support from his side. The primary object of the policy which had ended in the war was not to drive the Boers from British territory, as they were not then on it. The primary object

was not to plant the British flag at Pretoria and Johannesburg. These two things might be the result of the war, but they were not the primary objects of the Government policy. The objects which he wished to see attained, and which he would pledge himself to give the utmost support to the Government in attaining, were, first, equal rights between all white men in South Africa, and by that he meant that never again should a situation arise in any part of the British sphere in which a modern industrial community should be placed under the heel of an antiquated minority which was dominated by prejudice and governed by corruption. The second object was that never again in South Africa should it be possible for arsenals to be formed or an accumulation of military material under any control except British control. That was the end to be attained, and to that end the Government would have support."

On the 3rd of February Mr. Bryce expressed his opinions. He affected to disbelieve that there had been any Dutch conspiracy to drive the British from South Africa, and considered that, owing to the menace of the Government in the arrangement of negotiations, the meek Boer had no resource but to prepare for war.

Mr. Goschen admitted the gravity of the situation and the responsibility of the Government *en masse*. The Cabinet, he decided, must stand or fall together. The Admiralty, in acceptation of its responsibility, had assisted the army with heavy guns without weakening its resources. Lastly, he touched enthusiastically on the exhibition of Colonial loyalty:—

"Before concluding I must say a word with reference to the Colonists. They have been supporting us with unstinted loyalty and unstinted generosity. There has been a spirit shown by the Colonies of affection to the mother country which has been the admiration of the world. May we not suggest that that unstinted loyalty and that unstinted generosity is to some extent a reward for the consideration which has been [Pg 10] shown the Colonies for some time past; and is it not right to remember that for years there has not been a Secretary for the Colonies who has so endeavoured to win the affection of the Colonies as the right hon. gentleman who now holds that office? You tax us with not having shown foresight and judgment. At all events our treatment of the Colonies has ensured, not their loyalty—that will always be there—but the enthusiastic impulse of the Colonies to come to the assistance of the mother country. We have a great work to do; we want to do that work, and now hon. gentlemen opposite move an amendment the only object of which could be to damage and weaken the Government, who are the instruments of the national will. If hon. gentlemen opposite do not wish to take our places and to bear the burden which rests on our shoulders, is it wise to endeavour to shake the confidence of the country in the men who must continue this war, and gather together all the forces of the Empire to bring it to a successful conclusion? Supposing there should be a division which could be called a bad division for the Government, what would the cheers which would greet that division mean? They would mean, 'We have succeeded in damaging and weakening the Government.' The time may come when we will be damaged. If the war is not successful, sweep us away as men who have no judgment, but do not lame the arm of the Executive Government when they have such a work on hand as we have got to do. There has been patriotic co-operation between us and some of the Liberal Party. We thank them for it. I believe this is a Parliamentary bad dream—an interlude between the patriotic attitude of these gentlemen a few weeks ago and the patriotic attitude which I hope we may look forward to when this debate closes. They have assured the country they will support us in going forward. I thank them for that, for it is more important than the petty criticisms to which we have been treated. We are the trustees of the nation for the work that has to be done. The nation will support us, I believe; and so long as we receive that support, God willing, we will fulfil our task."

Sir E. Clarke, among other things, said:—

"He did not believe the annexation of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State would be of the slightest benefit to the country. The annexation of the two Republics would compel us to very greatly increase our already enormous military expenditure, and it would not give us any advantage commensurate with the difficulties of administration. He had no desire to press his own views, which were singular, and certainly not popular, on that side of the House. He only pleaded that this question might be left open, and that Ministers might not pledge themselves to a course which would involve so great a sacrifice. While he agreed generally with the doctrine of Cabinet responsibility, he considered that the real responsibility for the war lay with the Colonial Secretary. The Prime Minister, in whom all England put the greatest confidence, having many other things to deal with, and being distressed by domestic anxieties, might not have been able to attend so closely as he otherwise would have done to South African affairs; but it could not be gainsaid that there were two men, one in this country and the other in South Africa, who must be associated with the beginning of the war. He wished that the highest sentiments of patriotism would induce those two men to leave to others the positions they now occupied. He believed that the difficulties involved in a solution of the questions arising out of the war would be increased by the fact that the lines of communication and action in South Africa were in the hands of the Colonial Secretary and Sir A. Milner. He had not a word to say about [Pg 11] the honesty of these two gentlemen; but if, for a few weeks or a few months, in this

grave national crisis and time of deep anxiety, others could take their places—if the Prime Minister himself would take under his own control the communications of the Colonial Office with South Africa, and if Lord Rosebery would give his services to the country, and go out to South Africa to assist in a solution of the difficulties, it would be a sacrifice not too great to ask even from the greatest men among us, and one for which the country would be very grateful. He had said that he was not going to make a controversial speech. He did not think he had. If he had, it had been with no intention of personal attack or party bitterness, but with the deep conviction that in deciding on the great issues with which Parliament had to deal we had to consider not only the things of to-day but the things of the future."

Mr. Chamberlain's speech on the 5th of February was an advance on former proceedings. Sir William Harcourt dilated on the indomitable energy of a free people fighting for their independence, praised the gallantry of the troops, and blamed the Government for being led by the opinions of the authors of the Jameson Raid, to which the Colonial Secretary made dignified reply. Finally he questioned—

"How do we meet the charge of mistakes? Not by denying the mistakes, but by saying what we have done and what we are doing to repair them. You say we sent too few troops. We are pouring troops into South Africa, and, as you have been told, in a few weeks you will have an army of 200,000. You said we were forgetful of the need for mounted men. We have been increasing the number of horse infantry until in a very short time the number of mounted men in the British forces will be almost as great, if not as great, as the total number of mounted men in the Boer army. You say our artillery is deficient and not heavy enough. We have sent battery after battery, until now you have an unexampled force of that arm. We have at the same time added a number of heavier guns. When the war began, no doubt the needs of the war were under-estimated at that time; it is part of the same mistake. We failed to respond as we ought to have done to the splendid offers that came from our Colonies. We accepted enough to show how much we valued their assistance, but we hesitated to put on them any greater strain than necessary. But what is happening now? They are multiplying their forces, and every offer is gratefully and promptly appreciated and accepted. And we shall have in this war before it is over an army of Colonials called to the aid of Her Majesty who will outnumber the British army at Waterloo and nearly equal to the total British force in the Crimea."

In conclusion he said:—

"In Africa these two races, so interesting, so admirable, each in its own way, though different in some things, will now, at any rate, have learned to respect one another. I hear a great deal about the animosity which will remain after the war, but I hope I am not too sanguine when I say that I do not believe in it. When matters have settled down, when equal rights are assured to both the white races, I believe that both will enjoy the land together in settled peace and prosperity. Meanwhile, we are finding out the weak spots in our armour, and trying to remedy them. We are finding out the infinite potential resources of the Empire; we are advancing steadily, if slowly, to the realisation of that great federation of our race which will inevitably make for peace, liberty, and justice." [Pg 12]

On the following night Mr. Asquith, on Talleyrand's principle—that speech is given us to hide our thoughts—dilated interestingly on the position, his sympathies oscillating between the Opposition, the Government, and Mr. Kruger. Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman declared it to be the duty of the Opposition to press Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice's amendment to a division. He inferred that the conspiracy of the Cape Dutch was a chimera, and went so far as to suggest that when our military supremacy was asserted in South Africa the question of settlement might be left to decide itself *sine die*! Said he: "Provided that our territories are free and our military supremacy asserted, what matters it at what time or what place a settlement is arrived at?"

In his reply Mr. Balfour distinguished himself. He said that it was discovered that the War Office has more than fulfilled its promises, and appealed to the members of the Opposition who sympathised with the justice of the war to reflect before voting for the amendment. It was necessary to help the soldiers at the front by proving to them that they were supported by a united country, and that every hostile vote might induce or encourage our opponents to prolong the contest. He concluded by saying:—

"Can they contemplate with equanimity that their first action in a session of Parliament meeting under such circumstances should be a weakening of the Government, whose hands they profess to desire to strengthen—whose hands I believe they genuinely desire to strengthen—in every succeeding operation connected with this war? Can they contemplate with equanimity the reflection that possibly their votes may lengthen the war, and, by lengthening it, may increase that tragic list of losses with which we are already too familiar? If in giving their vote they add one fraction to the chances of a European complication, one fraction of a chance that an unnecessary life may be lost or a family thrown into mourning, can they easily reconcile that with their duty towards their own principles and to that country of which they are, I believe, as devoted servants as we on this side of the House? I think it is a violation of every Parliamentary

tradition that men who desire to keep in office a Government should vote for an amendment which, if carried, will turn out that Government, and that it is contrary to every patriotic instinct to vote in a minority against the Government. The size of that minority will affect the whole course of European policy, the whole course of the war. I have stated the problem as it presents itself to my mind. I know that you are men of conscience and honour, and I must leave it to you to decide the problem, each man in his own case as his conscience and honour dictate. To the House at large I can only make one appeal. It is that we, who are the representatives of the country, may rise to the height reached by those whom we represent. I ask no more, and I can ask no more, of the House than that they should imitate, for they cannot exceed, the courage, steadfastness, resolution, and firmness under adversity, and the calmness of temper with which our countrymen all over the world have dealt with the situation in its entirety. If the House of Commons do, as no doubt they will, imitate, for they cannot better, the conduct of those who have sent them here, then who can doubt that the clouds by which we are at present surrounded will in a short time be dissipated and the Empire will issue from the struggle in which it is now engaged stronger, not only in its own consciousness of strength, but in the eyes of the civilised world.” [Pg 13]

SERGEANT OF THE IMPERIAL YEOMANRY.

Photo by Gregory & Co., London.

In the end, by 352 to 139—a majority of 213—the vote of censure on the Government moved by Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice was defeated. The decision adequately expressed the feelings of the country. It must be remembered that many of the Government supporters were in South Africa, consequently a total poll of 491 represented a heavy vote. The following list serves to show the number of members of both Houses who had sacrificed party spirit to patriotic convictions, and had proceeded to the front:—

House of Lords.—Earl of Airlie, commanding 12th Lancers; Earl of Albemarle, lieutenant-colonel, City of London Imperial Volunteers; Lord Basing, major, 1st Dragoons; Lord Castletown, special service, South Africa; Lord Chesham, commanding a battalion of Imperial Yeomanry; Earl Cowley, lieutenant, Imperial Yeomanry; Lord Denman, lieutenant, Imperial Yeomanry; Earl of Dudley, D.A.A.G. for Imperial Yeomanry; Earl of Dundonald, C.B., major-general, commanding 3rd Brigade (Natal) Cavalry Division; Earl of Dunraven, captain, Imperial Yeomanry; Earl of Erroll, special service, South Africa; Earl of Essex, second in command of battalion of Imperial Yeomanry; Earl of Fingal, lieutenant, Imperial Yeomanry; Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, G.C.B., K.C.M.G., Chief of the Staff; Earl of Leitrim, lieutenant, Imperial Yeomanry; Earl of Longford, captain, Imperial Yeomanry; Lord Lovat, captain, Lord Lovat’s Corps; Duke of Marlborough, staff captain for Imperial Yeomanry; Lord Methuen, K.C.V.O., C.B., commanding 1st Division in South Africa; Duke of Norfolk, K.G., captain, Imperial Yeomanry; Lord Roberts of Kandahar, K.P., G.C.B., G.C.I.E., G.C.S.I., V.C., Field Marshal Commanding-in-Chief; Lord Romilly, special service, South Africa; Lord Rosmead, major, 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers; Duke of Roxburghe, lieutenant, Royal Horse Guards; Earl of Scarborough, second in command of battalion of Imperial Yeomanry; Earl Sondes, lieutenant, Imperial Yeomanry; Duke of Westminster, A.D.C. to Governor; Lord Wolverton, second lieutenant, Somersetshire Yeomanry Cavalry; Lord Zouche, lieutenant, Imperial Yeomanry.

House of Commons.—Mr. W. Allen, trooper, Imperial Yeomanry; Hon. A. B. Bathurst, captain, 4th Battalion Gloucester Regiment; Colonel A. M. Brookfield, commanding battalion of Imperial Yeomanry; Lieutenant-Colonel R. G. W. Chaloner, commanding battalion of Imperial Yeomanry; Hon. T. H. Cochrane, captain, 4th Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders; Lord A. F. Compton, captain, Imperial Yeomanry; Viscount

Cranborne, commanding 4th Battalion Bedford Regiment; Mr. W. Bromley-Davenport, captain, Imperial Yeomanry; Sir J. Dickson-Poynder, lieutenant, Imperial Yeomanry; Viscount Folkestone, major, 1st Wilts Volunteer Rifle Corps; Mr. W. R. Greene, lieutenant, Imperial Yeomanry; Hon. J. Guest, lieutenant, Imperial Yeomanry; Mr. G. Kemp, captain, Imperial Yeomanry; Mr. E. H. Llewellyn, major, 4th battalion Somerset Light Infantry; Mr. H. L. B. McCalmont, commanding 6th battalion Royal Warwick Regiment; Mr. F. B. Mildmay, lieutenant, Imperial Yeomanry; Viscount Milton, lieutenant, Imperial Yeomanry; Mr. D. V. Pirie, with Remounts Department, South Africa; Lord Stanley, special service, South Africa; Lord Edmund Talbot, special service, South Africa; Viscount Valentia, A.A.G. for Imperial Yeomanry; Major W. H. Wyndham-Quin, captain, Imperial Yeomanry; Major the Hon. H. V. Duncombe, adjutant, Imperial Yeomanry; Sir Elliott Lees, captain, Imperial Yeomanry; Sir S. Scott, lieutenant, Imperial Yeomanry.

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KIMBERLEY

There was little bombardment after the 25th of November, and though not living on the fat of the land, the garrison was not short of provisions. Mr. Rhodes, with characteristic forethought, now caused the formation of a committee to inquire into the resources of those dependent on the men killed, with a view to compensating them for their loss, and in other ways exerted himself for the welfare of sufferers in the town.

Considerable friction occurred between the civil and military authorities. The clashing of wills was inevitable in so small an area, for Colonel Kekewich represented military power, while Mr. Rhodes could be no other than he is, and ever has been—a power in himself. It was unfortunate that two such forces should have been placed in collision, but it remains to the credit of both that, in spite of the tension of the situation, they should have co-operated to the end to save the town from the common enemy, and protect the interests and lives of all who, but for this co-operation, might have suffered much more intensely than they did.

Early on the morning of the 9th of December a force with a battery under Colonel Chamier—to whom the efficient and mobile condition of the artillery was due—made a reconnaissance to the north. The Lancashire's Mounted Infantry and two guns were posted on Otto's Kopje while the Cape Police protected the Dam Wall. The Kimberley Light Horse in the centre extemporised some rifle-pits out of some prospectors' huts in order to cover retreat when necessary.

The enemy were screened by the debris of a wall at Kamfeens, but when the boom of the British gun burst out and a shell roared in their midst, they hurriedly sought cover in their foremost rifle-pits, whence with great energy they "sniped" in the direction of the officers who were superintending the operations. Meanwhile tremendous barking of cannon and pinging of rifles continued, the Boers having got the range of Otto Kopje to perfection. The troops had an exceedingly hard time, but continued their operations till dusk. They lost only one killed and four wounded.

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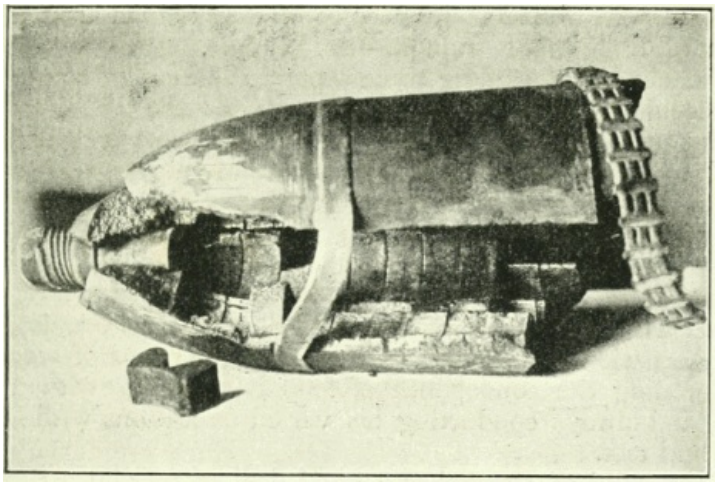
On the wise principle that it is safer to act early on the aggressive if you do not want to have to act late on the defensive, the smart little force indulged in more military movements.



Shell Picked up in Kimberley Streets.

Photo by Alf. S. Hosking, Cape Town.

Colonel Kekewich's general plan for the defence of Kimberley was based on the principle of always keeping the enemy on the move and constantly in fear of attack from an unexpected quarter, but the immediate object of the numerous sorties and demonstrations in force now made by the garrison was to assist the operations of Lord Methuen. The Colonel explained that, "when the advance of the Relief Column from the Orange River commenced, and I was put in possession of information concerning the probable date of its arrival at Kimberley, I adopted such measures as I hoped would cause the retention of a large force of the enemy in my immediate neighbourhood, and thus enable the Relief Column to deal with the Boer force in detail." As the

portions of mounted corps were continually employed, the work which fell on the detachment, 1st Batt. Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, Cape Police, Diamond Fields Horse, Kimberley Light Horse, and the Diamond Fields Artillery, was very arduous; but the bravery and dash of these troops was unending. Colonel Murray, of the Loyal North Lancashire, was invaluable in many capacities, and Captain O'Brien of the same regiment, in command of a section of the defences, was unfailing in energy and zeal. Cool as the proverbial cucumber were Major Rodger of the Diamond Fields Horse and Major May of the Diamond Fields Artillery. The motto of these officers was the reverse of that of the notable *gens d'armes*, for they were "always there when wanted," and generally in the fore-front. The officers of the Kimberley Regiment, too, were conspicuous for [Pg 16] courage, coolness, and sagacity. They knew as by intuition what was wanted and did it. From Colonel Finlayson, who commanded the regiment, to Surgeon-Major Smith, who tended the wounded in the field, there was none who did not contribute to the stock of efficiency which was placed at the disposal of the Colonel.

On the 20th of December, the mounted detachments under Colonel Peakman, with maxims and 7-pounders under Colonel May, started off in the pitch darkness of 2 A.M., and marched through Kenilworth in the direction of the wreck of Webster's Farm, and on towards Tollpan in the Free State. British cannonading then took place, the Kimberley guns shelling Tollpan Homestead at 2500 yards' range, and the Boer gun on Klippiespan ridge returning the compliment with interest. Fortunately the hostile shells burrowed deep in the sandy soil, and consequently little damage was done. The Boers were found to be very comfortably situated at the three corners of a six-mile triangle—at Coetgie, Scholtz, and Alexandersfontein—commanding three separate sources of water supply. This reconnaissance was of importance, as the positions of the enemy's guns and outposts were determined, and the garrison was enabled to be on guard against raiders and snipers, and to protect itself, its patrols, and cattle from the fire of the enemy. In the matter of protecting the cattle from the tricks of the Dutchmen, as in many other ways, Mr. Fynn, manager of the De Beers farms, did splendid service. This gentleman was Mr. Rhodes's right-hand man, and as a natural consequence of the honour he enjoyed rose to every occasion that offered, now managing a corps of scouts, now superintending the conveyance of food, now dealing with truculent natives, and always conducting his varied avocations with immense energy and tact.

Lieutenant. Captain. Adjutant.

THE ROYAL LANCASTERS.

Photo by Gregory & Co., London.

On the 22nd of December a good deal of martial activity took place. At cockcrow a detachment of mounted forces, with artillery and infantry, went west for the purpose of reconnoitring Voornitzright and part of Weldermstkuil. On the right were the Diamond Fields Horse under Major Rodger, supported by a company of the North Lancashire Regiment under Lieutenant de Putron. Presently an animated cannonade began between the enemy's artillery from Kamferdam and the Diamond Fields Artillery guns on Otto's Kopje. In the centre Colonel Peakman, with the Kimberley Light Horse and Cape Police, proceeded along Lazaretto Ridge. There, before retreating, he made the necessary discoveries—firstly, that the Boer patrols were then the only

occupants of the place, and secondly, that the enemy's reinforcements were advancing behind Wimbledon Ridge. Meanwhile Colonel Chamier on the left, with R.A. guns and an escort under Major Snow, was exchanging salutations with the Boer guns posted in the earthwork in the [Pg 17] centre of Wimbledon Ridge. This occupation was pursued for some time, during which the enemy were found to be rapidly approaching. Directly the guns were limbered up some 500 Boers came on the scene, and began to pour a fierce fire from the earthworks at the foot of the Ridge upon the Kimberley troops, who retired to cover. The object of the reconnaissance was gained, however, for it proved in what an inconceivably short space of time the enemy could summon his reinforcements, and, moreover, that three of his guns were yet in the neighbourhood of the town.

On Christmas Eve congratulations were received by flashlight signals from the Military Secretary at Cape Town:—

> "Convey to Colonel Kekewich and all the garrison and inhabitants of Kimberley his Excellency's best wishes for their good luck on Christmas Day and in the coming New Year."

Colonel Kekewich replied:—

> "Kindly inform the Military Secretary that I and the garrison and inhabitants of Kimberley thank his Excellency for his kind message. We also wish respectfully to offer our very best wishes for Christmas and New Year."

This little interchange of compliments caused infinite pleasure to those whose days were one unvarying round of trial and suspense. The weather was exceedingly hot; at times the thermometer registered 105° in the shade, and life without absolute necessities in torrid weather is trying even to the patience of the active. To those whose intercourse with the world was confined to flashlight signals, it was barren in the extreme. But with much pluck they thus announced their sentiments in a journal called the *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, which still maintained a languishing existence: "Excepting two or three of our inhabitants who shared the terrible privations of the siege of Paris, few of us have ever spent such a Christmas before, and few will ever care to spend such a Christmas again. The scarcity of turkeys and plum-pudding at this time of traditional plenty need only distress the gourmand. The majority of the people of Kimberley are happily made of sterner stuff, and do not look for luxuries in a time of siege." They were nevertheless not utterly plum-puddingless. Mr. Rhodes, with characteristic forethought, had caused to be cooked in the Sanatorium some two score of these bombshells to digestion, and had distributed them in each of the camps. Here they were devoured with much merrymaking and a general interchange of felicitations, which went on by telephone from one camp to another. From the Mounted Camp to the Royal Artillery: "Best wishes and longer range to your guns." From the gunners, in return, while they kept one ear open for movement in the direction of the Boers' [Pg 18] "Susannah:" "May our range be always long enough for us to be guardian-angels to the Mounted Corps."

On the following day the artillery was at work responding to the salutes of the Boers, who commenced to fire with great activity after their Christmas rest. They dropped some thirty-five shells in the direction of the fort, and received nineteen well-directed replies. Two of the mines were fired by the thunderstorm of the previous night, but no one was injured. Food now was becoming more and more scarce, and those connected with the distribution of provisions had to exercise much forethought and economy.

The task of arranging for the victualling and supply of the garrison and 40,000 people in the town was undertaken by Major Gorle, Army Service Corps, and the zeal and resource which he brought to bear on his onerous duties were applauded on all sides. Of course there were found persons who, on the take-everything-from-everybody-else-and-give-it-all-to-me principle, thought they were badly treated, but these were the exception rather than the rule. The arrangements for milk were made by a special civil committee, consisting of Mr. Oliver, the Mayor, whose courage and energy in keeping up the spirits of the people were wonderful, Mr. Judge, and four visiting surgeons of Kimberley Hospital, Doctors Ashe, Watkins, Mackenzie, and Stoney. These made themselves notable for the untiring energy with which they devoted themselves to their incessant duties. They kept a sharp eye on the milk, serving it out cautiously at the depôt, and only to those who had a medical certificate that they required it. The Colonel was very appreciative of the help given by most of his civilian coadjutors, for, in reference to the difficulties of his position, he stated in his despatch: "It will be realised that, under the peculiar circumstances in which the defence of the scattered town, containing over 40,000 inhabitants and much valuable machinery, was entrusted in the first instance to a force consisting of about 570 Imperial troops and 630 Colonial troops, my efforts would have been of no avail had it not been for the valuable assistance and advice which many citizens afforded me in a military as well as a civil capacity."

Mr. Henderson, Captain Tyson of the Kimberley Club, and Dr. Smart collaborated with the ruling spirit of the place, organising relief committees, distributing thousands of pints of soup per diem, and apportioning such fruit and vegetables as were to be had for the good of those who were most sorely in need. That green stuffs were scarce may be gathered from the fact that the allowance for nine people for half a week was a bunch of five carrots, four liliputian parsnips, and several beets (duodecimo editions). The garrison, later on, were glad of mangel-wurzels, when quantity rather than quality came to be appreciated. [Pg 19]

The Boers were now beginning to build redoubts on Dronfield Kopjes, about a mile east of the

railway and in a northerly direction, showing that whatever withdrawals might be going on from besieged places elsewhere, the City of Mines would receive its due of attention up to the last. The Boer prisoners inside the town presented quite a rejuvenated appearance, owing to the delicate attentions of Mr. Rhodes. Christmas saw them provided with new outfits, and a general air of cleanliness and health pervaded them. The invalids in hospital, both British and Boers, were visited frequently by the Colossus, whose generosity in the matter of delicacies, which were now very scarce, was highly appreciated.

Much of the Kimberley news was obtained through the energy and acuteness, almost amounting to genius, of the despatch-runners. Of these, Mr. Lumming of Douglas succeeded in getting in and out of the town with missives for and from Mr. Rhodes, always at tremendous risk. The Boers had offered a large reward for his capture. On one occasion, so as to evade observation in a district swarming with the enemy, he had to travel quadruped fashion on hands and knees for some thirty miles. Tales of the despatch-runners' ingenuity in all parts of the Colony were many. One Kaffir boy, though caught by the Boers and stripped by them, carried his despatch safely, it having been packed in a quill and hid in his nostril, while another—a canny Scot—concealed his treasure in the inmost recesses of a hard-boiled egg.

On the morning of the 27th of January the mounted troops under the indefatigable Colonel Peakman at an early hour reconnoitred the Boer position near the Premier mine. The Boers were indulging in a last little doze, when some shells were neatly dropped into their laager. The alarum was effective. They were up and doing in no time, and set to work firing with the utmost vigour, but their shots were not accurate and much waste of ammunition took place. It may be remembered that Colonel Peakman, Kimberley Light Horse, after the death of Colonel Turner was selected for the command of the mounted troops in Kimberley. A tower of strength of himself, he was surrounded by a gallant crew, among whom were Major Scott, V.C., Captains Ap-Bowen and Mahoney (both severely wounded on the 25th of November), Captains Robertson and Rickman. There were also in the corps several lieutenants conspicuous for dash and daring, notably Lieutenants Hawker (wounded 22nd November), Harris, and Chatfield. Of the Colonel an amusing tale was told, which, if not *vero*, was certainly *bentrovato*, and served to cheer up those who needed to salt the monotonous flavour of daily life. It fell to the duty of Colonel Peakman to introduce horse-flesh at the officers' mess, a ticklish task, and one that required considerable tact. When the dish was served, the Colonel said, "Gentlemen, as I was unable to get the whole of [Pg 20]
our ration in beef, a part of it had to be taken in horse-flesh. Here is the beef," said he, carving at the joint opposite him, "that at the other end of the table is the horse. Any one who prefers it may help himself." No one accepted the invitation, and after there had been a great run on the beef, the Colonel suddenly said, "By Jove, I'm mistaken; of course *this* joint is the horse, the other is the beef!" Thus the palates of the heroes of the Kimberley Light Horse were educated to the fare that was shortly to become unvaried.

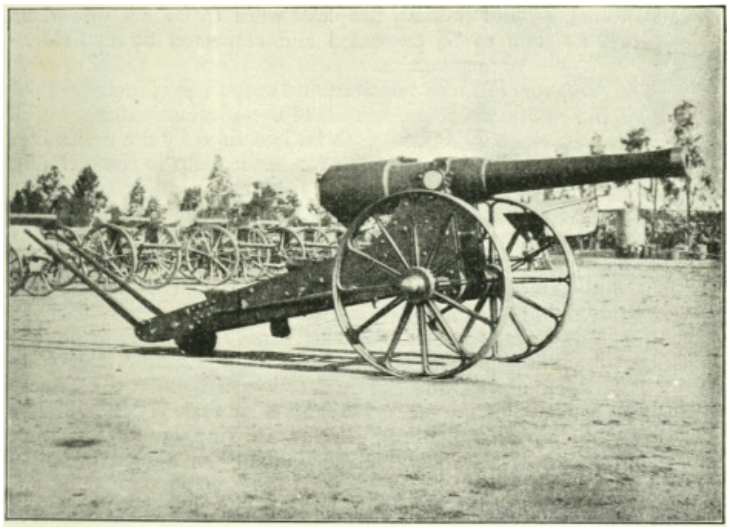
Later on, a chunk of donkey occasionally replaced the equine morsel, and cats, it was noticed, began to be less in evidence. There were whispers—hints—— But to proceed to facts.

On the 29th a tussle took place between the foe and a man named Sheppy, who, with twelve mounted natives, was herding a thousand De Beers horses and mules. The cattle-drivers were at work when out from the bushes rushed a hundred Boers. These at once opened fire, but the herdsmen managed to return it and effect their escape.

The transformation of diamond-diggers into warriors was an entire novelty, of which Kimberley boasted not a little. The entire community of the De Beers Company were now soldiers of the Queen, receiving the same rate of pay as before, with food in addition. The total white population in the town was 14,000, and of these 6000 were employés of the mine, men from Natal. The Company worked wonders—of course under the auspices of the ruling genius of Kimberley. They stuck at nothing, from assisting with food supplies—distributing soup in gallons—to providing for the employment of upwards of 4000 natives in making improvements in the town. Sanitation too they undertook when contractors failed, and, when the supply of water was cut off at the main reservoir by the enemy, they came to the rescue by providing another source of water supply.

Owing to the excellent management and regulation of stores, the community had hitherto been enabled to live at normal prices, and food had been within the reach of all. But now the pinch of the siege began to be felt. Luxuries such as eggs, vegetables, &c., were naturally scarce, but horse-flesh even grew to be limited, for there was little forage left. The tramcars ceased to work, and Dr. Ashe predicted that presently there would be "no carts save military ones and the doctors' and the hearse!"

People had to take their meat allowance half in beef and half in horse-flesh, and the over-fastidious were but meagrely nourished. These, however, soon came to "take their whack" of horse-flesh gladly, and some even declared that horse, by any other name, would be quite appetising! Conversation largely consisted of speculations regarding food or its absence, and once or twice there was a rub with the military. Dr. Ashe expressed himself frankly when [Pg 21]
confronted with red-tape difficulties, addressed the Colonel—of course, minding p's and q's, for people had to look to the dotting of i's and crossing of t's in those days—and suggested that, "in matters which affected the health and feeding of the people," the doctors thought that, in virtue of their knowledge of town, climate, and people, they might be consulted. The objection to the red-tape difficulty being proved sound, the Colonel at once altered the routine, but, said Dr. Ashe, "he flatly declined to ask any opinion from the general body of doctors, as they might have ideas which would affect the military situation."



"Long Cecil," made at the De Beers Mines.

Photo by D. Barnett, War Correspondent.

The new gun, "Long Cecil," manufactured in De Beers, was greatly prized. It distinguished itself on its début by plumping a shell in the centre of the Kamfersdam head-laager exactly over the position of the Dutchmen's gun. Bombardment continued spasmodically, sometimes at night, the shells entering several houses and "making hay" of the furniture; but wantonly barbarous was the attack on the laager containing the women and children, which took place on the 23rd of January. One of the little innocents was killed and another probably maimed for life. On the 24th more bombardment began as early as four in the morning, and firing continued all day. The worst [Pg 22] feature in the affair was the attack—deliberate and premeditated it appeared—on the hospital, which caused general grief and indignation. There was no excuse for such inhumanity, as the place was distinguished by two Red Cross flags.

Very lamentable was this habit of the Boers to violate the sacred rules of the Geneva Convention, for it alienated even those who were in sympathy with their cause. They could not plead ignorance of the rules of warfare, for at one time they ignored these rules to play the barbarian, while at another they utilised them to act the poltroon. The history of the Convention may not be generally known. It was promoted in 1864 and subsequently signed by all the Continental Powers. It was decided that—

1. Ambulances and military hospitals were to be recognised as neutral, and as such to be protected and respected by all belligerents.

2. The *personnel* of these hospitals and ambulances, including the *intendance*, the sanitary officers, officers of the administration, as well as military and civil chaplains, were to be benefited by the neutrality.

3. The inhabitants of the country rendering help to the sick and wounded were to be respected and free from capture.

4. The sick and wounded were to be attended to without distinction of nation.

5. A flag and a uniform were to be adopted for the hospitals, ambulances, and convoys of invalids; an armlet or badge for the *personnel* of the ambulances and hospitals.

6. The badge was to consist of a red cross on a white ground.

Committees were formed throughout Europe and America to carry out this convention, and the Society worked under the title of the "International Society of Aid for the Sick and Wounded." It played its first important part in 1870 in the Franco-German War, before which time battlefields had been scenes of almost inhuman torture.

Now, in consequence of the brutal disregard of a world-appreciated agreement, the Boers—in many ways men of fine character—were placing themselves beneath contempt. Their conduct also to the loyalists and non-belligerents was also causing exasperation.

The ministers of all denominations—Wesleyan, Presbyterian, Baptist, Congregational, and Jewish—all united in condemning the Boer Government and its methods. They were especially scandalised at the inhumanity of the Dutch commandoes, who intermittently poured shells not only into the heart of the town, but into the suburbs, where women and children were known to congregate, while leaving for the most part unmolested the forts occupied by the citizen-soldiers. Homes were destroyed mothers and children stricken down, and some killed. These might have been looked upon as the accidents of war had it not been confessed in Boer papers that such acts [Pg 23] were deliberately committed and vaunted.

Spasmodic bombardment took place during the evening of the 24th, and continued through the night, striking some buildings—the hospital and other defenceless positions—and maiming a woman and her child. Another child was killed. Profound admiration was expressed by all in the achievements of "Long Cecil," and the utility of the new long-range weapon was highly

appreciated. Indeed, Mr. Rhodes viewed this Kimberley masterpiece with quite a paternal eye, and his pleasure in firing it was considerable.

Enough could not be said of the splendid valour and pertinacity of the townspeople, who co-operated in the warlike proceedings as though they had been to the manner born. Though the fortification belt was some twelve miles in circumference, at all points it was protected by these amateurs of the sword, who, under no military obligations whatever till sworn in on the immediate emergency, rose to the occasion with a chivalric warmth that was as perfectly amazing as it was admirable. Devotion to the Sovereign Lady who rules the Empire was never more steadfastly shown and more ardently maintained.

The zeal and the “go” of the Cape Police was notable. Among the most prominent of the corps were Colonel Robinson, gallant Major Elliot and Major Ayliff (wounded on December 3), who was brave as he was tactful. Perpetually useful and conspicuously gallant were Captains Colvin, Crozier, White, and Cummings. Their duties, most difficult, were almost interminable.

Life was monotonous in the extreme. From the town it was possible on clear days to view the Modder River balloon, and the occasional sight of it afforded a stimulus to the drooping spirits of the inhabitants. Its rotund form floating so peacefully high in air seemed like a harbinger of hope promising and consoling, and teaching the lesson of patience and perseverance that overcome all things! Of course, it was only the sentimentalists of the community who thus interpreted the language of the aërial monster, but these, like the people who find sermons in stones, promptly took heart, and bore their trials with renewed dignity and pluck. Both these qualities were in great demand, for the Boers and their tactics were exhausting to the patience of the most forbearing. Their pertinacity was great. At one moment they would pour shells into the town, making hearts palpitate or stand still in horror at the gruesome fracas; at others they would persistently “snipe” from hidden corners and bushes, and render movements in the open, to say the least of it—inconvenient.

Sniping always continued, though, for a day or two, no serious bombardment took place. Indeed, there was reason to believe that a Boer gun was *hors de combat*. The report came in that [Pg 24] “Susannah” had burst. There was general jubilation. Later on it filtered out that “Susannah” was “all serene,” but this was doubted. The sanguine hoped against hope. We are ready enough to believe what we wish to be true, and finally, for want of something to discuss, the question of “Has she burst, or has she not burst?” was bandied about in the tone of a popular riddle. Unfortunately “Susannah” was intact, as subsequent experience proved. Not only was “Susannah” herself again, but it was reported that a considerable Boer reinforcement had arrived in the neighbourhood, and that three guns from Spyfontein were being ranged in attitude to defy “Long Cecil,” whose prowess was more decided than pleasant. Still the inhabitants bore up very creditably, and enlivened themselves continually with concerts or entertainments of some kind. The programmes, it must be noted, were always marked “weather and Boers permitting”—a modern adaptation of the customary *D.V.*

The Boer spies took a lively interest in all that concerned Mr. Rhodes, and hopes were entertained that before long some one would receive the price of his capture. But this gentleman pursued his avocations in the town and its suburbs with unabated interest, arranging for the comfort of the refugees, and evincing paternal solicitude in the laying out of new suburbs, and the construction of a regular row of bomb-proof shelters, which were being excavated at Kenilworth. People now became great connoisseurs on the virtue of brick, old and new, and began to mistrust corrugated iron as affording less protection from the artillery fire of the enemy. They became judges also of shell—of the peculiarities of shrapnel and ring shells—and sapiently discussed the merits of time fuses and percussion fuses. Food, however, was the prime subject of conversation—a subject of “devouring” interest, some one said. The refugee fund now amounted to £3000, owing to the united subscriptions of Mr. Rhodes and the De Beers Company. It was none too much, as the demand on its resources was some £600 weekly.

LIEUT.-GENERAL THOMAS KELLY-KENNY, C.B.

Photo by C. Knight, Aldershot.

The Colossus, regardless of the fate that hung over the town, continued to make plans and projects for the development of the place. On a high plateau he purposed to create a new suburb, and the name will doubtless bear a relationship to the great events of 1900. A column was in course of erection to commemorate the siege, but the tale of bombardment, writ large on many of the buildings, is one that will scarcely be forgotten, and forms memorial enough. Some curious damage was done, a shrapnel shell electing to penetrate the wall of a draper's shop and wound a feminine dummy and smash a wax effigy of a boy used as a clothes model. Fortunately few human beings suffered. Great precautions were taken for the safety of the inhabitants, and a look-out was kept, so as to give warning by whistle whenever the smoke of the enemy's guns breathed a hint of coming destruction. A calculation was made as to the sum total expended by guns, British and Dutch, and it was discovered that Kimberley had fired 1005 shells, while the besiegers had spent three times that number. The total loss of life attributable to shell fire amounted at this date to about twelve killed. [Pg 25]

Affairs within the town were now growing almost as bellicose as affairs without it. Continued friction generates heat, and of this throughout the siege there had been more and more as time went on. It was quite evident that Kimberley was not sufficiently large to afford an arena for the combat of brains *versus* military discipline, and that the patience of the besieged was nearing the snapping-point. Indeed there was doubt as to whether operations for the relief of Kimberley would be pursued, and it is averred that the Commander-in-Chief sent a message to Mr. Rhodes, saying, "Hope I shall not be compelled to leave you in the lurch." Naturally the Kimberley barometer fell to zero. Then came rumours of the coming of Lord Roberts, but these scarcely served to allay the general impatience.

A curious incident occurred on the 29th. Some thirty-five Zulus took their departure. They had been ordered by their chief to leave the town, but when they obeyed they had promptly to return, as they encountered the Boers, who threatened to shoot them.

At this time food was becoming more and more scarce; even horse-flesh was distributed with caution. Milk was obtainable only by the invalids, and some four hundred babes died for want of proper nourishment. It was pathetic to see people standing at the Town Hall waiting eagerly to take their turn for the scanty portion of meat that could be provided for them. The ceremony of the drawing of meat rations had an aspect almost comic in its desperate seriousness. Matutinally at 5.30 A.M. might be seen a vast concourse of persons scampering in hot haste to gain a front place. So animated was the early bird to catch its morning worm, that it was up and doing before the regulated hour, 5.30 (fixed by proclamation), before which time people were forbidden to leave their houses. The police put a stop to this superactivity, and hungry persons were seen from five to the half-hour waiting patiently at their gates till the exact moment should arrive when they could make a dash for a place in the tremendous crush which, two by two, gathered outside the market.

Marvellous was the rapidity with which this vast crowd, at hint of a shell, would drop to earth. As by some mechanical process there would come a bang, and then, like a card castle, the whole procession would drop flat. The Boers, knowing, most probably, that this was an eventful period

of the morning, would invariably start off about six with a boisterous “good-morrow.” [Pg 26]

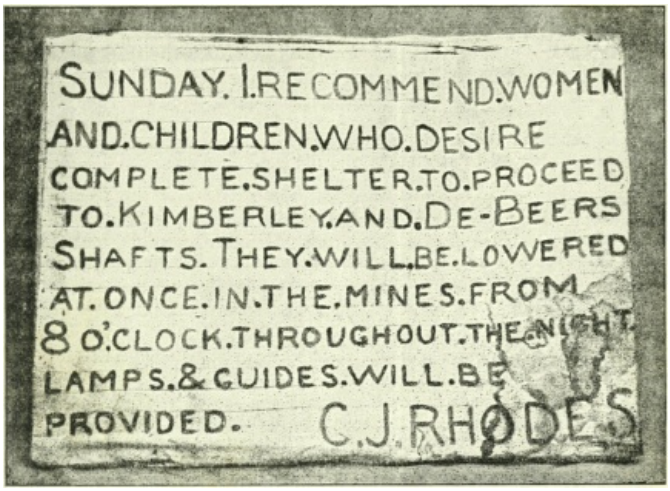
Gradually the rations grew shorter and shorter and shorter. They now consisted mainly of horse-meat, served out every second day, mealie meal, stamped mealies, with a sparse allowance of tea, coffee, and bread. For those who had children under three years of age one tin of milk was allowed. With this strong children could get along well, but there were many weakly ones, and these waned and waned till the baby funerals became pathetically frequent.

The Dutchmen were exceedingly ingenious in the invention of tricks and traps. One of these was to move a waggon with sixteen fat oxen in charge of but two men into the open Vlei below Tarantaal Ridge, and there to leave it, apparently unguarded, for two hours. They thought that this bait would lure forth the cattle-guard, but they were disappointed, for the authorities were too acute to allow them to get “a bite.” They knew that in rear of the Vlei was a deep sand-drift, behind which a large body of men might be comfortably concealed, and consequently left waggon and cattle severely alone.

After this began the bombardment by a new Boer gun—a diabolical instrument, whose perfections were hymned by an artillery expert, who declared it to be one of the most perfect pieces of ordnance ever made! A correspondent in the *Daily Telegraph* described the terrifying effect produced on the nerves of the sick and the weakly. He went on: “The shock caused by the firing of this gun was distinctly perceptible five feet under ground at a distance of five miles, and the miniature earthquake thus created was clearly registered by the new seismograph at Kenilworth, the pendulum of which remained perfectly stationary during the firing of the smaller guns, or the passage of the most heavily laden trains or vehicles at very close quarters.”

The 9th of February was a terrible day. There was crashing and booming from morning till night, and no one dared venture abroad. One inhabitant had his child killed under his very eyes and his wife mortally stricken down. Towards sundown a shell struck the Grand Hotel, killing Mr. Labram, the De Beers chief engineer, whose valuable brains had been the salvation of the place. He had constructed armoured engines, armoured trains, and had completed his ingenious labours by constructing the huge 4.1-inch gun, with carriage and shells complete—a triumph of science considering the conditions under which the achievement was attempted. Now he was gone, and Kimberley was vastly the poorer.

The bombardment was growing daily more severe. Each time the Boers fired their 100-pounder gun a bugle was blown from the conning tower and all ran to cover. There would be an interval of seven minutes between every shell, and the bombardment would last for about two hours. Then the Boers would take a rest, and, after a breathing spell, begin again. By the kindness of Mr. [Pg 27] Rhodes the mines now became harbours of refuge for thousands of women and children, who, huddled together in the 1200-feet level, were thus protected from the shells which were launched in the midst of the town. Those days in dark diamondiferous caverns were full of strange experiences. There, over a thousand shrinking beings found asylum, bedding, food, and such comfort as could be secured for them. There, babes were born into the world—human diamonds brought into the daylight from the grottoes of the millionaires—babes which surely should take some strange part in the drama of the century. It was an underground village swarming with the weak and the distressed, a feminine populace, kept from panic and despair by the man who, large enough to make empires, yet proved himself capable of sympathy with the small sorrows and quakings of the sick and the fearful.



Placard Erected by Mr. Rhodes.

Photo by F. H. Hancox, Kimberley.

The experiences of a lady who enjoyed the hospitality of the mine were scarcely exhilarating. She said: “We went down the mine, but only stayed one day. Of course, one felt safe, but it was so miserable; still, it was another siege experience, the crowds of people down there. On the 1000-feet level were 500 persons alone, and the buzz of tongues, and the children crying, and the [Pg 28] noises altogether, besides the damp, were horrible; although Mr. Rhodes and those working under him did all in their power to make things as comfortable as possible. Hot coffee, soup, bread, milk for the children, everything obtainable was sent down; and some thousands of people

were fed free of charge from the Saturday night till the following Friday morning.... Those people who run down Mr. Rhodes should have been here during the four months of the siege. The soup-kitchen was another of his institutions, threepence a pint for good soup, and those who had no money got it free."

Now that the nerve-destroying capabilities of the Boers' 100-pounder gun were proved, and Mr. Rhodes and other citizens were conscious of the immense amount of danger to town and life that must result from the bombardment, the Colossus, in conjunction with the Mayor and others, forwarded to Colonel Kekewich a letter which he begged might be heliographed to headquarters. The letter ran:—

"KIMBERLEY, *February 10*.

"On behalf of the inhabitants of this town, we respectfully desire to be informed whether there is an intention on your part to make an immediate effort for our relief. Your troops have been for more than two months within a distance of little over twenty miles from Kimberley, and if the Spytfontein hills are too strong for them, there is an easy approach over a level flat. This town, with a population of over 45,000 people, has been besieged for 120 days, and a large portion of the inhabitants has been enduring great hardships. Scurvy is rampant among the natives; children, owing to lack of proper food, are dying in great numbers, and dysentery and typhoid are very prevalent. The chief food of the whites have been bread and horse-flesh for a long time past, and of the blacks meal and malt only. These hardships, we think you will agree, have been borne patiently and without complaint by the people. During the last few days the enemy have brought into action from a position within three miles of us a 6-inch gun throwing a 100-lb. shell, which is setting fire to our buildings and is daily causing death among the population. As you are aware, the military guns here are totally inadequate to cope with this new gun. The only weapon which gives any help is one of local manufacture. Under these circumstances, as representing this community, we feel that we are justified in asking whether you have any immediate intention of instructing your troops to advance to our relief. We understand large reinforcements have recently arrived in Cape Town, and we feel sure that your men at Modder River have at the outside 10,000 Boers opposed to them. You must be the judge as to what number of British troops would be required to deal with this body of men, but it is absolutely necessary that relief should be afforded to this place."

To this Lord Roberts replied:—

"I beg you represent to the Mayor and Mr. Rhodes as strongly as you possibly can the disastrous and humiliating effect of surrender after so prolonged and glorious a defence. Many days cannot possibly pass before Kimberley will be relieved, as we commence active operations to-morrow. Future military operations depend in a large measure on your maintaining your position a very short time longer." [Pg 29]

A great deal of gossip hung round the suppression of the *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, but the whole affair was merely a storm in the ink-pot resulting from the clashing of opinions civil and military. After the publication of a leading article on the 10th of February, an article with which Mr. Rhodes was entirely in accord, the military censor addressed the following letter to the editor:—

"ARMY HEADQUARTERS,
KIMBERLEY, *February 10, 1900*.

"Sir,—Since the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* has now on two occasions printed leading articles on the military situation which are extremely injurious to the interests of the army and the defence of this town, without previously submitting the same to the military censor, I am directed to inform you that from this date the proof of the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* must be submitted to me before the copies of any daily number, leaflet, or other form of publication is issued to the public.

"I am further requested to inform you, in your own interests, that on the two occasions referred to you have committed the most serious offences dealt with by the Army Act, under which Act you are liable to be tried.—Yours faithfully, W. A. O'MEARA, Major, Military Censor."

The military censor was within his rights. The editor, after the manner of editors, did not care to be muzzled, so the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* was temporarily suspended.

The editorial chair at the time was not an enviable berth, owing to the invasion of shells from the 100-pounder gun, therefore the holiday may have been beneficial in more ways than one.

The new gun, mounted on the kopje at Kamferdam, was determined to make life hideous, and so incessantly swept the neighbourhood that a state of panic began to prevail even among those who had hitherto borne themselves with unconcerned front. In addition to this perpetual tornado of horror the pinch of famine was becoming sharper, and the question of relief seemed to be growing into one of "now or never." Despair seized on many. They began to count the days, and wonder when it would all end, and whether indeed it would ever end at all! Two days—three days—five days—the 15th of February! Then, dramatically, as in a fairy tale or a stage play, came the

rumour of help, the whisper that French, the gallant, the energetic, the invincible, was coming, as on the wings of the wind—coming to restore freedom to those who, in their tedious imprisonment, were fainting with hope deferred. In an instant all was changed. The rumour became reality. Colonel Kekewich and his staff rode forth, and it was as though the good fairy had waved a wand. In an instant the dismal streets seemed to grow gaudy with flags, to flutter [Pg 30] and flare as with the hues of the butterfly. Panic ceased, and gave way to almost hysterical joy. People laughed, chaffed, threw up their hats. The mines disgorged their human wealth—some thousand of women and children, who came forth alacrious, with swinging step and loudly babbling—babbling like mountain torrents let loose from the ice of winter! It was a scene for painter, not for penman; for who shall describe wrinkles of anxiety swept suddenly away, pangs of hunger allayed by thrills of glad excitation, nervous exhaustion magically forgotten, and all this simply because there was dust in the distance—the dust of coming feet—the dust of the British cavalry sweeping nearer and nearer on a glorious errand of deliverance!

Five minutes later the looked-for moment had arrived. Anticipation had given way to fact—the 124 days' siege was at an end. Yet there were some who could scarce believe their ears. A man, hearing that General French had arrived, approached a trooper who was holding a horse outside the Club, and asked if the good news was true. "Yes," was the reply; "I'm 'is horderly; this is 'is 'at, and over there is 'is 'orse!" And the Kimberley man stared at the three objects before him as though he could never take his fill of satisfaction.

GENERAL FRENCH'S RIDE

And now, as the conjuror says, to explain how it was all done. The object of the combined movements was to turn Cronje's position, which extended west and east from Majersfontein to Koodoesberg Drift on the one side towards Klip Drift on the Modder on the other, to relieve Kimberley, and, if possible, cut off the retreat of the Boers to Bloemfontein and invest the whole force. This stupendous programme was unfolded to General French and his A.A.G. Colonel Douglas Haig at the time already mentioned, when the great cavalry leader mysteriously ran down from Colesberg to the Cape. Here the plans for the future campaign were discussed, and here General French agreed to embark on an enterprise which had it failed in a single particular might have brought about "such a disaster as would have shaken England's dominion in South Africa to its very foundation." This is the opinion of Captain Cecil Boyle, a splendid young officer, who, when asked to join General French's staff as galloper, was almost overcome with joy. But the plan did not fail: indeed it succeeded beyond expectation, and the relief of Kimberley, accomplished solely by the mounted troops—said to be the largest force ever commanded by a British General—was a feat scarcely to be excelled in the annals of warfare. This feat was performed between the 11th and the 15th of February, during which the Division experienced hardships of every kind. Horses and men were worked incessantly, without a day's rest and in a [Pg 31] broiling sun, which literally baked every portion of the human frame exposed to it, and grilled the eyeballs, causing the most acute suffering to man and beast. Supplies and forage ran short, and the horses were reduced to 1½ lb. of corn a day, while the men lived finally from hand to mouth, killing and eating as they went along, now a sheep, now a goat, and presently nothing but boiled mealie cobs. Water was so scarce, and the sufferings of the animals so terrible, that when a stream was once encountered, the brutes, wild with an anguish of delight, tore towards it in their frantic career, becoming absolutely beyond control, and carrying their riders straight into the river. Some in this way were drowned. Many horses died of exhaustion. At the end, out of 8000, only 5400 remained. But all discomforts were forgotten in the success of the achievement, which from first to last was conducted with admirable *finesse* and consummate dash. Indeed this marvellous ride is looked upon by those who could technically criticise the difficulty and daring of the enterprise as one of the finest achievements of British arms.

On the 11th of February the great cavalry division under General French started. With marvellous rapidity, and with a vast amount of mystery, the troops had gathered together in the neighbourhood of Enslin or Graspan, and commenced to move south-east on the now celebrated march for the relief of Kimberley. So swiftly was everything planned, and so dexterously was it accomplished, that even the wary Cronje, whose spies were everywhere, was incapable of believing that the detested rooineks were advancing with the rapidity of a cyclone for the purpose of sweeping him and his burghers from their comfortable positions. But a clean sweep they made nevertheless. Before the British advance Dutchmen fled precipitately from their farms, leaving their sweet mealie pap *in statu quo*, and all their effects exactly as they had been using them.

They carried to Cronje wild rumours of British multitudes approaching, and preparing to make a last frontal attack upon Majersfontein, rumours which exactly suited Lord Roberts' strategic plan. Cronje instantly primed himself for the reception of the British, strengthening his fortifications and keeping his eye on the west, where he knew the Highland Brigade was operating. This again was precisely what Lord Roberts had intended him to do.

Meanwhile, in the light of the stars, the great cavalry division with its batteries of artillery was on the move, rumbling cautiously through the mysterious, Boer-haunted regions under the guidance of the Hon. Major Lawrence, Chief of the Intelligence Department, and travelling many miles before sunrise on its important journey to Ramdam. Here horses were watered, men rested, details and remounts from Orange River picked up. On the morning of Monday the 12th, the [Pg 32] troops were again on the move, starting at 3 A.M., and endeavouring to cover as many miles as

possible before the sun should rise and make the whole earth into a scorching, blistering wilderness. But now, in return for the cool night air, they had to contend with jetty obscurity. Very slow, therefore, was their progress. When helped by the dawn they got along faster, and soon the whole division reached Waterval. Here extra precautions were taken, for none knew how many Dutchmen might be ensconced in the surrounding kopjes or whether the drift might be swarming with Boers. But they were not long left in doubt. A Boer shell greeted the troops with such nicety of range that the General and his staff barely escaped. Colonel Eustace, R.H.A., immediately turned his attention to the hostile gun, and shortly silenced it, but the enemy still held on.

Dekiel's Drift is commanded by kopjes, having on the bank an octopus-armed donga which cuts deeply into the soil. At this drift the Boers endeavoured to make a stand, but the Mounted Infantry and Roberts' Horse were too much for them. Unfortunately, Captain Majendie, second in command of the latter regiment, was shot from Drift Kopje, in the shadow of which his remains were interred. There was no time for expression of mourning and regret; the Boers had to be routed, and presently, finding their rear threatened, they went streaming away from their strong position, taking with them their guns. After this the drift was taken possession of, and in the rays of the setting sun the disciplined hosts—brigade after brigade—crossed the Riet River, keeping possession of both banks.

Horses and men were wearied out, scorched, and famishing, and there was a general sense of relief when at last they were joined by Lord Kitchener and staff and the Sixth Division, with convoys of provisions and fodder. At dawn on Tuesday a great deal had to be done—breakfast finished, nose-bags filled, &c., before it was possible to order the advance. Day was well developed by the time the brigades had started, and now came the exceeding trials of their march. The level veldt was like a mirror to a brazen sky, and all through the sweltering hours when the sun blazed its strongest, men and horses, shadeless, parched, and sparsely fed, moved on mile after mile on their imperative errand without pause and without relief. Even a beautiful well of water, which tempted them to distraction, had to be passed by untouched. It was necessary to reserve it for the infantry, who were following on the morrow. So dry, dejected, yet determined, they went on and on, crossed the districts of Poortje, Zwart Kopjes, Kromkuil, and made a brief halt at Wegdraai. From thence they swung along past pans and kopjes and plains, due north to Klip Drift. [Pg 33]

THE DASH FOR KIMBERLEY—THE 10th HUSSARS CROSSING KLIP DRIFT.

Drawing by John Charlton, from a Sketch by G. D. Giles, War Artist.

Captain Boyle, in the *Nineteenth Century*, gave a fresh and spirited account of their movements on this important and critical march.

"The distance covered in extended order was great, and to save the artillery horses Major Lawrence directed the columns by a slight *détour* north-easterly, leaving Jacobsdal some seven or eight miles to our left. The heat was now intense, and was further increased by the accidental burning of the veldt over a large area, thereby destroying our field-cable, as we learnt afterwards. From flank to flank the distance was so great that at times the General's gallopers could not move their horses out of a walk, though the message was important, and everywhere men and horses alike suffered from sun and thirst.

"General Gordon's brigade, far away on the left, was ordered to bring up its left shoulders to meet what looked like an attack on the right, but the guns of the 1st Brigade put the enemy to flight, and the march was resumed in slightly different order. The left brigade, under General Gordon, was ordered to advance; the centre brigade, under General Broadwood, was deployed to the right; and the right brigade, under Colonel Alexander, was ordered to follow in the rear. From a little stone-covered knoll the General and his staff scanned the distant river and its banks eight miles off, and instantly determined to push on for the drift. 'Move up the whole division,' and the three gallopers started back with the order to the brigades, which had been halted meanwhile. General Gordon on the left, with the 9th and 16th Lancers and his guns, and General Broadwood on the right, with the 12th Lancers, Household Composite, and 10th Hussars, moved off at once; but Colonel Alexander's brigade was far in the rear—he had already lost sixty horses,

and the rest could move but slowly. The artillery horses could scarcely drag their guns and waggons, but still the General determined to force the drift; and I believe this decision was one of the most critical in the relief of Kimberley, for, had we not gained the drift directly our presence was known, the enemy would most certainly have fortified a very strong natural position. But the General's mind was made up, and he was quick to act. Throwing Gordon on to the left to effect a crossing, and Broadwood some five miles away on his right, the advance to the river was made so swiftly that the enemy were absolutely surprised. After shelling for some time, Gordon crossed and went in pursuit. Only four guns out of twelve could come into action in the centre, but with such effect that the enemy shortly retreated over the hills. By this time General Broadwood had crossed on the right, and his brigade trumpeter sounded the 'pursue.' The general rout was now complete—camp, waggons, everything was in our hands. New bread was lying about on the veldt and dough-tins ready to be placed on the fire, with such haste had the Boers left their position. [Pg 34]

"My horse had died with my last message to the 1st Brigade, and I trudged on over the level veldt partly on foot, partly on ammunition waggons, over the last five miles, crossed the Modder River with the four guns of P and G Batteries, and went to congratulate the General, who was sitting on the north bank, on his splendid achievement; for by this last forced march of nearly ten miles he had won half his way to Kimberley. Little incidents after the rout were full of the humour that hangs around everything grave. One of the staff plunged into the river and caught some geese, but some one else ate them; a pig ran the gauntlet through the camp—amidst roars of laughter, even from the serious General—of lances, bayonets, knives, sticks, boots, water-bottles, anything to hand, and at length was caught by a lucky trooper, who shared his feast that night with his friends. A waggon of fresh fruit was taken, sufficient to make thirsty men's mouths water, but some thought the grapes were sour. Why the Boers retreated in such a hurry is difficult to understand, for the position and drift were very strong and easy to defend, especially against a spent foe; and, but for the quickness of the advance over the open veldt, which took the Boers completely by surprise, the division would have encountered a very nasty opposition."

The Dutchmen were pursued with splendid animation by General Gordon's jaded brigade, who succeeded, worn out as they were, in capturing some ambulance waggons and some Boer doctors; while General Broadwood's brigade, also worn out, chased the Boers into the far distance till absolute exhaustion forced the abandonment of the pursuit. So at the drift the cavalry division enjoyed its terribly needed repose. They had gone through an appalling ordeal, but it had been wonderfully surmounted, and the command of river both at Klip Drift and Klip Kraal, some miles to the east, had been secured.

On the 14th the Boers still continued to buzz about after the fashion of mosquitoes—now advancing, now retiring, worrying and annoying, but never coming boldly to the attack.

They made strong efforts to fathom the movements and designs of the British, but without success. Colonel Gorringe, Chief of Lord Kitchener's Staff, now arrived, and announced that Lord Kitchener and General Kelly-Kenny were advancing by night from Dekiel Drift, whereupon Captain Laycock, A.D.C., rode out and succeeded by midnight in conducting these officers safely to camp. In the small hours the Sixth Division, after a hard and really glorious march, which must be described anon, arrived. Thus his left flank being secured, General French was free to pursue his impetuous ride. This he did after handing over to the infantry the positions he had gained. [Pg 35] While the cavalry division moved out, Kelly-Kenny's division—as in the game of "general post"—quickly shifted to the vacant place, thus making any return of the fleeing Boers impossible.

The three cavalry brigades then drew up in columns of brigade masses, with the seven batteries of horse-artillery on their left, where the strongest attack from the laager near Kimberley was expected. How far the Boers were aware and prepared for the British move was uncertain, but it was decided that at all costs the cavalry would cut through them.

Operations began with the shelling and capture of two laagers on the north side of the river, and the way being thus cleared of the enemy, the division made its way to a point where it was met by the contingent from the Modder River. The force, now increased by Scots Greys, Household Cavalry, and two Lancer Regiments, numbered some 10,000 men, seven batteries of horse-artillery and three field-batteries.

Scarcely had the brigades proceeded before the Boers opened fire, and soon men and gunners fell, and horses riderless and pairs devoid of drivers were seen rushing madly over the plain. From a kopje on the right came the rattle and roar of musketry, which was replied to by the guns of the horse-artillery. There was no doubt now that a horde of Boers were hiding in front, and that the way forward was only to be gained by a desperate plunge. There was no hesitation. General Gordon and his gallant men were ordered to charge and clear the right front, and the thing was done. Away went the 9th and 12th Lancers, galloping for all they were worth, on and on like a flash of avenging lightning. At sight of the human avalanche the Boers, who had been "raining hell" from their trenches, suddenly threw up Mausers and hands; but it was too late, the whirlwind was upon them, and over a hundred Dutchmen bit the dust. Others ran helter-skelter, a whimpering and shouting rabble!

Now came the greatest sight that military men have witnessed for years—the rush of the legions across the great plain of Alexandersfontein. This vast area, about three to five miles square, is surrounded by menacing kopjes, which harboured Boers rendered desperate by surprise and consternation. Across the open the Lancer regiments and Scots Greys as advance guard, with the rest of the force deployed at ten yards' intervals, rushed like a hurricane, a sirocco in the desert. Boers still showered down their lead, but the cavalry, heedless, thundered along, throwing up a

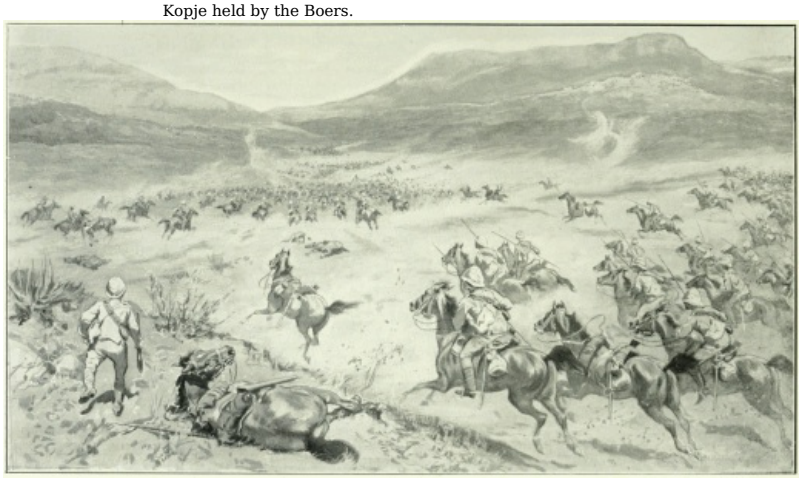
volume of dust, while kopje after kopje was swept by the mounted infantry. The enemy was dispersed on every side. [Pg 36]

Five long miles the race of the centaurs continued—centaurs galloping as if for dear life—Carabineers and Greys leading the main body, the 12th Lancers on the left, the Household Composite Regiment with the 9th Lancers on the right—a regal show, and one worth a lifetime to have witnessed.

Typical Underground Dwelling at Kimberley.

At De Villiers the exhausted warriors watered their horses and strove to gather together the poor brutes for a final effort. Many were sun-stricken, others had simply used themselves up. The speed that was to outwit Cronje had to be paid for in horse-flesh. But, owing to that speed, much loss of human life was spared. Lieutenant Sweet Escott (16th Lancers) had fallen early in the day, but considering the fire of the enemy it was a marvel that only one officer had been killed. One man was also slain, and there were about thirty wounded.

Kopje held by the Boers.



16th Lancers. 9th Lancers. Household Cavalry.

THE LAST STAND MADE BY THE BOERS BEFORE KIMBERLEY—CHARGE OF BRITISH CAVALRY IN THE ENGAGEMENT AT KLIP DRIFT.

Drawing by W. S. Small, from a Sketch by G. D. Giles, War Artist.

At two o'clock the troops were halted at the base of a small kopje, from the crown of which it was possible to descry the chimneys of Kimberley in the distance. It was as though they had sighted the Promised Land. Up went a mighty cheer from a thousand throats, ringing almost against the vault of the burnished heaven, and echoing far and wide among the threatening Boer-haunted [Pg 37] kopjes! Kimberley was on the eve of relief. The trial, the trouble, the turmoil were over! The triumph was won! On went the Division, riding now with all their might, and at sight of them the enemy, hot-foot, commenced to gallop into space. Soon the Division was within sight of the suburbs, and their guns were addressing themselves to a Boer laager on the east of the town. The extra uproar struck fresh alarm in the people of Kimberley, who had been driven distraught by the Boer's 100-pounders, and a message was flashed out, "The Boers are shelling the town." Then came the answer—the glorious answer—"*It is General French coming to the relief of Kimberley*." The news to the imprisoned multitude seemed incredible. They dreaded lest it might be a new wile of the Dutchman, and, to make assurance doubly sure, flashed out a fresh query. But by sunset the British troops had appeared: the whole force, battered, bronzed, but jubilant, was galloping into Beaconsfield.

STRATEGY *VERSUS* TACTICS

Some one has said that strategy is a permanent science whose principles are immutable, while tactics vary with the variations of weapons and modes of warfare. The first example of this permanent science was presented only when Lord Roberts came to South Africa, but so complete and skilful, and withal so subtle, was the initial demonstration, that its fruits within ten days of his arrival at the front were ready to drop to his hand. Looking back, the plan of Lord Roberts' operations appears simple in the extreme, but at the time only masterly conception and accuracy of execution could have ensured success for so complicated a programme. To appreciate its subtlety and its neat execution, it becomes necessary to follow the other portions of the programme, beginning from the entry into the Free State of the enormous army that was massed on its borders by Monday the 12th. On that day three divisions of infantry, the 6th, 7th, and 9th, General French's division, two brigades of mounted infantry under Colonels Hannay and Ridley respectively, the artillery under General Marshall, consisting of three brigade divisions of horse-artillery, two brigade divisions of field-artillery, one howitzer battery, and a Naval Contingent of four 4.7-inch and four 12-pounders, marched from Graspan and Honeynest Kloof through Ramdam. The total field force amounted to 23,000 infantry and 11,000 mounted men, with 98 guns, and a transport of over 700 waggons drawn by nearly 9000 mules and oxen. Later on the artillery was reinforced by the arrival of a battery of 6-inch howitzers, throwing 100-lb. shells, and three Vickers-Maxim quick-firers and the Brigade of Guards, which had remained opposite the Boer trenches at Majersfontein. [Pg 38]

The following table serves to show roughly the disposition of the troops:—

FIELD-MARSHAL LORD ROBERTS' FORCE

First Division.—(Lieutenant-General Lord Methuen).—1st (Pole-Carew's) Brigade—3rd Grenadier Guards; 1st Coldstream Guards; 2nd Coldstream Guards; 1st Scots Guards. 9th (Douglas's) Brigade—1st Northumberland Fusiliers; 1st Loyal North Lancashire (half); 2nd Northamptonshire; 2nd Yorkshire Light Infantry; 18th, 62nd, 75th Field Batteries.

Sixth Division.—(Lieutenant-General Kelly-Kenny).—12th Brigade—2nd Worcestershire, 1st Royal Irish, 2nd Bedfordshire, 2nd Wiltshire (half battalions). 13th Brigade (Knox's)—2nd East Kent; 1st Oxfordshire Light Infantry; 1st West Riding; 2nd Gloucester; 76th, 81st, and 82nd Field Batteries; 38th Company Royal Engineers.

Seventh Division.—(Lieutenant-General Tucker).—14th Brigade—2nd Norfolk; 2nd Lincoln; 1st King's Own Scottish Borderers; 2nd Hants. 15th Brigade—2nd Cheshire; 1st East Lancashire; 2nd South Wales Borderers; 2nd North Stafford; 83rd, 84th, and 85th Field Batteries; 9th Company Royal Engineers.

Ninth Division.—(Major-General Sir H. Colvile).—3rd (Highland) Brigade (MacDonald's)—1st Argyll and Sutherland; 1st Highland Light Infantry; 2nd Seaforth Highlanders; 2nd Royal Highlanders (Black Watch). 18th Brigade—1st Essex; 1st Yorkshire; 1st Welsh; 2nd Royal Warwick.

Cavalry Division.—(Major-General (Local Lieutenant-General) French).—1st Brigade (Broadwood)—10th Hussars; 12th Lancers; Household Cavalry. 2nd Brigade (Porter)—6th Dragoon Guards; 6th Dragoons (two squadrons); 2nd Dragoons; New Zealanders; Australians. 3rd Brigade (Gordon)—9th Lancers; 16th Lancers; Horse Artillery; G, P, O, R, Q, T, U Batteries.

Troops with Lord Roberts.—Gordon Highlanders; 2nd Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry; 2nd Shropshire Light Infantry; Canadian Regiment; Roberts' Horse; Kitchener's Horse; City of London Imperial Volunteers (Mounted Infantry Company); 2nd, 38th, 39th, 44th, and 88th Field Batteries; A Battery R.H.A.; 37th and 65th Howitzer Batteries; three Naval 4.7-in. guns; part of Siege Train.

It will be seen by the above that General Colvile had been appointed to the command of the Ninth Division, while Colonel Pole-Carew was transferred from the command of the Ninth Brigade to that of the Guards Brigade, and was succeeded in the former post by Colonel Douglas, late Chief of the Staff to Lord Methuen.

Having viewed this force, it becomes somewhat interesting to note how smoothly wheel turned within wheel. The movement began by the concentration of General French's division at Ramdam. On the morning of the 12th the infantry appeared, and General French moved on, crossed Dekiel's Drift on Tuesday the 13th, and captured Klip Drift and Drieput Drift, on the Modder River. Following him closely on the 12th came the divisions of General Tucker and General Kelly-Kenny. The latter division was accompanied by Lord Kitchener and his staff. The negotiation of the first drift, which was almost impassable for transport, next occupied the [Pg 39] ingenuity and tested the perseverance of the troops. The drifts, like the kopjes, are the almost unconquerable bogies of South Africa. They are the natural defences of the country, offering obstruction on every hand, and, however boldly you may storm the kopje, you must with infinite patience negotiate the drift. This is no small undertaking, for drifts, in a way, partake of the paradoxical character of individuals—the weaker the person, the more difficult is he to manage; the more insignificant the river, the greater the perverseness of the drift. It resolves itself in both cases into a question of narrowness. Small streams and small minds are banked up too high to allow moving room in their midst. The result of an attempt to advance is congestion of a painful kind. At this particular drift it was found impossible for the team of mules to lug the formidable

waggon-loads up the north bank, and at last the feat had to be accomplished by adding relays of oxen to assist in the tremendous labour. Finally, by 4 A.M. the next morning the troops got across, General Tucker's division marching to within some three miles of Jacobsdal, and hugging the river all the way, so as to run no risk of being without water. General Kelly-Kenny followed, marching from Waterval Drift to Wegdraai on the morning of the 14th, and proceeding thence at 5 P.M. on the same day to Klip Drift, which was reached in the middle of the night. The rapidity with which this rush on his heels was accomplished enabled General French, who had been awaiting the arrival of the infantry, to proceed on his flying swoop for the relief of Kimberley. This, as we know, was accomplished on Thursday the 15th of February. Meanwhile the wheels of the strategic machinery were going round. A small cavalry patrol had entered Jacobsdal, which town was found to be full of wounded, including many of our own invalids from Rensburg. On the way back the mounted infantry were attacked, and Colonel Henry was fired on by a party of Dutchmen who were concealed in the vicinity of the river, and so sudden was the attack that nine men were wounded. Colonel Henry, Major Hatchell, and ten men were missing. A battery of artillery shelled the environs of the place, and put to flight such Boers as were hanging about, whereupon the British remained masters of the situation. Thus it will be seen that while the Dutchmen were fleeing from Jacobsdal, from Alexandersfontein, and from the neighbourhood of Kimberley, for fear of being cut off, they had surrounding them Lord Methuen at Majersfontein, General Tucker at Jacobsdal, General Kelly-Kenny at the Klip and Rondeval Drifts, General French on the north, and General Colvile wheeling around, ready to suit his movements to any emergency. In this manner Cronje found the teeth of a trap preparing to close on him, and recognised that there was no alternative but to "make a bolt for it." [Pg 40]

Thus the first part of the programme was accomplished. Kimberley was automatically relieved; Cronje was on the run. But his running was no easy matter. Since Lord Roberts' strategy had come into play, there was a prospect of a neck-and-neck race between the mobile Boer and the mobile Briton, and success depended on General French's ability not only to rout but to head off the retreat of the Dutchman. That the British cavalry commander should outmatch him in celerity was a contingency which had not occurred to Cronje; that he should advance independently of the rail, and start off across the Riet to trek to the Modder, was described by one of his countrymen as distinctly "un-British." Whether this epithet was used to denote admiration or contempt we cannot say. Certain it was that the wily persecutor of Mafeking and Kimberley thought that the secret of the art of trekking was confined to himself and his rabble, until he discovered, too late, that the equally wily French with his disciplined legions was ready to ride over him. On the 16th of February the astonished commandant, with a horde of 10,000 Boers, was scudding in full retreat towards Bloemfontein. On all sides were Boer laagers in a state of abandonment—stores, tents, food, Bibles, raiment—everything had been left by the amazed and panic-stricken Dutchmen. Dronfield, Saltpan, Scholtz Nek, and Spyfontein were now evacuated. Under cover of darkness the investing hordes had taken to their heels, leaving behind them even herds of cattle and ammunition, in their desire to gain a loophole of escape. But they soon found that, wherever they might go, there was the rumour of British opposition, an armed and avenging race advancing!

The fact was that the trekking of the Boer hordes had been adroitly discovered by Lord Kitchener, who, having detected an unusual haze of dust in the distance, at once gave orders for the mounted infantry not to follow French, but to pursue the enemy. Accordingly, to quote the *Times* correspondent, who was present:—

"The mounted infantry rode in pursuit across the plain, endeavouring to get to the north of the convoy, while General Knox's Brigade was pushed along the north bank of the river, which makes a large bend to the north between Klip Drift and Klipkraal Drift, to strike the convoy on its southern flank. Cronje sent on his waggons to Drieputs Farm, at the north-eastern end of the bend, where they laagered at about eleven, and maintained a running fight with our troops all day. The skill with which the Boers conducted this rear-guard action extorted unqualified praise from all our officers. As the detachments on the extreme right of the Boer line were driven back by our mounted infantry, they rode round behind their centre and took up fresh positions on their left against the 81st Battery and Knox's Brigade, which were advancing along the north bank of [Pg 41] the river. At midday the Boers attempted to hold three low kopjes two miles north-east of Klip Drift, but were driven back to a stronger position at Drieputs."

CAPTURE OF A BOER CONVOY BY GENERAL FRENCH'S TROOPS NEAR KIMBERLEY.

Drawing by Stanley L. Wood, from a Sketch by an Officer.

Fighting went on throughout the day. At seven o'clock on the evening of the 16th it became almost possible to see the end; the artillery had commenced the vigorous shelling of the laager, and all the divisions moving on the great axis were now aware that Lord Roberts' strategic plan was likely—how soon they knew not—to be crowned with success.

But we must here break off to eulogise the wonderful activity of Kelly-Kenny's division, which acquitted itself so honourably. The march from Graspan to Brandvallei beyond Klip Drift, a distance 55¾ miles, was accomplished in five marching days. The Light Brigade on the eve of the battle of Talavera did sixty-two English miles in twenty-six hours, losing only seventeen stragglers by the way. They accomplished this feat by adopting the peculiar step invented by Sir John Moore, three paces walking alternating with three paces running, which enabled them, when tracks were suitable, to cover six miles an hour! No such evolutions as these were possible, owing to the torrid weather and the necessity to take precautions against exposure in the open veldt during midday. The temperature may be imagined when it is stated that in one day about sixty-six soldiers sun-stricken fell out of the ranks. On the morning of the 12th of February the infantry marched some nine and a half miles from Graspan to Ramdam, and from thence on the 13th moved to Waterval Drift. On the 14th they proceeded to Wegdraai, and on to Klip Drift, which was reached in the small hours of the 15th. Here, notwithstanding their fatigues, the 13th Brigade at once engaged with the enemy's rearguard, and exhibited splendid fighting qualities, which in the circumstances were remarkable even for Englishmen. The West Riding, Gloucesters, Buffs, and Oxfords had a warm time during the whole of the 16th, as the enemy from kopjes beyond the river in the region of Klipkraal assailed them for nearly eight hours, assisted by a pom-pom which caused considerable loss. Though a furious sandstorm later on permitted the Boers under cover of night to get away, abandoning seventy-eight waggons, the next morning the invincible Sixth Division started in pursuit. Captain Trevor (1st East Kent Regiment), Lieutenant Shipway (2nd Gloucester Regiment), and Colonel M'Donnell, R.A., were wounded in the course of the engagement. Major Evelegh, Oxford Light Infantry, while proceeding to join his battalion in the Sixth Division with a small convoy and escort, was surrounded by a large party of Boers, and after a gallant defence was forced to surrender.

Fighting and marching without ceasing, the infantry went to Brandvallei and thence to Paardeberg, where they arrived at 9.30 P.M. on the 17th, in time to take a brief rest prior to the [Pg 42] operations which have yet to be described, and in which they took such a prominent part. The marching, considering the tremendous heat and the difficulty of obtaining water, was a feat of which General Kelly-Kenny might justly have felt proud. Though plodding along incessantly through the heavy burning sand under a sun which baked and frizzled even through their uniforms, these men maintained patience and cheerfulness in a rare degree. The whole force was animated by complete faith in their commander, and moved unanimously like some magnificent piece of machinery, scarce taking time to eat or sleep in the zest of their persistent pursuit of the enemy. And they were not alone in their zealous performance of their share in the great scheme. The nicety and precision of the transport arrangements may be imagined when we remember that at one time four divisions were moving independently of their base, making marches across the arid waterless tracks, and carrying with them the necessaries of life for a healthy working multitude. A new regime had begun, and the mobility of our columns had grown equal to that of the Boers, while the railway had been relegated to a subordinate place in the strategical plan.

Colonel Graham, in his "Art of War," declares that "to organise the means of transport for an army acting at a long distance from its principal magazines, in a country where it is entirely dependent on its own supplies, is a problem difficult of solution." Now, the solution of this problem was due to the wonderful talent of Lord Kitchener, who was earning his right to be looked upon as the greatest military organiser of his generation. But his gigantic effort did not increase the popularity of the late Sirdar. He ran counter to too many private interests. The army is too intersected with grooves to be crossed without a few nasty jars, and it was scarcely possible for so young and successful a general and a peer—one possessed of almost criminal good luck and amazing moral as well as physical courage—to be looked upon by his contemporaries-in-arms with excessive approval. The secret of discord was given in a nutshell by Mr. Ralph of the *Daily Mail*. He wrote:—"His first conspicuous act when in South Africa was the withdrawal of the transport service from separated commands in order that it should be managed by the Army Service Corps. Thus it came about that every brigadier and colonel saw a certain amount of his power shifted to what he considered a subordinate branch of the service. A goodish degree of latitude in the enjoyment of comforts and extras, which had been made possible when these officers controlled the waggons, was also curtailed. The army wailed and gnashed its teeth, but I confess I always thought that reason and right were on Lord Kitchener's side in this matter. Lord Kitchener's plan was the only one by which an insufficient number of waggons and teams [Pg 43] could be utilised for all that they were worth."

The mobility of an army depends on the reduction of transport, and to the task of organising transport sufficient to ensure the mobility of 100,000 men the hero of Omdurman applied himself with his customary thoroughness. He conceived the gigantic ambition of doing away with all distinctions of transport, regimental, departmental, ammunition, or ambulance, and merging them in an immense whole, thus creating a single general corps, and it was doubtless to this

conception and the able way that the scheme—with the assistance of Colonel Richardson—was carried out, that Lord Roberts owed the expedition of his march to Bloemfontein and the further success which resulted from his sure and swift rushes onward. Ordinarily speaking, in the army each unit is allowed its own transport. For instance, colonel, adjutant, and orderly-room are allotted by regulation a tent apiece. Every three officers share a tent, every fourteen men another. Staff-sergeants, batmen, and other details are proportionately provided for. Mounted officers are allowed 80 lbs. baggage, double the amount allowed for "smaller fry." Without going into minute particulars, we may reckon that a brigade would move with 70 waggons and a division with about 180. To reduce the huge encumbrance of say some 2000 waggons, with their complement of oxen and drivers, was a stupendous labour, from which, with its consequences, this military Hercules did not shrink. Each unit was taken in hand, and its excrescences—regulation excrescences, we may call them—were cut down, peeled of all superfluities, much to the disgust of the staff officers and various other personages who stickle for their rights, and resent any innovation that threatens to dock off an iota of the creature comforts that belong to them by the divine right of red-tape and red-book regulations.

Not only were the rules of transport revised, but special hints tending to the development of the initiative of the private soldier were issued to the troops. Herewith is appended the notable document which may be said to have marked the beginning of the new era:—

CAPE TOWN, *February 5, 1900*.

The following notes by the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief are communicated for the guidance of all concerned.—By order,

KITCHENER OF KHARTOUM, *Chief of Staff*.

NOTES FOR GUIDANCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN WARFARE

Cavalry

1. On reconnaissances or patrols not likely to be prolonged beyond one day, the cavalry soldier's equipment should be lightened as much as possible, nothing being taken that can possibly be dispensed with. [Pg 44]

2. It has been brought to my notice that our cavalry move too slowly when on reconnaissance duty, and that unnecessary long halts are made, the result being that the enemy, although starting after the cavalry, are able to get ahead of it. I could understand this if the country were close and difficult, but between the Modder and the Orange Rivers its general features are such as to admit of small parties of cavalry, accompanied by field-guns, being employed with impunity.

Artillery

3. If the enemy's guns have, in some instances, the advantage of ours in range, we have the advantage of theirs in mobility, and we should make use of them by not remaining in position the precise distance of which from the enemy's batteries has evidently been fixed beforehand. Moreover, it has been proved that the Boers' fire is far less accurate at unknown distances. In taking up positions, compact battery formations should be avoided, the guns should be opened out, or it may be desirable to advance by sections or batteries. Similarly retirements should be carried out, at considerably increased intervals, by alternate batteries or sections, if necessary, and care should be taken to travel quickly through the dangerous zone of hostile artillery fire.

The following plan, frequently adopted by the Boers, has succeeded in deceiving our artillery on several occasions.

Suppose A to be a gun emplacement, the gun firing smokeless powder. Simultaneously with the discharge of the gun at A a powder flash of black powder will be exploded at B, a hill in rear, leading us to direct our projectile on B. Careful calculation with a watch, however, will defeat this plan.

Infantry

4. The present open formation renders it difficult for officers to exercise command over their men, except such as may be in their immediate vicinity. A remedy for this would appear to be a system of whistle calls, by which a company lying in extended order could obey orders as readily as if in quarter column. I invite suggestions for such a system of whistle calls as would be useful.

5. It is difficult to recognise officers as equipped at present, and it seems desirable they should wear a distinguishing mark of some kind, either on the collar at the back of the neck or on the back of the coat.

6. Soldiers, when under fire, do not take sufficient advantage of the sandy nature of the soil to construct cover for themselves. If such soil is scraped, even with a canteen tin, a certain amount of cover from rifle fire can be obtained in a short time.

7. The distribution of ammunition to the firing line is one of the most difficult problems of modern warfare. One solution, which has been suggested to me, is for a portion of the supports gradually to creep forward until a regular chain of men is established from

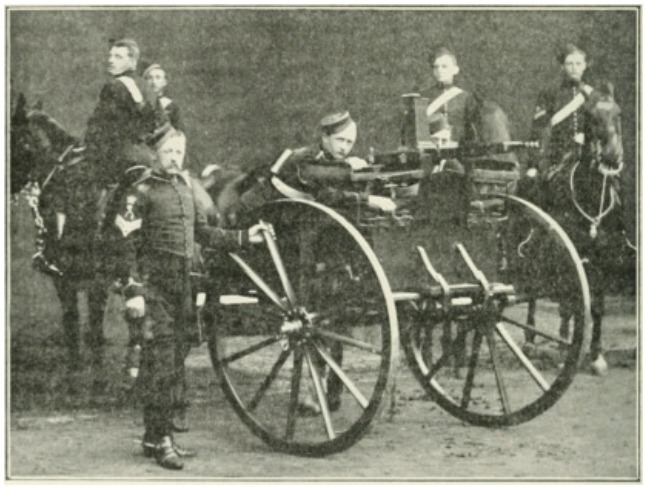
the supports (where the ammunition carts should be) right up to the firing line. The ammunition could then be gradually worked up by hand till it reached the firing line, where it could be passed along as required. This would, no doubt, be a slow method of distributing ammunition, but it appears to be an improvement on the present method, which is almost impossible to carry out under fire.

8. Reports received suggest that the Boers are less likely to hold entrenchments on the plain with the same tenacity and courage as they display when defending kopjes, and it is stated that this applies especially to night-time, if they know that British infantry are within easy striking distance from them. How far this is true time only can show. [Pg 45]

ROBERTS, *Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, South Africa*.

To return, however, to the great advance. Much of the travelling was done by night, in order to save the oxen from the trying temperature of the day, though even during the night the heat was equal to that of an ordinary British midsummer. In addition to the painful toil of motion over the heavy, sandy, rugged leagues, there was the hourly danger of attack. Cronje had made known his need for reinforcements, and at the time, from the south, Andries Cronje was moving, and from the north, Commandants Snyman and Fournie, while from other quarters and in the direction of Ladysmith there was the belief that Boer hordes might be advancing. There was only one encounter with the Dutchmen, but it ended in a mishap that was a serious one, for the results were felt for days afterwards, and helped to try the heroism of the troops who engaged in the movement to the uttermost. A convoy of 180 waggons, one-quarter of the total transport, containing forage and provisions, was lost at Waterval Drift. An interesting picture of the terrible passage of the drift was given by a sapper who accompanied the convoy:—

"It was a pitiful sight to see the poor infantry fellows played out, some dropping with a slight sunstroke, and the cattle dropping dead in all directions. We moved sometimes by day and sometimes by night. Night-time was the best on account of the oxen working much better in the cool of night. Nothing occurred of note with us—but our fellows were fighting every day in front on their way to Kimberley—till we got to Riet River or Drift, which was a terrible pass in the river. Miles and miles of transport had to pass through a narrow passage across the drift, and it took a terrible time for one waggon to pass over, let alone the hundreds that had to pass. We were lucky to get across and encamp below a hill for the night. Next day they still continued to pass the drift, in fact they had been at it all night, and still hundreds of waggons to come on. The Boers evidently knew of this obstacle, and a party came up from the south and had vengeance on the column, as they couldn't on the fighting line. It was a lucky thing for us we were clear, or else we might have found our baggage gone and ourselves put over the border (i.e. sent to Pretoria or shot). The Boers took up position in the hills and shelled the waggon convoy. The nigger drivers are terrible cowards, and all fled to the hills or kopjes near at hand, leaving the waggons and oxen to the mercy of the Boers. Some of the oxen we succeeded in driving back into our camp on the other side of the river. The good old New Zealanders (who have proved of great use and very daring in this campaign) rode over to where the nigger drivers were, and threatened to blow their brains out if they didn't return to the waggons, which they did after the Boers had left off shelling for a bit, after doing a terrible lot of damage. Lord Bobs came up just as they were going to try and get some of the waggons away, and said 'Let them go.' Our loss proved to be over £100,000, which I am glad to say we recovered later. The Boers thought this convoy was lost purposely, and when we arrived here we found the whole of it except what had been sent to our prisoners at Pretoria." [Pg 46]



TROOP OF THE 10TH HUSSARS WITH NORDENFELDT GUN.

Photo by H. Johnston, London.

The unpleasant adventures of E Squadron of Kitchener's Light Horse, who were taken as prisoners to Pretoria, make a separate narrative of themselves, as they took place while the main body was moving on to the relief of Kimberley.

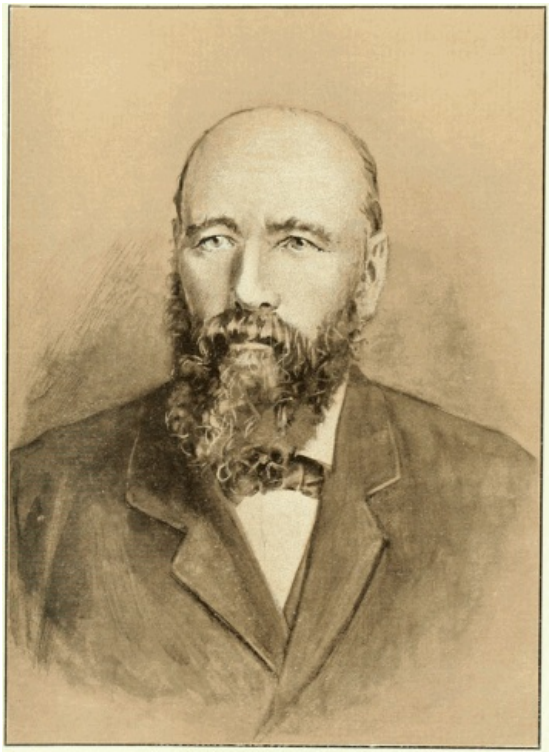
The squadron was attached to General French's column, and took part in the engagement at Riet

River. On its way to the relief of Kimberley, a halt was made at a farm a short distance from Modder River, and part of E squadron was detached to hold a well of water until the arrival of another column, expected in four hours, and then to advance along with them. The relieving column never arrived. Squadron E held the position for four days without food against a large [Pg 47] force of Boers. They (E Squadron) occupied an old farmhouse. They loopholed the walls, and although continuously harassed by the Boer fire, they managed to maintain their position and the post they were placed in charge of. During that time they had to subsist on water only, and that brackish. Their horses were dying daily, as there was not a blade of grass on the veldt, and the stench was abominable. On the third day of the siege a poor goat that had wandered near the besieged was immediately captured and devoured. On the fourth day they commandeered one of the enemy's horses, which they intended to slaughter, their own being too emaciated for that purpose. But the Boers, having been reinforced, gave them no time to do the butchering. On the evening of the fourth day a messenger bearing a letter from General de Wet arrived, demanding surrender within ten minutes. The Boer force consisted of 500 men and two 12-pounders. The officers consulted together, and decided, in view of the hopeless condition of their little garrison of fifty all told, worn out and starving and their horses dead, to accept the inevitable.

While all this was going on, and Cronje was making the discovery that he might be completely outflanked, and that the position of the Boer army at Spyfontein must become untenable, Lord Roberts was entering into Jacobsdal. The place was orderly and quiet. The three churches were full of patients, the town having been used mainly as an hospital. The invalids, for the most part, were sufferers from enteric, the result of too much Modder River. After a long and painful intimacy with the grilling veldt, the sight of houses and civilised dwellings struck gratefully on the eyes of the incoming troops. A store was hailed as a veritable godsend. Some one bought a tin of oatmeal, and walked off with it as one who had secured a prize; some one else gave a goodly price for a pot of pickles, and came away licking his lips like a modern Eliogabalus. The rejoicing was no mean emotion, for the unfortunate men, with the appetites of athletes, had been existing on lovers' fare. One of the famished but cheery fellows wrote: "We marched into Jacobsdal, and as soon as we arrived we thronged the stores for provisions. I made the following purchases for three of us:—

	s.	*d.*
Three two-pound loaves at 1s. each	3	0
Three tins of condensed milk at 1s. each	3	0
Two tins of syrup at 1s. 3d. each	2	6
One small packet of cocoa	0	9
One tin of Quaker oats	1	3
One pound of sugar	0	6
	11	0

Then we gorged ourselves to make up for three weeks' semi-starvation. The most prominent [Pg 48] building of Jacobsdal is the church, which stands in the centre of the town. The town itself lies in a hollow—Sleepy Hollow would be an apt title for the place just now. Most of the houses, including the church, are at present converted into hospitals, and the female population are acting as nurses. Most of them are in mourning for relatives lost during the campaign." Later, the troops moved on and encamped at a farm which had also been used as an hospital. Sights pathetic were only too common—our own sick and wounded in various stages of suffering, and outside, to use a "Tommy's" description, "some poor devils wrapped in sheets ready to be put to bed for the last time!"



GENERAL CRONJE.

From a Photo by M. Plumbe.

Lord Roberts visited the large German hospital, and expressed himself well pleased with the splendid cleanliness of the place and the general evidences of good management. Among the sufferers was found Colonel Henry, who had been taken prisoner on the 14th. Strangely enough, all the inhabitants of the place evinced satisfaction at the arrival of the British, particularly on making the discovery that it was not the habit of the British troops to loot and destroy, as they had been led by the Burghers to believe was the case. They were now made acquainted with the proclamation which Lord Roberts issued to the Burghers of the Orange Free State when his force invaded their territory. It was printed both in English and Dutch:—

> “The British troops under my command having entered the Orange Free State, I feel it my duty to make known to all Burghers the cause of our coming, as well as to do all in my power to put an end to the devastation caused by this war, so that, should they continue the war, the inhabitants of the Orange Free State may not do so ignorantly, but with full knowledge of their responsibility before God for the lives lost in the campaign.
>
> “Before the war began the British Government, which had always desired and cultivated peace and friendship with the people of the Orange Free State, gave a solemn assurance to President Steyn that, if the Orange Free State remained neutral, its territory would not be invaded, and its independence would be at all times fully respected by Her Majesty’s Government.
>
> “In spite of that declaration, the Government of the Orange Free State was guilty of a wanton and unjustifiable invasion of British territory.
>
> “The British Government believes that this act of aggression was not committed with the general approval and free will of a people with whom it has lived in complete amity for so many years. It believes that the responsibility rests wholly with the Government of the Orange Free State, acting, not in the interests of the country, but under mischievous influences from without. The British Government, therefore, wishes the people of the Orange Free State to understand that it bears them no ill-will, and, so far as is compatible with the successful conduct of the war and the re-establishment of peace in South Africa, it is anxious to preserve them from the evils brought upon them by the wrongful action of their Government.
>
> “I therefore warn all Burghers to desist from any further hostility towards Her Majesty’s Government and the troops under my command, and I undertake that any of them who may so desist, and who are found staying in their homes and quietly pursuing their ordinary occupations, will not be made to suffer in their persons or property on account of their having taken up arms in obedience to the order of their Government. Those, however, who oppose the forces under my command, or furnish the enemy with supplies or information, will be dealt with according to the customs of war. [Pg 49]
>
> “Requisitions for food, forage, fuel, or shelter made on the authority of the officers in command of Her Majesty’s troops, must be at once complied with; but everything will be paid for on the spot, prices being regulated by the local market rates. If the inhabitants of any district refuse to comply with the demands made on them, the

supplies will be taken by force, a full receipt being given.

"Should any inhabitant of the country consider that he or any member of his household has been unjustly treated by any officer, soldier, or civilian attached to the British army, he should submit his complaint, either personally or in writing, to my headquarters or to the headquarters of the nearest general officer. Should the complaint on inquiry be substantiated, redress will be given.

"Orders have been issued by me prohibiting soldiers from entering private houses or molesting the civil population on any pretext whatever, and every precaution has been taken against injury to property on the part of any person belonging to or connected with the army.

"ROBERTS, *Field-Marshal, Commanding-in-Chief, South Africa*."

THE HERDING OF CRONJE

To return to General French. The cavalry division bivouacked outside the town of Kimberley, but their repose was limited. At 3 A.M. on the morning of the 16th they were up and doing. The enemy in the north was giving trouble. Some sharp fighting took place, during which Lieutenants Brassey (9th Lancers) and P. Bunbury were killed. This early activity was tough work for the already weary troops, who had been fifteen hours without a meal. Indeed, it was generally remarked that the relievers looked sorrier specimens of humanity than the relieved. The Colonial troops, the Queensland and New Zealand Contingents, and the New South Wales Lancers, considering all things, were wonderfully fit after having played a conspicuous part in the operations. These troops had joined General French's column from the regions of the Orange and Modder Rivers. The New South Wales Lancers rode on the extreme right flank of the first brigade, and their ambulance corps, under Lieutenant Edwards, kept up with the column, and was complimented on being the first ambulance to cross the Modder River. Like the rest of the troops, they had taken their share of small rations, merely nominal rest, sun-scorching, and maddening thirst, and yet were full of zeal—"keen as mustard," as some one said—to engage in the herding of Cronje and effect his capture. Worn out as they were, they had sprung to attention on a rumour brought in by a despatch-rider to the effect that Cronje had evacuated Majersfontein and was in full retreat. [Pg 50]

At midnight on the 16th, no confirmation of this news had been received. The jaded troops, and still more jaded horses—mere skeletons in horse's skins—were preparing for real repose, when all was changed! A telegram arrived from Lord Kitchener saying that Cronje, with 10,000 men, was in full retreat from Majersfontein, with all his waggons and equipment and four guns, along the north bank of the Modder River towards Bloemfontein; that he had already fought a rearguard action with him; and that if French, with all available horses and guns, could head him and prevent his crossing the river, the infantry from Klip Drift would press on and annihilate or take the whole force prisoners.

Here was a surprise! Pleasant yet unpleasant, for shattered men in the last stage of fatigue. But General French—whom some one has described as possessing the shape of a brick, with all the solid and excellent qualities of one—rose to the occasion. He was on the point of going to sleep, but there was no thought of rest now. Arrangements had to be made, horses weeded—out of a division of 5000 only one brigade was fit to move!—more borrowed from the Kimberley Light Horse, whose holiday-time had come, and other preparations hurriedly set on foot to ensure an immediate rush—a swoop that should be as swift and successful as it was startling!

One may imagine the midnight picture. The dark immensity of veldt—the dust-driven, sweltering veldt—and Cronje, miles ahead with his horde, the remnant of his convoy, his women and children, fleeing along the north bank of the Modder, harassed by the Sixth Division, threatened by the Seventh and Ninth, and yet longing to cross the river, to get safely to Koodoosrand Drift, where he hourly expected reinforcements would come to his succour. French, dead beat after glorious work accomplished, rising from the first hospitable pillow he had seen for days—springing suddenly to action, ordering, organising, deciding how to effect the great swoop on Koodoosrand Drift and head off the fugitive. There was no time for the buckling on of mental and moral armour; only the warrior at soul could have been ready for such a situation. But such an one was here. He gave swift orders. In three hours' time General Broadwood and his brigade and three batteries of artillery—the only ones available out of seven—sallied forth towards the east, in the dusk of the morning. Their destination—Koodoosrand Drift—was some forty miles off, and once here Cronje's last loophole of escape would be gone! The General and his staff followed at 4.15 A.M., riding at full speed, and catching up the brigade about fifteen miles off. [Pg 51]

The whole nature of their errand and the proposed movement was a surprise, for this manœuvre had not entered into General French's original calculations.

When the General had seen the Sixth Division safely at Klip Drift and secured his left flank, he proceeded on his rush to Kimberley. Of other movements save his own he was ignorant. Even as he and the troops were riding into the town, Cronje, who had discovered the futility of his position at Majersfontein and the danger of it, was trekking madly across the front of the Sixth Division. On the morning of the 16th Lord Kitchener, hearing that the Majersfontein laager and the Modder River camp were deserted, and seeing a cloud of dust in the distance, had guessed

what was happening, and immediately altered his plans to meet the emergency. As we are aware, he instantly gave orders for the mounted infantry not to follow French, but to pursue and attack the Boer convoy, while he telegraphed later to French, with the results just described. General French grasped the position at a glance. He knew no time was to be lost, and soon Broadwood's brigade, with horses that could barely move, was pushing on as fast as spurs could insist. The early morning dusk broke into the green and grey and gold of dawn; birds flew frightened hither and thither; foxes rushed to their holes; springbok and hares tempted the sportsmen, but never a glance to right or left was wasted. All eyes were strained to the east, to the momentous east, and the wooded banks of the distant river. Nearer and ever nearer they came—specks were seen on the horizon—men?—horses?—the enemy moving?—scudding away before he could be cornered? No—Yes? A moment of excitement, anguish—joy! The General had mounted a kopje, reconnoitred, and discovered the truth. It was Cronje's force—the remnants of his convoy some 4000 yards off—the convoy streaming down into the drifts that lead to Petrusberg and thence to Bloemfontein! They must never reach that destination! Kitchener's words—"Head him and prevent his crossing the river"—so simple in sound, so complex in execution, thrilled every heart. Quickly the guns were got into action—grandly—almost magically—the first shot plumped—bang! in front of the leading waggon just as the convoy was preparing to descend the drift! What a reveillé! Cronje, as we know, was rushing from the clutches of the Sixth Division at Drieputs. Breathless, he gathered himself together. Suddenly he found himself assailed by a new force—a new terror! He divined in a moment what had happened. It was French, the ubiquitous French—French redivivus, as it were—who was putting the finishing touch to the chapter of disaster. Poor Captain Boyle, in his letter to the *Nineteenth Century*, thus described the great Dutchman's plight:— [Pg 52]

"His only chance now was to sacrifice his guns and convoy, and cut his way across the river under the heavy fire of our guns. Immediately on the first shell bursting in the laager, about thirty Boers galloped out to seize a kopje on our right, afterwards called Roberts' Hill; but the 10th Hussars in a neck-and-neck race had the legs of them, and seizing the hill in advance, beat them off with their carbine and Maxim fire. The Boers from their laager answered our shell fire for a short time with great accuracy from two or three guns. But these were quickly silenced, and shell after shell from Artillery Hill fell plump into the laager. Finally, our second battery was moved to a little distance from Roberts' Hill and opened fire from the southern slope on to a kopje to which the Boers had retired. All that afternoon at intervals our guns poured shells into the laager, but no response came, and we spent our time watching the Boers, now 3000 yards away, entrenching themselves in the open and along the river-bank. Their waggons caught fire and the ammunition exploded, and as they realised their position more and more, so must their hearts have sunk. Anxiously must they have waited for the first sign of the infantry gathering round, as anxiously as we did in our turn watching from the high kopjes.

"The cavalry, worn out as they were and without food, had to hold the kopjes and water their horses in turn some five miles off. They got what grazing they could in the kopjes as they lay there, for no corn had come on from Kimberley, and neither men nor horses had had any food except the three days' rations with which they originally started from Klip Drift the Thursday before, a good deal of which had been shaken off the saddles or lost in the long gallop up the plain to Kimberley. The General, the men, the horses, all alike had to live on what was found at Kamilfontein—a few mealies, a few onions, and the crumbs of biscuits in our pockets were all we had until some Free Staters' sheep and cattle were rounded and killed. Had it not been for this plentiful supply of meat, the men must have fared very badly for the next three days. No transport came in until Monday night, and the horses had but 1½ lb. of corn in three days. The men were put on half rations of biscuits even after the transport arrived.

"Meanwhile, on Saturday afternoon about 5 P.M. Broadwood sent word to French that in the far distance he observed the dust rising, which he took for Kelly-Kenny's division. French returned to Roberts' Hill, and, until the sun set, anxiously awaited the arrival of the infantry—but they marched but slowly. From 6 P.M. till 7 P.M. we opened fire again from our batteries to show Lord Kitchener our exact positions." The splendid work done by the Royal Horse Artillery was described by another eye-witness. He said: "I will give you an idea of what good gunners we have in the Artillery. General French said to one of the gunners, 'See those three waggons over there? [Pg 53] (a distance of about 3½ miles); see what you can do with them.' The gunner fired three shell, and the waggons were no more."

We must now watch the progress of the other portions of the force who were actively engaged in taking their share in the huge undertaking. Colonel Stephenson's brigade, on the night of the 16th (while General French was learning the great news), had re-crossed the river at Klip Drift, and on the morning of the 17th (at the same hour as Broadwood's brigade was moving from Kimberley) had marched to the south of the river with the same intention—that of heading off Cronje at Paardeberg and Koodoosrand Drift. Thus, with Broadwood's brigade on one side, and Stephenson's on the other, Cronje's prospects of escape were scarcely worth a dime. The *Times'* correspondent, talking of Colonel Stephenson's troops on the morning of the fateful 17th, said:—

"They were joined about ten at Klipkraal Drift by Knox's brigade, which marched along the northern bank. The mounted infantry, pushing on, reached Paardeberg Drift that evening, and encamped on rising ground close to the south bank. The infantry, leaving Klipkraal at six in the evening, made a night march for Paardeberg Drift, but, missing their way, slightly passed the Drift and bivouacked on some rising ground nearly two miles beyond, separated from the river by a smooth plain shelving gently down to it. The mistake was a fortunate one, as it brought the

infantry almost opposite to the place where Cronje had determined to cross. Cronje had left Drieputs during the night after the battle, abandoning seventy-eight waggons, and pushed on along the north bank of the river during Saturday for Koodoosrand Drift. Soon after passing north of Paardeberg Drift he heard that French had already returned from Kimberley, and was holding a line of high kopjes running north-west from Koodoosrand Drift, and completely commanding the drift. Wheeling his waggons to the right across the plain, he laagered on the north bank of the river at Wolveskraal Farm. This was opposite to a drift of the same name, about half-way between Paardeberg and Koodoosrand Drifts, being about four miles in a straight line from each. Here he intended to cross on Sunday morning. But already, during the night, he became aware of the presence of the mounted infantry south of Paardeberg Drift, and decided that he could not get his convoy away without fighting. Probably Cronje did not realise that Kelly-Kenny's infantry could have already marched up and occupied the rising ground not three thousand yards south of Wolveskraal Drift; still less could he know that General Colvile's division (whose endurance had been extraordinary) was but a few miles behind, and was to reach Paardeberg Drift before [Pg 54] daybreak. If Cronje had known this, there is little doubt that he would have promptly sacrificed all his transport and all his guns in order to get his men away and escape from the trap into which he was now caught. As it was, he sent a great part of his force to line the river-bed all the way down to Paardeberg Drift, in order to act as a rear-guard and check any attempt to interfere with his crossing Wolveskraal Drift at his leisure."

Later on, the Ninth Division, with the Highland Brigade, who had made a forced march from Jacobsdal, arrived on the scene just in time to see the Boers sending up rockets to show their position to expected reinforcements. And there is little doubt that Cronje, unable to realise the expeditious advance of "lumbering Britons," mistook General Colvile's troops for the longed-for relief.

Among the missing from near Paardeberg were Lieutenants Romilly (Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry) and Metge (Welsh Regiment), and Captains Arnold and Vaughan of Kitchener's Horse.

Here we have the position of affairs as they stood on the night of the 17th and on the morning of the 18th, when the trap so ingeniously set for Cronje commenced to close little by little—north, south, east, and west. Everywhere he turned the detestable rooineks menaced him, and he who so lately had eaten his breakfast to the tune of his 100-pounder gun, that belched ruin and mutilation over the whole region of Kimberley, was now constrained to breakfast to a new and disagreeable inversion of an identical melody!

THE BATTLE OF PAARDEBERG

On Sunday, the 18th of February, the most exciting action of the war took place. It was costly as it was momentous, for it served to decide the fate of the fleeing Dutchman. The scene of the drama was not unpicturesque. From the Paardeberg to the Koodoosrand Drift the Modder flowed along a deep hollow from thirty to a hundred yards in depth. To either side the forks of small dongas radiated, while the high banks were fringed with the feathery foliage of the mimosa and willow. Donga and tree stump afforded excellent cover for the slim adversary, sniper or scout. The river travelled from Koodoosrand Drift west-south-west, deviating southwards on either side of the Wolveskraal Drift. A vast expanse of veldt, some two thousand yards wide, shelved down towards the south bank of the river, fringed by higher ground; and this grassy plain extending eastwards joined a circle of kopjes now known as Kitchener's Hill. On the opposite, the north bank of the river, was another similar plain, dotted with minor kopjes to within a thousand yards of the river, and beyond them was the higher hump of Paardeberg Hill. [Pg 55]

The action began at dawn. Firing grew hotter and hotter with the growth of the morning, and soon pandemonium was let loose. While part of the mounted infantry was forcing the rearguard up the river another part was manœuvring on the right front and flank of the enemy. The Dutchmen meanwhile from King's Kop turned on a quick-firing Hotchkiss gun, which swept the flat country from the kop to the southern bank of the river. The antagonists had both posted themselves on the north bank of the river—both banks of which were level, and this expanse afforded no cover for movements. Over this expanse the Ninth Brigade had to move, struggling through a zone of fire towards the concealed enemy.

Cronje by this time had realised that his position was critical—almost hopeless. Bringing his fine military qualities to bear on the situation, he decided to make the best of a bad job, and entrench himself with all the skill possible. He held about one square mile of the river-bed on either side of Wolveskraal Drift, and beyond that he knew were encircling kopjes, each one concealing its multitude of rooineks. On the east, slowly creeping up, were the menacing numbers of Tucker's Division; on the west the vast crowds of the mounted infantry and the Sixth Division; on the south were field-guns little more than a mile off, threatening to shower destruction from Gun Hill, while on the north were Naval guns and howitzers. Indeed, everywhere was fate frowning, obdurate, vengeful. But the Dutchman retained his pluck and his wits. He even believed that with everything against him he might yet employ the same tactics which had nonplussed Lord Methuen at Modder River. He still retained a poor opinion of his adversary, and his delusion lent him confidence. He hurriedly built trenches, that in themselves were masterpieces of defensive art, and took up his headquarters in the centre, in a red brick house—a species of travellers' hostelry, which may be found near all drifts in South Africa. Here at night Mrs. Cronje joined him. During the day she was placed in the women's shelter at the east side of the area, which

shelter was protected by waggons and trenches all along the bed of the river. Talking of these trenches, the correspondent of the *Times* declared that “the skill with which they were constructed as defences against both rifle and shell fire was worthy of the highest praise. All except those of the outer lines of pickets were made so narrow and deep that it seems as though they were in many cases entered from one end rather than the top, as any such ingress must even in a week’s time have considerably widened the neck of the excavation. At the top they were perhaps eighteen inches wide, at the bottom about three feet, and by crouching down the most complete protection was afforded from bursting shell.

“Every natural protection, such as the ramifications of the dongas which eat into the banks on both sides of the river, had been utilised, though the bombardment from both sides compelled them to abandon their first hasty breastworks cut into the actual top of the bank, which was here from about fifty to a hundred yards from the river itself, and thirty feet in height. [Pg 56]

“For the first time here the ‘T’ trenches, of which much has been said during the present campaign, were used. They did not seem to present the least advantage over the ordinary shapes, except that in an exposed angle they may have provided additional protection against an enfilading fire.”

Cronje’s first object in entrenching himself in the bed of the river was to arrest the further advance of the mounted infantry, who had taken possession of the bed of the river west of his position. In this he was successful. Worn, harassed, and almost helpless, he determined to make a desperate stand, hoping against hope to gain time till some help from without should arrive. But this help never reached him. A grand enveloping movement commenced, and Cronje, brought to bay, found himself face to face with what proved to be his Sedan.

By this time he and his followers were snugly ensconced in bush and donga and scrub round the laager, and from the trees around they vigorously sniped and poured volleys at the advancing troops. In the advance to the attack the Highland Brigade was on the left, General Knox’s brigade in the centre and on the right, while General Smith Dorrien’s brigade, after crossing the river by Paardeberg Drift, moved along the north bank. The Highland Brigade had a terrific duty. The Boers, from their position in the bed of the river and on both sides of it, commanded the left of the Brigade, and as the kilted mass moved forward in the open poured upon them a deadly fire, which forced them to lie prone for the rest of the day. Here at noon, when bullets were humming their loudest, General Hector Macdonald was wounded. He had dismounted, and was directing the movements of the brigade, when overtaken by a shot which penetrated thigh and foot. Despite this unlucky accident and a tremendous spell of hard fighting, the brigade exhibited splendid pluck and tenacity. They were destitute of cover, but maintained their position with astonishing fortitude, and this after the long forced march they had made from Jacobsdal, and while enduring the tortures of maddening thirst, which could not be assuaged. A heavy thunderstorm mercifully overtook them in the course of the afternoon and raindrops large as gooseberries clattered down their relieving moisture on the parched and exhausted troops.

British Guns. Laager in Flames French's Cavalry 6th Division

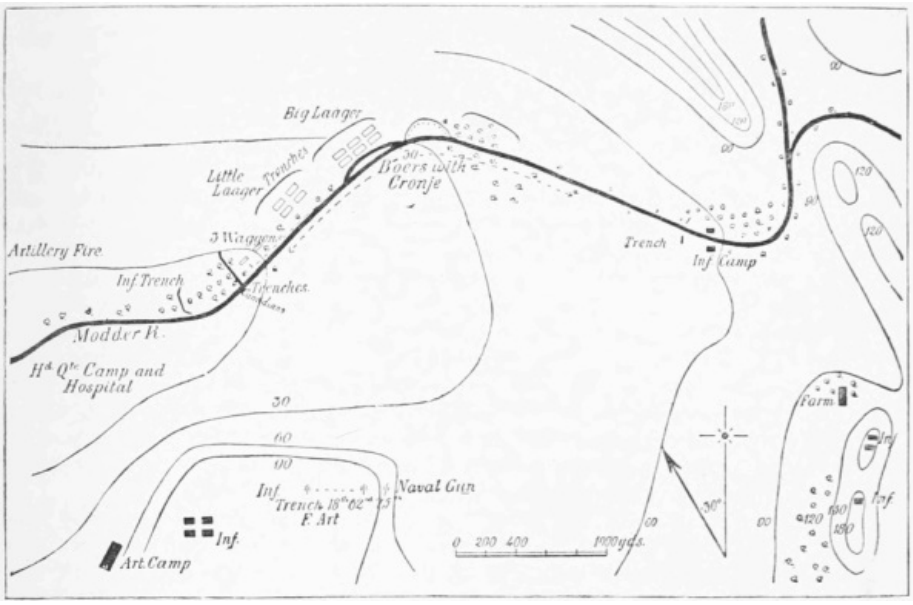
9th Division.

THE BATTLE OF PAARDEBERG.

Drawing by Sidney Paget from a Sketch by W. B. Wollen, R.I.

On the north bank of the river was Cronje’s laager, an environment of waggons, carts, ammunition, and stores. While General Smith Dorrien’s force, among which were the Canadians, Gordons, and Shropshires, attempted to charge into the laager, they too were vigorously shelled by the enemy, who, undefeatable, held on valiantly to a kopje on the south bank of the river. Here they posted a Vickers-Maxim and other deadly weapons, and in a measure divided our force in two. The Seaforths and the Cornwall Regiment made a splendid charge with the bayonet, and drove the Boers from their cover round the drift, but in the glorious rush both the Colonel and Adjutant of the Cornwalls were stricken down. Ninety-six of the men were wounded, but they [Pg 57]

now held the north-west side of the enemy's position.



Plan of the Boer Laagers and Trenches and the British Positions at Paardeberg.

(By an Officer of the Royal Field Artillery.)

On the east the Sixth Division was hard at work tackling a horde of Boers, who made a last despairing lunge in order to burst through the entangling forces and push for the south bank of the river. The effort was stubborn as it was desperate, but they were defeated by the dash of the West Riding Regiment, who pressed forward with the bayonet and succeeded in seizing the drift. Many splendid fellows were wounded and slain in the collision. Meanwhile the artillery continued to direct their incessant thunder against the laager, pouring in a deluge of destruction from all quarters, and forcing the Dutchmen to shrink within the space, little more than a mile square, into which they had so hurriedly scrambled. [Pg 58]

General Kelly-Kenny having possessed himself of both Klip Drift and Koodoosrand Drift, the Boers were now enclosed east and west. But here, crunched in a veritable death-trap, they fought tenaciously. Worn, harassed, and weakened by their hurried march, they yet held a stubborn front to our assaulting troops, and from the cramped region of their laager did as much damage as it was possible to do. The Canadians, who had behaved with conspicuous gallantry in the attack on the laager, lost nineteen killed and sixty-three wounded. A description of the fight as seen from their point of view was given by a private in the 1st Contingent:—

> "We left Klip Drift on the Modder River at 6 P.M. Saturday, and marched all night until seven on Sunday morning, covering 23 miles. During the march we could hear the guns ahead. I was orderly man for Sunday, so, removing my pack, I went to the river for water. Just a little way up the river a brisk fire opened up. When I got back to our lines I found them issuing a ration of rum. I had mine, and it just braced me up.
>
> "By this time the engagement was pretty brisk. Our brigade was ordered on the left of the river, which we crossed at a ford just in rear of the camp. The Shropshires crossed first, then followed the Canadians and Gordons. The water was up to our necks. Some went deeper and had to swim. We crossed in fours, holding on to each other, formed up in column and advanced a short distance, when we extended to seven paces in skirmishing order. C Company formed to support A Company.
>
> "By this time the bullets were coming pretty thickly, and we had some very narrow squeaks. We reinforced A Company at 500 yards and opened fire. The Boer fire was heavy, and some of our boys had been hit, but we soon subdued the fire. Their position was in the river, and we were lying out in the open, no cover of any kind except a few anthills. We could see very little to fire at except the fire from their guns. Our line was in a crescent shape, the right on the river, and the left extended along about 500 yards. In the afternoon our troops were ordered to cease fire. As soon as we stopped they started sniping, which made us hug the ground.
>
> "Shortly after joining the firing line Captain Arnold of A Company was struck. The Boers started a murderous fire on the stretcher-bearers who carried him away, a trick they did all day long. Towards evening the left was ordered to reinforce the right. It was a daring move, but we did it by running down in threes and fours. At dark all the forces retired, and quite a few men volunteered to search for the wounded. I was out all night until four the next morning, when I laid down played out. I never want to witness such terrible sights as I saw that night again. Whenever we showed ourselves in the moonlight the sharpshooters would fire at us. We were all up early next morning, but the Boers had retired farther up the river. So we collected our wounded and buried the dead. I was helping a hospital sergeant, and he sent two of us up the river to search for

wounded. We found a few, and also came across a wounded Boer, whom we bandaged and took back to camp. We also came across a few dead. We questioned the Boer, and he said that they had retired during the night, carrying their wounded and throwing the dead into the river. After dinner, which we had about four, we went out on outpost duty. During the night there was quite a little firing going on. This morning we advanced towards the position again, and about ten o'clock retired for some breakfast and advanced again. Although under fire all day we did not fire, but the artillery certainly played Cain with them." [Pg 59]

Captain Arnold's wound was mortal, but Lieutenant Mason, who was also shot, was not dangerously hurt.

A Colonial, writing from the front at Paardeberg, said that fighting "went on during the day until about five o'clock, when the Cornwalls arrived in support. The officer commanding this battalion seemed to think that too much time had already been spent in fighting the Boers, so ordered the charge. The result was fatal to the Cornwalls, as they had to retire. The Canadians, acting under the orders of the commanding officer of the Cornwalls as senior officer, also charged, and with a like result; but the Canadians, in place of retiring, simply lay down and remained. It was during this charge that most of the fatalities occurred. The unfortunate commanding officer of the Cornwalls was killed, and Captain Arnold and Lieutenant Mason of the Canadians wounded. The Brigadier subsequently expressed his regret that the charge took place, but at the same time warmly congratulated the Canadians on their behaviour, as did Lord Roberts also."

Of gallantry and daring there was no end. From dawn till sunset raged a battle of appalling fierceness, of magnificent persistency. From drift to drift the hollows reverberated with the perpetual roll of musketry, the brawling of multifarious guns, the hoarse cheers of charging troops, the shouts of the unflinching enemy. Curling smoke burst in wreaths and garlands from the sides of the hills and rose against the purple of thunder-clouds; flaring tongues of vengeful flame danced and forked their reflections of heaven's lightnings; spouts and torrents of water poured from the sky, mingling with the heroical blood of Britain's best, that trickled in rivulets, north, south, east, and west of the scene, and traced far and wide the history of sacrifice on the now sacred ground. For all this, the position of the contending parties remained unchanged—Cronje defiant and enclosed, the British lion crouching, watching.

At dusk the scene was weirdly, terrifically picturesque. From the south and north sides of the river shells hurtled through the air, falling and exploding along the river-bed, now setting fire to a waggon, now a cart, and filling the gloom with lurid panoramas of flame and an awe-striking, ceaseless din. Once an ammunition waggon was struck. Then the blaze and crackling which followed, intermingling as they did with the roar of artillery and the rattle of rifles, made a fitting concert for Hades. And to the tune of this demoniacal intermezzo the cordon round the enemy was gradually closing, his last chances of escape were one by one being sealed, the last links in Lord Roberts' strategical chain were being forged. [Pg 60]

At night there was peace. The Modder might have been the placid purling Thames winding along between fringed and sloping banks to the bosom of the sea. But there was none to admire the pretty scene. All were worn out, and glad to drop to sleep where they had fought, while the bearer-parties—"body-snatchers," as they were jocosely styled—picked their way in the darkness, doing their deeds of mercy with zealous, unflagging perseverance. During this time many deserters from the enemy came in. They had seen the hopelessness of their case, and had been urging, uselessly, the implacable Cronje to surrender.

The following is the list of those who were killed and wounded during the fight:—

Killed:—Mounted Infantry—Colonel Hannay.[1] 2nd Warwick—Lieutenant Hankay. Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry—Lieutenant-Colonel Aldworth,[2] Captain E. P. Wardlaw, Captain Newbury. Seaforth Highlanders—Second Lieutenant M'Clure. Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders—Lieutenant Courtenay. West Riding Regiment—Lieutenant Siordet. 1st Yorkshire—Second Lieutenant Neave. Oxford Light Infantry—Lieutenant Bright, Second Lieutenant Ball-Acton. *Wounded*:—Staff—Major-General Knox (13th Brigade), Major-General Hector MacDonald (3rd Brigade). Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry—Captain J. H. Maunder, Lieutenant H. W. Fife, Second Lieutenant J. W. C. Fife, Second Lieutenant R. M. Grigg. Seaforth Highlanders—Captain G. C. Fielden, Captain E. A. Cowans, Captain G. M. Lumsden, Lieutenant J. P. Grant, Second Lieutenant D. P. Monypenny (died of wounds), Second Lieutenant A. R. Moncrieff. 1st Gordon Highlanders—Second Lieutenant W. B. J. Nutford. Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders—Lieutenant C. N. Macdonald, Lieutenant G. Thorpe, Second Lieutenant G. A. Akers-Douglas, Second Lieutenant F. G. S. Cunningham. Black Watch—Lieutenant-Colonel A. M. Carthew-Yorkstoun, Major Hon. H. E. Maxwell, Major T. M. N. Berkeley, Captain J. G. H. Hamilton, Lieutenant J. G. Grieve (N.S.W. forces attached). West Riding Regiment—Captain F. J. de Gex, Captain H. D. E. Greenwood. 1st Yorkshire—Lieutenant-Colonel H. Bowles, Major Kirkpatrick, Lieutenant C. V. Edwards, Captain A. C. Buckle (South Stafford attached). Oxford Light Infantry—Major Day, Captain Watt, Lieutenant Hammich. East Kent Regiment—Captain Geddes. Shropshire Light Infantry—Captain Gubbins, Captain Smith, Lieutenant English, Second Lieutenant Kettlewell. Canadians—Captain H. M. Arnold (since died of wounds), Lieutenant J. C. Mason, Lieutenant Armstrong. R.A.M.C.—Captain J. E. C. Canter. Lieutenant G. H. Goddard. [Pg 61]

East Surrey—Captain A. H. S. Hart. 2nd Lincoln—Second Lieutenant Dockray Waterhouse. 1st Yorkshire—Second Lieutenant W. G. Turbet. 2nd Oxford Light Infantry—Captain Fanshawe, Lieutenant Stapleton. 2nd Bedford—Captain R. W. Waldy, Lieutenant Selous. 2nd Norfolk—Lieutenant Cramer-Roberts. 1st Welsh—Lieutenant-Colonel Banfield, Major Ball. 2nd East Kent—Captain Godfrey-Faussett, accidentally shot (died February 21). 1st West Riding—Captain Taylor, Captain Harris. Roberts' Horse—Lieutenant A. Grant. Argyll and Sutherland—Captain N. Malcolm, D.S.O. 1st Gordon Highlanders—Lieutenant Ingilby. 1st Welsh Regiment—Major Harkness, Lieutenant F. A. Jones, Lieutenant Veal. Mounted Infantry—Lieutenant-Colonel Tudway (1st Essex). 1st Essex—Captain Milward, Second Lieutenant Thomson. *Missing*:—Captain Lennox, 81st Field Battery R.A.

The following table gives the distribution of the losses among officers:—

	Killed.	*Wounded.*	*Missing.*	*Total.*
Staff	—	2	—	2
2nd Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry	3	4	—	7
2nd Seaforth Highlanders	1	6	—	7
1st Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders	1	4	—	5
1st West Riding Regiment	1	2	—	3
1st Yorkshire Regiment	1	4	—	5
1st Oxfordshire Light Infantry	2	3	—	5
2nd East Kent Regiment	—	1	—	1
1st Gordon Highlanders	—	1	—	1
2nd Royal Highlanders	—	4	—	4
2nd Shropshire Light Infantry	—	4	—	4
Royal Canadian Regiment	—	2	—	2
Royal Army Medical Corps	—	2	—	2
81st Battery R.A.	—	—	1	1
Total	9	39	1	49

The heaviness of this list and the evenness with which the casualties were shared bear witness to the dash and daring displayed by all the battalions engaged. [Pg 62]

A good deal of comment subsequently took place regarding the methods adopted during this day's warfare, and many were of opinion that the attempt to take the position by assault was unnecessarily wasteful of life. Considering the positions of the various regiments on the morning of the battle, it seemed as though the encircling of the enemy and forcing him to submission by a slow process of pressure would have served equally well to bring about the inevitable end. But again it has been urged that there was at the time no knowing how soon reinforcements might come to the assistance of Cronje, or what results might accrue from permitting the Boers—at the time breathless and weary—to gather themselves together for fresh resistance. Delay was evidently the one thing that Cronje was playing for, and Lord Kitchener, on his side, was averse from risks which might bring about the failure of the vital undertaking.

TRAPPED

The enemy had little rest. The small hours were spent in constructing entrenchments round the laager. All owned that their stubborn energy was admirable, but further active resistance on the part of Cronje was now beginning to be regarded by all—even his own people—as an act of suicide and murder. "It was magnificent, but it was not war," as the Frenchman said. The Mounted Infantry and a battery of artillery next morning turned their attention to an offending kopje, whence the Boers could yet pour their equivalent for "cold water" on the British plans, and while circling round the position were accosted with a morning salutation from the rifles of the Federals on the summit of the hill. Fortunately the fusillade was launched with more vigour than accuracy, and there were no casualties. Pursuing their investigations, the troops discovered a good defensive position and seized it.

Early in the morning Cronje sent a white flag, demanding twenty-four hours' armistice for the purpose of burying his dead. This most probably being part of a wary plot to gain time for reinforcements to come to the rescue, a reply was sent back from Lord Kitchener to the effect that it was impossible to grant the request, which must await the arrival of the Commander-in-Chief. Lord Roberts was then on his way from Jacobsdal, and when the matter was referred to him, he at once sent a message refusing to accede to the proposition. General Cronje's reply, being roughly translated, implied that he wished to surrender, but when Lord Kitchener requested him to surrender in person, it was discovered that he had no notion of capitulation—unconditional surrender being the terms offered. Lord Roberts then ordered the resumption of the bombardment.

About midday came the rumour that French was at hand, and that he was taking his share of the great hemming-in movement, but the cavalry division was then nowhere in view. Lord Roberts arrived later, and addressed the troops, who welcomed him with cheers. Meanwhile the 18th, [Pg 63]

62nd, and 75th field-batteries and the 65th (howitzer) battery surrounded the laager, and commenced an avalanche of destruction, the howitzers battering the river-bed with an enfilading fire, the fumes of lyddite rendering the surrounding air green with noxious vapour. Waggon after waggon of ammunition exploded with infernal uproar, shrapnel and lyddite danced diabolically over the river-bed and laager, yet there were no signs of surrender—not the flutter of a white flag in the direction where remained the obdurate man who, his last chance gone, refused to bow to the inevitable. Prisoners now and then, worn out and disgusted, came in, their rifles slung, and gave themselves up. In the laager were sixty women and girls, they said, and Cronje, "disconsolate and defiant, sat holding Mrs. Cronje's hand and comforting her in the river-bed." Meanwhile Broadwood's brigade had appeared, exhausted and starving. The cavalry had come along the river-bank to Paardeberg in order to reach the forage and the convoy which was accompanying the infantry divisions from Klip Drift. Their state was lamentable, for it must be remembered that General Broadwood had galloped off during the night of the 16th almost provisionless. His brigade had borne the brunt of the fray, for General Gordon had only been able to follow later with some 120 horses out of his whole brigade. Colonel Porter's brigade marched later still, owing to some accident with the telegraph. The work of relieving Kimberley and heading Cronje had cost the cavalry some 990 horses out of a total of 4800.

The loss of life, however, had not been excessive considering the strain and the engagements that had taken place between the 14th and 16th, but some goodly young officers were missing. Lieutenant Carbutt (R.H.A.), Lieutenant Brassey (9th Lancers), Lieutenant Hesketh (16th Lancers), and Lieutenant the Hon. M'Clintock Banbury (Scots Greys), were among the killed. Among the wounded were Captain Humfreys (Q Battery), Lieutenant Houston (P Battery), Lieut. Barnes (Q Battery), Captain Gordon and Lieut. Durand (9th Lancers), Captain Tuson (16th Lancers), Lieut. Fordyce and Second Lieut. Long (Scots Greys), Lieut. Johnson (Inniskilling Dragoons), Lieut. Gray (Roberts' Horse). The fatigued remnant of the cavalry division now engaged in tackling the reinforcements that Cronje had so ardently expected.

In consequence of the huge circumference of the British circle, it was almost impossible to chronicle the innumerable small but brilliant actions which were continually taking place, and which in the excitement of the investment were almost overlooked. On the night of the 19th the [Pg 64] Gloucesters performed a dashing though futile feat. In the afternoon they neared a kopje in which the Dutchmen were ensconced. They bided their time, and just as the shades of night began to fall rushed on the enemy with bayonets and drove them off with considerable loss. The positions taken were evacuated, however, during the night.

On the 20th the Boers before dawn were again hard at work increasing their entrenchments all round their laager, but their plucky labours were impeded by continual shells which were launched now and again to prevent the work from being carried to completion. Meanwhile from the east came the echo of artillery, a rumour of battle which proved that the untiring French was actively engaged in standing between the Boer reinforcements and Cronje, who still held out gallantly in the fond yet forlorn hope of their ultimate arrival. He was humanely offered many chances to give in, but since he stoutly refused them all, measures were taken by Lord Roberts to bring the fighting to a speedy conclusion.

But the doggedly valiant attitude of the enemy was not lost on his assailants. It had been impossible to withhold from Cronje a certain admiration for the masterful manœuvres which extricated him from his impossible position at Majersfontein, or for the stubborn resistance with which his force, outwitted, harassed by the mounted infantry, and fighting a skilful rearguard action, had succeeded in getting at least thirty-five miles to Koodoosrand Drift. It was now equally impossible to overlook the magnificent energy of the man, who, with his means of flight at an end, his 50,000 lbs. of ammunition sacrificed, his stores captured, his oxen exhausted to the death, with almost certain defeat staring him in the face, could turn and fight an action both ferocious and sanguinary. Moreover, by the sheer magnetism of his personality he forced his followers to show a bold front and maintain a desperate, almost fatuous, courage in the face of the most terrific shelling that the century has known.

CRONJE'S STRONGHOLD ON THE MODDER RIVER.

Drawing by H. C. Seppings Wright, from a Sketch by Frederic Villiers, War Artist.

Little by little the enclosing circle began to grow narrower. The infantry—the Cornwalls assisted by the Engineers—again set to work to push the enemy still farther back into the river, but otherwise little advance was made. The position was now sufficiently terrible for the enemy. Cronje's trap was about a mile square, while commanding it in every direction were guns multifarious; bushes and banks and ravines were swept by cataracts of shrapnel, while volumes of greenish-yellow smoke from bursting lyddite curved and twisted around the river-bed, then carried their noxious vapour to the serene sapphire of the heavens. In the clear atmosphere the reiterations of Maxims filled up the pauses between the steady booming of artillery, while now and again the impotent despairing splutter of rifles from the enemy's laager mingled with the stertorous rampage. [Pg 65]

On the fourth day of Cronje's resistance what might have been an unfortunate incident occurred. The Gloucester and Essex regiments by an accident had bivouacked on the north side of the river too close to the enemy's laager. The result was that on the first gleam of daylight they were discovered by the Dutchmen, who treated them to a volley by way of reveillé. Luckily the firing was not at all up to the Boer mark and the regiments came off scot-free.

During the day General Smith Dorrien's force on the north worked towards the doomed laager while General Knox's brigade held the containing lines on the south side of the river. In the east General French was keeping an eye on a swarm of Boers who were hoping to come to the rescue of Cronje. These held a strong position on a kopje which seemed to be specially constructed by nature for defensive purposes. Still, when General Broadwood's brigade and a battery of horse-artillery turned their attention to the summit and scoured it thoroughly, the Dutchmen helter-skelter fled. Unluckily for them, their precipitate action took them straight into the arms of General French, who having headed them towards the drift, now gave them so warm a reception that numbers bit the dust. Some escaped, but fifty were taken prisoners. Forage, provisions, and equipment were also seized, though the corpses of the slain were carried off, so that the tale of loss could not be told.

The capture of the kopje was an excellent move, as it was a useful position whence to watch for and intercept reinforcements that might be coming from Ladysmith or elsewhere to the succour of the doomed. A message was sent to the obdurate Commandant offering a safe conduct and a free pass anywhere for the women and children. Lord Roberts also proffered medical attendance and drugs. The offers were curtly rejected. Finding courteous overtures of no avail, the bombardment of the position was resumed, and the artillery continued to fire till dusk put an end to the operations. While the firing was taking place the mules of the 82nd Battery, while still hitched to the waggons, took it into their heads to stampede, causing a scene of the wildest confusion. The next day, however, all save one waggon were recovered.

During the night the Shropshire Regiment accomplished a fine feat. They pressed forward some two hundred yards, captured new ground, and there entrenched themselves. It was an excellent finale to four days' incessant work under a withering fire, and by the 22nd they were fairly exhausted. They were then relieved by the Gordons. Here be it noticed that the Gordons were now incorporated with the Highland Brigade, which was thus composed of four kilted regiments. The Highland Light Infantry, who wear "trews," had joined General Smith Dorrien's force. [Pg 66]

The exchange of positions between the Shropshires and Gordons was effected in a manner worthy of the slim Boer himself, and showed that the Britons had speedily taken practical lessons from their adversaries. The Shropshires having, as said, seized 200 yards of new ground, they were relieved the following morning by the Gordons. The Highlanders, snake-like, wormed themselves forward to the trenches on their stomachs, while the Shropshire men in like manner crawled over the bodies of the relieving force. An officer who witnessed the evolution said, "I have often heard of walking on an empty stomach, but I'm hanged if I've ever seen the feat accomplished so well and so literally."

Another tremendous thunderstorm broke over the position, causing considerable discomfort to the troops, but still more to the unhappy creatures who, through the stout resistance of Cronje, were held to all the horrors of the trap into which he had fallen. We were now closing in on every side.

A grand attempt was made on the morning of the 23rd to bring help to the Dutchman. Commandant de Wet with a horde of some 1000 Boers, collected from the region of Ladysmith, appeared, and made a desperate effort to thrust himself through the British lines. Part of the force on its way towards its hoped-for destination was luckily accosted from a kopje occupied by the Scottish Borderers. The greeting, smart and accurate, was scarcely to the Dutchmen's liking, and they made off in another direction, but still with the same result. From position to position they were hunted, and in sheer despair they made for an unoccupied kopje, where they hoped at last to make a stand. But they were disappointed. The lively Scottish Borderers were "one too many for them." Seeing the Boers in act of seizing this point of vantage, the Borderers promptly hurled themselves in the coveted direction. There was an animated neck-and-neck race, and the Borderers, who won by a nose, promptly took possession of the hill and completely routed the Federals.

Finally the Boers found shelter in a kopje which was *vis-à-vis* to a like eminence held by the

Yorkshires. A passage at arms followed, with the result that the fusillade of the enemy died a natural death. Then the Yorkshires, who had so strenuously brought about this result, were reinforced by the Buffs, lest some more of the Boer hosts from Ladysmith should put in an appearance. At this time the 75th and 62nd Batteries gave tongue from an adjacent farm, but their vociferous notes produced little effect upon the crown of the Boers' stronghold. [Pg 67]

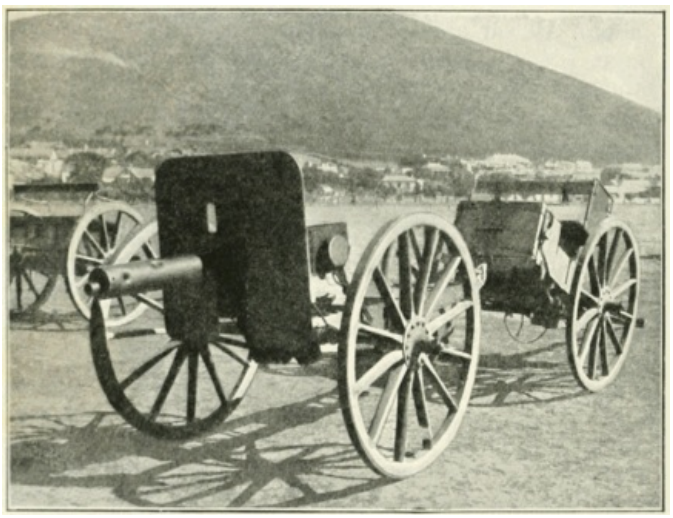
So great was the silence that the Yorkshires moved on with a view to prodding the enemy in his lair, but, in the attempt, they were so furiously assailed by the shot of the enemy that they, in default of cover, were unable to proceed. Meanwhile the Buffs persevered, moving warily round the position till within 150 yards of the Dutchmen, who were eventually driven off. More than eighty—their horses having been shot—surrendered. On many of these were discovered explosive bullets, and it became evident that desperation was driving the Boers to disregard the rules of civilised warfare. Many of our wounded were found injured by these unholy missiles; and other tricks—barbarous tricks—were reported. On one occasion a Vickers-Maxim gun was directed at an ambulance, which at the time was fortunately unoccupied.

During the week our losses were fewer than on the opening day. Captain Dewar and Lieutenant Percival, 4th King's Royal Rifles, and Lieutenant Angell, Welsh Regiment, were killed. Among the wounded were:—

> 2nd Gloucester—Lieutenant-Colonel R. F. Lindsell; 2nd Derbyshire—Lieutenant C. D. M. Harrington; 9th Lancers—Captain Campbell; P.R.H.A.—Lieutenant Houston; Royal Engineers—Captain Crookshank; 1st Lincoln—Second Lieutenant Wellesley; Argyll and Sutherland—Lieutenant and Adjutant Glasford; 1st East Kent Regiment (attached 2nd Battalion)—Lieutenant Hickman; 2nd Lincoln—Captain Gardner; King's Own Scottish Borderers—Captain Pratt; East Kent—Captain Marriott; Yorkshire—Captain Pearson, Lieutenant Gunthorpe, 2nd Lieutenant Wardle.

Lieutenant Metge (1st Welsh Regiment) was missing.

Daily the enemy was squeezed into a smaller space. General Smith Dorrien had now pushed up the river-bed to within two hundred yards of Cronje's entrenchments. The object lesson in perseverance, both on the part of Boers and British, was becoming almost awe-inspiring—the tension was veritably appalling. Soaked with rain to the very skin—the fevered skin that had been scorched, and toasted, and begrimed with dust—our men, grim and fierce, with the storm-winds piping the pipe of death about their ears, held their ground. Rations had been intermittent till the convoys began to come in, and, almost fasting, they had been acutely conscious of the foul, the nauseating atmosphere that now enveloped them like a loathely vaporous entanglement. The river had swollen and bore upon its turbid breast horrific revelations—thousands of rotting carcases and festering loads of poisonous wreckage, that rendered the act even of drawing breath almost a heroism. All along the great march endurance had been put to supreme test, for the track had been margined with the dead bodies of exhausted oxen and horses. These lay littered about, unburied, disembowelled, and in various stages of putrefaction. Everywhere vultures and flies and other loathsome parasites of the veldt hovered and sidled and crawled, [Pg 68] glutting themselves at veritable orgies of destruction, and contesting their prizes with the winds. These, taking their fill, hastened to diffuse the remains of the grisly banquet far and wide. Thus the foul dust, wantonly distributed, blew in the throats and eyes and ears of gallant men, and contributed death more liberally, more pitifully, than even the bullets of the Boers!



Guns Captured at Paardeberg.

Photo by Alf. S. Hosking, Cape Town.

Plentiful rain had fallen, saturating humanity, and causing the heated ground to retract the fumes of a charnel-house. But in one way better times had come. There was fuller fare. Large convoys made a daily appearance, and the men were refreshed after their labours with the promise of plenty. Food of a substantial kind was indeed necessary, for it served to attune the stomach to the noxious vapours that hourly grew almost tangible. Cronje, though he knew it not, was sowing the seeds of a harvest of revenge! He was killing his thousands! For many days our

troops had been enduring lenten fare; they had rung the changes on hardships, fatigues, and self-abnegations of all kinds. They had been battered on by storms. They had outstripped transport and supplies. They had kept the inner man appeased and working on quarter rations. They had marched like giants in ten-league boots, and meanwhile fed like fairies; yet withal had borne countenances cheery and noble, full of confidence and unquenchable pluck. But these splendid [Pg 69] creatures were but mortal. The foul fiends of enteric and malaria were already sapping their buoyant constitutions, and marking them, one after another, with the deadly seal of possession.

Every day of the Dutchman's resistance was therefore full of horror, full of anxiety. There were continual rumours that the Boer reinforcements were in view, that the Federals were massing for a desperate effort. Wearied and battered, the cavalry at Koodoosrand were perpetually speeding on wild-goose chases, in one of which both General French and Colonel Haig nearly lost their lives. A reconnaissance in force had been ordered. The drift, swollen by rains, was now a torrent, and in crossing the General and his A.D.C. were thrown by their restive horses into the river, whence they only emerged safe and sound in consequence of their being fine swimmers and pneumonia-proof Britons.

Cronje, finding that the reinforcements failed to reach him, decided on the night of the 26th to cut his way out and seize a kopje before dawn. But his intention was frustrated by the Mounted Infantry, who, in spite of the darkness, kept a watchful eye on the slippery enemy.

Quite early on the morning of the 27th of February, the anniversary of Majuba day, the splutter of musketry greeted the ears of the dozing camp. Some one was up and doing early. It was the Canadians. They were acting on the principle of the early bird that catches the morning worm. Supported by the Gordons, Cornwalls, and Shropshires, they were advancing, building a trench in the very teeth of the enemy, and at fifty yards' range were saluting him with such deadly warmth as to render his position untenable. How this energetic and gallant movement, the wonder and admiration of all, was brought about was described by the correspondent of the *Times*. "It appeared that Brigadier-General MacDonald sent from his bed a note to Lord Roberts, reminding him that Tuesday was the anniversary of that disaster which, we all remembered, he had by example, order, and threat himself done his best to avert, even while the panic had been at its height; Sir Henry Colvile submitted a suggested attack backed by the same unanswerable plea. For a moment Lord Roberts demurred to the plan; it seemed likely to cost too heavily, but the insistance of Canada broke down his reluctance, and the men of the oldest colony were sent out in the small hours of Tuesday morning to redeem the blot on the name of the mother-country.

"From the existing trench, some 700 yards long, on the northern bank, held jointly by the Gordons and the Canadians, the latter were ordered to advance in two lines—each, of course, in extended order—thirty yards apart, the first with bayonets fixed, the second reinforced by fifty [Pg 70] Royal Engineers under Colonel Kincaid and Captain Boileau.

"In dead silence, and covered by a darkness only faintly illuminated by the merest rim of the dying moon, 'with the old moon in her lap,' the three companies of Canadians moved on over the bush-strewn ground. For over 400 yards the noiseless advance continued, and when within eighty yards of the Boer trench the trampling of the scrub betrayed the movement. Instantly the outer trench of the Boers burst into fire, which was kept up almost without intermission from five minutes to three o'clock to ten minutes past the hour. Under this fire the courage and discipline of the Canadians proved themselves. Flinging themselves on the ground, they kept up an incessant fire on the trenches, guided only by the flashes of their enemy's rifles; and the Boers admit that they quickly reduced them to the necessity of lifting their rifles over their heads to the edge of the earthwork and pulling their triggers at random. Behind this line the Engineers did magnificent work; careless of danger, the trench was dug from the inner edge of the bank to the crest, and then for fifty or sixty yards out through the scrub. The Canadians retired three yards to this protection and waited for dawn, confident in their new position, which had entered the protected angle of the Boer position, and commanded alike the rifle-pits of the banks and the trefoil-shaped embrasures on the north."

For some time it seemed as though hostilities were suspended, and then—a sign, a flutter of white, a signal of surrender caught the straining eyes of the regiment nearest the crest of the hill. In an instant the plains and the hollows, the kopjes, and even the dome of heaven, seemed animated—lending themselves to repeat the ringing cheer, to reiterate the cry of an immense joyous heart splitting a little universe in twain. Ears languid, ears hard-working, ears occupied, ears expectant, all caught the sound, echoed it and knew that at last the looked-for hour had come, Cronje had surrendered! Many Boers threw up their hands and dashed unarmed across the intervening space; others waved white flags and exposed themselves carelessly on their entrenchments, but not a shot was fired. Colonel Otter and Colonel Kincaid held a hasty consultation, which was disturbed by the sight of Sir Henry Colvile (commanding the Ninth Division) quietly riding down within 500 yards of the northern Boer trenches to bring the news that at that very moment a horseman was hurrying in with a white flag and Cronje's unconditional surrender, to take effect at sunrise. [Pg 71]

THE SURRENDER OF CRONJE

Then all was activity. A note was borne to Lord Roberts stating that Cronje had given in, and General Pretyman thereupon rode out to take his surrender. The scene was highly impressive. Lord Roberts, in front of the cart in which he slept, walked up and down awaiting his prisoner,

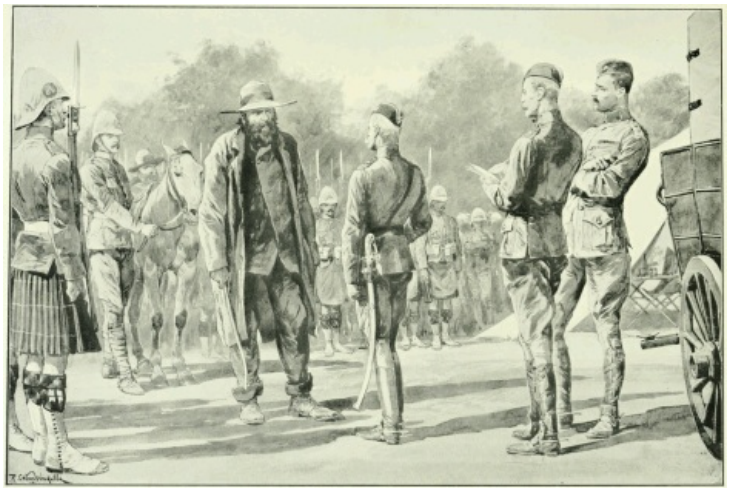
while a guard of the Seaforth Highlanders with drawn bayonets formed a line to either side. In the distance a small group of horsemen was seen approaching, a silhouette which gradually grew clearer in the golden light of the morning. It was General Pretyman with the redoubtable Cronje riding a white pony on his right and the escort of the 12th Lancers following. The subsequent scene was a study in reserve. After all the tumultuous passions, the ferocity of bloodshed, the diamond-cut-diamond activities of death-dealing lyddite and Vickers-Maxims, the two leaders met without the smallest sign of emotion. To Lord Roberts, who stood with his staff awaiting him, Colonel Pretyman said, “Commandant Cronje, sir!” The two great men looked at each other, the Dutchman touched his hat, the Englishman returned the salute. The group dismounted, and then, regretfully be it noted, Lord Roberts, the blameless upright British soldier gave his hand to the tyrant of Potchefstroom. “You have made a gallant defence, sir,” said the British Commander-in-Chief; “I am glad to see you. I am glad to get so brave a man!”

The picture of the redoubtable Cronje as he approached our great little Field-Marshal was remarkable in its contrast. On the one side you saw a burly square-jawed agriculturist, grizzly of beard, tanned and battered of complexion, portly and cumbrous of form. On the other, you had the lithe figured aristocratical British soldier, trim in his kharki uniform, and wearing his sword with the air of nameless distinction which belongs to the born ruler of men. Cronje’s aspect was that of a substantial farmer, his heavy cane, his slouch hat encircled by its orange leather band, his bottle-green overcoat and tan boots were distinctly bucolic, but his rigid implacable countenance, an utterly impenetrable façade, betrayed the masterly and indomitable character of the man.

There is no doubt that by his fierce, his masterly resistance to the British he won for himself the respect of all who trapped him. His undoubted pluck, a quality which has such unending fascination for the English, served in a great measure to wipe off the terrible remembrance of his atrocious deeds in other years. Cronje spoke scarcely a word. He said there were 3000 Boers in the laager—as a matter of fact, there were over 3700—and also requested that his wife, son, grandson, and secretary might be allowed to remain with him. This request was acceded to; arrangements were made that his relatives should accompany him into captivity. He then partook of refreshment in Lord Roberts’ quarters with the staff. Though he smoked, he said little and remained gloomy and preoccupied. [Pg 72]

The prisoners trooped across the river like some patriarchal or gipsy horde, with trousers turned up so as not to damp them in the swollen drift. They splashed along, each armed with his household effects, pots and pans, blankets and rifles, some jesting and skipping in sheer exuberance of animal spirits that long had been subdued, some stolid and serious in the full comprehension of the grievous end of all their pluck and endurance. And they had endured! From the hundreds of wounded that were brought in the same tale of suspense, and misery, and horror was told in varying keys. Always they had awaited reinforcement; they had even invented a scheme for cutting a way out to meet the relieving force which never came. But volunteers for this deed of daring were few. About a hundred in all. This meagre array was not sufficient. Others had pressed on the relentless Cronje the philosophy of surrender. They urged that directly, if not annihilated by shell fire, they would be laid low by fever; already eighty-seven men were slain and a hundred and sixty wounded. These had no doctors even to attend them. The surgeons had been left behind on the Modder, and the offer of Lord Roberts of medicine and succour had been refused. The suffering had indeed been terrible and now was of no avail.

It was not pleasing to the vanity of the British army to find themselves confronted with such a rabble of tatterdemalions, and to remember how this nondescript mob had so long held them in check. But there was no denying that the ruffians had qualities, and that they, unkempt and undisciplined as they were, had proved themselves foemen worthy of our steel and tacticians meriting study.



“MAJUBA DAY”—CRONJE SURRENDERS TO LORD ROBERTS AT PAARDEBERG.

Drawing by R. Caton Woodville, from a Sketch by Frederic Villiers, War Artist.

It was curious how much our troops had learnt both from the undisciplined Boers and the inexperienced Colonials. From the latter they picked up the art of taking cover, and from the former the art of obtaining it. The Boer was not content merely to crouch behind a stone and show a head only when about to shoot. He cunningly arranged his sangar so that he should expose no head at all. He built up his small stones to the necessary height, taking care to leave a central loophole through which he could take aim and yet remain invisible. An officer, in giving his opinion of the Boer as a fighter, showed the lessons that had been taught by him. "As a defender of defensive positions in a mountainous country he is unequalled. He digs good trenches and chooses good defensive positions, and he lies there quietly and waits for his enemy to advance across the open. But he never, hardly ever, dares to attack in the open, and if his flank is [Pg 73] turned or his rear threatened, he gets nervous, and retires to a better position if he can. If our positions could be reversed—that is, if Tommy Atkins had to defend the kopjes, and if the Boers had to attack them in the open, there can be no doubt as to the result. Tommy, perhaps, would not be quite so good as the Boer in defence, but, on the other hand, the Boer would fail in the attack; indeed, he could not be brought to attempt it. As a shooter the Boer is no better than our own men. The only difference is that he attempts to shoot at far longer ranges. The Boer has taught us to dig big trenches and to use big guns as mobile artillery."

The mobility of the big guns was at the moment more of a puzzle than ever. The Boers were in possession of some Vickers-Maxims in laager, two 15-pounders, and some big guns. We captured the minor weapons, but the big ones were sedulously hidden, and how they had vanished became a problem that was never solved. It was supposed they were buried in the bed of the river, but search failed to unearth them.

Trophies innumerable were picked up. Sir Howard Vincent succeeded in securing a quaint seventeenth-century Bible, and Roberts' Horse possessed themselves of Cronje's green bell-tent and ox-waggon. One cavalry officer thought himself lucky to secure a new pair of stays marked "11¾, waist 28 inches," evidently the property of a capacious vrow. Letters multifarious were found, among them Cronje's commission, signed by President Steyn.

Most of the prisoners, when interrogated, declared they were sick of the war, and confessed that but for their fear of Cronje they would long ago have surrendered. His was the powerful, the guiding hand. Some of them expressed queer notions of the causes of the trouble, giving forth at second and even third hand—and in a very garbled condition—the sentiments poured into them by "sympathisers."

Said one, "The war is got up by the capitalists. The generals arrange a victory or a reverse to suit their own interests on the Stock Exchange!"

A private remonstrated, "You don't include Lord Roberts? You'll admit that he is disinterested!"

"Not a bit of it! He is a shareholder along with Chamberlain and Rhodes and the other millionaires. They all look after number one."

Against such prejudice and ignorance it was useless to argue.

Some of the Free Staters expressed their joy at being relieved of the company of the Boers. They had been on bad terms with them, and had scarcely dared to speak a word in English for fear of their lives. One declared that he was not permitted even to address his horse in the odious language! [Pg 74]

There were great and astonishing contrasts in the groups of prisoners that were gathered together. Many of them were youths of sixteen to eighteen years of age. Some seemed in a hopeless stage of sickness and despair, others attenuated by the amount of vinegar consumed to cure the stupefying effects of our lyddite. Endurance, it was plainly to be seen, had been carried to the last pitch. Some, on the other hand, appeared as though already reviving with the relaxation of the strain to which they had been subjected; some even delighted to find themselves in British hands, no longer tormented by "hell-scrapers," as they called the shrapnel, and already clamouring to partake of spirits and refreshment, for which they had longed in vain. The rapture at their deliverance overcame all other sentiments; they had no thought for the ups and downs of the war, and many, indeed, were still unaware of the causes that had led them to share in it. Cronje had evidently kept a tight hand on them, and but for his unique influence many would long before have surrendered. This peculiar despotism was marvellous when it is considered that none of the younger commanders could induce more than a portion of his commando to follow him from the Natal side to the scene of operations. Cronje had the privilege of being the most admired and well-detested person on the stage of the moment, and one Boer was seen clenching his fist in the direction of the vanquished tyrant and exclaiming, "You hard man! you deserve to be shot." There were many who heard him who endorsed the opinion.

A great deal of undue attention seemed to be bestowed on the Dutch Commandant, and evidently it was his undisputed military genius that earned for him the admiration of his conquerors. Only to this final display of skill and pluck can be attributed the deference paid to a man whose Anglophobia had made itself prominent for many years, one who cut such a despicable figure in his relations with us at Potchefstroom, and who was responsible in particular for much of the brutality which has been accredited to the Boers in general. It was certainly a case of turning the other cheek to the smiter, for the captive was allowed to take with him his wife, and retain in his possession his favourite horse, Wolmarens!

Accompanied by Mrs. Cronje, he was sent to Cape Town in a covered waggon, guarded by a

special convoy under the command of Colonel Pretyman. There was considerable pathos in the scene of departure, for many of the other prisoners had gone through the ordeal of the bombardment with their wives by their sides, and these, less fortunate than Mrs. Cronje, had to be left behind!

The majority of people, it must be owned, were horrorstruck at the consideration shown to one to whom the word consideration was an empty name. A Scottish Colonial, writing home, expressed his irritation at the mode in which warfare was conducted. He said: "Cronje is now a hero, [Pg 75] housed in the Admiral's cabin on board the *Doris*. He is probably saying, 'What fools the British are.' For, give him a chance, and he would commit again the treacherous murders for which he has been responsible in the past with as little compunction as he would feel at putting his heel on a scorpion. I wonder if we may take this bit of foolishness as an indication of the way in which England is going to settle up finally with the Republics. Her policy has so often before ended in weakness that one cannot help feeling nervous."

He was merely one of a thousand who argued that it was impossible to go to war with kid-gloves on, and who regretted the terms of the proclamation which had been made on the entry of Lord Roberts to the Free State. This proclamation, which will be discussed anon, was another of the nineteenth-century humanitarian movements which were mistakenly applied to seventeenth-century comprehension. To return to the events of Majuba day.

Lord Roberts subsequently visited the Boer laager, and testified his admiration of the ingenuity and energy with which the position was made almost impregnable to assault. In spite of ten days' bombardment by over fifty guns and howitzers, the number of Boer wounded was said to amount to only 160—a fact which went to prove that the power of artillery can be broken by the ingenious use of the spade. The entrenchments, when examined, proved to be most skilfully contrived, with narrow mouths some eighteen inches wide, and wide bases, some quite three feet broad, which rendered them almost impregnable to shell fire.

The effect of the bombardment was terrific. The laager presented an appearance of black chaos, varied only by streaks of yellow, which told of the gambols of lyddite. Waggons were wrecked with shrapnel; some had ceased to exist; rings and twists and girandoles of distorted metal were all that was left of them. Within the laager was a decaying, disordered mass of Boer belongings, saddles innumerable, karosses and panniers, coats and feminine apparel, fragments of old tin trunks, and 2,000,000 rounds of ammunition; wreckage of all sorts, united by the super-evident, unavoidable, and persistent bonds of stench, which permeated everything, weaving visible and invisible in one noxious nightmare of the senses.

Round this arena of pestilence sentries were posted. It was necessary to prevent loot, though little of value remained save munitions of war. Most of the Boer property had been left behind in the hurried rush from Majersfontein and Spyfontein. Still the locality had to be guarded, and the guards, as well as all who approached, had to pocket their sensibilities. Indeed, it was a marvel how the Boers had managed to exist in the pestilential atmosphere that pervaded the river-bed. [Pg 76] Dotted everywhere, or collected in heaps, already rotting in the tropical heat, were the remains of horses, mules, and cattle, some of which had been driven to death, while others had been hurried there by the voice of our howitzers or the rain of our rifle fire. In the fringe of this atmosphere our troops had lived for some three days past, for nightly they had advanced some fifty to an hundred yards nearer the laager, and there dug trenches and located themselves, till, at the end, the last three nights were passed almost within pistol-shot of the enemy and in the thick of a stench whose opacity was well-nigh suffocating.

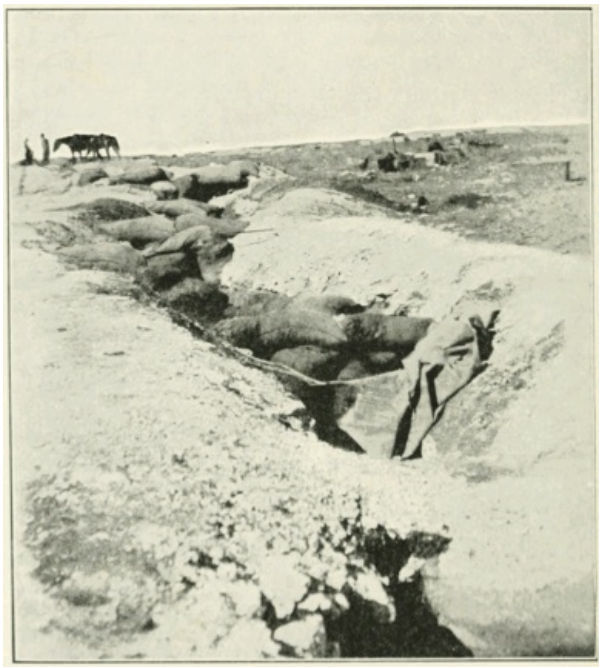
An interesting account of his enforced stay in the laager was given by a trooper in Kitchener's Horse, who was taken prisoner on the day previous to the great battle which settled Cronje's fate. He had become separated from the rest of his troop while scouting along the Modder River. When he looked round for his friends, he found himself surrounded by a party of Boers, who, jumping from the bushes, fired upon him. His horse was shot and rolled over upon the young trooper, carrying him with him into the river. The Boers rescued him, relieved him of his bandolier, and made him prisoner. Together they went to the laager. "There," the trooper said, "I was taken before Commandant Cronje, who asked me our strength and movements. On my replying that I was only a trooper, and did not know, he said, 'Oh, never mind; if you don't want to tell me, I shall not try to make you.' A guard was placed over me, and we stayed the night in the laager. I should say there were about 6000 Dutchmen all told, and forty women and children. A great many among them were Irishmen, a few Scotchmen; in short, almost every nation was more or less numerously represented. All that night they were busy entrenching themselves, employing a great deal of native labour to help them." Through the whole of the 18th of February the young man endured the bombardment, which he described as so heavy that it was impossible to remain in the laager, and consequently all, even the women and children, took refuge in the trenches. The Boers' mode of firing he specially made a note of: "The Boers did not in the least mind our attack, and laughed amongst themselves as they saw the men advancing. They allowed them to come up to about 600 yards from the trenches, and then opened a tremendous fire from their rifles. It did not seem to be aimed at any particular man, but more at a certain fixed distance. At that they fired as fast as they could. The range was obtained by a few fixed shots, who fired, watched the dust caused by the strike of the bullets, and then gave out the range. Our men came up to within 150 yards and then retired. They fired volleys at the longer distances, but [Pg 77] all their fire seemed to me to be short." Each day there were losses, but comparatively few, as the bottle-shaped trenches afforded excellent cover; those that fell, however, were buried where they lay. He went on to say that "The shelling of Monday night destroyed several waggons, two of

which were on either side of Cronje's own. No one could have been braver than he was. He stood upon the waggon-step, field-glasses in hand, and did not seem to care in the least how thickly the shells and bullets fell. Many of the Free Staters, however, were quite the reverse, and were in a great state of terror when the bombardment began. The ammunition waggons blew up, and several of the provision waggons were burned. The shrapnel killed the majority of the horses and cattle, which had no shelter but the banks of the river. Beyond that the fire did little real damage." The prisoner declared his belief that "could they have kept their laager out of fire they would never have surrendered. The loss of the provision waggons was what caused them to give in. They had only four days' food left. Their ammunition was still plentiful. After the explosion of the ammunition waggons by shell-fire on February 19, all the remaining cartridges were distributed throughout the trenches, and on the south side every trench was still full of unused ammunition. Everything was done in the trenches, even the cooking, each individual having with him a box of provisions sunk into the ground. These boxes were replenished at night as there was no possibility of reaching the laager during the day."

Lord Roberts addressed the Canadians, and expressed his satisfaction and appreciation of the splendid work they had done and the courage they had shown. To them he attributed the greater share in the Boer surrender. All were delighted at the attention shown the heroic Colonials, who had done splendid work, and at the exhibition of Lord Roberts' tact and kindliness in thus singling out the Canadians for the position of honour. In the Jubilee of 1897 the Field-Marshal had told the Colonial Bodyguard that he would like to have them with him if he were ever in another campaign, and now the Canadians felt that the Chief's cherished words had been no mere formula, and that they had been given the chance to distinguish themselves that they had so eagerly desired.

To General Colvile was given the credit of inventing the order of attack which at last brought the Boers to their senses. He arranged that the first rank should advance, bayonets fixed, till the enemy opened fire. Then they were to lie down and continue to fire on the Boers, while Engineers and the second line dug a trench. The trench thus made was within eighty yards of those of the Boers, and owing to its trefoil shape, the troops were able to enfilade both the river and northern [Pg 78] trenches of the enemy and make them untenable. From their point in the original trench the Gordon Highlanders kept up a brisk fire, while the Shropshire Light Infantry, who were posted over a thousand yards to the north-west of the position, co-operated.

In the very successful attack on the enemy's trenches the Royal Canadian Contingent lost seven killed and twenty-nine wounded. Major Pelletier, who commanded the French company, foremost of the three companies, was wounded, and also Lieutenant Armstrong. It is interesting to note that few of this gallant company of Great Britain's defenders could speak English!



Boer Trenches at Paardeberg.

Photo by Alf. S. Hosking, Cape Town.

Colonel Otter, in command of the Canadians, had distinguished himself on many occasions by rare coolness and display of great talent in the field, and he now took pleasure in reporting excellently of the various members of the battalion under his command who had especially [Pg 79] distinguished themselves. Among these were:—

> Captain H. B. Stairs, 66th P. L. Fusiliers, and Lieutenant and Captain A. H. Macdonell, Royal Canadian Regiment. E Company, No. 5130, Corporal T. E. Baugh, R.C.R. F Company, No. 7782, Private O. Matheson, 12th Newcastle Field Battery; No. 7803, Private A. Sutherland, D. of Y. R. C. Hrs.; No. 7868, Sergeant W. Peppeatt, Royal Canadian Artillery; No. 7871, Corporal R. D. M'Donald, Royal Canadian Artillery; No. 7822, Private C. Harrison, 2nd Montreal Regiment C.A.; No. 7841, Private A. Bagot,

65th Montreal Rifles; No. 7778, Private Sievert, 93rd Cumberland Infantry; No. 7615, Private A. T. Seriault, 9th Voltigeurs de Quebec.

But these were only a select few among the number who were engaged in incomparable things done incomparably well.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Colonel Ormelie Campbell Hannay was in his fifty-second year, having been born on December 23, 1848. He entered the army as an ensign in the 93rd Foot (now the Princess Louise's Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders) on October 5, 1867, received his lieutenancy on the 28th of October 1871, and from February to November 1878 was instructor of musketry. Obtaining his captaincy on November 17, 1878, he was employed on special service in South Africa during the latter part of the Zulu War, from June to October 1879, for which he had the medal with clasp. From April to September 1883 he was aide-de-camp to the brigadier-general at Aldershot, was gazetted a major in January 1884, and from September 1886 to November 1887 was again employed on staff service, for the first portion of the period as an aide-de-camp in Bengal, and for the latter portion in Bombay. He became lieutenant-colonel in June 1893, and colonel in June 1897, and in June 1899 was placed on the half-pay list, from which he was removed last October in order to take up the temporary appointment of assistant-adjutant-general at Portsmouth. Not till December 30, 1899, was he chosen for special service in South Africa.

[2] Lieutenant-Colonel William Aldworth, D.S.O., was forty-four years of age, having been born on October 3, 1855. He entered the army as a sub-lieutenant on June 13, 1874, and was gazetted to the 16th Foot, of which he was adjutant from October 17, 1877, to March 29, 1881. Gazetted a captain in the Bedfordshire Regiment on March 30, 1881, he served with the Burmese Expedition from January 14, 1885, to March 3, 1886, as aide-de-camp and acting military secretary to Sir Harry Prendergast, first as a major-general in Madras, and then as general officer commanding in Upper Burma, being mentioned in despatches and receiving the D.S.O. and the medal with clasp. He also took part in the Isazai Expedition in 1892, and in February 1893 was gazetted a major. In 1895 he served with the Chitral Relief Force under Sir Robert Low with the 1st battalion of his then regiment (the Bedfordshire), and took part in the storming of the Malakand Pass and the engagement near Khar, for which he had the medal with clasp. Again he was in active service in 1897-98, under Sir William Lockhart, in the campaign on the North-West Frontier of India, with the Tirah Expeditionary Force as deputy-assistant-adjutant-general of the 2nd Brigade, and with the Khyber Force as deputy-assistant-adjutant-general, being present at the forcing of the Sampagha and Arhanga Passes, and the operations against the Chamkanis and in the Bazar Valley. He was mentioned in despatches, received the brevet of lieutenant-colonel (May 20, 1898), and two clasps. He obtained the substantive rank of lieutenant-colonel in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry on October 12, 1898.

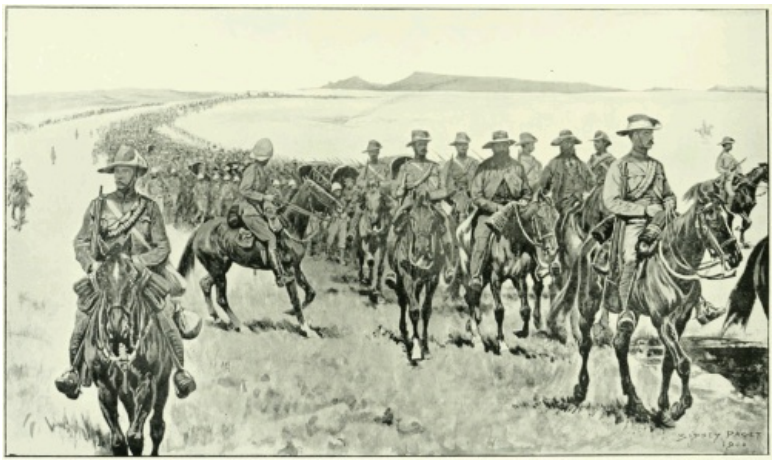
CHAPTER II

MAFEKING IN DECEMBER AND JANUARY

Christmas Day, in deference to warlike etiquette, was observed as a holiday; but, in spite of the pacific nature of the occasion, the man who was the brain of Mafeking was organising a plan by which the cordon around the town might be broken. He was deciding that there must be a big fight on the morrow, and that a desperate effort must be made to change the cramped vista of affairs. Waiting was a weary game, and it was felt that some one must make a move. The Boers certainly, had they chosen, might have carried the town by assault, but for such activity they had no appetite. This was no boy's job, and, as they themselves confessed, they went out to shoot, not to be shot. Not so the gentle civilians, who, while incarcerated in this little hamlet of the veldt, had developed into valiant campaigners. They were always ready to be up and doing, and gladly fell in with the Colonel's plans. Frequent reconnaissances had disclosed the fact that the enemy's position, though strong on the western face, was fairly vulnerable at a point on the east, and at this point it was decided an attack on the morning of the 26th should be directed.

The plan of attack was as follows:—Captain R. Vernon, King's Royal Rifles, with C Squadron, and Captain FitzClarence and D Squadron, to lead; Captain Lord Charles Bentinck, with A Squadron, to hold the reserve upon the left, which was under the command of Colonel Hore. Major Panzera and the artillery were to take up a position upon the extreme left of the line. The railway running to within a few hundred yards of Game Tree had been repaired, in order that the armoured train, under Captain Williams and twenty men of the British South Africa Police, with one-pounder Hotchkiss and Maxim, from a point parallel with Game Tree, might protect the right flank. This flank was to be further supported by Captain Cowan and seventy men of the Bechuanaland Rifles. The entire operations from this side were to be under the command of Major Godley, while Colonel Baden-Powell and his staff, Major Lord Edward Cecil (Chief Staff Officer), Captain Wilson, A.D.C., and Lieutenant Hanbury Tracy watched the direction of events from Dummie

Fort.



CRONJE’S FORCE ON THEIR MARCH SOUTH.

Drawing by Sidney Paget, from a Sketch made 8 Miles South of Paardeberg by W. B. Wollen, R.I.

It must be remembered that at that time the character of the fort they intended to assail was barely known. In reality, it rose some seven feet above a ditch deep and wide, which almost defied assault. However, it was decided that Game Tree, from which had poured voluble rifle and artillery fire for many weeks, must at all hazards be silenced. It was most important that communication with the north should be, if possible, re-established, and there was every hope that a successful fight might make it easier for Colonel Plumer to eventually join hands with the besieged. [Pg 81]

The night passed. As the grey dawn broke over the veldt, a flash weirdly orange and a golden puff of smoke showed that the preconcerted plan had begun to be put in operation. Major Panzera with his seven-pounders had started the programme. Presently the Maxim rapped out in chorus, while on the right the great dusty crocodile, the armoured train, slunk along to its destination. Its whistle shrieked. It was Captain Vernon’s signal for action. On the instant a thin line of moving kharki broke from cover, bayonets glittered among the scrub, cheers and the rattle of musketry filled the air. Officers and men were dashing, as only Britons can dash, each striving to outrush the other towards the lair of the enemy. Quick as thought they had plunged into the scrub that girdled the sandbags, and excitedly, jubilantly, some one on Dummie Fort sang out, “They are swarming over the bags—the position is ours!”

All waited anxiously, almost breathlessly. The moments grew and grew, seconds became years. The sputtering of rifles continued, and swelled into a vast hum, and then some one—the same some one, only in a very different voice from that which spoke last, said hoarsely, “Our men are coming back!”... Yes. They were indeed coming back—the remnant—firing sullenly their parting shots ere they receded. The enemy’s position had been proved impregnable! Their parapet was loopholed in triple tiers and roofed with a bomb-proof protection. It had but a single opening, large enough to admit one man at a time. It was in firing his revolver into one of the loopholes and endeavouring to pull out a sandbag with his left hand that Lieutenant Paton was killed. Captain FitzClarence, far ahead of his men, was shot in the thigh within 150 yards of the fort, and both Captains Sandford and Vernon were laid low almost within a stone’s throw of the rifles of the enemy. Lieutenant Swinburne, who, directly Captain FitzClarence was wounded, led his men forward with dauntless energy, escaped unhurt. But few were equally lucky. Out of a storming party of eighty, twenty-one were killed and thirty-three wounded. It was when he saw this useless sacrifice of life that Major Godley sent a message to headquarters by the aide-de-camp. “Captain Vernon, sir, has been repulsed,” he said, “and Major Godley does not think it worth while trying again.” Nor was it. All that could be done was to send the ambulance to perform its grim duty. [Pg 82]

In describing the tragic affair, Mr. Angus Hamilton, in *Black and White*, said: “Indeed, from the armoured train it could be seen that the progress of the men towards the fort was like the Charge of the Six Hundred into the Valley of Death—a conviction which became more and more apparent as our men gallantly held to their course. Within 300 yards of the fort it was almost impossible for any living thing to exist, and the rush of the bullets across the zone of fire was like the hum of myriads of locusts before the wind. The gallantry of the effort, the admirable steadiness and precision with which the attack was delivered, has been compared by our commanding officers to deeds which rank among the foremost of our martial chronicles.”

It was veritably a charge of heroes. Scarcely one man could be singled out as the bravest of the brave where all showed such magnificent courage. Captain Sandford, Indian Staff Corps, though wounded mortally by a bullet in the spine, with his last breath ordered his men to continue their advance and leave him to his fate. Captain FitzClarence, wounded in the leg, bleeding, exhausted, was seen sitting up and directing the charge. Elsewhere was Captain Vernon, with a bullet through him, rushing on and on in company with the heroic youth, Paton, whose effort to scale the inaccessible rampart brought about his death. This splendid fellow was shot through the heart; while Captain Vernon, who had again been hit, and still pursued his onward course into the teeth of the foe, was struck on the head and killed. The only other officer that escaped

uninjured was Lieutenant Bridges, and he hurt his ankle while assisting a wounded comrade. The details of the killed and wounded were as follows:—Officers killed, three; wounded, one. Men killed, eighteen; wounded, thirty-two; missing, thirteen. Thus ended a superb effort, which, failure though it was, was vastly superior to many a meaner martial success.

So the garrison had to go on in the old, old way, though many popular and beloved members were now missing, and the hospital was full of cases that threatened to end seriously. Owing to the commendable forethought of Lord Edward Cecil and the enterprise of Messrs. Julius Weil, the garrison was provided with the wherewithal to make what resistance they did. Lord Edward Cecil's work was ceaseless; as Chief Staff Officer he came in for both the external fights and the internal discords. He smoothed down quarrels, dispensed justice, allayed "siege fever" in all its intermittent phases, and in fact performed the tasks of ten men, with unfailing courtesy and inexhaustible patience. The pinch of the siege had gradually become more painful, and luxuries for some time had been commandeered for the use of the sick. Luckily, some Chinamen among the besieged contrived to grow vegetables in small quantities for the use of the inhabitants, and [Pg 83] by force of good management in the disposal of the food supplies, which had been stocked by Messrs. Weil before the outbreak of the war, a fixed scale of rations for every man, woman, and child was secured. Conversation grew monotonous. It circled round the positions of the guns, the chance of relief, and question of stores, till it produced a mental giddiness that verged on the idiotic. Few grumbled, few swore. In this matter the Boers acted as a safety-valve. When people felt in the "something's too bad of somebody" mood, they could go out and snipe, and vent their spleen usefully and to the honour of their country! Sundays were more than ever flat. There was not the excitement attendant on dodging shells in the open. Speculation on the subject of food languished round the limitations of Hobson's choice. Mr. Neilly in the *Pall Mall Gazette* gave a sorry outline of the scanty fare. "I will attempt to give you an idea of what this scarcity of diet means. You are in a trench. In the early morning you have handed to you a piece of bread as big as a breakfast roll and a little tin of 'bully' sufficient for one average meal. You have some of it for breakfast, and if you have not an iron will you will eat the lot there and then, and go hungry for the rest of the twenty-four hours. What you leave is kept in the broiling sun until luncheon-time, when you find the beef reduced to an oily mess that does not look very appetising. You eat more and tighten your belt a hole or two to delude yourself into the belief that you have had a satisfying meal. You roast away again until dinner-time, when you gather up the last crumb and sigh for a few hours in the Adelaide Gallery or even in an East-End cookshop. But this is not all; you are for guard duty from midnight until 3 A.M. You have no sleep before you go on, and the slumber you fall into when relieved is destroyed an hour after you have entered upon it by the morning order to stand to arms. You thus get a schoolboy's luncheon to keep you alive for twenty-four hours. It is made unpalatable by the sun, and if a Mafeking shower falls, the odds are that it will be flooded over and buried in the mud at the bottom of the trench."

At this time Cronje, by way of recreation, returned to Mafeking, a fleeting visit, possibly to test some novel plans for the purpose of subduing the town. He came armed with incendiary shells, which were supposed to hit and blaze up and cause an inspiriting conflagration. But they did not succeed. They caused a conflagration certainly, but its duration was limited. At the end of it, Mafeking smiled still, but smiled with the curled lip of scorn. The convent, notwithstanding its symbol of the Red Cross, had been hit, and crushed, and wrecked; the hospital had been assailed; the sacred claim of humanity had been outraged; women and children had been subjected to [Pg 84] terrors of fact and terrors of dread. These atrocities continued, and Her Majesty's long-suffering subjects looked on and waited; they believed that deliverance must soon come. If they had not had that belief to help them, they would have died or surrendered. They believed that a day of reckoning would arrive, and that then Cronje and his diabolical hirelings would come by their deserts. If only they could have skipped six weeks and looked into the mirror of Fate, the drama at Paardeberg Drift would have reassured them. As it was, they had to live in faith. The series of atrocities that marked the Boer assaults had scarcely a counterpart in modern history, and it grew doubtful, if ever their turn should come, whether the besieged would be prevailed upon to emit one spark of that "magnanimity" with which their countrymen had been so lavish, and which the Boer had grown to account as a natural weakness of these "verdomde rooineks."

Siege life was now becoming painfully irksome. A blazing sun, a drenching rain, a gust of wind through the pepper trees, this was all the variety at hand. The inhabitants of the town began to feel like ghosts of themselves, ghouls walking the earth, yet out of touch with those who spoke of them as a memory, and nothing more. To them it was the quiet of the grave. They waited like some enchanted princess of a fairy tale for the time when the magic wand should wave and their pulses throb with joy and excitation, with laughter and zest for the good things of the hour. Now they walked as in a dream to the accompaniment of shot and shell, surrounded by devilish ogres and looters of the dead, while somewhere within a few miles of them, kith and kin, living and breathing kith and kin, seemed as phantoms in a nightmare to pass by and to ignore! A speechless, soundless asphyxia of the soul seemed to be creeping over these tired patient heroes! They still waited and hoped, but hoping and waiting had now grown monotonous, almost mechanical, as the tickings of an eight-day clock.

Rumours many and fantastic were brought in by the natives. It was believed that a new year's gift of three waggon loads of ammunition had been received by the Boers from Pretoria, and also a new gun. This weapon it was afterwards discovered was provided with more combustible bombs, horrible missiles that disgorge a chemical liquid which ignites in contact with the air. Here was a continual horror, and one that was only combated by extreme precautions. Though Colonel Baden-Powell in his nook on the stoep of his house continued to whistle his insouciant

notes, his busy brains needed to be Machiavellian in their ingenuity. Some declared he slept with one eye open; others, that he never slept at all. Certain it was that when all were hushed in slumber he was “on the prowl,” either on the roof or in the open, reading from the heavens above or the earth beneath the enemy’s approaching machinations. Some find sermons in stones; B.-P. found inspiration in sand and sky. [Pg 85]

The Market Square, Mafeking.

The Boers continued their bombardment, the sun continued to blaze, to smite the tin roofs and glaring sandy roads. After persistently directing shells on the women’s laager the ruffians succeeded in murdering three little children. These were of Dutch nationality, and it was hoped that their loss might possibly awaken a feeling of humanity and remorse in the breast of those who had prompted the assault on the defenceless position. But their conduct was rendering those within the town exasperated almost to madness. They panted for a chance to mete out annihilation to the blood-lusting rascals and untamed savages who were harassing them. They did their best, and sat down to the business of clearing off as many as possible of the polyglot horde who worked the guns. [Pg 86]

The work done by the Bechuanaland Rifles and the British South Africa Police was prodigious. They shrunk from no toil and no exposure so that they might reduce the number of the besiegers. Early in the New Year the Rifles entrenched themselves within 900 yards of the enemy’s big guns, and spent days and nights in the trenches, relieved at intervals by the Police. From nine on one night till nine the next they would occupy their unenviable position, carrying with them their day’s food and water, and employing themselves during the hours of light by keeping up a persistent fire on the Boer siege gun. On occasions their fire was so accurate that the Dutchmen had entirely to abandon the work of loading and training the gun. So smart, at last, grew the British sharpshooters, that during each Sabbath the gun was shifted farther and farther away.

Colonel Baden-Powell’s resourcefulness was again put to the test, and was again triumphant. The Boers were somewhat nonplussed by the discovery that he had a new weapon of defence. They put their heads together and concluded that the weapon must have sprung from the bowels of the earth. It so happened that in some long-forgotten stores in the town an old ship’s gun was suddenly discovered. Quickly it was brought into action. But the ways of this old muzzle-loading 16-pounder were not as the ways of the modern “Long Toms,” whose tricks were “understanded” of the Boer people. It had curious and distinctive virtues of its own. This gun threw solid shot, which, unlike a shell that bursts and is done with for better or for worse, gallivanted along the ground according to its own sweet will, and produced little surprises that caused the Colonel much amusement and not a little satisfaction.

Gun made in Mafeking.

Photo by D. Taylor, Mafeking.

The biography of the treasure-trove was written by Mr. Angus Hamilton of *Black and White*, who declared that there was quite a flutter of excitement at the appearance of the antiquated weapon. “It would seem,” he said, “to have been made about 1770, and is identical with those which up till [Pg 87]

very recently adorned the quay at Portsmouth. Its weight is 8 cwt. 2 qr. 10 lbs., and it was made by B. P. & Co. It is a naval gun, and is stamped ‘No. 6 port.’ How it came here is uncertain, and its origin unknown; but one gathers that it must have been intended more for privateering than for use in any Government ship of war, since it is wanting in all official superscription. This weapon, which we have now christened ‘B. P.’ out of a compliment to the Colonel, has been lying upon the farm of an Englishman whose interests are very closely united with the native tribe whose headquarters are in Mafeking Stadt. Mr. Rowlands can recall the gun passing this way in charge of two Germans nearly forty years ago. He remembers to have seen it in the possession of Linchwe’s tribe, and upon his return to the Baralongs, after one of his trading journeys, he urged the old chief to secure it for use in defence of the Stadt against the attacks of Dutch freebooters. The chief then visited Linchwe and bought the gun for twenty-two oxen, bringing it down to Mafeking upon his waggon. In those days it had three hundred rounds of ammunition, which were utilised in tribal fights. With the exception of visits which the gun made to local tribes, it has remained here, and is now in the possession of Mr. Rowlands. It has recently been mounted, [Pg 88] and is in active operation against our enemies. We have made balls for it, and are intending to manufacture shells, in the hope we shall at least be able to reach the emplacement of Big Ben. The first trial of ‘B. P.’ in its new career gave very satisfactory results. With two pounds of powder it threw a ball of ten pounds more than two thousand yards. The power of the charge was increased by half pounds until a charge of three pounds threw a ball of the same weight as the first rather more than two miles. We, therefore, have pinned our hopes upon it, and commend to the responsible authorities the reflections which may be derived from the fact that our chief and most efficient means of defence lie in such a weapon.”

The mosquito tactics of the wily Colonel proceeded as usual, but the Boer was hard to checkmate. On the 15th of January an attack was made by the sharpshooters against the enemy’s big gun battery, with the pleasing result that on the following day the 94-pounder and high-velocity Krupp evacuated their positions, and retired to a more distant one on the east side of the town, whence their command of the place was comparatively limited. In this quarter, now that the foe was pushed out of rifle range, it was possible to open grazing for cattle, a very desirable movement, for the poor lean beasts were waning rapidly. At this time Captain FitzClarence was reported among the convalescents, the wound received on the 26th of December having almost healed.

Preparations were set on foot for the purpose of routing the enemy with dynamite, failing all other means of ridding the town of his too intimate proximity. Colonel Baden-Powell’s motto, unlike that of British Governments, was to take time by the forelock. He left nothing to chance. In order to avert any risk of running short of supplies, rations were reduced, and oats which had previously belonged to the beasts were promoted to the use of their owners. Very stringent laws existed for the economising of everything. Matches and tinned milk were commandeered, and the theft of a matchbox was now viewed as a heinous crime. Tobacco in small quantities remained, but wines and spirits were fast running out. There were pathetic leave-takings as each quart of whisky disappeared from the stores; there was no knowing when would arrive the hour for a fond and a last farewell. Conversation grew still more monotonous. It mostly consisted of how the inner man should be sustained, and of anecdotes of agility in avoiding shot and shell.

WEST YORKSHIRE REGIMENT (Colour-Sergeant). **YORKSHIRE REGIMENT (Sergeant).**

Photo by Gregory & Co., London.

Still, considerable interest was taken in the performances of the old 16-pounder, which had been rigged up and christened by some “Skipping Polly,” on account of its skittish habits and its propensity to ricochet. This, though erratic in its proceedings, did good work, and struck the [Pg 89] parapet of the enemy’s fort. On the 10th of January violent rains came down, and rendered most of the trenches in front of the town uninhabitable, and life in general almost unendurable. Never was there greater need for the inestimable virtues of pluck and patience, and if medals had been awarded for these united qualities, the inhabitants of Mafeking would all have possessed them.

The pinch of siege life now became terribly evident, for the Kaffirs were reduced to eating mules. The British feared their turn at this diet would come directly. But the garrison was still cheery, and their entrenchments were considerably improved. In these Colonel Baden-Powell took a just pride, and his activity in promoting the safety and comfort of the inhabitants was boundless. They declared that they could feed themselves for another three months, but the nature of the form of provision was not divulged. Hardships and privations were endured by the little force with really amazing pluck. Beds they had scarcely enjoyed since the commencement of the siege; baths were almost as foreign, few had had a chance to remove their clothes; and news—the stimulus of the outside world—was entirely lacking. Letters now and then were passed out, but the real truth could never be trusted to black and white.

The office of censor was undertaken by the Hon. A. H. Hanbury Tracy (Royal Horse Guards). His occupation was a hard and a thankless one, for constant vigilance had to be exercised lest reports concerning the inner state of Mafeking—reports most ardently craved by those interested at home—might fall into the hands of the enemy, and thus cramp the operations of Colonel Baden-Powell and those who helped him to present a bold and fearless front to the hovering hordes who were waiting smugly for what they believed to be the inevitable.

On the 17th General Snyman bethought himself of a new way of starving the garrison into surrender. He sent a party of natives to enjoy the hospitality of the already sparsely fed town. It had not a mule to spare for extra Kaffirs, and Colonel Baden-Powell sternly though regretfully refused admittance to the new-comers. According to Boer usage, the officer and orderly who conveyed the message, notwithstanding the fact that they carried a white flag, were fired upon by the enemy while they were returning. A dastardly trick this, and the garrison resented it.

At this time the news of the grand Ladysmith sortie was received with rejoicings, and the bellicose youngsters of the community began to rack fertile brains in hope to emulate the courage and dash of the sister garrison. On this day a shell hit the shelter occupied by Major Baillie and Mr. Stent, Reuter’s correspondent, and portions crashed through Dixon’s Hotel, but fortunately without injuring any one. [Pg 90]

News now reached the benighted villagers that Colonel Plumer, with three armoured trains, had actually reached Gaberones, some three hundred miles north of Mafeking. The troops had some sharp tussles with the Boers, and drove them out of rifle range while the railway operatives mended the line. Where Colonel Plumer’s three trains came from was a mystery. He was known to have *one*, but there was no saying of what Rhodesia might not be capable in time of stress. Colonel Plumer had his work cut out for him, but he was not a man to sheer off difficult tasks, and there was intense hope that he might succeed. But there was always the Boer artillery—a terrible barrier between the relieving force and Mafeking—and in the face of this even the finest warriors, almost gunless, could scarcely be expected to advance alive.

On the 19th of January the small community celebrated the 100th day of the siege. All the corners of the square had been knocked off by the ever-active Boers, but the village maintained a suitable air of liveliness. Exhibitions were arranged, and some smart fighting showed that the right arm of the British had lost none of its cunning.

There were fat days and lean days in Mafeking. Though for the most part leanness prevailed, there was now and then to be found an oasis in the desert of the commissariat. Occasionally some successful raid made by the natives was productive of real meals—succulent beef *versus* old mule and husks. In the course of one daring foray the natives secured two dozen head of cattle; in another they carried off prizes of fat kine to the tune of a score. The excursions took place under cover of darkness, and, like all raids, were pursued without the consent of the Government. The natives had a process peculiarly their own in seducing the fat kine to follow them home. Devoid of clothing, and crawling snake-like over the veldt, they would approach the grazing cattle and gradually draw off such beasts as appeared goodly in their eyes, and which had been previously marked down with the acuteness of hungry instinct. Noiselessly the animals were enticed on and on till they reached the precincts of the staadt, where the raiders were anxiously looked for by their Baralong friends. These famishing individuals greeted the successful capture of the wherewithal to maintain life with shouts and dances of joy.

The garrison was soon put on a scale of still more reduced rations. These consisted of half a pound of meat and the same of bread daily. The luxuries of life—the people in England looked on them as necessaries!—tea, sugar, biscuits, jams, &c., were commandeered. In January the following housekeeper’s notes were made by the correspondent of the *Times*:—“Meal and flour have jumped from 27s. per bag to 50s.; potatoes, where they exist at all, are £2 per cwt.; fowls [Pg 91] are 7s. 6d. each; and eggs 12s. per dozen. Milk and vegetables can no longer be obtained, and rice has taken the place of the latter upon the menus. These figures mark the rise in the more

important food-stuffs as sold across the counter, but the hotels have, in sympathy, followed the example, they upon their part attributing it to the increase which the wholesale merchants have decreed. A peg of whisky is 1s. 6d., dop brandy 1s., gin 1s., large stout is 4s., small beer 2s. In ordinary times whisky retails at 5s. per bottle. This rate has now advanced to 18s. per bottle and 80s. per case. Dop, which is usually 1s. 4d., is now 12s. per bottle; the difference upon beer is almost 200 per cent., and inferior cigarettes are now 18s. per 100."

On the good management of the contractors, Messrs. Weil & Co., every one depended for flesh and blood. On them rested the responsibility of issuing daily rations—bread and meat for the garrison, forage for horses, and food for natives—and very excellently they fulfilled their difficult task.

On the 21st an unusual sort of show was held. The exhibits ranged from foals to babies, Mr. Minchin (Bechuanaland Rifles) securing first prize for the former, while Sergeant Brady, B.S.A.P., was the proud winner of the prize for the latter.

Colonel Baden-Powell sent a despatch reporting his own doings at the end of January to Colonel Nicholson. It ran as follows:—

> "Inform the Commanding Staff Officer that we are well here. On January 23 the enemy moved their north-east supporting laager to within 4500 yards of the town. We pushed our advance works in that direction, and mounted Lord Nelson, an old naval smooth-bore gun, in an emplacement 3100 yards from the enemy. On the evening of January 29 we unmasked our guns and shelled the enemy's camp with complete success. Next morning the Boer laager was moved back two miles.
>
> "On the 31st we were busy on all sides of the town. On the south the men in our advance works had a skirmish with three of the enemy's Krupp and Maxim guns, the firing being very heavy. A bombardment of our front on Cannon Kopje by the Boer 94-pounder followed. On the east front our four guns replied to this by a concentrated fire on the brickfield entrenchments, where the enemy poured in a musketry and artillery fire.
>
> "On the north the enemy's 5-pounders kept up a steady fire. They dropped one shell through the roof of the hospital, but luckily it did not explode. On the west the enemy, from their advanced works, opened a heavy rifle and Maxim fire on Fort Ayr, which our fort eventually silenced by the well-aimed fire of its guns. The enemy sent three big shells into the town after dark, but they gained nothing during the day.
>
> "Our casualties during the past two days from the enemy's shell fire have been three killed and three wounded. Mr. Kiddy, of the Railway Department, has died of fever.
>
> "On February 2 General Snyman, in reply to my letter with regard to his deliberately shelling the women and children's laagers on the 27th ult., offered no excuse or apology, and by a transparent falsehood practically admits that he ordered it. I have told him that I have now established temporary premises for the Boer prisoners in the women's laager and in the hospital, in order to protect these places from deliberate shelling."

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General Snyman and Colonel Baden-Powell had also a correspondence regarding Snyman's arming and raising of natives. In reply the old commandant said that he had merely armed the natives as cattle-guards. In his turn he complained that the British had been seen making fortifications on Sunday. The Colonel, who only relaid some mine wires, informed him that he had himself been entertained by watching the building of new fortifications by the Boers on that day.

On the 25th of January a shell burst through the convent, which was used as a convalescent hospital, and slightly wounded Lady Sarah Wilson, who had taken upon herself the care of the invalids. On the following day the women's laager was continuously shelled, but fortunately with small result. There was general jubilation at reports received regarding the success of Lord Roberts' operations. The news was an immense stimulus, and speculation as to the date of relief was freely indulged in. The besieged had learnt to gather hope from the smallest incidents. The disappearance from time to time of the 5-pounder Krupp, the 1-pounder Maxim, the 9-pounder quick-firing Creusot, which had a trick of making weekly excursions somewhere—caused them to conjecture whether Colonel Plumer had reached a point where these pieces could be made to come in handy. The 100-pounder Creusot, however, was untiring. It engaged only in shorter peregrinations, moving from one emplacement to another by way of variety, and keeping up a system of torture which acted badly on the nerves of the unhappy persons who were honoured with its attentions.

The following telegram, forwarded by runner from the Mayor of Mafeking (Mr. Whiteley), was addressed to Queen Victoria: "Mafeking upon the hundredth day of siege sends loyal devotion to your Majesty, and assurance of continued resolve to maintain your Majesty's supremacy in this town." The splendid little garrison had indeed a right to be proud of itself for having for so long a period held at bay a puissant and spiteful foe. It had fought, it had schemed, it had set its wits against the wits of Cronje and his successors, and defied them magnificently. "No surrender" was its motto, and the reply from the enemy was stamped on every house of this minute town—so minute that it could have been "stowed within the railings of St. James' Park"—and scribbled in large black defacing lines wherever shot and shell could penetrate. Some idea of life's daily

accompaniment of artillery may be arrived at by reading a description of his experiences recounted by Mr. Neilly of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He said:—"When the enemy's artillery began to [Pg 93] send us the heavy ration, those who knew most about the power of modern long-range high-velocity arms dreaded most the consequences. At the advice of our commander-in-chief, we went to earth, some into dug-outs, I, with others, into the wine-cellar of the hotel, which I consider was the most comfortable and luxurious place in the town. After breakfast a twelve-pounder on the heights went 'Boom!' Where had the shell gone? Had it struck a house? Had the building collapsed? Would the town be flattened and set on fire when the whole battery came into action? We speculated so until the second boom sounded, and the third quickly followed. Himmel! We had got it, and what a crash it was! Something had given way, and *débris* and shrapnel scattered like a hailstorm across the dining-room floor overhead. While some calmed the ladies, others of us doubled up through the trapdoor, slid the panel that divides the bar from the dining-room, and looked in. The dense smoke of the bursting charge filled the place, but there was nothing to indicate that anything was aflame. When the air cleared slightly we entered, to find the floor and tables littered with brick-dust and scrap iron; but the area of destruction was confined to the brickwork at the side of the window. Nothing was stirred upon the tables, which were laid for luncheon. That was enough. Had the house been built of good tough English brick, its flank would have probably collapsed; the rottenness of the walls had saved them; the rottenness of all the houses would bring about comparative safety to the town. Solids struck by shell add to the destruction wrought by the projectile through flying splinters; but there is no use in trying to batter sand stuck together with water. The concussion sends off the detonator, the burst makes a hole in the wall, and the further results are an untidied room and a bad fright to anybody who may be in it."

The writer, like the rest of the plucky crew, talked airily of the ordeal that all passed through, without a single boast of the splendid effect of the garrison's doughty resistance to the enemy in the early phases of the war.

It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the full importance of this magnificent defence at that time. As an object-lesson in British pluck, and the marvellous celerity with which peace-loving citizens may become glorious fighters, the defence as a whole stands without parallel. But from a political point of view the initial stoutness of the resistance was a *coup* which had far-reaching results.

There is no doubt that at the outset of the war a conspiracy was on foot between the Cape Dutch and the Federals, and that the capture of certain towns was to be taken as a signal for the joining of the allies to drive the British from South Africa. It was thought that the apparently [Pg 94] insignificant village of Mafeking would be among the first to fall, and the conspirators congratulated themselves that once the place went under, the door to Rhodesia would fly open. The gallant Cronje, with nothing better to occupy him, could have worked his way north, attacked Colonel Plumer and his small force, and without doubt defeated them. He would then have proceeded on a triumphal march. Having intimidated the natives, who invariably back the man with the visible biceps, and having armed the Matabele and Mashonas, he would have completely swept and devastated the fair country of the Colossus before our troops could have had time to save it from ruin. How far the ruin would have spread it is difficult to say. Like dynamite, it would have struck upwards and downwards, north and south. The capture of Mafeking would have unhinged the native population there, and forced them to side with the Boers; and once the natives got under arms the situation would have become so complicated that it might have taken years to unravel, if indeed the Government had the patience to unravel it at all.

Then disaffection would have spread rapidly, even to Table Bay. Had Cronje at the outset not been kept tied to the place, occupied in trying to crack the nut which he eventually found too hard for his own teeth and for the sledge-hammer weapons of his mercenaries, he would have gone on from town to town gathering up adherents as he went, and causing intimidation of such a kind that even the loyally disposed would in sheer self-defence have thrown in their lot with him.

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CHAPTER III

AT POPLAR GROVE

Before going on, it must be noted that on the 19th Lord Roberts had issued a proclamation to the Burghers of the Free State in English and Dutch. He said that the British having entered the Free State, he felt it his duty to make known the cause, and to do his utmost to end the war. Should the Free Staters continue fighting, they would do so in full knowledge of their responsibility for the lives lost in the campaign. Before the war, the Imperial Government desired the friendship of the Free State, and solemnly assured President Steyn that if he remained neutral the Free State territory would not be invaded and its independence would be respected. Nevertheless, the Free Staters had wantonly and unjustifiably invaded British territory, though the Imperial Government believed that the Free State Government was wholly responsible, under mischievous outside influence, for this invasion.

The Imperial Government bore the people no ill-will, and was anxious to preserve them from the evils which the action of their Government had caused. Lord Roberts warned the Burghers to desist from further hostilities, and he undertook that Burghers so desisting should not suffer in their persons or property. Requisitions of food, forage, fuel, and shelter must be complied with. Everything would be paid for on the spot, and if supplies were refused they would be taken, a receipt being given. Should the inhabitants consider that they had been unjustly treated, and should their complaint on inquiry be substantiated, redress would be given. In conclusion, Lord Roberts stated that British soldiers were prohibited from entering houses or molesting the civil population.

By the terms of this proclamation it was necessary to abide, though, by degrees, as will be seen, it began to be discovered that generous concessions made to our enemies were misinterpreted and taken advantage of in ways which tended to prolong the war.

Lords Roberts and Kitchener paid a flying visit to Kimberley on the 1st of March, and attended a crowded meeting in the Town Hall. Lord Roberts, with his usual grace, dwelt on the courage, endurance, and heroism exhibited by the troops and residents, not only in Kimberley, but in the other besieged towns.

Cronje's fate being sealed, the Field-Marshal shifted his headquarters to Osfontein, seven miles up the Modder from Paardeberg. Near here it was rumoured that such Boers as had failed to come to the succour of Cronje had flocked. These, numbering some 10,000, had gathered at the summons of their chief from the regions round Stormberg, Colesberg, and Ladysmith, and were now busily entrenching a position some fifteen miles long. Of this the flanks rested on kopjes to the south of the river on a group called Seven Sisters, and to the north across the river on a flat-topped kopje, behind which were further fortified kopjes, forming a formidable position at Poplar Grove, a place so called because of a sparse display of poplar and Australian gum-trees in the vicinity. [Pg 96]

At this time the two Presidents of the Republics, finding things getting too hot to be comfortable, made magnanimous proposals for peace. The following is the text of their despatch.

"BLOEMFONTEIN, *March 5, 1900*.

"The blood and the tears of the thousands who have suffered by this war, and the prospect of all the moral and economic ruin with which South Africa is now threatened, make it necessary for both belligerents to ask themselves dispassionately, and as in the sight of the Triune God, for what they are fighting, and whether the aim of each justifies all this appalling misery and devastation.

"With this object, and in view of the assertions of various British statesmen, to the effect that this war was begun and is being carried on with the set purpose of undermining Her Majesty's authority in South Africa, and of setting up an Administration over all South Africa independent of Her Majesty's Government, we consider it our duty solemnly to declare that this war was undertaken solely as a defensive measure to safeguard the threatened independence of the South African Republic, and is only continued in order to secure and safeguard the incontestable independence of both Republics as sovereign international States, and to obtain the assurance that those of Her Majesty's subjects who have taken part with us in this war shall suffer no harm whatsoever in person or property.

"On these conditions, but on these conditions alone, are we now, as in the past, desirous of seeing peace re-established in South Africa, and of putting an end to the evils now reigning over South Africa; while, if Her Majesty's Government is determined to destroy the independence of the Republics, there is nothing left to us and to our people but to persevere to the end in the course already begun, in spite of the overwhelming pre-eminence of the British Empire, confident that that God who lighted the unextinguishable fire of the love of freedom in the hearts of ourselves and of our fathers will not forsake us, but will accomplish His work in us and in our descendants.

"We hesitated to make this declaration earlier to your Excellency, as we feared that as long as the advantage was always on our side, and as long as our forces held defensive positions far in Her Majesty's Colonies, such a declaration might hurt the feelings of honour of the British people; but now that the prestige of the British Empire may be considered to be assured by the capture of one of our forces by Her Majesty's troops, and that we are thereby forced to evacuate other positions which our forces had occupied, that difficulty is over, and we can no longer hesitate clearly to inform your Government and people, in the sight of the whole civilised world, why we are fighting, and on what conditions we are ready to restore peace." [Pg 97]

SHELL FROM THE NAVAL BRIGADE DISPERSING BOERS FROM BEHIND THE SEVEN SISTERS KOPJES, DURING THE ACTION OF 7th MARCH AT LE GALLAIS KOPJE, NEAR OSFONTEIN.

Drawing by Sidney Paget, from a Sketch by W. B. Wollen, R.I.

The answer to this effusion, addressed by Lord Salisbury on behalf of Her Majesty's Government to the Presidents, ran:—

"Foreign Office, *March 11, 1900*.

"I have the honour to acknowledge your Honours' telegram, dated March 5, from Bloemfontein, of which the purport is principally to demand that Her Majesty's Government shall recognise the 'incontestable independence' of the South African Republic and Orange Free State as 'sovereign international States,' and to offer, on those terms, to bring the war to a conclusion.

"In the beginning of October last, peace existed between Her Majesty and the two Republics under the Conventions which then were in existence. A discussion had been proceeding for some months between Her Majesty's Government and the South African Republic, of which the object was to obtain redress for certain very serious grievances under which British residents in the South African Republic were suffering. In the course of these negotiations, the South African Republic had, to the knowledge of Her Majesty's Government, made considerable armaments, and the latter had, consequently, taken steps to provide corresponding reinforcements to the British garrisons of Cape Town and Natal. No infringement of the rights guaranteed by the Conventions had, up to that point, taken place on the British side. Suddenly, at two days' notice, the South African Republic, after issuing an insulting ultimatum, declared war upon Her Majesty; and the Orange Free State, with whom there had not even been any discussion, took a similar step. Her Majesty's dominions were immediately invaded by the two Republics, siege was laid to three towns within the British frontier, a large portion of the two Colonies was overrun, with great destruction to property and life, and the Republics claimed to treat the inhabitants of extensive portions of Her Majesty's dominions as if those dominions had been annexed to one or other of them. In anticipation of these operations the South African Republic had been accumulating for many years past military stores on an enormous scale, which, by their character, could only have been intended for use against Great Britain.

"Your Honours make some observations of a negative character upon the object with which these preparations were made. I do not think it necessary to discuss the questions you have raised. But the result of these preparations, carried on with great secrecy, has been that the British Empire has been compelled to confront an invasion which has entailed upon the Empire a costly war and the loss of thousands of precious lives. This great calamity has been the penalty which Great Britain has suffered for having in recent years acquiesced in the existence of the two Republics.

"In view of the use to which the two Republics have put the position which was given to them, and the calamities which their unprovoked attack has inflicted upon Her Majesty's dominions, Her Majesty's Government can only answer your Honours' telegram by saying that they are not prepared to assent to the independence either of the South African Republic or of the Orange Free State."

To return to Osfontein. There was now a short and much-needed interval of repose, in which men and horses tried to recuperate. It was, however, necessary for the cavalry to be continually scouring the country to ascertain the whereabouts of the enemy. [Pg 98]

On the 6th of March Lord Roberts welcomed the Ceylon Mounted Infantry, and sent the following telegram to Sir West Ridgeway, Governor of Ceylon:—"I have just ridden out to meet Ceylon Mounted Infantry, and welcome them to this force. They look most workmanlike, and are a

valuable addition to Her Majesty the Queen's army in South Africa." These troops were in excellent condition, so also were their handy Burma ponies, smart, knowing, and game little beasts, warranted to turn on a sixpence and stand any amount of wear and tear.

On the same day the Colonials had a smart set-to with the Dutchmen, who were endeavouring to locate themselves in the vicinity, and the New Zealanders and Australians made themselves more than a match for the Boers, losing themselves only six wounded, while they put ten of the enemy out of action. The rest of the gang disappeared, on the principle of those who fight and run away live to fight another day. In fact, they moved to some strong eminences that commanded either side of the river, the centre of the position being at Poplar Grove Farm. Here the Federals thought to embarrass the British advance, but Lord Roberts decided to undeceive them. The Field-Marshal's plan was now to turn their left flank with the cavalry division, and then to meet their line of defence with the infantry divisions, and thus enclose them as Cronje had been enclosed.

Accordingly the troops got themselves into battle array. The Naval Brigade brought their 4.7 guns four miles north-east of Osfontein, while the cavalry prepared to turn the Boer left, and started before daybreak of the 7th to accomplish this feat. On the north bank was left the Ninth Division with some handy Colonials and guns. Moving to the east were the Sixth and Seventh Divisions, with the Guards Brigade in the centre.

The dawn grew. The Boers in the golden rays of morning were disclosed massed in the far front, and later was seen the glorious mass of French's cavalry sweeping south—a martial broom which the Boers began to know meant business.

At eight o'clock the music of battle started, the Naval guns on one side and the batteries of General French on the other. Lyddite and shrapnel bounced and spluttered over all the small kopjes wherein the Dutchmen had made a lodgment. It was sufficient. The Boer guns spat impotently—the puling cry of dismay—then, knowingly, the Federals made preparations for a stampede. They saw in the distance the Sixth Division advancing, the Colonials cleaving the columns of dust, the Highland Brigade coming on and on, their dark kilts cutting a thin line across the atmosphere—they saw enough! To east they flew, speeding towards Bloemfontein—guns, waggons, horsemen—as arrows from the bow, and leaving behind them their well- [Pg 99]
constructed trenches, their ammunition, tents, and supplies. After them went the Colonials and City Imperial Volunteers, all keen sportsmen, exhilarated with the heat of the chase, but the Boers were uncatchable. No one has yet beaten them in the art of running away. Nevertheless, Lord Roberts was left in undisturbed possession of Poplar Grove. In the early afternoon the Boers certainly endeavoured to make one futile, feeble stand, but their effort was unavailing, and by sunset they were careering into space, while the cavalry vainly endeavoured to hem them in. Horse-flesh had come to the end of its tether; poor food and much galloping had reduced the noble steeds to helpless wrecks, and unfortunately the manœuvres of Paardeberg could not be repeated. Curiously enough, though no Boers were caught, the military net was full of strange fish, a Russian, a Hollander, a German all being left in the lurch. It was a humorous episode. While the Boers were making off as fast as legs—the mounts of some had been shot—and horses could carry them, a dilapidated country cart, surmounted by a red flag, was seen to be approaching. From this cart presently emerged several forlorn personages, looking very sorry for themselves indeed. They accounted for their plight by saying that while the final fight was taking place their mule-waggon had broken down. The mules having been unloosed, promptly stampeded, and left them between two fires, that of the Boers (to whom they were attached) and the British. The name of one foreigner, in dark blue uniform, was Colonel Prince Gourko, of the Russian army; the other, attired in plain clothes, was Lieutenant Thomson, of the Netherlands (Military Attaché of the Boers). With them was a German servant in attendance on the Russian prince. Finding themselves in an uncomfortable quandary, one from which there was no escape, they decided to join the British. They were introduced to Lord Kitchener, and thereupon presented to the Commander-in-Chief, who received them with his usual courtesy.

Lord Roberts, telegraphing home in the afternoon, thus described the day's work:—

"Osfontein, *March 7* (4.30 p.m.).

"March 7.—Our operations to-day promise to be a great success.

"The enemy occupied a position four miles north and eleven miles south of Modder River.

"I placed Colvile's division on north bank; Kelly-Kenny's and Tucker's, with cavalry division, on south bank.

"The cavalry division succeeded in turning the left flank, opening the road for 6th Division, which is advancing without having been obliged to fire a shot up to present time (twelve noon).

"Enemy are in full retreat toward north and east, being closely followed by cavalry, horse-artillery, and mounted infantry, while the 7th (Tucker's) and 9th (Colvile's) divisions, and Guards Brigade, under Pole-Carew, are making their way across the river [Pg 100]
at Poplar's Drift, where I propose to place my headquarters this evening."

Later on the Commander-in-Chief wired from the said headquarters:—

"Poplar Grove, *March 7* (7.35 p.m.).

"We have had a very successful day and completely routed the enemy, who are in full retreat.

"The position they occupied was extremely strong, and cunningly arranged with a second line of entrenchments, which would have caused us heavy loss had a direct attack been made.

"The turning movement was necessarily wide owing to the nature of the ground, and the cavalry and horse-artillery horses are much done up.

"The fighting was practically confined to the cavalry division, which, as usual, did exceedingly well, and French reports that the horse-artillery batteries did a great deal of execution amongst the enemy.

"Our casualties number about fifty.

"I regret to say that Lieutenant Keswick, 12th Lancers, was killed, and Lieutenant Bailey, of the same regiment, severely wounded. Lieutenant De Crespigny, 2nd Life Guards, also severely wounded."

Though the state of the cavalry was deplorable, it was thanks to the splendid execution of General French that the Boers showed so little fight, and there were so few casualties. The enemy saw the cavalry menacing their line of retreat, and pelted off from kopje to kopje, now and then sniping at the leading squadrons, and occasionally plumping a shell or two into the British midst. With the Dutchmen, Presidents Steyn and Kruger were said to be, and these worthies made a desperate attempt to rally the forces, but without success. Some say they even shed tears to encourage their countrymen, which tears had evidently a damping effect, for the Boers—some 14,000 of them—retreated all the faster. They were absolutely demoralised by Lord Roberts' tactics, and felt seriously injured that the trenches which had been prepared against a frontal attack should have been ignored. They had been so accustomed to be attacked in front that they began to look upon the Commander-in-Chief's "roundabout way of doing things" as distinctly unfair. They took themselves off, and when General French, who advanced ten miles ahead of the main body, scoured the front, he reported that not a Boer was to be seen. A vast amount of ammunition was left behind, and this, including several boxes of explosive bullets, labelled "Manufactured for the British Government," was promptly destroyed.

Good news now arrived. The A and B squadrons of Kitchener's Horse, reported missing, suddenly returned to camp at Paardeberg. They, with E squadron, were cut off on the 13th of February, and given up for lost. Though E squadron was captured by the enemy, A and B squadrons succeeded in escaping, and, after losing their bearings on the veldt, and enduring three weeks' somewhat unpleasant experiences, found their way into safety. [Pg 101]

Quantities of the Transvaalers disbanded and returned to their farms. In other quarters, too, progress was announced. General Gatacre occupied Burghersdorp and General Clements had reached Norval's Pont, and thus the sporadic rebellion in Cape Colony was slowly beginning to die out.

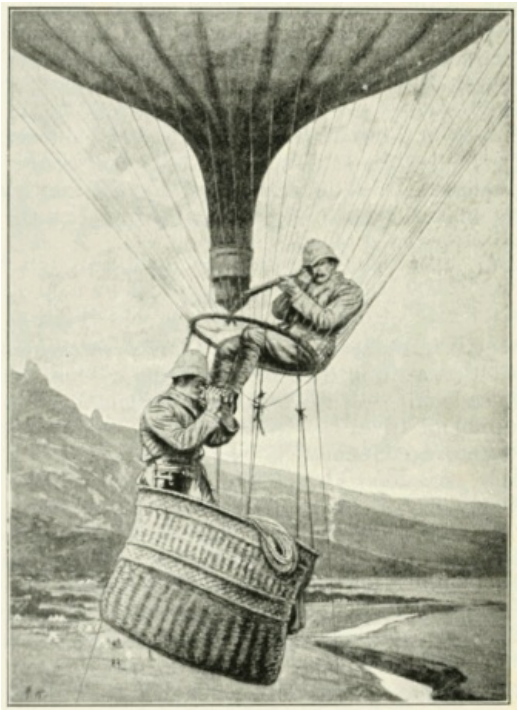
The army advanced and formed a fresh camp beyond Poplar Grove, where on the 8th and 9th more of the troops concentrated. The force was now moving through a fine grassy country, made additionally green and refreshing by plentiful rains, and the horses were improving in condition and spirits, while the men were in first-rate fettle.

On the 10th of March the army proceeded onwards. By this time the Boers had posted themselves on the kopjes eight miles south of Abraham's Drift. It was imagined that they would be able to offer little resistance to the advancing force, but they, however, made a very determined stand.

THE FIGHT AT DRIEFONTEIN

On leaving Poplar Grove, Lord Roberts' force, rearranged and divided into three, advanced on Bloemfontein *via* Driefontein, a place about six miles south-west of Abraham's Kraal and some forty miles from the capital of the Free State. Along the Petrusberg Road, to the right, moved General Tucker's division, with the Gordons and a cavalry brigade. The central column, composed of General Colvile's division, the Guards Brigade (General Pole-Carew), and Colonel Broadwood's brigade of cavalry, accompanied Lord Roberts, while on the left, advancing along the Modder River, was General French with Colonel Porter's cavalry brigade and General Kelly-Kenny's division. The ranks had been filled up by detachments from the Modder and Kimberley, which latter place had been converted into the advanced depôt. Among the additional troops were the Ceylon Mounted Rifles, a soldierly lot and much admired by those who saw them. At 10 A.M. the brigade of cavalry under Colonel Broadwood, which was marching in advance of the central column, came in touch with the enemy. Their position was a strong one, an open, crescent-shaped group of kopjes, with the centre a plateau, dropping on all sides to flat ground. At the extreme end of the semicircle (on the crescent at the north-east) was posted a formidable gun, and this weapon, perched on a commanding kopje at Abraham's Kraal, protected the position from advance from the north-west. It also provided the Republicans with a loophole for

escape. Colonel Broadwood had no sooner discovered the enemy in his snake-shaped array of kopjes than he commenced to shell him and drive him forth from the lower projections of the position. That done, he there planted his mounted infantry till reinforcements should come to his aid. [Pg 102]



Directing an Army from a Military Balloon.

On the right Colonel Porter had now come in contact with the foe. General French's orders were to avoid imbroglio with the enemy and to keep in touch with the centre. On a message being sent by Colonel Porter to inform General French of the presence of the Dutchmen, the infantry division changed its course. They now marched twenty miles to the south, reaching the position about one o'clock. The march was an achievement. Twenty miles across the blistering, blinding veldt, as a commencement to a fighting day six hours in length, was a feat of endurance of which the infantry division might well have been proud. The change of course had the effect of avoiding [Pg 103] the necessity to attack Abraham's Kraal, though at the same time it unfortunately left open the enemy's line of retreat to the north, which, later on, he was not slow to make use of. With the arrival of General French's force, Colonel Broadwood was free to continue his movement to the left of the enemy's position, and working round it, found himself assailed by the 9-pounder of the enemy. He nevertheless pursued his course, gaining ground very slowly but surely, and by nightfall the brigade of cavalry had worked eight miles to the rear of the Dutchmen's position. This flanking movement, though not concluded at dusk, resulted in the eventual retirement of the enemy.

Meanwhile in the centre of the plateau hot fighting was taking place, General Kelly-Kenny's division having made a bold attack on the north of the stronghold, whence the troops were greeted from behind a screen of boulders with a storm of shot and shell. The Dutchmen, safe and invisible, could not, however, succeed in arresting the dogged advance of the Welsh Regiment, who formed the first line of the attacking force. They went on and on despite the fierce fusillade of the Federals, their numbers growing momentarily thinner, but their nerve and perseverance showing no diminution. The Boers, ingenious as ever, offered a skilful and stubborn resistance, pouring a heavy enfilading fire from kopjes both east and south-west, while they plied two 12-pounders with intense vigour.

From the south now came the artillery, T Battery R.H.A. sweeping the way for the infantry advance. But they had no easy task. Before they could get into action the Vickers-Maxim of the Federals commenced its deadly activities, and while the gunners were unlimbering killed first one man then another, and laid low several horses. But the brave artillerymen undauntedly pursued their work, and presently, with the loss of very few minutes, exchanged hearty greetings with the weapon which had wrought such havoc among their numbers. At this time U Battery, at the north of the Boer centre, was active, but later on, when the 76th Field Battery moved towards the enemy with a view to clearing a way for the rush of the infantry, U Battery joined T, and together they blazed away at the ridges held by the Dutchmen. But throughout the whole period they pursued their work under showers which unceasingly rained down from the rifles of the foe. Meanwhile the Welsh Regiment, supported by the Essex and Gloucesters, moved on and on till they reached the shelter of the crest of the ridge. Here, at 500 yards range, a crackling concert of musketry was heard, the Boers firing with great ferocity and stubbornness, the British with coolness and accuracy. From the centre of the position the Yorks, supported by the Buffs, did magnificent work, and they, together with the Essex Regiment, later on in the afternoon began [Pg 104] doggedly to ascend towards the stone sangars of the enemy, which yet vomited forks of flame.

Now they crawled and now they wormed themselves along through the grass, dripping with gore

and covered with sweat, many of their officers gone, comrades dropping to right and to left of them, while the fire of the enemy continued to rattle down in their midst. Then, as the fusillade slackened, they leapt up and made for the ridge, taking it, going over the crest with glittering steel and ringing cheer, and finding not one single Boer had awaited their coming. The Dutchmen had vanished into thin air! It was a magnificent deed—the finest that had been witnessed for a long time—but it was dearly paid for. The way was paved to Bloemfontein, but with the corpses of the honoured dead. The brunt of the fighting fell on the Sixth Division, more particularly on the Welsh and Essex Regiments, the Ninth Division, with the Guards, arriving too late in the day to take part in the fight. A great number of officers were put out of action—so many, indeed, that some of the leading companies were led, and admirably led, by their colour-sergeants. A characteristic feature of the engagement was the Dutchmen's slim and ingenious mode of firing a big gun from amid a group of red houses, each floating a white flag, an arrangement which served to cover the retirement of the enemy, and on the success of which he doubtless complimented himself not a little.

SERGEANT OF THE INNISKILLING DRAGOONS.

Photo by Gregory & Co., London.

At dusk a splendid sight was visible. In the last glimmer of day Lord Roberts and his staff entered the central plateau, followed by degrees by all the troops—an imposing force, which evidently determined the Boers in their resolution to make themselves scarce. This they did, guns included, with really creditable and surprising rapidity. They were much disheartened by defeat, however, and though they had offered most stubborn resistance, the character of their defence was lacking in evidence of the determination which had hitherto been noticeable. Among the mortally wounded was the gallant officer commanding the Royal Australian Artillery, Colonel Umphelby.[3] The Boers lost over 100, but the list of our own killed and wounded was a long one. Amongst the killed were:—Captain Eustace, the Buffs; Lieutenant Parsons and Second Lieutenant Coddington, Essex Regiment; Captain Lomax, Welsh Regiment; Mr. McKartie, a retired Indian civilian attached to Kitchener's Horse. Wounded—Colonel Hickson, the Buffs, Lieutenant Ronald, the Buffs; Captain Jordan, Gloucesters; Second Lieutenant Torkington, Welsh Regiment; Second Lieutenant Pope, Welsh Regiment; Second Lieutenant Wimberley, Welsh Regiment; Captain Broadmead, Essex Regiment; Lieutenant Devenish, Royal Field Artillery; Major Waite, Royal Army Medical Corps; Lieutenant Berne, Royal Army Medical Corps; Colonel Umphelby, Royal Australian Artillery (since dead); Lieutenant C. Berkeley and Second Lieutenant Lloyd, Welsh Regiment; Second Lieutenant G. H. Raleigh, Essex Regiment.

[Pg 105]

The Australians came in for a heavy share of the fighting. The 1st Australian Horse, brigaded with the Scots Greys, were fiercely fired on by the enemy as they advanced to within 800 yards of the wide bend of kopjes. The New South Wales Mounted Infantry, under Colonel Knight, and the Mounted Rifles, under Captain Antill, engaged in animated pursuit of the enemy as they fled towards the north, their fleet horses showing a marked contrast in condition to the jaded steeds of the English cavalry.

Lord Roberts expressed his satisfaction at the brilliant work performed by the Welsh Regiment in the storming of Alexander Kopje, a feat in which they displayed consummate skill as well as

amazing pluck. Some heroic actions took place during the day, particularly in connection with the supply of ammunition, which ran short owing to the necessity of relieving the infantry for their heavy march, of fifty rounds apiece. Some dastardly ones were also practised by the Boers, who, finding themselves in a perilous situation, the artillery in front and a squadron of mounted infantry hovering on their flank, hoisted a white flag and threw up their hands in token of surrender. Naturally the British accepted the sign, and, while they were approaching the Dutchmen, some others of their number hastened to pour a volley into the British ranks. Lord Roberts himself having been a witness of this treacherous act, remonstrated with the Boer leaders, and ordered that in future if such action were repeated the white flag should be utterly disregarded. The following protest was made by the Commander-in-Chief:—

> "To their Honours the State Presidents of the Orange Free State and South African Republic.
>
> "Another instance having occurred of a gross abuse of the white flag, and of the signal of holding up the hands in token of surrender, it is my duty to inform your Honours that if such abuse occurs again, I shall most reluctantly be compelled to order my troops to disregard the white flag entirely.
>
> "The instance occurred on the kopje east of Driefontein Farm yesterday evening, and was witnessed by several of my own staff-officers as well as by myself, and resulted in the wounding of several of my officers and men.
>
> "A large quantity of explosive bullets of three different kinds was found in Cronje's laager, and after every engagement with your Honours' troops. [Pg 106]
>
> "Such breaches of the recognised usages of war and of the Geneva Convention are a disgrace to any civilised Power.
>
> "A copy of this telegram has been sent to my Government, with a request that it may be communicated to all neutral Powers."

The Boers had now entirely disappeared. It was nevertheless hinted that they might be collecting in some new and unexpected region. The column, however, resumed its victorious march, proceeding twelve miles without coming upon the enemy. The beating of yesterday had produced a good effect, for the Dutchmen kept their distance, though in the kopjes all along the direct road to Bloemfontein, which lay due east, they were said to be swarming. It was also reported that Transvaalers and Free Staters had fallen out, and that the former, under Joubert, were determined to make a stand behind a magnificent entrenchment that they had built. The advance was supposed to come from the west, and consequently the Boer line of entrenchments extended some six or eight miles from the town facing towards Bam's Vlei. There were shelter trenches, made not on the kopjes, but about a hundred yards out on the plain beneath. They used sandbags, and had gun epaulements besides. In addition to all this, they had made sangars and piles of stones on the kopjes. Unfortunately for them, our troops made a cunning detour, which again dislocated the Dutchmen's programme, and forced them in their mountain fastnesses to sit inactive, while the cavalry was wheeling south to the outskirts of Bloemfontein! Here there were no fortifications and very few Boers.

Mr. Steyn now secretly left Bloemfontein for Kroonstad, as, in spite of Mr. Kruger's representations, it had been decided to surrender the capital of the Free State. Lord Roberts, who had sent in a formal demand for surrender, received no reply. General Joubert made preparations, with some 3000 men, to avert the surrender, but his approach, veritably at the eleventh hour, was barred by the clever manœuvres of the British. This splendid piece of work was executed by Major Hunter-Weston, R.E. He was sent by General French to cut the railway north of Bloemfontein, and thus preclude any chance of Boer interruption to the triumphal progress into the town. In the dead of night the Major, with seven men of the field-troop, all mounted on picked horses (a precaution that was very necessary considering the hard work done by the troops both before and after the relief of Kimberley), started on their hazardous expedition. Darkness cramped, though it cloaked their movements, and the ground over which they sped was seamed with dongas and many impediments; and, moreover, a wide sweep had to be made to avoid Boer pickets. Before the peep o' day they reached their destination. Then they [Pg 107] began to search for a place suitable for demolition. They came on a culvert supported with iron girders, one of which was hastily but cautiously prepared by placing two 10-lb. charges of gun-cotton against the web, which was fired within twenty minutes. Then, with a detonation that seemed to shake the day into dawning, the line was completely wrecked and rendered impassable, and Joubert, whose "special" was timed to arrive at Bloemfontein at 8.10 A.M., lost his last chance of interfering with the proceedings! This in itself was an excellent *coup*, and particularly serviceable, since it secured to the British the use of twenty-six locomotives at a time when they were much needed.

General French had also seized and destroyed some portions of the railway south of Bloemfontein. His headquarters were made at the house of Mr. Steyn's brother—who had tried unsuccessfully to get away, and was forced to remain at his farm—while the troops were now posted at different points outside the town, and were, in comparison with their former state, in clover.

Early on the 13th the 1st Cavalry Brigade moved slowly towards some kopjes to the east of Bloemfontein and occupied them. All knew the great day was come when Lord Roberts with

Kelly-Kenny's and Colvile's divisions, the Guards Brigade, and the Mounted Infantry would be presently marching into the Free State capital. Whereupon the adventurous journalist, determined there should be no pie without the impress of his finger, put his best leg foremost and decided to lead the way. The correspondents of the *Sydney Herald*, the *Daily News*, and the *Daily Telegraph* were seen like madmen spurring over the plain. There was ten to one on the favourite, the Burleigh veteran, and the Colonial was only backed for a place, yet he it was who won! They were received in the Market Square with beams. There was a shade of relief even on the most surly countenances. Mr. Fraser, a member of the Executive, the Mayor of Bloemfontein, and others, "bigwigs of B.," as somebody called them, came out and did the honours. These gentlemen were invited to take carriages out to welcome the British force, which—diplomacy being the better part of hostility—they accordingly did. In starting they encountered the first of the British victors, Lieutenant Chester-Master, with three of Remington's scouts. At last they came to the Chief's halting-place, and the surrender of the town was made known. The mediæval ceremony of delivering up the keys of Parliament and Presidency was gone through. Formalities over, Lord Roberts made the gracious assurance that, provided no opposition was offered, the lives and properties of the Bloemfontein public were safe in his hands. Having notified his intention to enter the capital in state, the Mayor, Landrost, and others departed to acquaint the townspeople. [Pg 108]

AT BLOEMFONTEIN

Bloemfontein! A name of milk and honey, of flowers and dew! Every vowel breathed of pastoral simplicity, of luscious grasses and lowing kine, of gambolling game and purling stream. A name for a poet to conjure with! a talisman to awaken the mellow music of a Herrick and recall the soul of Walton to benevolent rejoicings in the "sights and sounds of the open landscape." Unfortunately, the mellifluous name was not derived from the German for flowers or from the melody of fountains. It owed its origin to a Boer peasant who stood godfather to the hamlet and also to an adjacent stream. Here in other days the innocent Voertrekker unpacked his waggons and set out his little farmstead, choosing green rising ground, an oasis in the sandy veldt, and the neighbourhood of a refreshing rivulet for comfort's sake, and not because he foresaw that in fifty years this spot would be the central scene in one of the largest dramas of the world! In the year 1845 the Union Jack first waved its protective folds over the homestead. At that period it was converted into the official abode of a British Resident, and from that time, with an expansion which was truly British, the tiny village developed till it became a town, and finally passed over, through British apathy and dislike for responsibility, to the hands of the Free Staters. And there it might and would have remained had not President Steyn, who owed us no grudge, and with whom we were on the best of terms, decided to put his finger in the diplomatic pie, in the hope that some of the plums would fall to his share. Thus, in his greed for power and his contempt for the British, he embroiled his country, and being unable to defend his capital, was forced to scurry off to his birthplace, Winburg, some miles to the east, where, with the assistance of his foreign mercenaries, he yet hoped to save himself from the consequences of his ill-advised interference. So it came to pass that on the 13th of March 1900, thirty-nine days after the commencement of his great march, Lord Roberts, with the magnificent British army in his wake, moved unopposed towards the capital of the Free State.

THE FORMAL SURRENDER OF BLOEMFONTEIN.

Drawing by J. Finnemore, from a Sketch by W. B. Wollen, R.I.

The entry into the town was an imposing spectacle. The Mayor, Dr. Kellner, the Landrost, Mr. Papenfus, and Mr. Fraser, as we know, had driven out in a cart to meet Lord Roberts, and four miles outside the town the keys of the town were given up. Then the Field-Marshal, the most simply dressed man in his whole army, appeared at the head of a cavalcade a mile long. He was followed by his military secretary, his aides-de-camp, the general officers on his staff with their respective staffs. Then came the foreign attachés, some war-correspondents, and Lord Roberts'

Indian servants, who contributed a warm note of colour to the sombre files of kharki. After this [Pg 109] came a serpentine train of cavalry and guns, which entered the city at one o'clock. It was the most wonderful military display that has been seen for years. A gigantic army—not a peace but a war army, not the crude army of Salisbury Plain but the perfected article, the army minus its raw recruits and plus its trained reserves, which owed its magnificent development to the man whom Lord Wolseley has called "the greatest War Minister we ever had." Looking at the splendid physique of the warrior multitude, it was impossible for military men, even those who had criticised most severely the short service system, to deny that to-day the triumph of Lord Cardwell's principle was complete!

The crowds collected from far and wide, all business was suspended, and knots and cliques gathered together to witness the procession moving up the slopes towards the town itself. Cheer after cheer rang through the air, kerchiefs waved and blessings were prayed for, as the procession marched through the collected crowd and on into the market square. Lord Roberts then went to the Government Buildings, and took formal possession in the name of the sovereign. There was renewed cheering and singing of "God save the Queen," when, half-an-hour later, at twenty minutes to two, a small silken Union Jack, specially worked by Lady Roberts, was seen floating over the town.

The day passed without notable incident. A public holiday was observed, and the kharki-clad crowds rejoiced themselves by singing "Tommy Atkins" and feasting right royally. They were quite undisturbed by the scarcely complimentary remarks of the Burghers, who compared them in number and colour and appetite to a swarm of locusts!

Mr. Steyn's brother, who, it may be remembered, had failed to get away with his belongings in time, remained discreetly at his farm, where he entertained General French, and subsequently Lord Roberts. One of the curious features of the entry into the capital of the Free State was the extraordinary welcome given by the inhabitants to the conquerors. Regiment after regiment filed past to the tune of hearty cheers, and surprised pleasure at the orderly and humane entry of the enemy was visible on every face. While the public offices were taken over by Lord Roberts' staff, the banks were visited by Colonel Richardson. This officer was accounted one of the heroes of the hour, for sufficient praise could not be given to the achievements of the Army Corps or to Colonel Richardson, whose task of provisioning, foraging, and transporting 40,000 men and 18,000 horses savoured of the labours of Hercules. There were quibblers, of course; but, practically considered, all had gone off without a hitch, and the whole arrangements moved, as the phrase [Pg 110] is, "on greased wheels," the influence over all of the beloved "Bobs" having been simply magical.

The next day Lord Roberts inspected the Guards Brigade, complimented them on their splendid march, and expressed his regret that through a mistake he had been unable to enter Bloemfontein at the head of the Brigade. He consoled them by saying, "I will lead you into Pretoria!" In these gracious words the troops were rewarded for their disappointment, for the Chief, though he had promised them to lead them into the town, had finally decided that it was expedient to enter the capital without waiting for the infantry.

The Guards Brigade had made a magnificent march of thirty-eight miles in twenty-eight hours, taking from 3 P.M. on the 12th to 1 P.M. on the 13th, with an interval of only two and a half hours for sleep. Yet, in spite of this, and of having been in some of the toughest fights of the campaign, they were cheery and elated. One of their number (the Scots Guards) described their arrival: —"We waited three hours outside Bloemfontein for Lord Roberts, as we were told that the Commander-in-Chief wished to ride at the head of the Guards Brigade into the town. But he did not come, and our Colonel got orders to go in on his own. Our reception in Bloemfontein would have surprised you. It was quite funny in its way—not in the least like entering an enemy's town. The people simply came forth and cheered us as friends. A small group of nuns who came out to meet us wished us 'Good evening,' and said we were very welcome. To myself, as an Aberdonian, it was very home-like to pass by a shop with the inscription, 'Bon-Accord Restaurant.' The proprietor was standing at the door shouting himself hoarse. I was not surprised afterwards to learn that he was a pure Aberdonian. We camped outside the town, and next day Lord Roberts reviewed the Guards Brigade. His Lordship made a short speech, in which he complimented us on our rapid march, and said he was sorry he had not been able to lead us into Bloemfontein. 'But,' said his Lordship, 'I hope to be at your head when we go into Pretoria.' We all gave three very hearty cheers for the Commander-in-Chief, who has always been the soldier's friend. We would follow him anywhere."

To return to the closing events of the momentous 13th. At 8 P.M. a telegram was sent home describing with simple brevity the entry into the capital:—"From Lord Roberts to the Secretary for War.—Bloemfontein, March 13, 8 P.M.—By the help of God and by the bravery of Her Majesty's soldiers, the troops under my command have taken possession of Bloemfontein. The British flag now flies over the Presidency, vacated last evening by Mr. Steyn, late President of the Orange Free State." [Pg 111]

An army order was issued on the 14th, in which the Chief said:—

> "On February 12 this force crossed the boundary of the Free State; three days later Kimberley was relieved; on the fifteenth day the bulk of the Boer army under one of its most trusted generals was made prisoner; on the seventeenth day news came of the relief of Ladysmith; and on March 13, twenty-nine days from the commencement of operations, the capital of the Free State was occupied.

> “This is a record of which any army would be proud—a record which could not have been achieved except by earnest, well-disciplined men, determined to do their duty, whatever the difficulties and dangers.
>
> “Exposed to the extreme heat of the day, bivouacking under heavy rain, marching long distances often on reduced rations, all ranks have displayed an endurance, cheerfulness, and gallantry which is beyond all praise.”

Lord Roberts added that he desired especially to refer to the heroic spirit with which the wounded had borne their suffering. No word nor murmur of complaint had been uttered. The anxiety of all when succour came was that their comrades should be attended to first.

So the great march was over—the hurry, the fatigue, the loss of life, the perpetual anxieties had brought about the desirable end—and the tremendous first act in the historic drama of the century was nearing its conclusion. Looking back on the difficulties that had been surmounted—the movement of some 40,000 men and 20,000 quadrupeds across over 100 miles of mostly dry veldt, where water was scarce and heat tropical, and where the enemy lurked in masses in kopje or donga, and had to be fought at intervals—the march appeared little short of miraculous. Now the curtain was shortly to go up on the first scene of the second act, an act which would have for its background the Orange River Colony, formerly known as the Orange Free State!

FOOTNOTES:

[3] Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. E. Umphelby, who died of the wounds which he received during the fight, was forty-six years of age. He commanded the Victorian portion of the Royal Australian Regiment of Artillery. He joined the Victorian Militia Garrison Artillery in 1884, and in the following year was appointed lieutenant in the Permanent Artillery. He was promoted to be captain in 1888, major in 1891, and lieutenant-colonel in 1897. Sent to England by the Victorian Government in 1889, he passed through various artillery courses, including the long course at Shoeburyness. Lieutenant-Colonel Umphelby was attached to the staff of Major-General M. Clarke at Aldershot from June to August 1890. See vol. iii., “Victoria.”

CHAPTER IV

MAFEKING IN FEBRUARY

The investment was much less close than formerly. Owing to the increasing activity in other parts of the theatre of war, Colonel Baden-Powell was relieved of the pressing attentions that were previously bestowed on him. Now for the first time he found himself in touch with the outer world, for telegraphic communication was restored in the direction of Gaberones, about ninety miles north of Mafeking, and from thence a bi-weekly service of runners was instituted for the conveyance of letters and telegrams, of course at the owners’ risk. There was delight all round, and “Old Bathing Towel,” as contemporary Carthusians used irreverently to call him, made haste to rejoice the hearts of those at home with a report of his doings.

SLEEPLESS MAFEKING—HOT WORK IN THE TRENCHES.

Drawing by R. Caton Woodville.

On the 4th of February the etiquette of the Sabbath was broken by an accident. The machine-gun at Fort Ayr was fired, and the enemy was not slow to reply. Lieutenant Grenfell, unarmed and

without a flag of truce, pluckily went out to tender apologies for the accident. He was met by the Boers, who exchanged for a flask of whisky two copies of the *Standard and Diggers' News*, containing glowing accounts of Boer victories on the Tugela! It needed more than the contents of the flask to correct the dismay occasioned by the lamentable, if exaggerated, news of the abandonment of Spion Kop, and the inhabitants could only console themselves by remembering what a stupendous and gratuitous liar the Boer could be. Luckily for them, they only accepted half of the Dutchmen's tales, and had learnt by experience that the art of editing Boer journals was dependent on imaginative rather than realistic talent. For instance, "one who knew" described the methods of *Volkstem* thus:—"When you knew it, something could be extracted. The key to the mystery was this: The paper always published the exact opposite of what had taken place. For instance, a few days before Cronje's capture it had a grand headline—'Cronje the Captor.' And underneath came the astounding statement that Cronje had cornered 900 British Lancers on the Koodoosrand. Alas! for Cronje and his Lancers! They existed only in the editor's fertile imagination." So, notwithstanding the report of reverses elsewhere, the large heart of Mafeking was still bent on bursting its cramped shell. If antiquated methods of warfare were carried on in other parts of South Africa, they were certainly not pursued here, for Colonel [Pg 113] Baden-Powell was a modern of the moderns. The secrets of the enemy's tactics were at his fingers' ends, and where science failed to match them resource came in. He knew how to make dynamite spit and scream and threaten; he studied the problem of tension and the art of playing on the nerves of his adversary, and Cronje's remark, "Not men, but devils," made as that redoubtable one shook the dust of Mafeking off his shoes, must have been the dearest compliment the Colonel's heart could crave. The Colonel, in a despatch forwarded to Colonel Nicholson—an officer who, with a small column and armoured train, held Mangwe, Palapye, and other places on the rail—dated February 12, described his activities:—

"MAFEKING, *February 12*.

"On the 3rd inst. our Nordenfeldt was chiefly occupied in preventing the enemy from completing their new work on the northern slope of the south-eastern heights. Assistance was rendered by our seven-pounder, emplaced in the bush to the east of Cannon Kopje. The enemy's siege-gun replied vigorously. During that night the enemy were nervous and restless, and kept firing volleys at our working parties, being apparently apprehensive of attack. Their firing continued until dawn, when the work in our trenches ceased.

"There was a curious incident at Fort Ayr that Sunday. Our machine-gun there was fired accidentally, and the enemy replied. Lieutenant Grenfell went out and apologised for the accident. Though the gun had been fired and the enemy had replied, he did not take a flag of truce with him. The Boers met him, and exchanged two copies of the *Standard and Diggers' News* for a flask of whisky.

"On Monday, the 5th, irregular shelling continued all day. In the evening heavy rains fell, but the enemy kept up the bombardment till midnight, firing a new incendiary shell, which, however, failed to take effect.

"On the 7th there was a desultory bombardment, and the sharpshooters were busy. On the 8th the enemy's siege-gun fired one shell only.

"On the 11th the enemy were quiet, being engaged in fortifying their big gun emplacement, and generally preparing to resist attack from outside. A good deal of night-firing was exchanged between our outlying positions and those of the enemy, volleys being fired at short ranges.

"Next day the enemy were fairly quiet. Mr. Dall, a well-known citizen, was killed, and two Cape boys were wounded, while two natives in the town were killed and some four wounded."

The circumstances of Mr. Dall's death were deeply tragic, for his wife, who was in the women's laager at the time, on hearing of the news was half-distracted by the shock. Owing to the grievous affair the dance that was to have taken place was postponed to the following day. [Pg 114]

THE MAFEKING MAIL.

SPECIAL SIEGE SLIP.

Mafeking Garrison.

GENERAL ORDERS.

LATEST NEWS.

Meat Rations.

NOTICE.

Facsimile of Issue of 25th January 1900 of the Mafeking Mail.

Colonel Baden-Powell issued an order which broke to the besieged the information that the Commander-in-Chief had requested them to hold on till May. Hearts dropped to zero! If properly conserved, it was believed that provisions might be eked out till the Queen's birthday, but the [Pg 115] quality of the fare was bad enough without consideration of the quantity. The men were tough, they were game for anything; but the women—helpless, worn, unnerved, surrounded by children, and limited to the confines of an insanitary laager—they made an additional tangle to the already knotty situation. The townsfolk going to the posts in the trenches, with their own lives in their hands, had upon them the burden of thought for those, their weaklier belongings, who were waning with anxiety and disease—waning many of them into their graves. Still the garrison grumbled little. It set out as Sabbath decoration for the forts and trenches some smart Union Jacks which had been worked by the ladies in the town, and the dauntless ones engaged in a concert, the programme of which was vastly appreciated. Here "B.-P.'s" well-known talents came in handy, for he played the Chevalier of the entertainment and displayed all the versatility of that renowned performer. From the æsthetic Paderewski (with his hair on) to a Whitechapel Coster is a good jump, but the gallant Colonel, who had so long impersonated Job to order of the British Government, was not to be defeated by minor representations, however various. After this joviality a ball was attempted, but alas! with sorry success. Before the gaily attired guests were well under way the uproar of Maxims and Mausers had begun. They tried to dance. It would have been a case of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning. A staff officer arrived ordering all to fall in. Soon there was a general stampede, officers fled to their posts, orderlies rushed off to sound the alarm, the galloping Maxim tore through the blue obscurity from the western outposts to the town; the Bechuanaland Rifles and the Protectorate Regiment hurried to the brickfields, the Cape Police made for the eastern advance posts, while the ladies, charming, disconsolate, hied them precipitately to places of refuge. There, in the lambent beams of the moon, were seen excited shadows, all either rushing to their bomb-proof shelters or scudding to the sniping posts of the river. Showers of bullets flecked the sapphire air, and the exquisite serene night was changed into a long, wakeful, quaking anguish. The Boers kept up their firing operations throughout the small hours, but at dawn, when they received a *quid pro quo* from the British quarter, they deemed it best to subdue their ardour for a brief space. Rest was short-lived. On the 13th the gunners again made themselves offensive by endeavouring to hit the flour-mill, and they succeeded in their efforts, though fortunately without destroying it. They pursued their murderous industries throughout the day, pouring bullets on any one who dared to show a nose in the open, and about noon succeeded in seriously wounding Captain Girdwood, who was returning to luncheon on his bicycle. [Pg 116]

The unfortunate officer—one of the most popular fellows and as gallant as he was jolly—never rallied after receiving the fatal wound and died on the following day. In the evening he was buried. The solemn rite was conducted with simplicity under the mild moonbeams which silvered the gloomy scene and softened the rigid faces of the bronzed warriors who hung in melancholy regret round the open grave.

The Boers sometimes endeavoured to affect jocosity. From the advanced trench, which was some hundred and ten yards from the besiegers' main trench, their voices could be heard travelling on the breeze. The prelude to their attacks began not seldom with "Here's a good morning to you, Mafeking," or other remarks of cheery or personal nature. Then rattle, rattle, and one of the British band would drop. On one of these occasions an amusing if tragic ruse was perpetrated. The Boers were known to be fond of music, and some one of the tormented hit on the happy idea of performing for the benefit of the hostile audience. The savage breast was soothed. The Boers were "drawn." They stopped to listen. Enraptured, they advanced nearer, nearer. Finally, two enthusiastic, inquisitive heads protruded from cover—protruded never to protrude again!

The Boers soon began to try the expedient of attacking Mafeking by proxy. Assaults were made, or rather attempted, by a mongrel force, composed largely of mercenaries—Germans,

Scandinavians, Frenchmen, and renegade Irish (probably “returned empties” from the gallant Emerald Isle), ne’er-do-weel’s, who felt it necessary at times to do something for their living. These were assisted by natives, who were pressed into their service to make a convenient padding for their front in advance, for their rear in retreat, as they took good care to save their own hides when retirement was obligatory.

Fortunately their artillery practice, which was patiently kept up, was very inferior, otherwise Mafeking would soon have been in ruins. On one afternoon the enemy plied his siege-gun and another gun with great vigour. Out of eight rounds one shot besprinkled two of the besieged with dust; a 5-pounder gun from one quarter and a 1-pounder Maxim from another filled the air with deplorable detonations for two whole hours, yet happily no life was lost. To this hot fire the inhabitants replied only with their rifles. It was wonderful in what good stead their rifles had stood them, and it was thanks to them, and not to the Government, that the town had been saved at all.

The difficulties both at Kimberley and Mafeking were the result of the obstructive policy adopted by the Colonial Government before the outbreak of hostilities. While the storm-cloud hung on the horizon, Kimberley had appealed to Mr. Schreiner for permission to send up from Port Elizabeth Maxims which had been ordered by the De Beers Company, and the licence was refused on the [Pg 117] ground that there was no necessity to strengthen the defences of the town. The appeals from Mafeking were treated in much the same way, the authorities at the Cape suggesting that there was no reason to believe that the situation demanded extra precautions!

Ingenuity and pluck had been the backbone of British defence, not British guns. An ordnance factory was established, and excellent shells were cast, and even powder manufactured. Thus the alarm lest ammunition should run out before the arrival of relief was allayed. The great ambition of the garrison was to complete a 5½-inch howitzer, and throw “home-made shells from a home-made gun with home-made powder.”

Major Baillie described with some pride the self-contained nature of the community: “We have our bank, our ordnance factory, and our police; and we flourish under a beneficent and remote autocracy. And now, as regards the ordnance factory, it was started for the manufacture of shells for our 7-pounder, for shot, brass and iron, for our antique cannon, and for the adaptation of 5-pounder shells (left here by Dr. Jameson) to our 7-pounders by the addition of enlarged driving-bands. These have all proved a complete success, and too much praise cannot be given to Connely and Cloughlan of the Locomotive Department, who have organised and run the factory. As great a triumph has been the manufacture of powder and the invention of fuses by Lieutenant Daniels, British South Africa Police and the Glamorgan Artillery Militia, which render us secure against running short of ammunition. A gun also is being manufactured, and will shortly be used. This factory is of long standing, but the authorities had not allowed us to allude to its existence.”

Other manufactures, too, were commenced, for manufacture it must be called—the art of making the poor skeletons, at one time known as horses, into succulent meat. Some declared that the number of cats and dogs was visibly thinning, but none dared pry too closely into the workings of the wonderful machinery that fed them. A number of the Protectorate Regiment’s horses were slaughtered, and any others that were shot by the enemy were passed on to the commissariat.

A soup-kitchen, under the supervision of Captain Wilson, was opened for the purpose of supplying some 600 natives with nourishing food, and rendering them contented with the vicissitudes of fate. The compound was scarcely inviting, and resembled a third-rate haggis. In two great boilers scraps of such meat as could be gathered together were simmered down, and to this immense stockpot was added various meals, which gave the mess the necessary consistency. The natives bought it eagerly at 6d. a quart, and really rejoiced in it. [Pg 118]

The blacks, indeed, suffered less than the whites. The latter were paying a guinea a day for very scant fare, while the Baralongs, who were earning from 1s. to 2s. 6d. a day, were able to sustain life on half their wages, and save the rest to buy luxuries, a wife possibly, when the stress of the siege was over. The young children suffered most of all, for malaria and unsuitable food played havoc in the women’s laager, and the graveyard was filled with small victims to the Imperial cause.

About the middle of the month the Boers became abnormally active, and for several days sounds of digging and picking suggested that they were throwing out new trenches beyond those they already manned in the region of the brickfields. The full significance of the activity was discovered by Sergeant-Major Taylor, who—in charge of three pits which formed the most advanced post—suddenly espied, some fifty yards in advance of the limit of the Boer trenches, a hostile figure! The apparition wore a German uniform, and Sergeant-Major Taylor was soon aware that the enemy were intending to sap the British position. Colonel Baden-Powell was informed of the impending danger, and at night a counter-sap extending 100 yards was thrown out, from which point it would be possible for the besieged to fire on the new work. The tension of the situation was extreme. Eighty yards only separated the combatants, and the enemy continued to burrow, approaching little by little, while the British continued to harass them in their labours by an active fusillade whenever a chance presented itself. But the operations continued, and every hour brought the Boers nearer. At last a night came when the enemy had almost reached his goal, and, moreover, had moved the Creusot gun to a position on the south-eastern heights so as to command the entire area. With due precaution the defenders tried to occupy the advanced posts, but the Boer firing was so correct and persistent that the position was rendered untenable. Sergeant-Major Taylor, a splendid fellow—who more than once had

ventured eavesdropping to the edge of the Boer trenches—and four others were mown down in their gallant efforts to save the situation. The enemy, satisfied with his exertions in this direction, now began to turn his attention to the forts in the rear—a bad move, for while the Dutchmen hammered in that region the British rapidly seized the occasion to construct a traverse across the mouth of the sap. This, of course, was not carried forward without attracting the attention of the enemy, who fired fast and furiously. But the task was accomplished, after which the Boers and the British, worn out, rested from their hostilities. For a day and a night the Boers were in occupation of the advanced hole and the sap that had been carried from it, but it was soon recaptured, and the connection made with the Boer trenches blown up with dynamite. [Pg 119]

On the 20th the Protectorate Regiment gave a dinner, which turned out to be quite a luxurious repast. Invitations were supplemented by the request to bring their own bread! Some of the officers shot a few locust-birds, small as quail, which, when carved judiciously, went round among the guests. Added to this there was a sucking pig, obtained none knew whence, but nevertheless most welcome.

On the 22nd, Sergeant-Major Looney of the Commissariat was sentenced to five years penal servitude for the misappropriation of comestibles and stores, which had been going on for some time. The Commissariat was reorganised by Captain Ryan (Army Service Corps) with untiring energy and economy. To the soup-kitchen went everything, scraps of meat, or hoof, meal, unsifted oats, bran, all were turned to account, and food of a sustaining, if not luxurious kind, was provided for every one. At this time the Boers were growing despondent, and began to doubt their chance of forcing the town to surrender. From a conversation overheard by some wary ones who had crept close to the enemy’s trenches, it appeared that President Steyn had urged Commandant Snyman to carry the town by storm, and afterwards to come to the rescue of the Free Staters with his force, but the Burghers had expressed their opinion that it was now too late to take Mafeking—they should have done so the first week.

The inhabitants were very pleased with their own ingenuity, and in their ordnance workshops the manufacture of shot and shell went on apace. The mechanics of the railway works, by a system which seemed to act on the lines of a conjuring trick, turned out from the shell-factory about fifty rounds a day. No waste was allowed. Even the fragments of the enemy’s shells were utilised. These and scraps of cast iron were purchased at twopence a pound for smelting, and twopence, it must be remembered, was now a magnificent disbursement, as money was growing more and more scarce. Curiously enough, the present foreman, Conolly, was at one time manager of the shell department of the ordnance factory at Pretoria, where he personally supervised the manufacture of the larger shells. He now necessarily took a parental interest in the shells flung into Mafeking by the Boers’ Creusot gun, and also in those new ones that were flung out of Mafeking as a result of his own and others’ inventive genius! A good deal of shelling took place, and that on the 23rd was said to be a salute in honour of Independence Day in the Orange Free State. The inhabitants of Mafeking would not have grudged their enemies the, to them, distressing attempt at festivity had they then known that four days later the death-blow of that independence would be struck, and the salute was destined to be the last in the history of the Republics! [Pg 120]

Fare was growing more and more meagre. Horse-flesh was diversified by bread made from horse forage; water, to say the least of it, was becoming interesting only to bacteriologists. The native population for the most part starved; they now and then indulged in a raid and brought back fat fare, which for a day or two had a visible effect upon their ebon skeletons, but they brought it at the risk of their lives.

Uninterrupted deluges of rain made existence a perpetual misery, the trenches and also the bomb-proof shelters were flooded, and the hapless inhabitants, saturated, fled into the open, uncertain whether death by fire was not preferable to death by water. The first, at all events, promised to be expeditious, while the second offered prospects of prolonged sousing and exquisite tortures of enduring rheumatism. Daily the state of affairs became less tolerable. Typhoid and malaria stalked abroad, and in the children’s and women’s laager diphtheria had set in.

On the 25th a message was received from the Queen. Its effect was electrical. It was vastly heartening to feel and to know that the great Sovereign herself knew and sympathised with the history of the struggles and privations, the loyalty and pluck of this little hamlet in a remote corner of Her Majesty’s possessions. It seemed more possible now to starve patriotically, and, with every mouthful of nauseating mule or horse, to put aside personal discomfort and to remember the gracious fact that each individual was a symbol, a sorry and dilapidated one perhaps, but nevertheless a symbol of the majesty and might of Greater Britain. In addition to the royal message there came two days later the stimulating intelligence that Kimberley had been relieved, and that Lord Roberts was advancing on Bloemfontein!

On Majuba Day, all made sure that some sort of attack might be expected, and they prepared to welcome it with a salute from the new howitzer gun which had engaged the genius of the siege arsenal. The Boers, however, were quiet. A good deal of psalm-singing took place in the Boer camp, while the besieged put the big gun through his paces.

Ash Wednesday was observed without sackcloth and ashes. Mafeking had been enjoying Lenten abstinence for months past, and therefore when, at the service on the following Sabbath, the parson reminded them that it was the fast season, every one in the church enjoyed the joke so hugely that smiles were with difficulty suppressed. As one of the congregation afterwards

suggested, they had had so much “Extra Special” fasting that they ought to be let off Lenten obligations for five years.

SOUTH AFRICAN LIGHT HORSE (Trooper). **BRABANT’S HORSE (Trooper).** **DUKE OF EDINBURGH’S VOLUNTEER RIFLES (Dispatch Rider).**

Photos by J. E. Bruton, Cape Town.

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CHAPTER V

AT CHIEVELEY AGAIN

On the 8th of February General Buller again retired across the Tugela. He realised that his whole flanking movement had been a failure, and though the ill-success has been attributed to many causes, we may safely say that the main cause of the fiasco was the insufficient rapidity with which the scheme was conducted. Napoleon declared that flank marches should be as short, and executed in as brief a time, as possible. Celerity and concealment in these cases must go hand in hand, and when celerity is overlooked concealment becomes impossible. Delay had given the Boers the opportunity to shift their positions and produce a new front even more powerful than that at Colenso. The General’s idea had been, after taking Vaal Krantz, to entrench it as the pivot of further operations, but the experience of two days’ hard fighting taught him that, owing to the nature of the ground, and the despatch of the Dutchmen, the plan was far from practicable. The position was found to be dominated in every direction by the enemy, and unless Vaal Krantz could be held securely during the advance to Ladysmith, it was thought advisable not to hold it at all. For this reason the Natal Field Force returned to Chieveley, the original scene of operations, where the “Red Bull,” as the Boers called him, with indomitable energy, planned out a fourth scheme of attack. It was now to be directed against the Boer left. The battle of the 15th of December was mainly directed against the Boer right, as there were reasons to believe the right to be the weaker of the two flanks. That attack had failed for reasons we know. Circumstances having changed, and more guns and men being now at his disposal, the General determined to direct his energies to the Boer left. The task was a complicated one. Both river and hills twist themselves mysteriously, and seemingly in conspiracy with Boer notions of defence. For instance, the river after leaving Colenso (which may be looked upon as the Boer centre) twists invisibly into the shelter of the impregnable kopjes, and takes a direct turn towards the north, thereby passing in front of the Boer right and in rear of the Boer left. By taking to themselves possession of Hlangwane the enemy had made their position almost unassailable. This formidable left ran in a series of trenches, sangars, and rifle-pits from Colenso past the thorn-bushes by the river, and [Pg 122] on to the powerfully fortified hill of Hlangwane. From thence it was extended over the ridge called Green Hill, and farther to the companion eminences of Cingolo and Monte Cristo, and the nek that united them. The first thing, therefore, to be done in a plan for turning this formidable position was to take possession of Hussar Hill, which was accomplished on the 14th of February, from which day and on till the 27th fighting without cessation took place. Some one called it the fighting march, for it was a series of ferociously contested moves from Chieveley to Hussar Hill, and thence *via* Cingolo Nek and Monte Cristo Ridge till the Boer line had been turned and the British forces had placed themselves diagonally across the left of the Boer position. Having worked round in a species of hoop, which crumpled the Boer left before it, and having deposited men and guns to mark as milestones the victorious advance, a frontal advance was soon made on Green Hill, the adjacent slope some three miles from Hlangwane, which mountain became, as a

natural consequence of the foregoing proceedings, a somewhat easy prize. The victory at Monte Cristo, which enabled us to acquire Green Hill, may be looked upon as the turning of the tide. From the hour that commanding point was occupied the future of the relieving army was practically secure, for the river was gained, and the Boers once on the run, there needed only the fine fighting quality of our troops—the A1 quality of the world—to bring things to a satisfactory conclusion. But now to try to follow this complicated and well-considered march.

On the 12th of February a force of mounted infantry, with a battalion of infantry, a field-battery, and a Colt battery, reconnoitred Hussar Hill (so called because it was the scene of the surprise to a picket of the 13th Hussars), a long ridge situated at the south of Hlangwane, where General Buller subsequently established his headquarters. The South African Light Horse and another Colt battery were treated to some fierce volleys by the enemy, with the result that Lieutenant J. Churchill and another officer were wounded. Four men were injured and one was missing. The fight was a brisk one, though of but half-an-hour's duration, for the hill was not strongly held. The troops then moved forwards, winding through a series of wooded ridges to the right, till they reached an entrenched ridge connecting Hlangwane with higher hills on the east. As there were continual increases and changes in regard to the troops, it will be found advisable, before going further, to refer to a table of the distribution of the forces as far as they were then known:— [Pg 123]

SIR REDVERS BULLER'S FORCE

SECOND DIVISION.—(Major-General Lyttelton).—2nd (Hildyard's) Brigade—2nd East Surrey; 2nd West Yorks; 2nd Devons; 2nd West Surrey. 4th (Norcott's Brigade)—1st Rifle Brigade; 1st Durham Light Infantry; 3rd King's Royal Rifles; 2nd Scottish Rifles (Cameronians); Squadron 13th Hussars; 7th, 14th, and 66th Field Batteries.

THIRD DIVISION.—5th (Hart's) Brigade—1st Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers; 1st Connaught Rangers; 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers; 1st Border. 6th (Barton's) Brigade—2nd Royal Fusiliers; 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers; 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers; 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers; Squadron 13th Hussars; 63rd, 64th, and 73rd Field Batteries.

FIFTH DIVISION.—(Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Warren).—10th (Coke's) Brigade—2nd Dorset; 2nd Middlesex; 2nd Somerset Light Infantry. 11th (Wynne's) Brigade—2nd Royal Lancaster; 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers; 1st South Lancashire; 1st York and Lancaster; Squadron 13th Hussars; 19th, 20th, and 28th Field Batteries. Corps Troops —1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers; Imperial Light Infantry; Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry; 61st Field Battery (Howitzers); 78th Field Battery; Natal Battery, 9-pounders; twelve Naval 12-pounder quick-firers; 4th Mountain Battery; two 4.7 Naval guns, 1st Cavalry Brigade (Burn-Murdoch)—1st Royal Dragoons; 14th Hussars; Gough's Composite Regiment. 2nd Cavalry Brigade (Dundonald)—Natal Carabineers (squadron); South African Light Horse (four squadrons); Imperial Light Horse (squadron); Natal Police (squadron).

General Lyttelton succeeded General Clery (disabled by blood-poisoning) in command of the Second Division, while Colonel Norcott (Rifle Brigade) temporarily took command of the Fourth Brigade.

On the 14th the army moved to occupy the new position on Hussar Hill. As we know, the irregular cavalry, the South African Horse, had secured the position, and some disappointed Boers who had thought to be beforehand with them had disappeared with much haste and not a little chagrin. After a short time Generals Wynne Coke, and Barton with their respective brigades joined Sir Charles Warren's division, and bivouacked on the new ground. There was some trouble about water, as Hussar Hill was arid and the nearest river was some miles away. However, necessity is the mother of invention, and necessity brought to light a system of water-waggons by which a small but appreciable amount of water was carried to the troops. While this was going on above, General Lyttelton was moving to the east of Chieveley round the eastern spur of Hussar Hill.

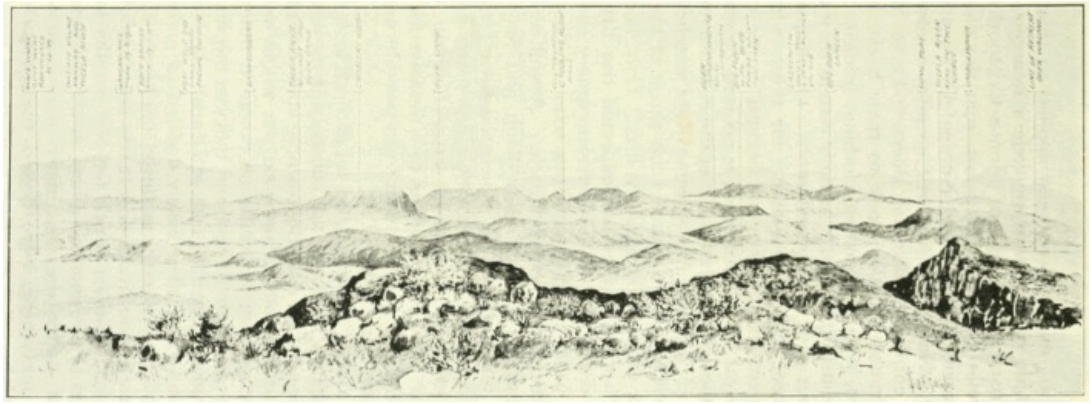
Here during the afternoon a number of Boers hiding among the boulders and dense scrub made themselves obstreperous; but their fire was overcome by our artillery, and before long they were dislodged.

Little happened for two days save some artillery duelling, then an appreciable advance was made. A wooded hill called Cingolo, part of the range east of Hlangwane, was the next to be seized by an adroit flanking movement of the infantry. They gained and kept the top of the hill with but few casualties owing to the dense cover. [Pg 124]

At dawn on the 17th a general advance was ordered. Consequently soon after midnight the business of movement began. At daybreak the cavalry under Lord Dundonald marched to discover the enemy's left flank through the tangled and rugged country to the east—country so broken and wooded that on occasions it was impossible to ride, and all that could be done was to lead the horses through thicket, and thorns, and over boulders by the light of intelligence rather than military regime. And while this was going on the artillery was performing a boisterous symphony on seventy instruments, an *aubade* to awaken such Boers as might still be dozing in rock, ravine, or ridge in the regions of Hlangwane.

At last the troopers had wormed and torn and scrambled their way up the ridge, where, on arriving, the Boers accosted them with the music of musketry in tolerably fast time. Bullets

whizzed and commenced to send the now well-known cataracts over the advancing troops, and for the moment it seemed to be a toss up as to whether the toil of gaining the position would be in vain. However, the Boers were in small number, and very soon they fell back, leaving the top of the hill before the advance of the Imperial Light Horse and the Natal Carabineers, who slew or captured some Burghers and horses. In their attack they were supported by the Queen's, the right battalion of Hildyard's attack, who had taken a short cut and came up in the nick of time, so that the Boers promptly scurried off and left the troops in undisturbed possession of Cingolo Hill. [Pg 125]



The Scene of the Fighting at Monte Cristo Hill on February 19.

(From sketches taken during the action by Captain P. U. Vigors, 2nd Devon Regiment.)

Further important movements took place on the 18th. Through the operations of the day before, the Boers had been hunted along towards Monte Cristo, and from thence at daylight they commenced to pour Creusot shells on the British troops. The Queen's, who had bivouacked on the northern slope of Cingolo, and came in for a good deal of fire, valiantly crossed the nek, and, supported by the rest of the 2nd Brigade under General Hildyard, assaulted and finally took the southern end of Monte Cristo. The 4th Brigade occupied the left or western slope. Operations were begun very early, and the long precipitous climb in a baking sun occupied till midday. The advance over country that is trellised with spruits, dongas, thorn-bush, and scrub at times was painfully slow, and the scrambling and stumbling, sometimes on all fours, to the roll and rattle of musketry and the banging of unseen and unlocatable guns occupied some hours. The words of the Scripture, "Eyes have they and see not," might have been applied to this nerve-trying assault [Pg 126] against hidden men with smokeless weapons. No sooner had the troops reached the top of Monte Cristo than they were assailed by a well-directed artillery fire from the direction of the invisible foe, shrapnel, Maxim, and Nordenfeldt guns pouring over the men as they advanced. But they steadily pushed on and up till at last they entirely routed the Boers. These, finding themselves in a desperate situation, took to their heels, leaving tents, food, biltong, lard, potatoes, onions, clothing, bridles, blankets, and Bibles behind them in disarray. In their retreat they were fired on by the cavalry, but they made small reply. Quantities of ammunition were captured, and, unfortunately for those who still maintained their respect for the enemy, several forms of expanding bullets. The Royal Welsh Fusiliers, supported by the rest of the 6th Brigade, assailed the eastern flank of the enemy's position. The 2nd Brigade of Cavalry on the extreme right watched the eastern slopes of Monte Cristo, and drove back those of the enemy who scurried there to escape the artillery fire. They had been completely taken by surprise; they had expected the British to begin a frontal attack on Green Hill, a smooth grassy eminence sliced with the gashes of Boer entrenchments, some of these six feet in depth, others blasted in the solid rock. Assaulted now by big guns in front and flank, attacked in flank and rear, the enemy, without offering much resistance, evacuated their strong positions and fled across the Tugela. That their flight was precipitate was testified by the fact that they even left letters behind. One of these was from General Joubert in answer to a request for supports, in which he said these could not be sent; the position was sufficiently garrisoned with the men they had.

The crest of Monte Cristo gained, all at once took heart. This hill was the hinge on which all the subsequent movements turned. By means of it Green Hill and the frowning eminence of Hlangwane could become ours. From Hlangwane the whole western section of the great Colenso position could be rendered untenable by the enemy. This the Boers well knew, and this was the reason for their tough resistance on the dreadful 15th of December. Now, seeing us masters of Monte Cristo, they wisely decided to make themselves scarce. The British guns once mounted on Monte Cristo made a complete difference in the situation. It was now possible to enfilade many of the choice positions which for two months had been the snug hiding-places of the enemy. Now, in the distance, was visible—the subject of many dreams, many nightmares—Ladysmith. Around it, here and there, were dotted the enemy's camps and hospitals—only eight miles away—a comfortable walking distance—eight miles ahead of our advanced lines! Ladysmith—an austere [Pg 127] queen to be wooed, a fainting beauty to be won—so she had seemed, with lives risked and sacrificed like mere handfuls of sand for the sake of her, for a few yards of approach near to that cestus which engirdled all the grand British blood that had palpitated for our coming, so long, so very long. It was glorious merely to know that Ladysmith was now in sight of the British picquets: there was a sense of exhilaration in the thought of real progress after the ghastly six days at Spion Kop, the fluctuating four at Vaal Krantz, the fourteen in and out and round about the precincts of fatal Colenso. Success was now almost within a stone's throw, and all hearts throbbed with expectation and confidence. All were in some way longing for the handclasp of

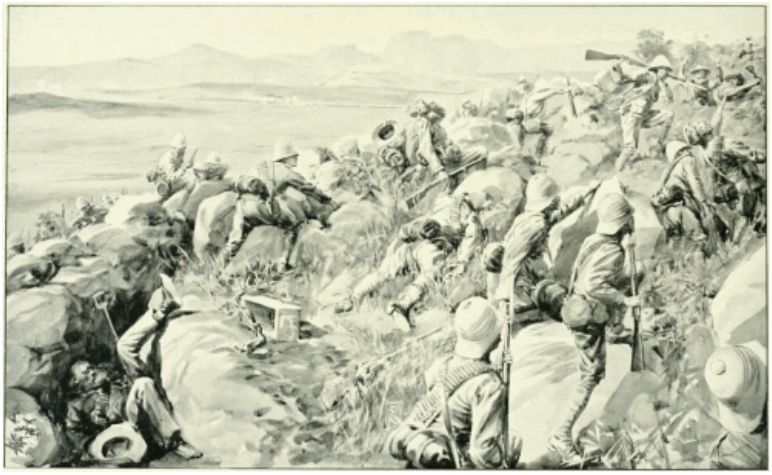
those beleaguered men. There, in that cup of the hills were kindred; if not kindred, friends; if not friends, comrades in arms—comrades who had belonged to the same old regiments or “ground” with the same “crammers” at the same schools. And even for complete strangers there was a thrill of excitement, almost of exultation, at the prospect of coming in touch with these men, of grasping hands with renowned warriors, every one of whom had helped to illuminate one of the most sumptuous pages of the history of the nineteenth century.

The intense heat, the terrific toil, the unparalleled hardships were forgotten. The energy and dash of the troops, hitherto unfailing, were now redoubled. They had now taken possession of the most important ridge which pointed towards the frowning guardian eminence of the beleaguered concave—Bulwana Hill—and hopes were high and spirits exuberant. There remained but Pieter’s Hill between them and the imprisoned multitude. They now saw that the turn of the tide had arrived, and already they looked towards the distressed town, veiled in the haze of distance, and pictured the hour when their long spell of strain and turmoil should meet its reward. In this day’s fight, the Queens, the Scots Fusiliers, the Rifle Brigade, and the irregular cavalry had especially distinguished themselves. It was the distinction of endurance rather than of display. The dogged perseverance with which they launched themselves at the positions to be taken, toiling through scrub and thorn, “potting away” at an invisible foe, was more to be applauded than more demonstrative feats of heroism. Colenso and Spion Kop had been showy in their tragedy, but the “fighting march,” as it was called, was a feat of superb endurance, of obdurate pluck. A perpetual stumbling and tearing, an eternal pushing up and on against opposition the more terrifying because unseen; the sound of booming, smokeless murderous guns; the sight of maimed or mutilated human beings dropping suddenly under the serene and smiling sky were experiences to test the grit of the toughest and most stoical. A bolt from the blue! That was all. Yet presently [Pg 128] there were dead men littered about, and far away, unconscious of their woe, were widows and orphans.

On the 19th, Hlangwane Hill—the impregnable Gibraltar, as it has been called—was taken by the Fusilier Brigade. As this hill, which commanded Colenso, had been evacuated by the enemy—who had left three camps and all their paraphernalia, thousands of rounds of ammunition, and 2000 Maxim automatic shells behind them—we were now free to cross the Tugela. Whether the enemy would continue to fight inch by inch was uncertain, but still there was one subject of rejoicing—the river was ours. The following officers were killed and wounded during this day’s operations:—2nd Royal Fusiliers—Killed, Captain W. L. Thurburn; wounded, 2nd Lieutenant E. C. Packe. 2nd Scottish Rifles—Wounded, 2nd Lieutenant J. M. Colchester-Wemyss.

On the 20th General Hart, after a slight resistance by a weak rearguard, occupied the village, and now the line of the Tugela on the south side from Colenso to Eagle’s Nest was in British hands.

Colenso was found to be a desolate ruin. The enemy had evidently tried to make matchwood of the place. Windows and doors told the tale of wanton destruction. They were wrecked past remedy. Houses everywhere were redolent of the Boer, the walls bore traces of his illiterate caligraphy, and his offensive remarks in many tongues amused without disturbing those who read them. They could afford to smile now. And while they went on their tour of investigation the hidden Boers could not resist some sniping shots from their trenches in Port Wylie, which were only silenced by the forcible arguments of the Naval gunners on Hussar Hill. On this day another trooper of the South African Light Horse (Walters) distinguished himself by swimming across the Tugela and bringing over the pontoon, thus repeating the gallant deed of his comrades at Potgieter’s Drift. Thorneycroft’s Mounted Infantry, though peppered by Boers who were ensconced on the kopjes on the opposite side, succeeded in fording the river, and proceeded to reconnoitre the kopjes on the other side. All the guns were gone, and the kopjes themselves seemed to be weakly held. In the distance small clusters of Boers were seen in the act of digging trenches, but it was generally believed that the enemy’s tactics were now those of a rearguard action.



THE RELIEF OF LADYSMITH—THE LAST RUSH AT HLANGWANE HILL.

From a Sketch by René Bull, War Artist.

Terrible reminiscences of the battle of Colenso greeted them wherever they turned. Fort Wylie was seamed with bombardment. The railway bridge remained a lamentable picture of upheaval. Outside the village, lying as they had dropped, were the rotted carcases of horses which had fallen victims to the enemy's volleys—fallen in tangled masses, all harnessed together, while making a futile effort to save the guns of the 14th and 66th Batteries. The trenches, beginning on [Pg 129] the very brink of the river, with their protective layers of sandbags and their ingeniously arranged earthworks, told how comfortably and with what immunity from danger the Boers had set about their fell work on the fatal 15th of December. The labour in making Colenso and its surroundings impregnable must have been as immense as it was skilful.

General Hart's advanced guard now proceeded to cross the Tugela, the Boers having vacated all their positions south of the river, and on the 21st he was followed by the 5th Division, who drove back the enemy's rearguard. The enemy had moved north and turned into a strongly fortified line of kopjes midway between the river and Grobler's Kloof, and from thence there was some doubt whether he could ever be displaced. At the approach of the British, he, however, retired precipitately towards Grobler's Kloof.

The crossing, on both days, of the magnificent infantry was apiece with all that had gone before. First came one shell, then another, but the troops steadily pursued their warlike course while the missiles hurtling over their heads exploded in the plain behind them. The great question had been as to where the river should be crossed. Now that the British were in possession of the whole area of Hlangwane and its connecting hills, it was possible to cross either where the river ran north and south, or where it ran east and west. The idea was to cross and get along the line of railroad, and follow a straight course up to Ladysmith. The enemy were believed to be in retreat, and therefore it seemed perfectly feasible to advance in the way attempted.

On the 21st the gunners continued persistently at work, determining that the Dutchmen should have no spare time for the building of further entrenchments. The foe managed, however, to render themselves aggressive by firing on an ambulance train that was steaming out of Colenso station. Meanwhile the army was moving westward from Hlangwane plateau, with a view to marching up beyond the stream, and getting out of the valley of the river and beyond the kopjes that frowned over it.

LADYSMITH

The story of famine is an insidious story, a creeping horror that, scarcely visible, yet slowly and very gradually saps first the spirits, then the energies, then the blood, and finally all the little sparks of being that serve to divide us from the dead. The seal of hunger was set on every action, though there was no complaint. The cramped-up Tommy in his sangar was scarcely as conscious of his risk of danger from shot and shell as of the aching void that assured him how much nature [Pg 130] abhorred a vacuum. When he marched, he marched now with the step of one who husbands his resources; when he whistled as of old, he ceased abrupt, the lung power being scant and short-lived. His eyes, plucky and Britishly dogged, grew large and wistful, as though looking for something that never came. Dysentery and fever caught him and left him, but left him still in charge of famine, which held him in leading-strings, allowing him his freedom to crawl so far and no farther. Yet daily routine went on as of yore. The shadow of the man went on picket or fatigue duty and met his fellow-shadows as often as not with a jest. In ordinary life you don't look upon cheek-bones as the features of a face. You take stock of eyes, nose, mouth, possibly ears. In Ladysmith a man's character betrayed itself in his cheek-bones and in the anæmic tone of the tanned parchment that was stretched across them. You could read of patience and heroism in the hard, distinct outlines, and comprehend the magnificent endurance of one who, expecting to fight like a devil, was condemned to feed like an anchorite.

The men were very near the barbaric brink of starvation. On one occasion a shell plumped into the mule lines and killed a mule. There was a general rush. Shells followed on the first, crashing all around, but the famished racing throng heeded them not; their one desire was to get at the slain beast, to capture the wherewithal to stay their grievous cravings. Quickly with their clasp-knives they possessed themselves of great chunks of the flesh, and then, with death hurtling around them and over their heads, they proceeded to carry their prize to safer quarters. Here they determined to have a good "tuck-in." Fires were kindled, and the flesh was toasted and swallowed with lightning rapidity.

For some weeks the inhabitants had been reduced to an essence of horse politely termed Chevril, which was declared to be both palatable and nourishing. The horses, with their ribs shining in painful high lights along their skins, dropped day after day from sheer famine, and were boiled down to meet the pressing demand. Their bones were gelatinous, however wizened their poor flesh.

The horses that were used for food, like those that yet crawled, were mere skeletons. When the General, in view of making another sortie, inquired how many there were in camp that could still carry their rider for six miles, he was informed that there were only twelve equal to the task.

The lack of fat and milk and vegetables was irremediable, but dainties, so called, were provided in curious ways. Blancmange was manufactured from ladies' violet-powder which had been "commandeered" for service in the kitchen, and biscuits were fried by the men in the axle-grease provided for the carts, in hope to make the task of biting them less like crunching ashes. [Pg 131]

The place itself appeared to be becoming the Abomination of Desolation. Many of the dwellings were unoccupied; the low bungalow-shaped villas were closed and barricaded; here and there were buildings cracked and seamed by shot and shell, with great gaps in their faces, reminding one of human beings without eyes and teeth. Melancholy and depression reigned everywhere—on the tangled, desolated gardens, as on the silent, listless men, who had almost ceased to converse, for there was nothing left to converse about. Buller's coming had been discussed threadbare; the prospect of the food holding out had been examined in all its hideous emptiness. Lassitude and weariness was the universal expression on the visages of the hollow-eyed spectres that were the remains of the dashing heroes of Glencoe and Elandslaagte. The land and riverbeds presented the appearance of a series of grottoes, shelters of wood, stone, and wire, the dens of wild animals, the caves of primitive man. Between the burrows and caves were sentry-paths and paths to the water-tanks, worn with the incessant traffic of weary feet.

Though affairs were arriving at a sorry pass, there were still some wonderful recoveries. For instance, Captain Paley (Rifle Brigade), who was wounded in both hips, was getting on amazingly. Though the leg was badly shattered near the joint of the hip, there was every reason to hope that it might be saved. Captain Mills, too, was mending. To have a bullet pass through the lung and pierce the spinal column is not a common experience, and one that few recover from; yet the doctors gave hopeful reports. They had scarcely thought that Major Hoare would outlive a fractured skull—completely riddled they said it was—yet the Major was expected to be himself again shortly. These were marvellous cases, and probably the wounded owed their curious recovery to the nature of the weapon of offence. Missiles have peculiar characteristics, and differ in their capacity for deadliness. For instance, bullets of the most harmless kind are those having a high velocity, those that hit apex-first and do not "keyhole," and those possessing a hard, smooth sheath with a smooth, rounded surface. After these come missiles of more death-dealing or mutilating nature—the Dum-Dum bullets, with the nickel sheaths around the apex removed in order to expose the lead nucleus, Remington lead or brass bullets, shrapnel bullets, and fragments of shell. Each and all of these things had been endured by one or other of our gallant men during the course of the campaign, and the surgeons were able to make a profound study of causes and effects. One of the heroes of Ladysmith who went near to testing the efficacy of that most deadly thing, the shell, was Archdeacon Barker. With the utmost presence of mind, he picked up a shell in the act of exploding and plumped it into a tub of water, thus saving many [Pg 132] lives. Numbers of officers who had been hit by Mausers or Lee-Metfords were now pronounced out of danger, among them Colonel C. E. Beckett (Staff), Major F. Hammersley (Staff), Captain W. B. Silver, Captain M. J. W. Pike, Major H. Mullaly, Lieutenants Crichton, S. C. Maitland, W. W. MacGregor (of the Gordons), and A. A. G. Bond. Captain Lowndes, who was wounded dangerously on Surprise Hill, was picking up wonderfully. Lieutenant Campbell, of the Imperial Light Horse, whose case at first seemed serious, was rapidly gaining ground.

Very capricious sometimes was the action of bullets. Some of the injured would have as many as four or five wounds, all "outers," to use their musketry phrase, while others would suffer strange and wonderful things in consequence of the vagaries of a single shot. A strange chapter of accidents befell one officer. He was hit under the left eye, the bullet passing out of his cheek into his left shoulder, and then into his upper arm, which it broke. Not content with doing this damage, the shock of the blow knocked him down, and in falling the unfortunate man broke the other arm! On the other hand, there were some, reported doing well, and expecting to be fit for duty shortly, who were veritably perforated with bullets—"a perfect sieve" one man called himself, with a touch of excusable pride.

The bravery of these men! The bravery of these women! Outside we knew only of the husk of their suffering; but the kernel of it, the bitter sickening taste of it, the taste that lived with them, that was there when they woke, and remained after they had closed their eyes in sleep—that, none but themselves could ever know. Boredom and flies, they jestingly said it was! Rather was it a slow petrifaction of the soul. Death to them had lost its sting, as life had lost its fire. Ladysmith was the grave of corpses that were not dead, forms in the cerements of burial now too weak to knock themselves against the coffin-lid and cry, "Save us! our last breath is not yet spent; we are living, loving men!" Yes, they were too weak. They made no sound, no cry. They who had so long resisted could resist no longer; they, who with their last effort on that fatal 6th of January had been a terror to their enemies, were now only a terror to themselves. Could they bear it longer? Was it possible? Might they not in some fit of madness, some palpitating moment of lust for dear life, begin to spell the letters of the unframable word, begin just to think how it might be spelt?—S—u—r—r— No! They could not get to the end of it! It choked them. They could stand the fetid water, the foul air with its loathsome whispers, its hideous suggestions, which at eventide grew strong as phantoms from the nether world; they could face the sight of virulent disease and gaunt famine stalking up and down as the hyena slinks round and about his prey; they could gasp under [Pg 133] the fierce heat; they could tune their ears to the racking, rending tortuous explosions of death dealing shells—they could do all this, but they could not get beyond. The first syllable of the crushing word could never pass their lips!

Food now was only interesting because of its mystery; it was beginning to have merely an ornamental value in the programme. Various "confections" made of violet-powder that had been impounded, strange brawns of mule-heel and suspicious "savouries" were the subject of speculation and awe. People pretended to be pleased and to put a good face on matters, and

indeed they had every reason to be thankful; for, owing to the ingenuity of Lieutenant M'Nalty, A.S.C., under whose auspices potted meats, jellies, soups, were manufactured, the imagination if not the appetite was appeased with what, when not too closely investigated, appeared to be quite delectable fare.

The following prices were realised at an auction on February 21:—Fourteen lbs. of oatmeal, £2, 19s. 6d.; a tin of condensed milk, 10s.; 1 lb. of fat beef, 11s.; a 1-lb. tin of coffee, 17s.; a 2-lb. tin of tongue, £1, 6s.; a sucking-pig, £1, 17s.; eggs, £2, 8s. per dozen; a fowl, 18s.; four small cucumbers, 15s.; green mealies, 3s. 8d. each; a small quantity of grapes, £1, 5s.; a plate of tomatoes, 18s.; one marrow, £1, 8s.; a plate of potatoes, 19s.; two small bunches of carrots, 9s.; a glass of jelly, 18s.; a 1-lb. bottle of jam, £1, 11s.; a 1-lb. tin of marmalade, £1, 1s.; a dozen matches, 13s. 6d.; a packet of cigarettes, £1, 5s.; 50 cigars, £9, 5s.; a ¼-lb. cake of tobacco, £2, 5s.; ½ lb. of tobacco, £3, 5s.

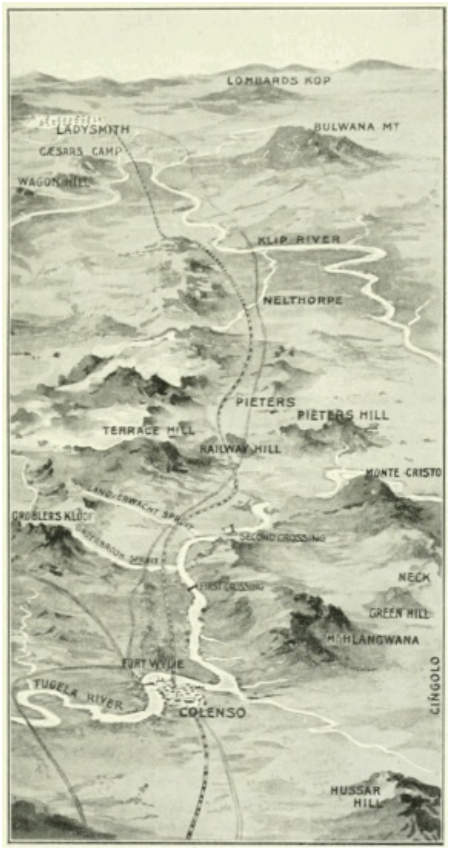
A doctor, writing home about this time, said:—

"Things are getting very trying here now. For two or three weeks we have had only half a pound of horseflesh and a quarter a pound of very bad mealie-meal bread, with one ounce of sugar. Sometimes a little mealie porridge is added or a little more bread. This is precious low fare, I can tell you, especially as the bread is so bad we can hardly eat it, and it makes us ill. Of course, drinks gave out after the first month, and tobacco followed suit some time ago, but, fortunately, they discovered a little Kaffir tobacco recently, which, vile as it is, we smoke eagerly. Alas! mine won't last long now. It is impossible to get proper food for patients, and not much of improper. Consequently men are beginning to die fast of scurvy, enteric, and dysentery. We have reduced the number of sick from two thousand to seventeen hundred here, of which I have about a hundred severe cases, and am allowed about two to three wineglasses of stimulants a day for the lot; so you can imagine what a farce that is. Drugs, too, are almost finished, and firewood for [Pg 134] cooking is an endless difficulty; so you can imagine I am pretty tired of the daily duty in these terrible fever-tents. About half of our doctors and half the nurses are sick, and there were always few enough. One doctor has already died and a nurse."

Among the severe cases alluded to was one especially to be deplored. Colonel Royston, whose name is intimately connected with Volunteering in Natal, was hopelessly ill. In spite of his iron constitution, he succumbed to the ravages of enteric fever, and was in reality marked by the finger of death at the very time when the relief force was pressing to deliver the town from the awful doom that hung like a miasma over the whole place. The gallant Colonel had done splendid service, and for two decades had worked energetically to promote the welfare of the Colony and stimulate interest in the Volunteer movement. As trumpeter in the Carabineers in 1872, the youth was found engaging in operations against Langalibalele, including the flying column in the Double Mountains and the capture of the chief; and in 1879, in command of a troop of Carabineers, he distinguished himself in the Zulu campaign. Later he accompanied Sir Bartle Frere to the Transvaal in command of the High Commissioner's escort. From 1881 to 1889 he commanded the regiment, and was appointed Commandant of Volunteers in 1898. When the call to arms came, the brave Volunteers of Natal were ready to a man, fully equipped to go to the front—a practical proof of the splendid ability and foresight of their chief. All agreed in deploring his illness, and declared that an officer more fitted to lead the gallant regiment, more trusted and more beloved, it would be hard to find.

THE BATTLE OF PIETERS

On Wednesday the 21st, as we know, our troops were back at Colenso. The day was mainly devoted to "sniping," to bringing up heavy guns, and to getting the troops across the Tugela. But the 12-pounder Naval guns on Hlangwane, and the 61st Howitzer Battery in the open, indulged in a stupendous concert addressed to the enemy's position, in which they were assisted from below Monte Cristo on the right by more Naval guns. The enemy was not inactive. No sooner had a pontoon been thrown across the river below Hlangwane than they began to drop shells in the neighbourhood of the troops who were attempting to cross. These, however, accomplished their intention without sustaining much loss. Meanwhile, Corporal Adams, of the Telegraph Brigade, distinguished himself by swimming across the Tugela, wire in mouth. The troops now advanced—General Coke's Brigade, followed by two battalions of General Wynne's and a field-battery. The Somersets, Dorsets, Middlesex, covered by shell-fire from two field-batteries and the heavy guns, [Pg 135] moved across the plain to the foot of the hill, with the object of reconnoitring Grobler's Kloof. At first no signs of the enemy were visible, the Dutchmen, though not entrenched, being cunningly [Pg 136] hidden in the dongas and thorn-bushes, which crowded the vicinity. But no sooner had the Somersets, who had been the first across the pontoon, approached the base of the hill, than a cataract from the rifles of the enemy suddenly burst over them. The Boers had withheld their fire till the troops were within point-blank range, and then rent the weird mystery of the dusk with jets of flame. Nearly a hundred of the gallant fellows dropped and three officers were killed. Some said that they were fighting the enemy's rearguard, but in reality a large portion of the whole Boer army was engaged. Though it was the first time the regiment had been under fire, the admirable behaviour of the men in the face of overwhelming hostile numbers was remarkable. Nevertheless, the unpleasant discovery of the enemy's strength at last involved the retreat of the troops, and decided the General that an advance in force must be made on the following day.



Balloon Map illustrating the Battle of Pieters and Relief of Ladysmith.

The following officers were killed and wounded in the operations of 20th and 21st February:—

> 1st Rifle Brigade—Wounded, Lieutenant W. R. Wingfield-Digby. 2nd Somersetshire Light Infantry—Killed, Captain S. L. V. Crealock, Lieutenant V. F. A. Keith-Falconer, Second Lieutenant J. C. Parr; wounded, Captain E. G. Elger. 2nd Dorsetshire Regiment —Wounded, Second Lieutenant F. Middleton. 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers—Wounded, Colonel J. Reeves. Staff—Wounded, Captain H. G. C. Phillips. Royal Army Medical Corps —Died of wounds, Captain R. E. Holt.

On Thursday the 22nd, part of General Wynne's Brigade began to advance. They were supported by Hildyard's Brigade from the region of Fort Wylie. (General Barton's Brigade and part of General Hart's were left on the south side of the river.) Progress was slow and painful. The country—a strip some two miles broad and stretching out between high hills and the river—was richly veined with irritating dongas and covered with bushes and scrub. The position was commanded by the wooded slopes of Grobler's Kloof, and enabled the Boers to worry the men in their advance with an enfilading fire. All around were steep kopjes such as the Boer soul delights in, and thorny tangles which afforded comfortable shelter for the enemy's guns. The movement, therefore, was costly, as it was difficult to locate the guns, and the sharpshooters of the enemy, well hidden in their rocky fastnesses, maintained a continuous fire on front and flanks of the advancing force. With their usual wiliness, the Dutchmen had evidently suspended their contemplated retreat, and had gathered together, crept up, and taken up a strong position on the left flank, whence they were enabled to hamper the troops considerably. Nevertheless the Royal Lancasters leading, the South Lancashire following, valiantly advanced towards their objective so resolutely that the Boers, who almost to the last stood their ground, pelted off to the sheltering [Pg 137] nooks and dongas in the shadow of Grobler's Kloof. Only one remained to face the bayonet. But the losses consequent on this smart day's work were many. Brigadier-General Wynne while conducting operations was slightly wounded, and about a hundred and fifty more were put out of action.

MAJOR-GENERAL A. FITZROY HART, C.B.

Photo by Elliott & Fry, London.

The troops were now moving on a route along the line of river and rail to Ladysmith, half-way between Colenso and Pieters Hill, and with kopjes to be stormed at intervals during the onward course. They had performed a species of zigzag movement, pointing from Chieveley north-east to Cingolo and Monte Cristo, and coming back in an acute line north-west to the river. Now the forward march involved the capture of all the strong positions, beginning with the twin kopjes, Terrace and Railway Hill, and ending with the whole Pieters position, and possibly Bulwana.

On the three hills—Terrace Hill, Railway Hill, and Pieters Hill—rested the Boers' second line of defence. The first hill, called Terrace Hill, lay about a mile and a half to north-east of the right flank. Farther east, divided by a valley, was Railway Hill, so called because on its east came the railway line, on the other side of which was Pieters Hill. Sir Redvers Buller's plan was to advance the infantry beyond the angle of the river, and then stretch round the enemy's left from Railway Hill, and so go straight to Ladysmith. The idea seemed a good one, as the Dutchmen were believed to be moving off; but it was afterwards discovered that they, seeing the assault was not to be made at once upon the weak, the left edge of their position, had gathered courage and returned, reinforced by commandos from Ladysmith, to their well-known hunting-ground on Grobler's Kloof and elsewhere, preparing to give battle so long as there was safety for their extreme left. Most of the night of the 22nd was spent in fighting of desperate character, the Howitzer Battery keeping up an incessant roar, explosion following explosion in the sombre blackness of midnight. The Boers, meanwhile, were attacking with rifle fire all along the line, and so persistent were the Dutchmen in their effort to get rid of the troops, that some even were only repulsed by the bayonet.

Details of that dreadful night's work are scarce, but a faint, yet tragic, outline was given by an officer of the 60th Rifles, who was one of the survivors of the fatal fray. This regiment had moved on the left of Hildyard's Brigade, and were swinging along a boulder-strewn hillside, which, surmounted by a series of uneven and indefinite crest-lines, gave on to a plateau where they intended to take up a line of outposts for the night. It so happened that the Boers had ensconced themselves at the rear edge of the position which the troops, in the belief that it was evacuated, were so incautiously approaching. Accordingly, in the gathering gloom a collision of amazing violence occurred—amazing to both Britons and Burghers, for the former surprisedly plumped upon the Dutchmen, who as surprisedly gave way before them. In an instant the gallant 60th were after the fugitives, charging and cheering, but assailed now by fierce volleys from undreamed-of trenches. This sudden and furious attack forced them, unsupported as they were, to seek cover till reinforcements could arrive. But no help appeared. The plight of the unfortunate band, whose peril had been hidden in the grim density of the night, was entirely unsuspected by the companion forces that fringed the crests in the vicinity, and therefore the unhappy fellows lay all night clinging to the cover of the boulders, and rained on by showers of bullets that traced a tale of agony along the ground. At dawn on the 23rd, no supports having arrived, and under the same fervid fusillade, they began to retire. In twos and threes they commenced to go back, finally covered in their retreat by the East Surreys, who had grandly gone forward to the rescue. But the cost of splendid succour was dearly and almost instantaneously paid. Men fell thick and fast over the hilltop—the Colonel, second in command, and four officers of the East Surrey Regiment dropping one after another, some wounded in many places. Captain the Hon. R. Cathcart, "the rearmost of his command, as he had been foremost of the night before," dropped dead, and round him within a few moments fifty other noble fellows had passed to the Unknown!

[Pg 138]

General Buller's orders on the 23rd were brief. Push for Ladysmith to-day, horse, foot, and artillery; both cavalry brigades to cross the river at once. The advance, which had hitherto been slow, was now hurried on. At midday it was in full swing, the cavalry having crossed the Tugela and massed at Fort Wylie. Meanwhile the Boers had taken up a formidable position on the right—on the well-entrenched height called by the gunners Three Knoll Hill, to describe the three hills, Terrace, Railway, and Pieters, that formed the entire position—while on the left they plied their activities from Grobler's Kloof. The artillery in front of Railway Hill concentrated a brisk fire upon the Boers therein entrenched, who returned some animated replies, assisted by other Dutchmen from a hidden vantage-point on the north-east of that eminence. General Hart's Brigade, to whose valiant Irishmen the difficult task of capturing the position was entrusted, was ordered to advance. This advance from Onderbrook Spruit to the base of Terrace Hill, the companion of Railway Hill, was a feat of cool courage that has seldom been equalled. The hill, triangular and standing some three hundred feet above the Tugela, was approached by a wide open space, which was commanded by the Boers, whose complicated position on Railway Hill and its [Pg 139] component ridges gave them every advantage. The correspondent of the *Standard* furnished a description of these precipitous steeps. "Railway Hill rises from the Tugela a mile from Platelayers' House. It is, perhaps, best described as triangular in shape, with one angle pointing towards the river. It rises from the latter in a series of jagged, boulder-strewn kopjes, until three hundred feet or so above the Tugela. A kloof, through which the railway passes upwards on its way to Pieters Station, separates the last jagged ledge from the hill proper. From the last kopje or ledge, and immediately on the other side of the line, the main part of the hill rises abruptly, almost precipitously, with a sharp edge running back in a north-westerly direction for several hundred yards. The base of this north-westerly line of hill makes up a kloof thick with thorn trees, and this kloof recedes round the left end of the hill to the rear, where the enemy's force, under Commandant Dupreez, had its quarters, while a little farther to the rear is still another kloof, in which the enemy's Creusots were mounted. Along the beginning of the sharp edge referred to a long trench was cut out, and right ahead, as the hill ran still upwards on an incline for three hundred yards or so, were other trenches, until the hill terminated in a crest crowded with commanding fortifications." To assail this formidable stronghold the troops moved off in the following order—the Inniskilling Fusiliers leading, followed by the Connaught Rangers, the Dublin Fusiliers, and the Imperial Light Infantry. Steadily marched the kharki-clad throng, advancing along the railroad in single file with rifles at the slope. At that time there was comparative silence save for the muffled drumming of artillery in the surrounding kopjes. These apparently frowned free of human influence, the dark, dull frown that portends many evil things to the eye of the advancing soldier. But nevertheless the troops moved nearer and nearer to the hill over the open ground by the railway bridge with a steady step and that air of consolidated distinction that marks acutely the difference between Briton and Boer armies. They had no sooner showed themselves in the open than the air grew alive, the trenches on the frowning hill vomited furiously. A casual observer remarked that it reminded him of the pantomimes of his youth, of Ali Baba's cave, when, at a given signal, its jars opened and the forty thieves suddenly—simultaneously—popped up their heads. Only now there were not forty but thousands of brigandish forms—forms that hastened to deal death from their Mausers on the advancing men. These were now coming on at a rush, a rush through the hailstorm whose every shower meant disaster. But Hart the valiant had said, "That hill must be taken at all costs"—and that was enough! The hill was about to be seized and the payments had already begun. One, two, three, [Pg 140] four, six—more and yet more down, one after another. So the men began to fall. The ironwork of the bridge had now its fringe of fainting forms. Still the splendid fellows pushed on. Still the air reverberated with the puissant pom-poming of the Boers' automatic gun. This they had turned on to the position they knew must be passed by the advancing warriors. Meanwhile the British artillery was saluting the hill, throwing up to heaven dust and splinter spouts that filled the whole atmosphere with blinding, choking debris, and causing the purple boulders far and wide to give forth rumbling echoes of the infernal rampage.

Gradually, in face of the deluge of shot and shell, the Inniskilling Fusiliers, the Connaught Rangers, and one company each of the Dublin Fusiliers, had wound their way towards the eastern spurs of Railway Hill, and in the late afternoon were ready for the attack. General Hart gave the word. Then, up the rugged stone-strewn heights the troops laboriously began to climb. Soon they reached a point, some hundred yards above, whence the Boers could pepper them with ease. At the same time from the adjacent hill more bullets whizzed upon them. Yet, with this horrible fire on their flanks and the deadly fusillade from the front, they persevered, dropping one after another like ripe fruit in a gust of wind. Volley after volley poured down on them, but up they went, cutting through wire, leaping boulders, and hurling themselves forward, and in such grand style, that the Boers, seeing the determined glitter of the bayonet, thought it wiser to retreat. They receded some two hundred yards up the hill, while the troops occupied the first position. Then, in the growing dusk, the Dutchmen were seen taking a commanding place on a somewhat higher or parent peak of the hill. From this point the Inniskillings, flushed with their first triumph, deemed it necessary to rout them. Fire streamed and spouted, the dim gloom of twilight came on; still the Irishmen, through the mist of evening and flashings furious from every side, advanced along the hill—a glorious, a tragic advance. One after another bit the dust. Men in mute or groaning agony lay prone in the gathering dusk. First went a major, afterwards another, and then two captains of this gallant band. The Boers had known their business. Some of their kopjes are of the nature of spider-webs; the outer fringe involves entanglement; and this especial eminence was of that particular nature that the second Boer position commanded the first. The Dutchmen, even as they receded, were able to mow down the men as they advanced, by a converging fire, against which it was impossible to stand. It was now an almost hand-to-hand

struggle between doughty Dutchman and dashing Briton. The Inniskillings were close, but every inch was gained with appalling loss to their numbers—indeed, the charging companies might almost have been described as individual men! [Pg 141]

Finally, some one gave the order to retire. But how? Most of the valorous band were stricken down, or had perished. The wounded could not be removed. Yet those that remained were too few to hold the ground in the darkness. All that could be done was to retire below the crest and wait till morning. A retirement was attempted, under the personal direction of the Colonel (Colonel Sitwell),[4] but in the course of the movement he was hit, never to rise again. The troops at last got to the cover of the hill, where they built schanzes and bivouacked. But from this point throughout the night firing continued, while the Boers above, between the intervals of dozing, peppered the bivouacs with bullets.

At 7 A.M., while cannonading had elsewhere assumed dangerous proportions, the Irish regiments were again assailed in their schanzes by the persistent Dutchmen. These had crept round the base of the hill and attacked the trenches from the western side. Volleys poured from all directions on a scene that was already deplorable. Only four officers of the Inniskillings remained. Of the Connaught Rangers five officers were wounded. The Dublin Fusiliers had lost their gallant Colonel (Colonel Sitwell), and also Captain Maitland of the Gordon Highlanders (attached). The picture at dawn and on throughout the day was truly appalling. The trenches of the Boers and those of the attacking force were now only some three or four hundred yards apart, and between them was spread an arena of carnage heart-breaking as irremediable. It was impossible for any one to show a nose and live. Wounded lay here, there, and everywhere, heaped as they had fallen, drenched in their own gore and helpless, yet struggling pathetically to edge themselves with hands or knees or heels nearer some place of safety. Dead, too, were entangled with the sinking, huddled together in grievous ghastly comradeship....

For thirty-six hours some of these heroes lay in wretchedness, hanging between life and death. Mercifully the Boers brought them water, but all their acts were not equally generous. Unfortunately, some misinterpretation regarding the Red Cross flag accentuated the misfortunes of the day. [Pg 142]

The Boers, it appeared, had begun by producing one. This signal should have been responded to by our troops, who, however, were not prepared to show another Red Cross flag, which display would have been the signal for truce. This being the case, the Boers, after carrying off their wounded and giving certain of the British wounded some water, removed their rifles. Further, they rifled their pockets and despoiled dead and wounded of boots and other property. Naturally, those who saw them were so infuriated at this wanton behaviour that they began to fire. From this time hostilities recommenced, and the innate cruelty of the Boers was evidenced in several cases. It was stated on the authority of an officer that many of the wounded in act of crawling away were deliberately shot. Let us hope that the aggravation at the non-appearance of the British Red Cross flag was the cause of the ugly display of character on the part of the enemy.

During the late afternoon the worn-out troops in their trenches at the base of the hill were fiercely attacked by the enemy's guns from all quarters. No such effective shell fire had been experienced since Spion Kop. Indeed, with the assistance of Krupps, and Creusots, and Maxims, and other diabolical instruments, the Boers managed to make a fitting concert for Beelzebub. Many of our positions on the lower slopes of the kopjes were enfiladed, and thus many gallant fellows in Hildyard's and Kitchener's brigades were killed. Several officers among those who were fighting on the left also fell, among them Colonel Thorold, Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

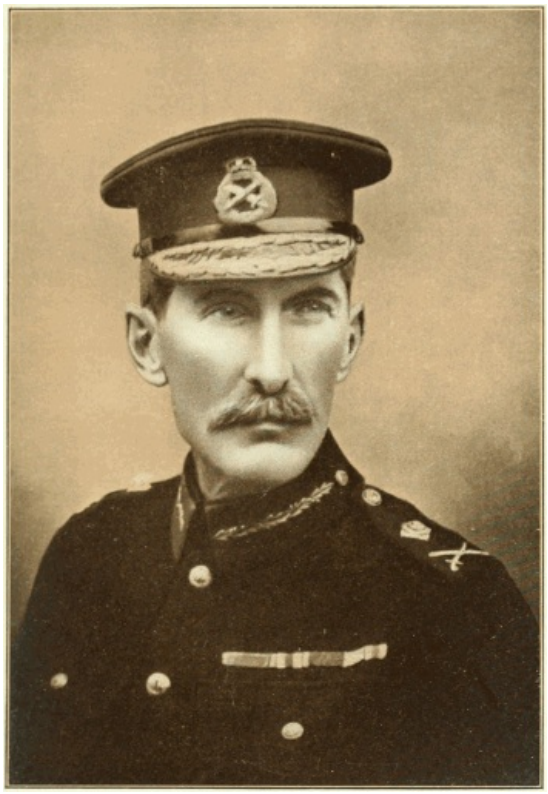
At this juncture, finding that the original passage of the river was commanded by entrenchments on every side, and that further advance would be costly in the extreme, the General decided that he must reconnoitre for another passage across the Tugela. This was forthwith discovered. Meanwhile, the day being Sunday, there was an armistice for the interment of the dead on both sides. Grievous were the sensations of those whose duty brought them to the awesome scene of death, who spent the long hours surrounded by sights hideous and forms uncouth, the remains of heroes, discoloured from days of exposure to the sun's scorching rays, to the damps and dews of night—lying limply rigid and rigidly limp in the unmistakable and undescribable abandonment of untenanted clay; or succouring still more pitiable wrecks, wrecks joined perhaps by an invisible handclasp with comrades in the other world, but still here, making a last struggle for the dignity of manhood, or fainting slowly, peaceably, beyond all knowledge of pain as of the splendid heroism that had placed them where they were! [Pg 143]

One who was present contributed to *Blackwood's Magazine* a curious account of that armistice—that was not entirely an armistice—of Colonel Hamilton's approach with the flag of fraternity (so often misused and abused by the Dutchmen), and of the strange apparitions that came forth suspiciously one by one from the depths of the hostile trenches. He said: "Seldom have I set eyes on a more magnificent specimen of male humanity than the Commandant of the trenchful of Boers, Pristorius by name, a son of Anak by descent, and a gallant, golden-bearded fighting-man by present occupation; for in far-away Middleburg those mighty limbs—he told it us without any of that stupid deprecation which would probably have characterised a similar confession on the part of an Englishman—were wont to stretch themselves beneath a lawyer's desk. Close on his heels came what a person who had never seen Boers before would have thought the strangest

band of warriors in the world—old men with flowing, tobacco-stained, white beards; middle-aged men with beards burnt black with the sun and sweat of their forty years; young men, mostly clean shaven, exhibiting strongly the heavy Dutch moulding of the broad nose and chin; big boys in small suits, suits of all kinds and colours, tweed, velveteen, homespun, and 'shoddy,' all untidy in the extreme, but mostly as serviceable as their wearers." These strange beings formed a strong contrast to the men who joined them, particularly in their attitude when confronted with the ghastly foreground of death which made the prominent feature of the amicable picture. The eye-witness before quoted declared that "it was much more difficult for them to conceal the natural discomposure which all men feel in the presence of the silent dead than for their more artificial opponents. From the airy and easy demeanour of the uniformed British officers, that dreadful plateau might have been the lobby of a London club. A Briton is at all times prone to conceal his emotions, and certainly in this instance the idiosyncrasy gave him a great social advantage over the superstitious Burghers, with their sidelong glances and uneasy shiftings." By-and-by, however, both parties grew even friendly, and the writer went on to describe an animated dialogue between himself and "a deep-chested old oak-tree of a man, whose swarthy countenance was rendered more gipsy-like by the addition of ear-rings. The opening of the conversation had its humours. 'Good-morning!' quoth I. 'Gumorghen,' rumbled the oak-tree sourly. 'Surely we can be friends for five minutes,' I ventured, after a pause. The rugged countenance was suddenly, not to say startlingly, illumined with a beaming smile. '*Why* not, indeed! *why* not, officer! Have you any tobacco?' Out came my pouch, luckily filled to bursting that very morning, and the oak-tree [Pg 144] proceeded to stuff a huge pipe to the very brim, gloating over the fragrance of the 'best gold flake' as he did so. The rumour of tobacco had the effect of dispelling the chill that still lingered on the outskirts of that little crowd, and many a grimy set of fingers claimed their share as the price of the friendship of the owners, the Commandant himself not disdaining to accept a fill with a graceful word of thanks. They were out of tobacco in that trench, it appeared, and suffering acutely from the deprivation of what to a Boer is more necessary than food."

Near to the place where they were stricken the Irish heroes were buried. Their last bed was made in a picturesque spot within the whisper of the spray of the river, and sheltered by the low-spreading thorn-bushes. The rest of the day was unusually peaceful, but in the evening the crackle of musketry from left to right of the position taken up by the Durhams again showed that the enemy was on the alert, and it was believed he was preparing for offensive operations during the night. It was discovered, however, that a gallant deed had put any effort to rush the British lines out of his power. Captain Phillips with eight Bluejackets had effectually rendered their searchlight useless, and had, moreover, got safely away after the venturesome act had been perpetrated and discovered.

The new passage was found by Colonel Sandbach (Royal Engineers) at a point below the waterfall on the east, and again guns, baggage, &c., were ordered to be removed to the south side of the Tugela. It may be advisable to note that the armistice mentioned was an informal one, which did not interfere with military movements. Owing to the desperate straits of the wounded on Inniskilling Hill (as the position, baptized in the blood of our heroes, had now been christened), the General had sent in a flag asking for an armistice. The Boers had refused. On condition that we should not fire on their positions during the day, they only consented to allow the bearer companies to remove the wounded and bury the dead. The Boers meanwhile improved their entrenchments, and the British troops, as stated, prepared for the operation of removal across the river. This they at first did with some misgivings, for they had tacked about so many times, but, on the whole, they bore the strain admirably. What with the hammering of Maxims, Nordenfeldts, and the fluting of Mausers, the men had for twelve days past run through the gamut of discomfort. They had been fed up with war. They were in the daytime fried, grilled, and toasted. At night the cold with its contrast had bitten and numbed them. They had bivouacked now in keen chilly blasts, now in intermittent downpours of rain, which had drenched them and made existence a prolonged wretchedness. And nothing had been achieved. Lives only had been [Pg 145] lost. But they still munched their bully beef and biscuit with an heroic cheerfulness and resignation that served to astonish and inspirit all who beheld it. There was no doubt about it that the pluck and perseverance of the British Tommy had become subjects for wonder and veneration!



MAJOR-GENERAL H. J. T. HILDYARD, C.B.

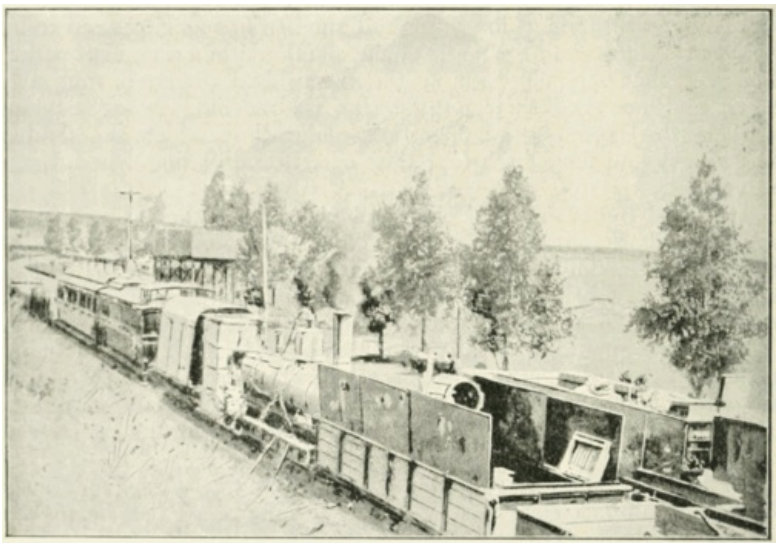
Photo by C. Knight, Aldershot.

During the night the pontoon bridge was removed from its original position and relaid at the point indicated by Colonel Sandbach. The Boers, watching the commencement of the move, were under the impression that a repetition of the retirements from Spion Kop and Vaal Krantz was to be enacted. They therefore deemed that the movement might be carried out with more expedition did they start a magazine fire at long range at such troops as happened to be between Colenso and the angle of the river. When they discovered, however, that only a portion of the troops had departed, they subsided and reserved their ammunition till morning, when a brisk artillery duel commenced operations—a duel in which the British in quantity and the Dutch in quality of practice distinguished themselves.

General Buller's revised plan was now to avoid the enemy's front, and work back again to the Hlangwane plateau, whence he would start again, having, as it were, made a redistribution of his troops, so that Hart's brigade in its expensively acquired position would now, instead of being his extreme right, become his extreme left. To this end guns and cavalry were removed, Naval batteries being posted on the Hlangwane and Monte Cristo positions, while Hart's brigade was left holding to the skirts, so to speak, of the enemy at Inniskilling Hill, and preventing him from congratulating himself on freedom.

The anniversary of Majuba began in clouds. Guns very early broke into an *aubade*, but awakened few. For there had been little sleep that night. All had dozed in their boots, ready for the worst. The cavalry proceeded to range itself at the northern point of the Hlangwane position, in order that by their guns and long-range rifle fire they might assist the advance of Barton's Brigade. This brigade was the first to start in the attack on the three hills on which the Boer left still rested. The disposition of the forces was as follows:—General Barton's Fusilier Brigade on the extreme right, with Colonel Kitchener's Lancashire Brigade—Colonel Kitchener having taken over General Wynne's Brigade while that officer was wounded—on his left, this latter being on the right of Colonel Northcott's Brigade. Colonel Stuart, working with a composite regiment on the south bank of the Tugela, protected the crossing.

General Barton, with two battalions of the 6th Brigade and the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, crept one and a half miles down the banks of the river, the Scots Fusiliers leading. Here the Tugela flowed between high shelving banks, while above them frowned the three spurs of the great Pieters position. As usual, these eminences were well ribbed with shelter trenches, and embedded everywhere were Boer sharpshooters, ready to pit cunning against courage, and sniggle at the victory of one over the other. A hot fire commenced on the river-banks while Barton's Brigade advanced gallantly towards its destination. The top of the hill was being raked noisily by the gunners. "Hell was dancing hornpipes aloft," some one said. However, in the afternoon British bayonets glittered against the skyline, and the thing was done. This, the most wonderful infantry in the world, had ascended precipitous cliffs 500 feet high, assaulted Pieter's Hill, gained the crest, and turned the enemy's left. [Pg 146]



Signal Apparatus of H.M.S. Forte, Mounted on Truck and used Nightly to communicate with Ladysmith.

This storming of the main position, which was accomplished by the Royal Scots Fusiliers and the Royal Irish Fusiliers, was a remarkable achievement, though the enemy, conscious of their weakness at this point, and knowing how completely they were dominated by the Monte Cristo [Pg 147] ridge, made no very prolonged opposition. No sooner had the brigade occupied the hill than the disheartened Boers removed in considerable strength to some dongas on the east, whence they continued to be aggressive, and poured a heavy rifle fire on the Fusiliers, whose losses were considerable. They failed, however, to dislodge them. At this time a simultaneous attack was taking place in the region of the two other hills which composed the Pieter's position. These the 4th Brigade under Colonel Northcott and the 11th Brigade under Colonel Kitchener were now assailing with magnificent courage. For two hours every spot on the kopjes had been searched, painted with the noxious hues of lyddite, and seamed with shrapnel, and few Dutchmen there were who cared to remain to welcome the bayonets of Kitchener's braves. Their preliminary advance was scarcely recognisable, kharki and kopje so smoothly blending themselves in one. Then on a sudden, as in the transformation scene when jars become forty thieves or shell-fish become fairies, the boulders took to themselves human shape and human tongue, and up flew a surging, yelling mass of fierce warriors, rushing the hill in the red light of the setting sun. The crest was carried magnificently by the Royal Lancasters, men who had been in the thick of everything for a month past, and who yet maintained their unconquerable British qualities without a flaw; and the Boers, recognising that the game was up, were seen skimming the distance like swallows in flight. Some magnificent service was done by the gunners of the Royal Navy and the Natal Naval Volunteers, service that was especially eulogised by the General, who declared that the losses consequent on the taking of the position might have been far greater but for the efficient manner in which the artillery was served. Be this as it may, an officer said what many echoed, namely, that however deadly our shell fire was, and however instrumental in winning the battle, "No infantry in the world but ours would have crowned such a victory with so much glory." For the Boers at first fought doggedly, relinquishing their hold of trench after trench only when artillery followed by the bayonets of the infantry made their positions untenable. In turn three hills were stormed; in turn cheer on cheer rent the air and travelled along the funnel-like banks of the river, and floated up to the rejoiced ears of those on Hlangwane and Monte Cristo, who had assisted to bring about the devoutly wished for consummation. The song of victory seemed to be taken up by the elements, earth and air and water, and the last flare of the guns of the enemy repeated it. All now knew that the way to Ladysmith was won; that the toil and tribulation, the perplexity and suspense, that had harassed them since the fatal day of Colenso had come to an end! There, right and left, were little black figures scudding away like ants disturbed; here streams of prisoners who had thrown up hands at [Pg 148] glint of bayonet; on all sides kopjes, kopjes, kopjes—ours, unchallengeably ours!

Some idea of the situation may be gathered from the description of a sergeant in the 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers:—

"On the 27th we put the damper on them.... You have read, no doubt, of Barton's Brigade deploying to the right early in the day. That deployment was made by crossing the pontoon bridge put up during the night by the Engineers. Instead of climbing up the banks on the opposite side, we crept down the water's edge over huge rocks for about a couple of miles. In the meantime our Naval guns, artillery, Maxims, were all blazing away overhead, and a terrible rifle fire was raging on the left. As we struggled up the steep banks the beggars spotted us, and things began to get lively. We got under a little cover, and blazed away for all we were worth.

"The whole brigade gradually pushed forward from one bit of cover to another, but still the Boers held their ground. About five o'clock in the afternoon the staff passed the word round to charge them out of it. We left our cover, and advanced by half-companies at the double. The company officers were given a point to make for, and as soon as we got in the open it was a case of every man for himself. It was a good 800 yards of open ground where my company had to cross, and, of course, they fired at us for all they were worth. A good many dropped, including A—— and the

two subalterns. What with shells bursting and a front and cross fire, it was like a full-dress rehearsal for the lower regions. We got on the hill, and made short work of our Brothers. Needless to say, they didn't all stand for the steel. They kept up a heavy fire on us until long after dark. Orders were passed to hold our own until daylight. As many of the wounded were without water, a terrible night was put in. The shouts for water, mingled with the groans of the dying, the sparks from the Mauser bullets as they struck the rocks, the blackness of the night, &c., fairly made me say my prayers.... The stretcher-bearers searching for the wounded carry lamps, and these lamps made a nice target for Brother Boer to snipe at. Daylight came at last, the night mist began to clear away, dead Tommies grinning at dead Boers, wounded men of all sorts, everybody stiff, sore, dirty, and tired. The Boers scooted."

And the next day came the serene happiness of viewing the Boers in full retreat behind Bulwana and in the direction of Acton Homes, the winding string of waggons trekking away from the scene of past triumphs. The misery, the lives, the pains, the doubts, the disappointments were well repaid by that vision of the departing foe, the foe moving off for ever from the strongholds of [Pg 149] Natal. All had been accomplished by a blend of pluck, obduracy, and perseverance that can scarcely find its match in the records of British prowess. They had suffered at Colenso, they had tested the deadly summit of Spion Kop. They had backed out from that cruel region with their lives in their hands, and repeated the same process in the equally terrific area of Vaal Krantz. They had come forth smiling, stalwart, staunch as ever, believing and trusting and determining to hew their way through the rocky wilderness sown with destruction and save the 8000 odd of their fellows whose lives verily hung by a thread. And now for fourteen days, each hour fraught with blood and broiling, they had moved on from one dangerous position to a second more dangerous position, till at last, after protracted torment and suspense, they had driven before them the whole horde of adventurous Dutchmen—foes allowed to be the bravest of the brave, if the shiftiest of the shifty. Now they had their reward. The Boers were scrambling to be off—that much they could see of them. It was only in those fleeing moments they saw them at all. At other times, when battle raged warmest, all that was known of the Brother Boer was the shape and number of his bullet!

The following officers were killed and wounded on the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th of February:—

Staff—Wounded, Major-General A. S. Wynne, C.B. 3rd King's Royal Rifle Corps—Killed, Lieutenant Hon. R. Cathcart; wounded, Lieutenant D. H. Blundell-Hollinshead-Blundell and Lieutenant A. F. MacLachlan. 2nd Royal Lancaster Regiment—Killed, Lieutenant R. H. Coë and Second Lieutenant N. J. Parker; wounded, Major E. W. Yeatherd, Lieutenant A. R. S. Martin, Lieutenant F. C. Davidson (since dead), and Lieutenant R. G. D. Parker. 2nd East Surrey Regiment—Wounded, Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. W. H. Harris, Major H. L. Smith, Major H. P. Treeby, Captain F. L. A. Packman, Lieutenant C. H. Hinton, Second Lieutenant J. P. Benson. 1st South Lancashire Regiment—Wounded, Captain B. R. Goren, Lieutenant H. R. Kane, Captain S. Upperton, Second Lieutenant C. H. Marsh. 2nd Devonshire Regiment—Wounded, Lieutenant E. J. F. Vaughan. 2nd Royal West Surrey Regiment—Wounded, Lieutenants B. H. Hastie, H. C. Winfield, and A. E. M'Namara. 1st Rifle Brigade—Wounded, Captain and Quarter-Master F. Stone and Second Lieutenant C. D'A. Baker-Carr. 2nd King's Royal Rifle Corps—Wounded, Lieutenant W. Wyndham and Second Lieutenant G. C. Kelly. 2nd Rifle Brigade—Wounded, Second Lieutenant H. C. Dumaresq. 1st Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers—Killed, Lieutenant-Colonel T. M. G. Thackeray,[5] Major F. A. Sanders, Lieutenant W. O. Stuart; wounded, Major C. J. L. Davidson, Captain R. M. Foot, Lieutenant J. Evans, Lieutenant [Pg 150] J. N. Crawford, Second Lieutenant C. Ridings, Second Lieutenant H. P. Pott, Second Lieutenant J. G. Devenish; missing, Second Lieutenant T. A. D. Best. 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers—Killed, Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel C. G. H. Sitwell, D.S.O.; wounded, Lieutenant A. V. Hill, Second Lieutenant A. Broadhurst-Hill, Second Lieutenant F. B. Lane, Second Lieutenant J. T. Dennis. 2nd Gordon Highlanders—Killed, Captain S. C. Maitland. Imperial Light Infantry—Wounded, Major Hay. 1st Connaught Rangers—Wounded, Lieutenant J. L. T. Conroy, Lieutenant R. W. Harling, Lieutenant H. Moore Hutchinson, Lieutenant A. Wise, Second Lieutenant A. T. Lambert, Second Lieutenant J. M. B. Wratislaw, Captain E. M. Woulfe Flanagan (5th Battalion, attached). Royal Welsh Fusiliers—Killed, Lieutenant-Colonel C. C. H. Thorold,[6] Lieutenant F. A. Stebbing; wounded, Second Lieutenant C. C. Norman and Second Lieutenant H. V. V. Kyrke. 2nd Royal Fusiliers—Wounded, Lieutenant R. H. Torkington.

The following casualties occurred on the 27th of February:—

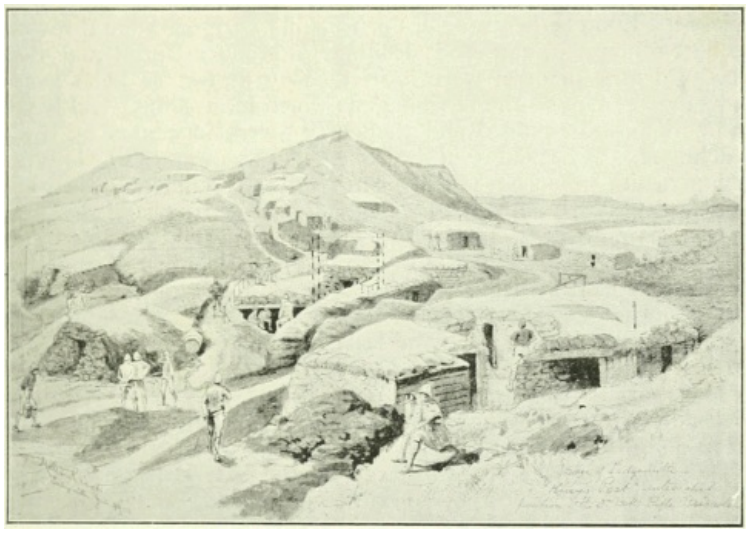
Killed.—1st South Lancashire Regiment—Lieutenant-Colonel W. M'Carthy O'Leary.[7] 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers—Brevet-Major V. Lewis, Captain H. S. Sykes, Second Lieutenant F. J. T. U. Simpson. 1st Royal Warwickshire Regiment—Lieutenant H. L. Mourilyan. Second Royal Irish Fusiliers—Second Lieutenant C. J. Daly.

Wounded.—Major-General Barton. 2nd Scots Fusiliers—Lieutenant-Colonel E. E. Carr, Captain C. P. A. Hull, Captain E. E. Blaine, Lieutenant C. H. I. Jackson, Second Lieutenant H. C. Fraser. 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers—Major F. F. Hill, Lieutenant A. G. Knocker, Second Lieutenant A. Hamilton, Second Lieutenant V. H. Kavanagh. 1st South Lancashire Regiment—Major T. Lamb. 2nd West Yorkshire Regiment—Captain C. Mansel Jones, Captain C. C. B. Tew, Lieutenant L. H. Spry, Lieutenant A. M. Boyall. 2nd Derbyshire Regiment—Lieutenant H. S. Pennell, V.C. 2nd Royal Lancaster Regiment—

Captain G. L. Palmes, Second Lieutenant C. W. Grover, Lieutenant E. A. P. Vaughan. 1st Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers—Second Lieutenant G. R. V. Steward. 1st Rifle Brigade—Captain and Adjutant S. C. Long, Second Lieutenant J. L. Buxton. 2nd Royal Fusiliers—Lieutenant H. B. G. Macartney. 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers—Lieutenant J. M'D. Hastard, Second Lieutenant De B. Bradford.

[Pg 151]

EXPECTATION



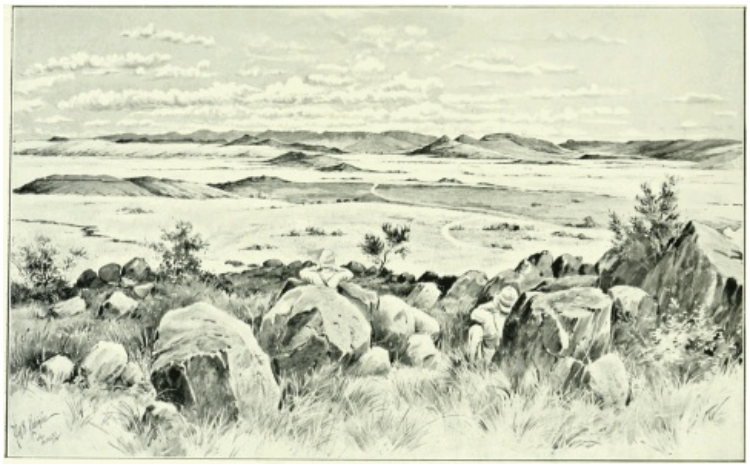
King's Post, the Entrenched Position of 2nd Batt. Rifle Brigade at Ladysmith.

(Reduced facsimile of sketch by Melton Prior.)

"Gloom, gloom, gloom, unending gloom!" So said one on the 26th of February, one who was fast sinking in the slough of despondency into which so many had slipped lower and lower, till they were sucked down and ended their troubles with fever and the grave. Some few days before all hearts had leapt with joy at reading of hopeful signals, listening to booming guns, which all thought to be bursting the gates of their imprisonment. So certain were they that the joyful hour of freedom was at hand that the force was placed on full rations. "We can afford to have a blow-out now," some one had said, and began to arrange what menu he should chose when he at last came face to face with civilisation. Then had come gloom—gloom blacker than Erebus—for it was gloom without and within. The guns—the welcome guns—not the obstreperous ones of Bulwana and the companion hills—had ceased their clamour. Hope was gone, and even the "helio" refused its communications. The sky was overcast, and rumours, that had always been prolific as flies, now began to breed apace. The air of Ladysmith was thick with them. No word from Buller's column. Kaffirs hinted that for the fourth time the relief column had retired at the back of the [Pg 152] Tugela. Doubt, anxiety, suspense set in with renewed terrors. Quarter rations—the more trying because temporarily dropped—again became the order of the course. This in spite of the fact that Buller had now signalled "Everything progressing favourably." It seemed that they had heard that message before, those poor, half-hopeful, half-sceptical sufferers.

Some said that on Tuesday, Majuba Day, the spirits of the community arrived at their nadir. When the barometer of fate registers its lowest, it is bound to rise. It rose in skips and jumps. There came the grand news that Cronje had surrendered to Lord Roberts. It was evident that the Boers too had heard, understood, and decided that they must scuttle the next morning. Signs of disturbance were evident. Long serpentine lines of trekking waggons were throwing up dust columns in the roads leading to Modder Spruit and Pepworth; droves of oxen were hurried along as fast as hoofs would carry them. Guns—the terrible guns which for 118 days had bayed and barked and rumbled and thundered—were in course of being dismantled. What did it all mean? Time was when the "braves" in Ladysmith would have sallied forth with their inherent dash and turned the retreat into a rout. But things were changed. Men and horses were now almost too weak to enter into sustained conflict with a mosquito, had a mosquito deigned to look at them. But most of them were past even the attentions of mosquitos. All they could do was to send a salvo at the heels of their tormentors, and hope that one or two shells at least might serve to "speed the parting guest." This was all they could attempt. They also flashed to Monte Cristo a message—a deplorable message—full of their despair and despondency. It said, "Garrison bitterly disappointed at delay of relieving force." This was at twelve o'clock. Then, as though Fate, with a full appreciation of the picturesque, had placed her highest light against her deepest dark—then, within the hour, came back glorious news!

King's Post. Rifleman's Ridge. Direction of Colenso. Spion Kop. Boer Laager.



IN BELEAGUERED LADYSMITH—WATCHING FOR BULLER FROM OBSERVATION HILL.

From a Sketch by Melton Prior.

“Have thoroughly beaten the enemy. Believe them to be in full retreat. Have sent my cavalry to ascertain which way they have gone.” Surprise, rapture, prolonged jubilation! Cheer on cheer rose on the clear midday air and rang for miles, till the sick in Intombi camp lifted pallid heads and strained their ears and wondered. Then came the rolling National Anthem and “Rule Britannia,” and Sir George White and those around him who had grown old within the spell of those awful 118 days, began to grow young again. And soon the Jack Tars set to work and the Naval guns pounded away with a reckless disregard for ammunition and a zest that did them credit. “One more go at him!—only one more!—only one more!” and “Long Tom,” which was in act of being dismantled, was the subject of boisterous farewells. [Pg 153]

THE RELIEF OF LADYSMITH

At six o’clock on the evening of the 28th of February all the suffering, suspense, and tension came to an end. The obstinate resistance, the heroic combats, the semi-starvation, the appalling melancholy of enforced exile, all were over.

In the late afternoon those viewing the departure of the Boers from a vantage-point at Cæsar’s Camp espied along the hazy blue of the valley horsemen recklessly approaching, riding at full gallop across the open. Conjectures wild were attempted. Hearts began to flutter, to stand still, to beat again with sharp quick thuds. Boers? Or Buller’s cavalry? Yes—no—yes! Hurrah! Hurrah! They were coming—the squadron was distinctly visible—they were making direct for Ladysmith. A roar went up from a multitude of throats. The Manchesters on Cæsar’s Camp, the Gordons at Fly Kraal, and presently the troops in the town, broke into shouts of exultation. Soon it was known everywhere they were coming—coming—coming—at last—at last! It was quite true. There was Lord Dundonald with Major Mackenzie (Light Horse) and Major Gough (16th Lancers), accompanied by the little column of Colonials, grand gallant fellows of the Light Horse, Natal Carabineers, and Border Mounted Police, some three hundred of them, pounding across the open country as fast as horses would carry them.

In the twilight the troops sped along over boulder and rock, down donga and ravine, reckless of every obstacle, and at last the melancholy perimeter was reached. Then from out the gloom came a challenge. A British voice called “Halt! Who goes there?” A British voice gave answer—the almost unbelievable answer—“The Ladysmith Relieving Army.” Four words, just four words! Paradise seemed to be opened. From all quarters came crowding and cheering—cheering faintly with wizened voices of the famished—men battered and almost bootless—happy, yet for all that deplorably sad in their happiness. Tears even glistened on some cheeks and in some eyes—the “unconquerable British blue eyes” of the Ladysmith “invincibles.” With a due sense of decorum, and in the determination to give none the precedence, the procession had arranged itself in special order. The Natal Carabineers and Imperial Light Horse riding two and two abreast, with Major Gough at the head of the column, now marched in triumph into the town.

At the English church they were met by General White, the defender of Ladysmith, fevered and thin and grey-haired, yet erect with the carriage of one who, without the strength, has the inextinguishable pride of his race, and the will to bear his country’s burden to the last. With him were General Hunter and Colonel Ian Hamilton, heroes of the defence. Each instant the scene [Pg 154] gained in colour, in vehemence, in pathos. Cheers and tears were commingled. Women wept unreservedly. Men, to dispose of a lump in their throats, shouted with all the scanty vigour that a limited diet of horse-sausage and mule would allow. But new life coursed through their veins. There was no glow of health on their cheeks, but the gleam of joy in their eyes rendered them young, almost hale. The Kaffirs and coolies gave expression to their rapture by dances and shouts that relieved the almost solemn ecstasy of the moment. Then General White, surrounded on one side by his pallid, worn, and wounded heroes, on the other by the bronzed warriors of the relieving force, made a brief address to the crowd: “People of Ladysmith,” he said, in a voice that wavered with the emotion it was needless to conceal—“People of Ladysmith, I thank you one and

all for the patient manner you have assisted me during the siege. From the bottom of my heart I thank you. It hurt me terribly when I was compelled to cut down rations, but, thank God, we have kept our flag flying!" Cheers broke out afresh, and then the battered multitude with one voice rent the grey gloom of the evening, and the strains of "God save the Queen" rang forth, till the banks, hollows, and rocks of the surrounding country gave back the glorious refrain. That night Sir George White, with his valorous colleagues around him, gave a dinner to the newly arrived, and these sat down with a feeling of exaltation, almost of awe, to find themselves thus in the familiar company of heroes. And all were conscious of a strange sense of unreality which pervaded the scene. It was almost impossible to realise that the drama was played, that they were about to ring down the curtain on the last act. It was scarce possible to believe that for three months the Natal Field Force had kept at bay a force double its number, had fortified and held a perimeter of fourteen miles against the most fiendish inventions of modern artillery, had made brilliant sorties and repulsed assaults innumerable—two of them being ferocious, almost hand-to-hand combats—had fought and watched and sickened and starved.... And now, all was changed. Those dire experiences were over for ever!

Yet the effect of them remained. As a consequence of the close confinement of some 20,000 persons, disease was stalking abroad, even attacking those who but an hour ago had neared the place. Away at Intombi camp, too, where drugs were scarce, many of the patients—convalescent patients—were sinking for want of the sustaining food which was necessary to recovery. There was regret, poignant and newly awakened, in this moment of relief, regret standing dry-eyed, yet with a grievous ache at the heart—regret that before had learnt to bear and be still. It was impossible to see the glad side without also remembering the deeply pathetic one. The [Pg 155] pestiferous atmosphere breathed of fever and disease, and those coming into it realised only too well what havoc such an atmosphere must have played on the sickly and the starved. Besides this there were gaps—woeful gaps. Names that dared not be mentioned, spots that could scarce be looked upon with dry eyes. The bronzed warriors, who day after day had shown tough fronts to the enemy, and whose ceaseless struggles should have hardened them to emotion, now turned aside to conceal the agony of bleeding hearts.

Outside the town, in a sheltered hollow below Waggon Hill, was a pathetic garden of sleep. Here, under the shadow of cypress trees, lay the honoured remains of brave fellows who had given themselves to save the town, and with the town the prestige of their motherland. The earth barely covered them, but for all that their peace was perfect. They had struggled to save Natal, and Natal through them and the survivors was saved. If there is a loophole whence those who have passed on to the Invisible can peer down and observe the issues of mortal deeds, surely in that great hour, those splendid, those self-abnegating ones, who had given their heart's blood for the glory of the Empire, must then have gazed their fill, and in the general rejoicing have reaped their beatific reward.

The effect in England of the news of the relief was truly surprising. The spectacle was unique in the annals of Victoria's reign. On Thursday the 1st of March the whole City of London by one consent burst into jubilation. Every human being, however hard-worked, wore a smile; every heart, however sore, throbbed with a sense of reflected triumph; for all, if they had not been at the front in the flesh, had been there in the spirit these many, many days. Never was such a spontaneous outburst of rejoicing! A nation of shopkeepers indeed! Why, shopkeeping and work of all kinds were forgotten, and in front of the Mansion House crowded the delighted multitudes, oblivious of everything save the glorious fact that British bull-dog tenacity had withstood the most fiendish warfare, and wiles, and wickedness that vengeful Dutchmen could invent.

From north, south, east, and west the people flocked, springing as it were from the very earth. The news came in at 10 A.M. By eleven the City was alive with drama. Hats were being waved or flung into the air, regardless of the effect upon the nap; flags from here, there, and everywhere fluttered—in default of these, other brandishable things were seized. Sometimes handkerchiefs did duty, newspapers, and even parcels and commercial bags; and from tongues innumerable came cheers and shouts and snatches of patriotic song, till an ignorant spectator, if one such [Pg 156] there could have been, might have imagined Bedlam to have broken loose. "Rule Britannia," "God save the Queen," "Tommy Atkins," "The Absent-Minded Beggar"—all tunes poured forth to an accompaniment of cheers. The Lord Mayor was called out, and appeared on his balcony. He was forthwith invited to speak. The great man opened and shut his mouth—he was much moved with the general emotion—but no sound penetrated the uproar. Cheers loud and vehement tore the air, and the walls of the civic domain literally shook with the inspiriting fracas. Then for a moment or two there was a lull, and taking advantage of the opportunity, in a short sincere speech the Lord Mayor expressed himself.

"Fellow-citizens, this news of the relief of Ladysmith makes our hearts leap with joy. We are now satisfied that at last our sacrifices of blood and treasure are not in vain!"

Upon that the crowd roared itself hoarse, sung "For he's a jolly good fellow," and never with better cause, for Sir A. J. Newton had put the best of himself into the launching of the glorious C.I.V.'s. By-and-by came, with banners and much ceremony, a deputation from the Stock Exchange, and after them waves on waves of shouting enthusiasts—a spectacle so un-English, so genuine, so unrestrained, that the gloomy decorous regions of the City seemed suddenly to have become things apart, card-houses to fill in the background to a soul-stirring scene. Everywhere,

in the alleys of "'Arriet," in the haunts of the "wild, wild West," at the Bank, in Leadenhall Market, and along the Thames, went up the jubilant echo—"Ladysmith is relieved!" Whereupon windows and balconies were dressed, flags, red, white, and blue, and the green of Erin with its romantic harp in the corner, fluttered wings of ecstasy from every British nest, and from every British household there rose unanimously a rapturous cry that was almost a sob, a cry of thanksgiving that the end had come, and that Ladysmith and the honour of the old country were saved!

THE FORMAL ENTRY

It seemed but artistic that Lord Dundonald and his brave irregulars should have met the keen edge of joyous welcome, that the burst of enthusiasm which greeted them should have been the heartiest of which Ladysmith, after a siege of 118 days, was capable. It was right, almost beautiful, that the staunch Colonials, who so well had fought for the Empire, should be the ones to throw open the doors of the dolorous prison, and deliver those who had been not only victims to the devilish machinations of the Boer, but had suffered from the active ache of suspense and the passive one of starvation, from their hellish bondage. Their informal coming was part and parcel of the unrehearsed and the splendid that appeared at every corner in this absolutely incomprehensible war. [Pg 157]

BRIGADIER-GENERAL THE EARL OF DUNDONALD, C.B.

Photo by R. Faulkner & Co.

The next day things were more decorously done—more English in their reserve. Etiquette and custom resumed their sway, and General Sir Archibald Hunter straightened out the limp backbone of the army, and made soldierly preparations to welcome the relief column. There were cleansings and polishings, washings and brushings up, of a ramshackle kind, it is true, but they savoured of the old parade days returned. Poor skeletons of horses were groomed down, Sunday best was smoothed out, everything was done that the slender resources of the melancholy perimeter would allow. Shortly after noon on the 3rd of March Sir Redvers Buller made his formal entry. His arrival was somewhat unexpected, and there was little effervescent demonstration. Sir George White and Sir Redvers Buller meeting with a handclasp, said at first little more than the familiar "D'ye do?" of saunterers in Piccadilly. What else could be done? There was much to say, so much that must remain ever unsaid, and throats to-day were too tightly compressed in strangling the large and unspeakable emotion to give vent to the infinitesimal resource of speech. Meanwhile the forlorn streets had begun to fill. They were margined by the garrison, and with them were collected such of the sorry civilians as were able to stand exposed to the tropical glare of the sun in its zenith. They came out wondering, almost diffident. Was it possible that the morning message of melenite was no longer to be heard? that the hoarse cadence of hostile artillery was silent for good? Was the open distance really innocuous—clear and peaceful as a Swiss landscape? They scarcely recognised themselves or their surroundings, and looked dazedly to right and left as on a changed world. Sir George White, with his staff, now took up a position in front of the Town Hall, where, backgrounded by the ruined tower—it had been battered, as it were, by the whole armoury of Satan—the broken blue tin houses and the parched trees, the group made an appropriate picture of noble wreck—of aristocratical exhaustion. The relievers, though physically hale, were externally scarcely more presentable than the relieved. The outsiders, it is true, were begrimed and tattered, though

robust and swarthy; while the Invincibles, rigged up in honour of their deliverers in Sunday best, and washed and scrubbed to a nicety, seemed—soap-like—to have dissolved in the very process of ablution. No joy of the moment could alter the tale of shrinkage that was printed on man and beast. But jubilation expressed itself in the best way it could. From windows and balconies soon hung strips of colour, national emblems, gathered from hither and thither to mark a rapture that it was impossible for human tongue to describe. From hotels and habitations the citizens began [Pg 158] to pour forth and to congregate. And then, when all were collected, the curtain drew up on the most wondrous scene that the nineteenth century has witnessed—the march past of the Ladysmith Relieving Column! Sir Redvers Buller, imperturbable of visage as usual, accompanied by his staff, rode at the head of his magnificent warriors, and leading, in the place of honour, were the valorous Dublin Fusiliers, the poor but glorious remnant, consisting now of 400 of the original battalion who had so grandly acquitted themselves in many battlefields. Next came Sir Charles Warren and the Fifth Division, and afterwards General Barton and General Lyttelton's Brigades—goodly fellows all, who had proved themselves deliberately brave and doughtily undefeatable. Meanwhile the pipes and drums of the Gordon Highlanders, with such vigour as was left them, made exhilarating music, to which was united the clanking and clamping of the Artillery Howitzer Battery and Naval Brigade as they filed past with uproarious martial rampage. Each section was greeted with admiring cheers. The regiments moved along in review order, a superb throng, bronzed, and battered, and brawny, a curious contrast to the pallid and emaciated comrades-in-arms—morally superb too, but physically degenerate—who welcomed them. The spectacle was unique in soul-stirring grandeur as in unspoken pathos.

"A march of lions," said Mr. Churchill, who had played his part with Lord Dundonald's force, and was now looked on as a critic. "A procession of giants," said some one else, who watched the lines and lines of heroes greeting each other with wild huzzas! Friends, kindred, comrades-in-arms—from either side the yawning gulf of destruction, from even the voracious maw of death—they came together again, all jubilant, all generously appreciative, all self-respecting, and glowing with honest and honourable emotion. The Gordon Highlanders cheered the Dublins, the Dublins, with little sprigs of green in their caps, responded right royally to the greeting of the Scotsmen. One battalion of the Devons met its twin battalion: the men of doughty deeds, large-hearted and large-lunged, accosted with zest the men of equally doughty deeds but dwindled frames, whose deep bass notes cracked with the strain of rollicking intention and futile realisation.

While all this was going forward, from the balcony of the gaol a wondering crowd of Boer prisoners looked on agape. They could barely believe the evidence of their eyes: the town was free. Had their compatriots at last turned tail and bolted? They stared down on the vast interminable avenue of men and guns winding through what only the day before yesterday was a fiery concave—watched a continuous moving multitude, tattered and begrimed, saddle-brown [Pg 159] and burly—and little by little began to fathom the meaning to themselves of this mighty display. The despised rooineks had, after all, not even been thrust into the sea: in fact, it appeared that the sea had cultivated a trick of casting up rooineks by the thousand, to be killed in scores only to come up in swarms!

By-and-by, when the military parade was over, the Mayor of the town, Mr. Farquhar, presented Sir George White with an address, in which the corporation and inhabitants expressed their appreciation of all that he had done for them in those dark days of durance. Flattering reference was also made to the services of General Hunter and Colonel Ward (A.A.G.). To these officers the General, in reply, alluded gratefully, eulogising the work done by the former, and describing the latter as the "best supply officer since Moses." He then called attention to the stubborn patience of the civilians of Ladysmith, "who had borne themselves like good and true soldiers throughout a very trying time." These remarks were followed by three hearty cheers for the civilians of Ladysmith. The Mayor expressed his pride in the manner the civilian population had comported itself, and the excellent feeling that had existed between both civil and military authorities. He then presented an illuminated address to Sir Redvers Buller, of which the following is the text:—

> "We, the Mayor and members of the Town Council of the borough of Ladysmith, Natal, and as such representing the inhabitants of the said borough, beg most respectfully to welcome with great joy the arrival of yourself and your gallant soldiers at our township, and to express to you our most sincere and heartfelt appreciation of your noble and courageous efforts in the relief of this long-beleaguered borough. As members of the great British Empire, as loyal subjects of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, and as colonists of Natal, we beg respectfully to tender you our most hearty thanks, realising as we do the magnitude and difficulty of the work you have accomplished. At the same time our sympathies are great for the heavy losses among your gallant troops that have occurred in your successful efforts to relieve us."

The following telegrams were sent to Sir Redvers Buller and Sir George White by the Queen.

To Sir Redvers Buller:—

> "Thank God for news you have telegraphed to me. Congratulate you and all under you with all my heart.
>
> "V.R.I."

To Sir George White:—

"Thank God that you and all those with you are safe after your long and trying siege, borne with such heroism. I congratulate you and all under you from the bottom of my heart. Trust you are all not very much exhausted.

"V.R.I."

Reply from Sir George White to the Queen:— [Pg 160]

"Your Majesty's most gracious message has been received by me with deepest gratitude and with enthusiasm by the troops.

"Any hardships and privations are a hundred times compensated for by the sympathy and appreciation of our Queen, and your Majesty's message will do more to restore both officers and men than anything else.

"General Sir George White, Ladysmith."

The following telegram was received by the Queen from Sir Redvers Buller:—

"Troops much appreciate your Majesty's kind telegram.

"Your Majesty cannot know how much your sympathy has helped to inspire them.

"General Buller."

An additional telegram was sent by the Queen to Sir Redvers Buller on the 2nd inst.:—

"Pray express to the Naval Brigade my deep appreciation of the valuable services they have rendered with their guns.

"V.R.I."

Later on a special Army Order was issued as follows:—

Gallantry of Irish Regiments in South Africa—Distinction to be Worn on St. Patrick's Day.

Her Majesty the Queen is pleased to order that in future, upon St. Patrick's Day, all ranks in her Majesty's Irish regiments shall wear, as a distinction, a sprig of shamrock in their headdress, to commemorate the gallantry of her Irish soldiers during the recent battles in South Africa.

Soon after this came the transformation scene. Seventy-three waggon-loads of supplies, eleven of which contained hospital comforts, began to wind into the town. Major Morgan and Colonel Stanley, like fairy godmothers in the story-book, waved the wand of office, and promptly the machinery began to revolve, and manna in the form of nourishing food-stuffs poured into the famished regions. The Boers, too, in the precipitate retreat had left welcome loads of grass, herds, and ammunition—the ammunition of the besieged was well-nigh exhausted—besides individual necessaries which came in handy. But of course, the machinery of relief, well as it worked, could scarcely work fast enough to make an appreciable result, and save invalids who were sinking from the protracted trial. It was amazing how the sick-list swelled. Many who had come into the town jocund and jaunty, found themselves in a few hours clutched by the fell fever. It was enough but to breathe the tainted atmosphere to fall sick, and those who were seized at once discovered all the horror of helplessness in an area where provision for the comfort of the [Pg 161] suffering was well-nigh exhausted. Looking back on the past from the new standpoint, the gaps became more than ever remarkable; for, despite incessant fighting, shot and shell were responsible for less lives than famine and fever.

LIEUT.-GENERAL HON. N. G. LYTTELTON, C.B.

Photo by Elliott & Fry, London.

Ladysmith at the commencement of the siege held some 13,496 fighting men and over 2000 civilians. Owing to sickness and hard fighting, the number had diminished to 10,164 men. There were about 2000 in hospital, but the death-rate practically increased only when, after January, food, nourishment of all kinds, and medical appliances grew scarce. At that time sickness of whatever kind assumed an ominous aspect; there was no chance of relief. It was impossible for languishing men to apply themselves to the soup made of old horse and mule, which was gladly devoured by those who had still the appetite without the means of appeasing it. From the 15th of January death stalked abroad uncombated; later he held carnival. Many died from wounds, very slight wounds, received on the 6th of January, from which they had not stamina to recover; the fevered and weakly dropped off from sheer starvation and famine; the gaunt talons needed scarcely to touch them, for they were exhausted, and some of them were glad to go. The deaths as a result of fighting were 24 officers and 235 men, while those attributed to sickness numbered six officers and 520 men, exclusive of white civilians.

The following special Army Order was issued:—

> "The relief of Ladysmith unites two forces which have striven with conspicuous gallantry and splendid determination to maintain the honour of their Queen and country. The garrison of Ladysmith for four months held the position against every attack with complete success, and endured its privations with admirable fortitude. The relieving force had to make its way through unknown country, across unfordable rivers, and over almost inaccessible heights, in the face of a fully-prepared, well-armed, tenacious enemy. By the exhibition of the truest courage, which burns steadily besides flashing brilliantly, it accomplished its object and added a glorious page to our history. Sailors, soldiers, Colonials, and the home-bred have done this, united by one desire and inspired by one patriotism.
>
> "The General Commanding congratulates both forces on their martial qualities, and thanks them for their determined efforts. He desires to offer his sincere sympathy to the relatives and friends of the good soldiers and gallant comrades who have fallen in the fight. BULLER."

Less formally and with more warmth the Chief addressed himself to his friends in England. He said:—

> "We began fighting on the 14th February, and literally fought every day and nearly every night till the 27th. I am filled with admiration for the British soldiers; really, the manner in which they have worked, fought, and endured during the last fortnight has been something more than human. Broiled in a burning sun by day, drenched in rain by night, lying but 300 yards off an enemy who shoots you if you show as much as a finger; they could hardly eat or drink by day, and as they were usually attacked at night they got but little sleep; and through it all they were as cheery and willing as could be."

[Pg 162]

Telegraphic wires and cables wore themselves out in repeating congratulation on the relief of Ladysmith. Veritably all the winds of heaven seemed to repeat them. From north, south, east, and

west came the chorus of acclamation, a chorus most reviving to the magnificent multitude both inside and outside the place, who had been ready to offer up their heart's blood on the altar of patriotism. Though the haunted and worn look could not die out of the faces of the sufferers in a moment, they had already begun to mend; though the shrunken and emaciated forms could not at once be relieved from the starvation and disease which had wasted them, there was over all a soothing glow of hope that acted magically, beatifically, as the mists of sunrise over a squalid landscape.

On the 9th of March Sir George White, looking much worn, he having suffered from Indian fever brought on by the malarious surroundings, left with his staff. The General addressed the Gordon Highlanders who formed the guard of honour, and in few and affecting words bade them farewell.

FOOTNOTES:

[4] Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Claude George Henry Sitwell, D.S.O., 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was born in 1858, and entered the army through the militia in 1878. His first ten years of service were with the Shropshire Light Infantry, from which he exchanged, in 1889, into the Manchester Regiment. He was subsequently promoted to a majority in the 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers in October 1898. Colonel Sitwell had seen a considerable amount of active service, his first campaign being the Afghan war of 1879-80, in which he served with the Koorum Division, and took part in the Zaimust expedition. He accompanied the 1st Battalion Shropshire Light Infantry in the Egyptian war of 1882, and was present at the occupation of Kafr Dowar and the surrender of Damietta. From 1892 to 1895 he was employed with the Egyptian army, and from 1895 to 1898 in the Uganda Protectorate. In 1895, as a captain, he commanded the expeditions against the Kitosh, Kabras, and Kikelwa tribes in East Africa, and was present with the Nandi expedition in 1895-96. Finally, he commanded the operations against Mwanga in 1897-98, including the engagement near Katonga River, and several minor affairs. For his important services in Uganda Major Sitwell was given a brevet lieutenant-colonelcy, and decorated with the Distinguished Service Order.

[5] Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Martin Gerard Thackeray, commanding the 1st Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, was born in 1849, and was appointed to the 16th Foot in 1868. In 1876 he exchanged into the 1st West India Regiment, subsequently obtaining his captaincy in the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in 1881. During 1880 and part of 1881 he served as Fort Adjutant at Sierra Leone. He was promoted to the command of the 1st Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in February 1897.

[6] Lieutenant-Colonel Thorold, of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, who was killed on February 24, became lieutenant on June 13, 1874, a captain on October 25, 1882, a major on July 10, 1890, and was promoted to be lieutenant-colonel on March 4, 1896.

[7] Lieutenant-Colonel William M'Carthy O'Leary, commanding the 1st Battalion of the South Lancashire Regiment, was born on January 6, 1849, and entered the 82nd Foot (now the 2nd Battalion of the South Lancashire Regiment) as an ensign in the old purchase days on April 17, 1869. He obtained his lieutenancy, also by purchase, on February 15, 1871. He was instructor of musketry to the regiment from July 19, 1874, to March 19, 1878, when he became captain, received his major's commission on August 13, 1883, and from the January preceding until January 1888, was an adjutant of Auxiliary forces. He had been lieutenant-colonel of the battalion since November 1896. He was a Justice of the Peace for the County of Cork and one of the Under Sheriffs of the city.

CHAPTER VI

CHANGES IN CAPE COLONY

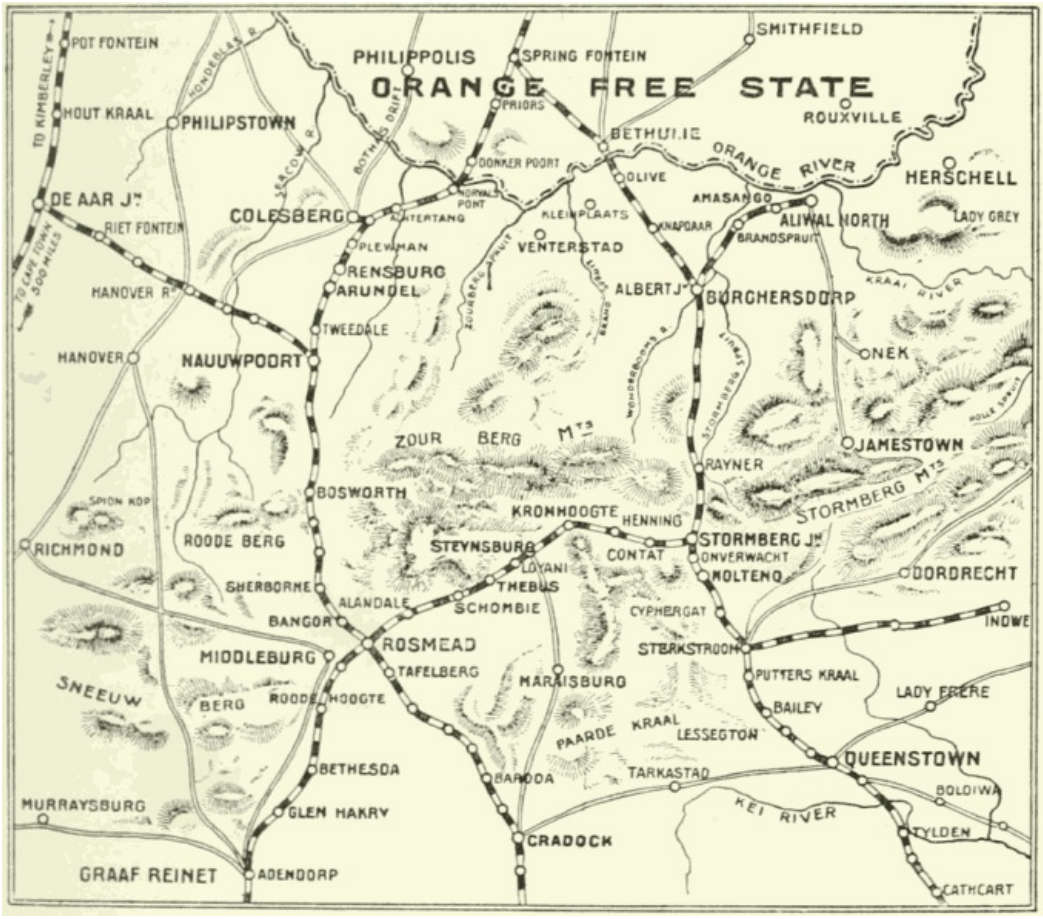
We must now return to Colesberg after the departure of General French. The Boers, doubtless much relieved to get quit of him, still occupied a semicircular set of camps from east to west round the north of the town, while the British, in the same manner, occupied the opposite half of the circle, and so continued, by dint of much fighting and skirmishing, to keep them in check. On the 9th February the Dutchmen threatened the right flank of the British, and shot one of Rimington's Guides. During the morning Captain Cameron, commanding the Tasmanian Contingent, with Captain Salmon and fifty Australians and Tasmanians, started out from Rensburg on a reconnaissance. He was supported by a detachment of the Inniskilling Dragoons under Captain Stevenson-Hamilton. The enemy was soon encountered, and promptly gave the Australians a warm time as they advanced across the plain. These cleverly took shelter and returned an active fusillade, but the Boers seemed to be everywhere in overwhelming numbers. The Australians with great gallantry took possession of a kopje, and maintained their grip of the position for a good hour and a half; but the crowds opposing them were too great, and when the Dutchmen worked round to the rear and fired on their horses, they thought it high time to come down, mount, and retire, amid a hurricane of lead from the foe. The same action was repeated,

the holding of another kopje, and the evacuation of it in consequence of the arrival, in the rear, of the Boers; and finally a retirement had to be effected across the open plain exposed to fierce volleys from the pursuing enemy. Strange to say, very few of the Colonials were injured, though they held their ground throughout the day with wondrous pluck, and tackled the Boers with dexterity equal to their own. Indeed, the coolness and courage of Captain Cameron were reflected by his men, and Captain Salmon, whose baptism of fire it was, made a remarkable display of talent in the field. Of grit and gallantry there was no end. Specially noticeable was the pluck of Corporal Whiteley of the Tasmanians, who hurried to the rescue of a dismounted comrade, and through a storm of bullets brought him to a place of safety.

More of the Australians on the same day came in for a good share of work. A reconnaissance was made from Slingersfontein by the Inniskillings and some Australians under Captain Moor. The [Pg 164] Australians discovered the enemy in the act of preparing to shell the British camp from the south-east. They therefore took up a position on a hill some 9000 yards from camp, but here were assailed by a party of Dutchmen who endeavoured to force them to surrender. So close had the Boers approached, that their shouts calling them to give up their arms could be heard by the Colonials. For answer, however, the Australians only fixed bayonets and yelled defiance! Their position was most critical; nevertheless they held their ground with such fierce tenacity that the Burghers were cautious of approach. Meanwhile, through the maze of fiery elements and in the teeth of the enemy, a sergeant and two troopers had galloped off to inform the commanding officer of the safety of the little band, and of their intention to make a good fight of it until, under cover of the shades of night, they could effect an escape. This they eventually did. Three of their number were wounded and one was killed in the act of succouring a wounded comrade.

On the 11th of February, at Rensburg, a picket of five Victorian Rifles had a nasty experience. After pluckily holding a post for several hours, during which they were fired on by the Boers from an adjacent kopje, they were forced to retire. Three of the party were slightly wounded, and one gallant fellow, who had helped the others to mount and escape, was missing. A patrol from Jasfontein, consisting of eight Tasmanians and eight of French’s Guides, also came to grief. Only two Tasmanians and three Guides returned to camp, the rest being captured by the enemy. In course of the day’s work Trooper Bosch distinguished himself. On his way with two comrades to join the main body at Slingersfontein he came on a large party of Boers on a hill. Though fired on, the party made off in hot haste, when Trooper Bosch, who was ahead, came suddenly on a solitary horseman. The two riders, each believing the other to be a friend, approached, then discovering their mistake, they raised rifles. But Trooper Bosch being the quicker, promptly disarmed his antagonist and made him prisoner. With the Dutchman in charge, Bosch and his companions proceeded. Presently they came on seven Boer riders. On these the scouts opened fire, with the result that the enemy hurriedly made off, leaving behind them one wounded, who was taken prisoner. So the three scouts returned to camp very proud of their “bag.”

The correspondent of the *Melbourne Herald*, accompanied by Mr. Cameron, the Australian correspondent, bearing a flag of truce, went to the Boer line west of Rensburg to make inquiries from Commandant Delarey regarding Mr. Lambie and Mr. Hales, the missing Australian correspondents. They were blindfolded before being taken to the Boer camp, where they were informed that Mr. Lambie had been killed, and were handed the portrait of his wife, which had [Pg 165] been found in his pocket. Mr. Hales, owing to a fall from his horse, had been taken prisoner. The correspondents were informed that some 120,000 men were fighting with the Federals, which was probably a piece of Boer bravado.



Map illustrating the Operations on the Orange River.

It was now found necessary to retire from Coles Kop and the outposts round it, as the Boers had placed a 40-pounder off Bastard Nek, and thus commanded the vicinity. The Wiltshire Regiment retired from Pink Hill, and the Australians and Bedfordshire Regiment moved from Windmill Hill. The Berkshire Regiment had also to move from their post—indeed, a wholesale withdrawal became imperative owing to the activity of the Boer pieces. There was now no camp west of Rensburg, and presently the camp at Slingersfontein had to withdraw on Rensburg, the eastern flank being threatened. There were Boers on all sides busily shelling the hills, and the overwhelming number of the enemy made retreat to Rensburg inevitable. In the course of the [Pg 166] fighting Colonel Coningham was mortally wounded.[8]

On the 13th the British “strategically” evacuated Rensburg, and General Clements fell back on Arundel. The guns from Coles Kop were safely removed, and a Maxim was destroyed to save it from the clutches of the enemy.

The retirement was quite orderly. On the previous day the stores and baggage-waggons were removed. After the evacuation the Boers held a prayer-meeting, and offered up thanks for their success. They then marched off in small parties to their various outposts, chanting in nasal tones their favourite hymns.

The gallantry displayed by the members of General Clements’ force during the retirement was amazing. It is found impossible to note all the acts of pluck and heroism which took place, and elicited the profound admiration of those who witnessed them, but especially noticeable was the devotion of some score of the Mounted Victorian Rifles. These were surrounded by the enemy—caught in a veritable trap—but they refused to surrender, and declared they would “die game.” They fought like heroes, not one of them being left to tell the tale.

Near Dordrecht, too, which had been occupied by General Brabant, the Colonial forces were performing prodigious feats of pluck. They forced the rebels to abandon the country between Dordrecht and Penhoek. During the attack on a Boer laager on the 16th, Trooper Drysdale bravely rushed to the succour of Sergeant Weinecke under a close and heavy fire and carried him off to a place of safety. The young Colonial was promoted to the rank of lieutenant in recognition of the valorous deed. Unfortunately two gallant officers—Captain Crallah and Lieutenant Chandler—were killed.

Curiously enough, when the Boers and British became acquainted with each other they grew friendly with great rapidity. When Captain Longhurst, R.A.M.C., from Arundel, was attending wounded Australians, he remarked on the exceeding kindness of the enemy to the wounded. He also fraternised with the Boer commander, and discovered they had mutual friends in London. The “Tommies” chatted most amicably with the Boers, notwithstanding the fact that their bandoliers were filled with soft-nosed bullets. To account for their having them, the Boers said, “We must use whatever we can get.” It was suggested that their ammunition—since they were of [Pg 167] the northern district—had been obtained for the purpose of hunting big game at the Limpopo. This excuse the “Tommies” accepted, and one wounded in the thigh said good-humouredly, “Well,

I wish you'd been kind enough to hit me lower down." Another informed a Boer that the British had specially come to deliver them out of the House of Bondage. The Boer was sceptical, whereon "Tommy" enlightened him. "Africander bondage," he explained, with a wink of the eye.

The moral effect of the relief of Kimberley soon became obvious. Barkly West was occupied by troops on the 21st of February, and there was evidence that the country west of Cape Colony and Kimberley was gradually settling down.

On the same day, General Brabant occupied Jamestown, some twenty miles north of Dordrecht, and seized quantities of horses belonging to the enemy, who in their retreat modestly had recourse to "Shank's pony."

During a reconnaissance of the Boer position at Stormberg, a party of scouts under Captain Montmorency, V.C., got within some fifty yards of the enemy, and a fierce and fatal combat ensued, which resulted in the sad loss of one of the most brilliant officers of the day.

The object of the reconnaissance was to ascertain the strength of the Boers at Stormberg. Accordingly, with four companies of Mounted Infantry drawn from the Royal Scots, the Northumberland Fusiliers, the Derbyshire Regiment, and the Royal Berkshire Regiment, with the 77th and four guns of the 74th Batteries Royal Field Artillery, the Derbyshire Regiment (Sherwood Foresters), a portion of De Montmorency's Scouts, and some Cape Police, supported by the armoured train under the charge of Lieutenant F. J. Gosset, 2nd Royal Berkshire Regiment, Sir William Gatacre occupied Molteno early on Friday morning the 23rd. Preceded by thirty Scouts, Captain de Montmorency, Lieutenant Hockley, and Colonel Hoskier, the force marched in the same direction that was to have been taken on the night of the fatal affair in December. Unfortunately the Scouts, on nearing their destination, came on a party of dismounted Boers, and these, as the British rushed up a kopje, executed the same feat on the other side of the hill. Though both instantly took cover, the scouts got the worst of it, each one as he raised a head being laid low by the fatal bullets of the completely hidden foe. Among the first to fall was Captain de Montmorency,[9] who, gallant fellow, was creeping round to a flank to surprise the [Pg 168] enemy. Not long after Colonel Hoskier[10] received his second wound, a mortal one, and two comrades, Collett and Vice, adventurous and dashing Colonials, were shot through the head. Lieutenant Hockley, rendered almost blind and senseless by a wound between the eyes, was taken prisoner. A gallant attempt to rescue the Scouts was made in the midst of a tremendous storm. All were drenched to the skin. The thunder and lightning rendered artillery fire almost impossible, and very few of the daring party got away from the scene of the fight. On the kopje by Shoeman's Farm were left seven killed and five wounded.

On the following day the bodies were recovered by the military chaplains. Deeply to their regret, they discovered that the dead had been robbed, and it is asserted that a Boer was seen in the feathered hat of the heroic leader of the Scouts, while even the clothes of the others had been filched by some despicable Dutchmen. Mr. Duncombe-Jewell in the *Morning Post* gave a pathetic account of the affair:—"The chaplains to the forces, Father Ryan and Rev. R. Armitage, proceeded under a flag of truce on the following morning to recover the bodies. This they were permitted to do, but they found that the Boers had stripped and robbed the slain, one of them riding about in triumph with poor De Montmorency's hat, with its black riband ornamented with the white skull and cross-bones and the black ostrich feather at the side, hanging at his saddle-bow. So far did they carry these ravages, that on the tunic, which they hastily replaced as the chaplains approached, there remained only one button. The rest of the unfortunate men were as shamefully treated, the three buried by the Boers before the arrival of the flag of truce being interred without either clothing or ceremony of any sort."

A sad funeral took place on the Sunday following, when the remains were buried. The band played a dirge as the procession—in which was the younger officer's gallant servant and comrade, Byrne, V.C., of Omdurman fame, and his favourite grey Arab pony—wound its way [Pg 169] through the town to the Molteno Cemetery. Wreaths were placed on the newly-turned earth by the General and his staff—ephemeral symbols, but in this case emblems of lasting lament for heroes sacrificed on the altar of duty.

HINDOO REFUGEES FROM THE TRANSVAAL IN CAMP AT CAPE TOWN

Photo by Alf. S. Hosking, Cape Town.

In a Divisional Order General Gatacre recorded with deep regret the news of the death of Captain Montmorency, V.C., commanding Montmorency's Scouts, and of Lieutenant-Colonel Hoskier, 3rd Middlesex Volunteer Artillery, who were killed at Schoeman's Farm. "By their deaths," the order concluded, "the division has lost two very valuable officers."

While this affair was taking place at Molteno the West Riding Regiment was distinguishing itself at Arundel. The troops were preparing to clear some kopjes held by the enemy when some Boers suddenly advanced on them. The West Ridings stood their ground grandly, waited with fixed bayonets the arrival of the Dutch horde, and then promptly advanced and scattered them. Unfortunately Captain Wallis was shot dead. Lieutenant Wilson was wounded, but rescued in the midst of a leaden blizzard by a gallant sergeant (Frith), who rushed to his assistance and carried him off on his back to a place of shelter. Scarcely had he done so than he was wounded in the face—in the left eye and nose. Lieutenant Wilson and Sergeant Frith were placed in an ambulance, but owing to the tremendous storm which prevailed at the time, their waggon lost its bearings and wandered aimlessly throughout the night. The sufferers reached hospital on the following day. On the 26th Colesberg and Colesberg Junction were held by our troops, and on the 27th Rensburg was reoccupied.

On the 5th of March Captain M'Neill, who after the death of Captain de Montmorency was appointed to the command of Montmorency's Scouts, discovered that the Boers had evacuated Stormberg. The Scouts now pursued the enemy, determining to keep him on the run. This they did over rugged country and at great personal risk, eventually chasing the Dutchmen to and beyond Burghersdorp.

On the 7th of March General Gatacre occupied Burghersdorp, and the railway arrangements towards Stormberg and Steynsburg were being hurried on in view of the coming operations. The enthusiasm of the loyal inhabitants of the district was great and their relief intense. The greetings from one and all were most effusive, the National Anthem was sung, and the British flag hoisted with jubilation so great that many wept at the relaxation of the long strain.

General Gatacre issued a proclamation requesting rebels to surrender and give up arms, when they would receive a pass to their farms, and where they were to remain till called to account later. Some few rebels appeared to the summons, but many were still shy and were waiting, as the phrase says, "to see which way the cat jumped." [Pg 170]

The oath administered to rebels was as follows:—

> "I, a British subject, do hereby and hereon swear and declare that I was forced by the Queen's enemies to take up arms against Her Majesty's troops, and that the rifle and ammunition were issued to me by Commandant ——, that I joined the commando on or about ——, and left it on or about ——. I now hand in my horse, rifle, and ammunition, and, if permitted, will proceed direct to my own farm, to remain there as a loyal British subject until Her Majesty's pleasure be made further known. I further promise to hold no further communication, either directly or indirectly, with Her Majesty's enemies, or to aid or abet them in any way whatever, under penalty of death."

General Clements now took up his quarters at Norval's Pont, on the south bank of Orange River. The north bank was still being strongly held by the enemy, who had succeeded in blowing up the bridge two days previously.

Aliwal North was next occupied, but the occupation was attended with severe fighting across the river. But the British took up tenable positions, while the Boers, after a wholesome experience of British fire, removed their laager from the hills. The inhabitants of the town, despite the fact that our entry was accompanied by shells, were full of enthusiasm. Colonel Page Henderson and his advance party seized the heights beyond Lundean's Nek. The enemy shelled the bridge with Krupp guns with great vigour, and twenty men were wounded. The British from their entrenched positions silenced these barkings, but were then attacked by the Boer riflemen, who were finally driven off by the Border Horse and a Maxim gun. A waggon of ammunition was captured and several Boers. There were general complaints as to the treatment experienced by British people in the place, and there was some satisfaction when Mayor Smuts was subsequently arrested on a charge of treason.

Railway and telegraphic communication were now carried to Burghersdorp. Everywhere the commencement of a new system was evident. In the north-eastern districts of the Free State the rebels, on the withdrawal of the commandos, slowly returned to their senses. Both English and Dutch loyalists were beginning to breathe freely; they had both equally suffered from Boer oppression. Europeans and natives were jubilant at the now continual laying down of arms by rebels and Boer refugees along the whole of the Colonial borders. The Boer refugees, some of whom were in a pitiable plight, many of them having subsisted for weeks mainly on bread and water and a species of coffee made from rye, were anxious for protection. They stood in fear of their lives, as Commandant Olivier had threatened to shoot those who should surrender. Major Hook of the Cape Police, with his smart men, occupied Barkly East, and at Lady Grey British rule, after three and a half months of oppression, was re-established. It is pleasing to record that the [Pg 171] heroic postmistress returned to her post there with an increased salary. The total collapse of the rebels was impending, and there were now only animated arguments among loyalists and others

as to the treatment which should be given to those who had engaged in and fostered the lamentable revolt. All voted for the speedy appointment of a Judicial Commission. Though a policy of revenge was to be deprecated, it was urged that the ringleaders should be punished with exemplary severity, as a deterrent for the future, and for the purpose of demonstrating to those who had suffered annoyances, loss, and anxiety, that there was some advantage in the maintenance of loyalty in trying circumstances.

AT BETHULIE

Sir William Gatacre, owing to the species of general post that had been set on foot by Lord Roberts' successful advance, suddenly found himself released from the shackles that had bound him. As we know, the enemy had retreated from Stormberg, and from Burghersdorp. Towards the Orange River they had betaken themselves in hot haste, and it was now time to fly after the retreating foe, to catch them, if possible, at the river. At Bethulie there was still the railway bridge. But even as it was neared it ceased to exist. Fragments filled the air. The Boers had blown it up behind them, and wrecked iron was all that displayed itself to the British troops. The road bridge, however, remained; a structure valued by the Colony at £100,000. Of course that would go directly, and the great question was whether the British troops, by putting the spur on their already jaded energies, would be able to reach the place in time to defend it. Captain M'Neill and thirty Scouts made a rush for it; and only just reached the scene of action in time! The Derby was never more hotly contested. The Scouts, like hunted fiends, had sped over obstacle and acre to gain the goal before the fell work of the Boers could begin. They won by a neck. The Boers were already buzzing along the bridge, manipulating with wire and explosive, putting the finishing touches on their design! At sight of the British there was a stampede to north of the river. Here the enemy had supports. (The Scouts carefully hid the fact they had none.) Here the enemy ensconced himself and prepared to do his worst. The Scouts took up their position in the kraal of a farm from which they could sweep the northern approach to the already laid mines, and sent back word urgently praying for reinforcements. Others took their well-deserved rest. Meanwhile with ferocious tenacity some eleven of them held on to the bridge, hawk-eyed, watching, firing, hiding, dodging, anything that should gain time till the [Pg 172] reinforcements could appear. On the other side, only a question of yards off was the foe—numberless, it seemed to them, sniping, potting, and banging with every missile at their command, and determining to hang round the precious bone of contention, the valuable road bridge. The British maintained the same determination. Perhaps a touch, an unseen movement, would set the whole string of dynamite mines in motion; perhaps in this moment or the next, with a roar and a rumble, the clear atmosphere would be decked to blindness with little bits—bits of the bridge that stood before them—bits, too, of the men that were! Still they hung on. It was a grievous subject for contemplation, a sorry possibility to roll in the wrappings of meditation. But fear they scorned. The Boers in vast numbers thronged on the opposite side, bullets from Mausers and Martini-Henrys spurted and flicked up their little wisps of dust till sand became thick as a veil between Boer and Briton. But still the hardy Scouts clung to their post. Moments, every one long as days, sped on; hours passed, night waned, day broke. Still the tiny British band of braves behind bush and boulder stayed with rifles cocked and pointed at the bridge. They dared not approach, but they defied the enemy to venture. Then, with morn, the eternity of anxiety was ended—they were reinforced by the Cape Police! Later the artillery came up. Oh, the sigh of relief! The bridge was saved! Oh, the rejoicing to hear the grand bark of British guns, and see the great earth mushrooms opening up to the sky on the opposite side! Then, at eventide came the supreme deed, among deeds no less worthy. Shot and shell were now falling on all sides of the mined bridge. The Boers were firmly ensconced across the front; hidden and sniping, and now and then appearing and firing boldly. The gloaming was otherwise peaceful, the purple shades of evening blending with the gentle, rippling golden grey of the river. Then from his fellows advanced one Lieutenant Popham of the Derbyshire Regiment. Straight to the threatened bridge, already peppered with the storms of the enemy, he went, crossed to the other side, and quick as thought deftly cut the connecting wires for firing the mines! By a miracle no Boers observed the act, an act that rendered abortive all their ingenious efforts and made the British masters of the situation. Then followed more plucky feats. Young Popham, on advancing through the trenches, had come across large, suspicious-looking boxes. He returned to the British lines. He gathered together some of the goodly men of his regiment, and with them again made his way to the threatened bridge. The sight of the party was the signal for a volley from the Dutchmen, but still they pursued their way to the boxes. "Dynamite, by Jove!" said one; "Kingdom come!" said another. But up they took them, and there and then, under a storm of bullets that now meant [Pg 173] more even than death, the splendid fellows marched back again. The astonishing feat cast dismay over the Federals on the other side of the water, as it filled with admiration and pride all in the British camp who were privileged to view a sight seldom seen in a lifetime. And then, later on, as though the quality of heroism were inexhaustible as the widow's cruse of oil, another splendid act followed on the heels of the foregoing ones. In the dead of night Captain Grant of the Royal Engineers groped his way to the bridge. The Boers were on the alert, but he groped cautiously. The soldier's martial step gave way to the catlike burglarious tread! It was ticklish work that had to be done—work that needed time and nicety of touch. But he meant to do it, and one hint, one rumour of activity would have roused the whole Dutch horde and ruined his plan. The bridge, as we know, was mined. Lieutenant Popham had cut the wires. But the charges of dynamite were somewhere. These Captain Grant found, removed, and dexterously dropped, buried for ever in the purling river! Then with infinite care he detached the other connecting wires, and the bridge

was safe! This was the beginning of the end. A few more passages at arms, and then the British on the 15th of March crossed the Orange River.

CONVEYING WOUNDED TO WYNBERG HOSPITAL CAMP.

Photo by Alf. S. Hosking, Cape Town.

Yet another brilliant act was performed soon after the arrival of the troops at Bethulie. Captain Hannessy of the Cape Police, an officer on General Gatacre's staff, was detailed to capture the railway station, which was situated some distance from the town. This he did. He examined the telegraph room, found the instrument intact, and learnt by communication with Springfontein that there were Boers still in that direction. Without hesitation he at once set off, in company with another adventurous spirit (Captain Turner of the Scouts), on his way to Springfontein. They commandeered a trolley and moved up the line. On nearing the station they saw two trains with steam up, ready for departure. Within the building were Boers—not slim Boers this time—but snoring ones, with bandoliers awry and rifles lollopping. It was a moment to be grasped. The rifles and the bandoliers were gently removed. Then the sleepers were awakened. They rubbed their eyes, and found, not rifles or bandoliers, but that they were prisoners of war! They were without arms, resistance was useless. They were escorted to the railway trucks; an engine-driver was found, and presently the two officers with their "bag" (two trains and eight prisoners) returned in triumph to Bethulie. Here their big-game hunting was vastly appreciated, as at this time, their engines having been left on the other side of the river, the capture of rolling stock was of tremendous importance. Soon after this, troops from Bloemfontein were sent off to occupy Springfontein.

FOOTNOTES:

[8] Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Coningham, 2nd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment, was born in 1851, and joined the army in 1872. His first appointment was to the 103rd Foot, afterwards the 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers, with which he served until 1891, when he was transferred as major to the Worcestershire Regiment. Colonel Coningham was an adjutant of Militia from 1889 to 1894. He also served in the Soudan with the Frontier Field Force in 1885-86.

[9] Captain the Hon. Raymond Harvey Lodge Joseph de Montmorency, 21st Empress of India's Lancers, and commanding De Montmorency's Scouts in South Africa, was the eldest son of Viscount Frankfort de Montmorency, K.C.B. He was born on February 5, 1867, joined the army on September 14, 1887, as second lieutenant in the Lincolnshire Regiment, and was promoted to a lieutenancy in the 21st Lancers, November 6, 1889. In this rank he served in the campaign in the Soudan in 1898, and was present at the battle of Khartoum, and was awarded the Victoria Cross for the following service:—"At the battle of Khartoum on September 2, 1898, Lieutenant de Montmorency, after the charge of the 21st Lancers, returned to assist Second Lieutenant R. G. Grenfell, who was lying surrounded by a large body of Dervishes. Lieutenant de Montmorency drove the Dervishes off, and finding Lieutenant Grenfell dead, put the body on his horse, which then broke away. Captain Kenna and Corporal Swarbrich then came to his assistance, and enabled him to rejoin the regiment, which had begun to open a heavy fire on the enemy." Lieutenant de Montmorency, in addition to being mentioned in despatches and receiving the V.C., had also the British medal and Khedive's medal with clasp. He was promoted to captain August 2, 1899, having in the previous October been despatched on special service to South Africa, when he raised and commanded the special body of scouts whose gallant services have under him been so frequently referred to in connection with the operations in the neighbourhood of Stormberg and Dordrecht.

[10] Lieutenant-Colonel Commandant F. H. Hoskier was a well-known Volunteer officer, who had brought the force which he commanded to a high state of military efficiency. He held a certificate for proficiency in several subjects, and had obtained special mention in examinations in tactics, besides having qualified as an interpreter.

CHAPTER VII

BLOEMFONTEIN UNDER BRITISH RULE

The pastoral little town of brick and tin in the vast expanse of toasted grass had now become a centre of civilisation, one may almost say a fashionable rendezvous. There regiments multitudinous were congregated, and these helped to convert the sleepy, dozing capital into a miniature sphere of many dialects born of a common tongue. Human beings, the conquered and the conquerors, brushed shoulders in friendliness, bought and sold, listened to the bands playing the well-worn British airs in the market-place, and discoursed, under the ægis of the Union Jack, which fluttered from pinnacle and spire, of trade and prospects as though such things as big guns had never acted in place of handshakes, and such men as Steyn had never staked their all on the possibilities of a mirage.

That potentate had betaken himself to Kroonstad, which, in new conditions, had also assumed a new aspect. It was now the capital of the Free Staters, and the seat of the polyglot army that was gathered together to consider the new face of affairs. A Norwegian attaché, who was with the strange horde, gave a description of the quaint dust-bound town and its still quainter inhabitants:—

"KROONSTAD, *March 16*.

> "Here prevails the most extraordinary life it has ever been my lot to witness. All hotels and private houses are filled to overflowing, whilst little laagers are spread everywhere in and outside the town. A wild stream of loose horses, mules, donkeys, and oxen, and little bodies of troops and solitary riders pour through the streets, broken by heavy ox-waggons and mule-carts driven by whips and shouts. All nationalities and all colours are present, and the most Babylonian babble of tongues resounds on all sides. Here are foreign military attachés, surgeons, nurses, regular and irregular Boer troops, volunteers of all arms, officers as well as privates, and besides a goodly lot which I can only stamp as 'freebooters,' for they do not belong to any fixed commando, but look upon the fighting as sport or chase. Frequently, however, among them I come across men of high culture and of first-class families, often fine handsome men with martial bearing, side by side with the worst scum of the earth. Many pass from one war to another. I have spoken with some who have gone through the Greek, Cuban, and Philippine wars. And what uniforms do these mercenaries wear? None at all, or, more correctly speaking, each one has invented his own! The only common badge is the bandolier across the shoulder and the slouch hat. Otherwise every one wears whatever [Pg 175] clothes he may possess, only so that it is nothing new. Many of them who are well off have donned a fantastic costume—slouch hat, with waving ostrich feathers and gold lace, jacket edged with yellow, orange, and green bands, epaulettes with great gold tassels, white or gilt buttons, stripes on the trousers, top-boots with spurs, cockades in the hat and on the breast, and revolvers in the belt. At present the Boer troops are spread all over the place, mostly without any order or discipline. Most of them, particularly the Orange Boers, are sick of the war, and long to go home to their families and farms. Others have simply gone home after the Bloemfontein *débâcle*. In these circumstances Steyn considered it best to allow his men to go home for a few days, and call them together again when the great council of war at the end of the week had decided whether the war should be continued. Many thousands have thus gone home, with or without leave. Will they return? It seems a dangerous experiment."

The fact was that gradually, very gradually, the eyes of the Boers were being opened, though they still tried to persuade themselves that Lord Roberts' presence in the capital of the Free State had no decisive effect on the game of war. They began to look anxiously towards the Continental Powers, who, they had been led to believe, were in sympathy with them, and to wonder when some intervention would save them from the doom they had brought on themselves. In one respect they were beginning to see clearly and to understand, that the great ideal of sweeping the British into the sea was a chimera, and that they must limit their aim to retaining their own freedom, the sole one that could be indulged in and clung to with any shadow of success.

The Dutchmen still hoped against hope for victory, but their scorn for the British was fast dying a natural death. Our repeated fights, had they served no other purpose, succeeded in educating those who had dared to flout us, and after the capture of Cronje the effect of the somewhat brusque lesson was very conspicuous. Before the battle of Elandslaagte, a resident of Cape Town indulged in argument with an obstinate Boer in terms somewhat similar to these:—

"We are going to send 50,000 or 60,000 troops into the field."

"They will be all shot!" he bragged.

"We shall send another 50,000 or 60,000."

"They, too, will all be shot!" he repeated.

"We shall send more."

“Almighty! am I to keep on shooting the Englishman all my life!” sighed the Dutchman, with his best air of braggadocio.

Such bumptiousness was not confined to himself. All his compatriots started on the campaign with identical bombast, for they took their cue from the attitude of those Continental nations with which they had lately become associated. Our neighbours across the Channel had found it convenient to persuade themselves we were a decadent race, that the Old Country was played [Pg 176] out and her children effete. As with the empires of Xerxes, Alexander, Augustus, so with that of Victoria, they said to themselves; and since the wish is father to the thought, the idea was rapidly propagated that Great Britain was fast becoming a second-rate Power.

Almost the whole of Europe had indulged in objectionable comment on the subject of the campaign, and treated us to naked truths that, though unpalatable, were useful as an excellent opportunity to see ourselves as others see us, and correct a somewhat overweening passion for resting on British-grown laurels. But however good as a tonic the cosmopolitan criticism may have been, it was distinctly ill-timed and decidedly ungrateful. Our sneering foes should have patted us on the back, have applauded us. They might even have subscribed to help us to do the hard work of Europe, for, as the Norwegian showed, we were not fighting the Boer alone, but were attacking thousands of his mercenaries—the scum of Europe. We were scouring a veritable Augean stable. Ne’er-do-weels of every nationality were congregated under the Transvaal flag—vagabonds, for the most part, who had made their own country too hot to hold them, and who hoped by promoting a general upheaval to come down on their feet safely—somehow, somewhere!

Fortunately Lord Roberts’ masterly combinations had rapidly brought about a general disillusionment, and served to prove to our critical neighbours that our martial race—from officers to the most raw and fledgling “Tommies”—was the same race as of yore, “game for anything,” even when the thing might range between and include shot and shell, sickness and starvation! The object-lesson was a grand one, and could not pass unrecognised. For us the sad part of it was that the flower of our country, the valiant sons of brave men and the noble descendants of kings, should have had to risk their lives against such a mob of adventurers and filibusters, creatures who were actuated by none of the finer and natural impulses of the Boers to secure their independence, but flung themselves into the fight merely because the spirit of ruffianism which had driven them from their native soils was too rampant to be appeased by any other exercise. But there is no achievement without sadness—no success without pain. Lives must ever be sacrificed to maintain any great nation’s prestige, and now how much more noble seemed the sacrifice when it secured the prestige of a Power that had propagated equality and civilisation over the whole face of the world!

THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF BLOEMFONTEIN—AN EVENING CONCERT IN MARKET SQUARE BY THE PIPERS OF THE HIGHLAND BRIGADE.

Drawing by A. Forestier.

The British once having put their hand to the plough, had stuck manfully to their work, not in hope of reward, but in the belief in the ministry of their great race. Beyond the minor considerations of franchise and political advantage, there had been greater and higher ends to be [Pg 177] attained, and as the flag was fluttering over the capital of the Free State these great ends served to inspire and refresh those who almost fainted by the way. Where the British flag waved there was freedom, enlightenment, progress, evolution—there was emancipation from sin, injustice, and degradation; therefore at the cost of precious lives, and for no personal gain, the great end for which they toiled and suffered and died had to be achieved.

Every ideal, whether merely human or bordering on the divine, demands enormous sacrifices from those who desire to realise it, and the spread of civilisation calls for its ministers and martyrs, and will continue to call for them so long as there are men of heroic mould who, regardless of personal cost, are ready to prize and protect a great and national cause. Only this reflection could serve to hearten and brace our warriors at the front, for, at this time, Lord Roberts’ glorious position was far from a happy one. It was impossible to ignore the cost at which

the prestige of his country and his splendid success was being secured. He found himself at Bloemfontein with the wreck of an army on his hands, with men dropping thick as flies from disease resulting from the terrible exhaustion of the march and from the insanitary conditions of the camp at Paardeberg. There the only water available for drinking purposes had flowed down from the Boer camp a mile and a half up the river, and was polluted by rotting carcases in various stages of decomposition, and, as a natural consequence of these conditions, Bloemfontein was suddenly filled with an appalling number of sick, some 2000 patients suffering from typhoid and enteric, in addition to a very considerable number of wounded at the fight at Driefontein. How to help the abnormal number of sufferers was a problem that taxed the medical authorities to the utmost, for it was impossible to meet the huge demand under the existing conditions. To improvise mere accommodation for so large an influx of sick within the narrow confines of Bloemfontein was a hard task in itself, and even the field-hospitals were inadequate, for owing to the rapidity of the march from the Modder no tents were carried with the force, and none were available until railway communication with Cape Colony could be restored. The Commander-in-Chief of this immense army in this dilemma had but a single narrow-gauge line of railway between himself and his base some 700 miles distant, and this line of rails was not yet available. The first duty was to utilise it for the bringing up of supplies sufficient to sustain the bare life of the healthy force, and prevent those who were sound from joining those who were already exhausted. Tents for the sick, nurses, doctors, hospitals were ordered up, but these could only arrive in their turn, and meanwhile the patients were distributed in all the public buildings, schools, &c. The town being small, this accommodation was meagre in the extreme, and [Pg 178] quantities of the sick in the field hospitals had to place their blankets and waterproof sheets on the ground, and lie there huddled together in a condition that was grievous in the extreme. The mortality was tremendous, and the sufferings of those who were recovering were pitiable, but these things it was impossible to avert; they have belonged in all ages to the horror of war, and in other times were the natural and ordinary, and not, as in the present case, an abnormal consequence of an exceptional situation.

The relief of Ladysmith and Kimberley accomplished, Lord Roberts was able to adhere to the cherished Napoleonic maxim—an army should have but one line of operation, which should be carefully preserved, and abandoned only as the result of weightier considerations. This army was now being reorganised as one great whole, a task which involved gigantic labour and called for rare discrimination. But the marvellous tact, one might say magnetism, of Lord Roberts smoothed every difficulty, and the enthusiasm with which those who were brought into contact with the Commander-in-Chief alluded to him, was remarkable. An army chaplain, writing home, voiced the popular feelings for the one and only “Bobs”:—“We are serving under the best and noblest man who ever led an army. You can have no conception of the passionate and devoted affection which Lord Roberts inspires in all ranks. It is not artifice, or adroitness, or dramatic power, but a simple overflowing of the milk of human kindness. Every one notices it; all remark it. The roughest and most cynical of the brave men out here cannot escape the fascination of his delightfully quiet and natural manner, his transparent unselfishness; and one sees in him the value in a born leader of men of a clear and musical voice, and eyes bright and piercing, yet full of kindness and benevolent sympathy. He is entirely without affectation, and takes care that the troops are fed, and not stinted of recreation whenever it can be found. Nothing pleases him more than to mix with the men when at play. And he is an example to all in his regular attendance at public worship and in resting on the Lord’s Day. His staff take their ‘tone’ from him, and this is good for all who come into contact with that staff. I never met so active a man. At daybreak he is in the saddle, riding round the camp before he makes an informal inspection, without notice, of some portion of the lines. He shows no sign of failing strength or of impaired energy, and fatigue is a word not to be found in his vocabulary. I am told that the secret is frugal living and early to rest which keeps him in such excellent health. It is a privilege which all value very highly that they have had the good fortune to serve under our Field-Marshal.”

No such raptures were expended on the silent man of Egyptian fame who had made himself into [Pg 179] the machinery of the tremendous movement, but how much his wonderful work was appreciated the following extract from the *Times* serves to show:—“When Lord Roberts and his Chief of the Staff reached Cape Town, we had troops of all arms in South Africa, but we had no field-army, and until we had a field-army the enemy were to a great extent masters of the position. It is not easy to realise the abilities and the unwearying energy needed to convert all the scattered raw material we possessed in South Africa and the reinforcements daily arriving from all parts of the Empire into the coherent and mobile fighting machine now directed by the Commander-in-Chief. To Lord Kitchener under him belongs the credit of that remarkable achievement. He has not only marshalled the fragmentary units of the paper army corps into a workmanlike fighting force, but in a country without roads in a European sense, and with few and light railways, he has seen that they were fed and clothed and supplied with all the innumerable articles indispensable to their efficiency. If Lord Roberts has won the battles, Lord Kitchener has been the ‘organiser of victory.’”

The result of the combined methods of these two great soldiers was little short of marvellous, and when we look back to the days of Wellington, and compare the army of his day with the army at Bloemfontein, we can but wonder and admire and congratulate ourselves.

For instance, the army at Bloemfontein, the victorious army, which had suffered exceedingly from

the many annoyances of the Boers, comported themselves in their day of triumph with admirable reserve. Brave as the British warriors of old, they showed themselves men of finer stamp and higher discipline than the men who followed Wellington. We have the words of that great commander, to assure us that his force was almost incorrigible. He declared that his own troops at the beginning of the Peninsular war were “a rabble, who cannot bear success any more than Sir John Moore’s army could bear failure.” He also confessed, “I am endeavouring to tame them, but if I should not succeed, I must make an official complaint of them, and send one or two corps home in disgrace. They plunder in all directions.”

Things in Bloemfontein were very different. The victorious army under Lord Roberts walked in like the heroes they were, stopped their predatory instincts at a word, and paid their way and conducted themselves like gentlemen. Indeed the Free Staters lined their pockets almost too satisfactorily at the expense of their conquerors!

Meanwhile the enemy conspired and plotted. On the 17th of March, at Kroonstad, a great council of war was held by the two Presidents, which was attended by a strange and mongrel community. [Pg 180] Among the motley crew were some forty Boer leaders, De Wet, De Larey, Botha, and De Villebois-Mareuil (who was killed at Boshop later on). They were not goodly to look on, as uniform was non-existent, and clean shirts were luxuries that long since had been dispensed with. The action of the Boers, their strength and weakness, came under discussion, and all decided that they must fight to the bitter end. President Kruger offered up prayer, and petitioned the Almighty to give ear to the just claims of his people, while President Steyn, when his turn came, stuck to practical matters, discussed the situation, and declared that if the English thought that because they had captured the Free State capital they had won the battle they were self-deluded. He went on to say: “How should we now continue the war? Should we, as before, defend ourselves in fortified positions, or should we try a new method? I am no soldier,” he continued, “but, according to my conviction, we ought no longer to occupy fortified positions, as the English have learned to manœuvre us out of them without fighting, for which they invariably have plenty of men. Therefore, we ought only, as much as possible, to hamper the enemy’s forward march, and, whilst threatening his rear and flank, attack him everywhere where there is a chance with small commandos without train. We must by this method proceed more offensively than hitherto, and before all turn upon his lines of communication.”

The President’s scheme was much applauded and approved, after which De Larey began to complain of the state of the Boer army, the size and irregularity of the commandos, and the huge waggon laagers behind their positions, stating that owing to these being threatened by a manœuvre of the British, the men were forced hurriedly to leave the ranks to look after the safety of the waggons. He attributed the Boers’ flight at Poplar Grove entirely to anxiety regarding these waggons. He suggested in future fighting with small commandos without train, as he declared it impossible for the Boers to succeed in wielding big armies, because when the enemy attempted to surround or outflank them the Boers lost their heads.

General Joubert proposed “that the so-called ‘veldcornetschappen,’ which are too large bodies to be led by one man, should be reduced to sections of twenty-five, with a corporal at the head. In the Transvaal this had already been initiated with very satisfactory results.” This proposal was also adopted, with the proviso that “‘veldcornets’ who did not at once adopt it should be fined £10.” The position of such a corporal is similar to that of a sergeant in Europe.

Discussion later turned to the coalfields in Dundee, and to prevent them becoming of use to the British it was decided that they must be destroyed. General Botha, however, objected to this destruction, on the principle that the fields were not contraband of war, but private property. [Pg 181] Thereupon President Steyn argued: “I am not of a destructive disposition, but this is necessary, and in accord with the law of nations. Does any one think that the English would let a vessel with coal for the Transvaal go by? If I had to blow up half the Orange Free State in order to secure the independence of my people I would do so.” The great council then closed with the following appeal by President Steyn:——“I close the council in the hope that every officer realises the seriousness of the situation. It is a question of life or death to us, whether we shall remain an independent nation or become slaves. I do all that is in my power, and so does also my elder brother (Kruger). I am no soldier, but you officers are, and to you much is entrusted—the future of our country. Your reward will depend on your actions. Your task is a very difficult one. May God aid you! We are all mortal, but is there a more glorious death than to fall for your country and people at the head of your fellow-Burghers. May God help us! The position is indeed full of trouble, but when night is darkest dawn is nearest.”

These impassioned periods were highly effective, and the Burghers who were present forgot to ask themselves why the speaker had carefully insured himself against so glorious an exit from life by carefully taking to his heels whenever he was confronted by the British!

Some Burghers evidently thinking that an ounce of example was worth a ton of precept, decided not to die gloriously, but to live at peace with all men inside their homes, and consequently turned their backs on their party and returned to their farms.

A proclamation had been issued requiring Burghers residing within ten miles of the military headquarters and the town to deliver up all arms and ammunition by noon on the 18th, under penalty of being punished and having their goods confiscated, and by degrees, as a consequence of the proclamation, rifles in considerable quantities were handed in. On the other hand, a great many more modern weapons were surreptitiously disposed of, many of them being buried in order to be dug up as occasion might require, and obsolete firearms surrendered in their place.

The work of pacification was going on apace at Springfontein, where the 1st Scots Guards, the 3rd Grenadier Guards, four Royal Artillery guns, and forty Mounted Infantry were now stationed, and at Bethulie, which place also had decided not to show fight.

Sir Godfrey Lagden from Maseru now telegraphed to Lord Roberts stating that the residents of Wepener (a town at the extreme east of the Free State on the Basutoland border) wished to receive copies of the proclamation and had decided to lay down their arms, and it was stated that many more towns on the eastern fringe desired to follow suit. [Pg 182]

With marvellous celerity things began to shape themselves. The law courts resumed work. Mr. Papenfus, whose services as Landrost had been dispensed with, was replaced by Mr. Collins. A train service was speedily established between Bloemfontein and Cape Town, and the Bank of Africa and the National Bank of the Free State were permitted (subject to restriction) to continue business. Transactions with towns in the Transvaal and Free State still occupied by the enemy were not allowed.

Signal Station at Bloemfontein.

On the left of the picture is the heliograph, and on the right a Begbie signal lamp, for use when there is no sun. (Photo by Reinhold Thiele.)

Naturally some of the best type of farmers in the vicinity who had surrendered were anxious for protection against attacks by Boers still in the field, and Lord Roberts, bearing this in mind, sent out columns to register names and take over arms, and give assurance that the necessary protection was forthcoming. During the end of March, General French, on this mission intent, [Pg 183] was sent to Thabanchu (forty miles east of Bloemfontein), while a detachment from General Gatacre's headquarters had gone to Smithfield (some forty miles north of Aliwal North). General Clements operated in the same pacific way round the south-west skirts of Bloemfontein, while General Brabant "tackled" the only still aggressive force of the Boers in the southern part of the Free State. Commandant Olivier with a force of some 5000 men and sixteen guns was there, being pushed back inch by inch, it was hoped into the arms of General French, who was waiting with such horses as he could still muster at Thabanchu to pounce on him. Still, though slowly, the country was settling down, and the inhabitants were beginning to realise the advantage of bringing in supplies for sale. They, however, were "slim" at the core, and their slimness was responsible for some lamentable occurrences with which we shall have to deal anon.

The telegraph was now restored as far as Reddersberg Railway, communication had been restored with Bethulie, and the railway at Norval's Pont had been completed. In south and west peace reigned. There were even signs that the Transvaalers were thinking of abandoning the defence of the Free State. Friction between the Federals was reported on all sides. Even Mr. Steyn and Mr. Kruger were scarcely at one. Mr. Steyn's last remark to the grand old man of Pretoria when they parted at Bloemfontein was, "Mind the British don't catch you, or you will get better quarters in St. Helena than I." Both Presidents were aware that the Commander-in-Chief was a person to be reckoned with, and that, if they wished to make a last wild effort, they must put their shoulder to the wheel. So on the 21st of March President Steyn and General Joubert went on a tour of inspection for the purpose of encouraging the troops. With them was a foreigner who described their movements. "The troops who are in laager at Venterburg, Roodstation, Zand River Bridge, and Smaldeel (Winburgroodstation), number only some 700 men, with a battery and six machine guns, all Transvaal Boers. The feeling was everywhere buoyant, and all were determined to hold out. To-day the Orange Boers begin to return after their leave. It looks as if they are recovering their breath after the Bloemfontein *débâcle*, and if the English wait much before they advance, the men will have time to reorganise themselves. Colonel De Villebois-Mareuil is now occupied with the scheme of organising a flying column of foreigners, to be called the 'European Corps,' of 600 men, two guns, and a waggon with dynamite and tools, with which he intends to operate on the English lines of communication, if possible in conjunction

with Major Stenekamp, who has collected some 2000 men to the west, who are furnished with ammunition, stores, and money by General du Toit at Fourteen Streams. The English have indeed lost much valuable time; the next few weeks should show if the Boers have understood to take advantage of it. But there seems to be too little plan and too little organisation among them." [Pg 184]

The loss of time was deplored on all hands, but Lord Roberts, rather than do things imperfectly, was content to wait. There was no use in attempting to hammer at the demoralised Boers till, rail, horses, and constitutions being in working order, his tools should be equal to the task required of them.

But the Chief, though stationary, was not allowing the grass to grow under his feet. It must be remembered that prior to his entry into Bloemfontein he had been marching and fighting for a month away from the railway, and that his primary duties had been, first, to capture and secure the railroad; second, to repair it and get it, together with bridges, &c., in working order; and thirdly, to shift his base from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth, a distance of 750 miles, by a single line of rails with a rise of 4500 feet. Much time had also been spent in defeating detached forces of the enemy which threatened his communications with Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, and blocked them from East London.

The question of horses, too, was a most important one, one which could not be settled without much delay, because, do what it might, the Government could scarcely send them off with sufficient haste to meet the demand. During the first four months of the new year there had been shipped, as remounts, in addition to those sent with the troops, 27,041 horses and 17,143 mules. A further supply was expected in May, consisting of 7500 horses and 4500 mules, and after that date another batch of 7500 horses and 20,000 mules was to be forwarded. The total of remounts bought since the opening of 1900 was about 42,000 horses and 23,000 mules! But, until the steady flow of these into the country commenced, the great final move could not be more than planned out.

STRATHCONA'S HORSE.

Photo by Pittaway, Ottawa.

The art of battle had resolved itself into a question of pace. The Boers had taught us that to be successful we must be slim, swift, and sudden. Lord Roberts decided that there must be no breathing-time, that their cunning commandos must not be permitted to collect, and that mounted troops must be met by mounted troops. It began to be evident that the army of the future would need to gallop—machine guns with the Horse Artillery, Royal Engineers with the cavalry, while guns of position and traction engines would have to follow a corresponding process of activity! With flying cavalry and mounted infantry must also go flying engineers, ready to take their share in schemes of scientific demolition, effective destruction of lines and culverts and bridges, which cannot be remedied under the loss of days—days which will mean the success or the failure of the enterprise in hand. In fact, hereafter a vast and wonderful military dictionary will be comprised in the word "mobility." [Pg 185]

To the ordinary mind the question of mobility resolves itself into a mere matter of mounted men. It is almost impossible to follow the extraordinary ramifications strategically and tactically connected with the term. To increase the mobility of the army—the problem which had to be faced by Lord Roberts on his arrival at the Cape and again at Bloemfontein—it was, above all things, imperative to have quicker moving transport; strategically, a leader would be hand-tied without it. After this it was necessary to provide for perpetual relays of mounts for the cavalry with far less weight on the saddle, and to feed up the infantry, and thus restore to the men their mental and muscular elasticity. Tactical mobility was dependent on these considerations, and they had to be faced equally with the great difficulty of how to deal with the daily increasing number of sick. The Boers had been given too much breathing-time at first, and the delay had to be made up for by the hurried and costly swoop on Cronje, which turned the tide of British fortune. It was now important that another rush should be made—a rush without the "intervals for refreshments" which had served the Boers so conveniently, and enabled their recuperative courage to assert itself—and to organise this a somewhat long halt was obligatory.

The Chief now intended to make the capital the advanced base for the invasion of the Transvaal, and decided to attempt no further move till sixty days' supplies should have arrived from the Cape. The heterogeneous units of Imperial and Colonial troops now called for redistribution. Gaps had to be filled in and "inefficients" weeded out. General Warren was put into civil charge of Griqualand West; General Nicholson was given charge of the transport—a thankless and onerous post; General Chermside took over the Third Division from General Gatacre; General Hunter was drawn with Barton's Brigade from Natal to the Free State side; Generals Pole-Carew and Rundle got Divisions; and General Ian Hamilton was appointed to the command of a Division of Mounted Infantry, 11,000 men in all, composed of two Brigades, each of four corps, with batteries of artillery attached. The remounting of the cavalry and Mounted Infantry was an undertaking needing time and help from all parts of the British world. Activities were not all serious, however.

Bloemfontein boasted a newspaper. It was styled the *Friend of the Free State*. Before many days were over it had changed hands, and had become the perquisite of the war correspondents. It was now run on Imperial lines, and formed the organ of official communications during the military occupation of the capital. But for that reason it did not lose the sense of humour with which the freelances of the press—Rudyard Kipling among them—were bubbling. A specimen of the jocosity of our exuberant scribes serves as a memento of a wonderful period. [Pg 186]

"STINKOSSMULEFONTEIN"

The Descriptive Art

> We have often felt that the gallant members of Lord Roberts' force, although themselves daily engaged in doing deeds which will live in history, yet have to exercise a vast amount of patience before they can read for themselves the brilliant, graphic, and wonderful accounts of their doings sent home by the war correspondents attached to the force. England is three weeks away, and it is a long time for the gallant soldier to wait to see his name in all the glory of leaded type. With the usual enterprise of the *Friend*, we have—we will not say how—managed to see and copy the telegrams sent home by the leading correspondents describing the action at Stinkossmulefontein Kopje. It was not, it is true, a very big engagement, for two companies of Mounted Infantry were sent to see if there were any Boers in the said kopje. They found them there—in the usual manner—one man wounded and six horses—and then retired to report the fact. That is the bare solid truth of the whole thing; now for the correspondents' accounts:—
>
> *Times* (London):—Human element in what commonly supposed be machine, namely, two companies Mounted Infantry to-day severely tried. To put to-day's action form algebraic equation situation briefly this Boers keen-eyed, rugged held kopje (forget name kopje but know stink and fontein in it but see Reuter) sitting behind boulders, while other portion equation represented two companies Mounted Infantry (don't know commander or regiment see Reuter) is possible work whole thing algebraically Boer on kopje equal ten Mounted Infantry advancing along level plain therefore fifty boers on kopje more than match for two hundred Mounted Infantry advancing across plain whole thing followed mathematical sequence Mounted Infantry returned from kopje having tried solve impossible equation.
>
> *Daily Telegraph* (London):—Early morning while camp asleep rose prepared my coffee saddled horse left camp each side lay poor wearied soldiers fast asleep dreaming doubtless home mothers wives sweethearts some tossed uneasily hard veldt moon shone pouring paling with silver light features [please insert here one my night-before-battle scenes No. 4] but I could not help feeling Army doing wrong sleep knew enemy front determined myself go forward find out position enemy passed outlying picket told officer keep good look out as knew enemy front officer answer and actually wished prevent me passing picket but when told him my name allowed pass sun now rising glorious [insert sunrise scene No. 2] moved cautiously forward saw near distance kopje approached near suddenly whole kopje burst forth into flame of flashes bullets whizzed past but I remained still counting carefully each flash till I found out exactly number Boers then putting spurs galloped back full speed flying past picket sentries horse lines arrived myself and horse breathless Field Marshal's cart dismounted saluted told him I

had discovered fifty enemy in position four miles on. Field marshal drinking coffee said thank you continued eating breakfast I then developed to him my plan campaign drew [Pg 187] statement correct map. Field marshal continued breakfast again said thank you I left him field marshal following my plan ordered two companies Mounted Infantry reconnoitre position which did with loss one man six horses wounded [insert famous "Vulture Scene"].

Daily News (London):—Again British arms successfully came contact enemy locating position number with great exactness early morning two companies mounted infantry under Major Jones pushed just as sun tinging kopjes with ruby light saw kopje front which from indications appeared be held enemy opening into skirmishing order small force advanced till within rifle range when enemy opened heavy fire Major Jones having found what he wanted immediately ordered retirement of force without replying to enemys fire our loss man wounded six horses enemys loss unknown but must be enormous value of horses wounded about £150.

Cape Times (Capetown):—Morning opened with soft breezes from north just sufficient to shake mimosa bushes into sweet rustling music when I rose rode forward fully sure that I should see something and I did for before we rode forward two gallant companies of Mounted Infantry having, it is true, none of the shining pomp war for every button, every shining bit of steel or metal covered with kharki still little force looked gallant enough reminded me one James Grant's novels. Veldt was green with recent rains there was a freshness in the air everything was peaceful around me but in front was war and wounds and death. I stood on rising ground and saw before me a panorama unfolded the little band of British soldiers approaching the grim kopje where lay the watchful Boer. Closer and closer rode our men and now I could see them open out and work like a perfect machine round the bases of the kopje and then across the still morning air came the ominous crack! which told me that the grim game had commenced crack! crack! crack! followed in quick succession the Boers were firing on our men whose orders were simply to feel for the enemy, but they not only felt for him, but also felt him for as we retired one man was wounded in the fleshy part of the arm, and through six horses Boer bullets passed though without fatal effects. And then I rode back with the little force who in spite of the shower of lead which had passed through their ranks laughed and chaffed and thought only of their coming breakfast.

Cape Argus (Capetown):—Early this morning two companies Mounted Infantry under Major Jones proceeded west came into touch with enemy at Stinkossmulefontein Kopje which lies on farm belonging old Pete Bumbleknuckel who well known Rand circles his daughter married Jacobus Pimplewinkel who lost an eye fighting in the Langberg Campaign his cousin maternal side is Jack Jackson who is one of General Brabant's most active Scouts. But to return to the skirmish the mounted infantry succeeded in locating the enemy retired having effected their object with the loss of one man and six horses wounded on way back I met native who told me commander Boer force Lucus Prussic old personal friend mine who curious to relate still owes me five pounds which borrowed just before I left Johannesburg.

Daily Mail (London):—Shakespeare said better lie bed than go fighting early morning. I agree but Plutarch said man who lies abed when work abroad moral coward am not moral coward but all same wish people fight decent hours fancy going out fighting cold raw morning nothing in stomach but one miserable cup cocoa however went being late lost my way instead witnessing fight British side found myself next Boer who not perceive me firing over our men by happy interposition Providence managed reach our men leaving behind enemy's hand one horse Cape cart pipe lucky get off with life [Pg 188] insensibly reminded celebrated lines Heine "wo ist mein pferd und mein kaap-tart?" no breakfast when arrived camp kept thinking how Boers enjoying my sausages drinking my whisky Boers must be destroyed now, with spirit old Roman I now say "delendi sunt Boeri" though I have greater reason for saying so since Hannibal's soldiers never stole sausages and whisky from Roman correspondents.

Morning Post (London):—Stinkossmulefontein mounted Jones reconnoitred kopje half dismounted half rear enemy fired returned front. Experience say half gone left flank greater success turning movement only against Boers see Page 431 Napoleonic Legends also Life Moltke Page 239 Battle Schweitzerkässe. Had Jones read more Schweitzerkässe—no Moltke—would capture whole army waggons. Paper should impress importance this all arms.

Reuter (London):—Stinkossmulefontein Thursday via Disselboomlaagte per despatch riders—Yesterday two companies Mounted Infantry Major Jones under orders General Flanker proceeded reconnoitre kopje was present what some may call unimportant rearguard action can say was most important event entire expedition at distance 2033.4216 yards enemy opened fire. Jones dismounted A company, B company sent E.N.E. by E. direction rear enemy. At 6.3½ a.m. front rank left section A after returned fire 6.4¼ a.m. Trooper Metford, fourth man rear rank right section A received wound four inches below left elbow. Having ascertained strength enemy force returned camp object reconnaissance accomplished six horses missing five receiving wounds sixth left behind with staggers not shot as some declare.

Every one exerted himself to make the newspaper a success, and, as may be imagined, the journal became a source of merriment and delight. Nor was it without pathos. Mr. Rudyard Kipling, whose patriotic feeling had dragged him to the scene of action to view the British flag as erected there by Mr. Thomas Atkins, contributed his quota. On the death of Mr. G. W. Steevens, the brilliant young war correspondent, who died in Ladysmith, he wrote the following lines:—

"Through war and pestilence, red siege and fire,
Silent and self-contained, he drew his breath.
Brave not for show of courage, his desire:
Truth as he saw it, even to the death."

The Naval Brigade was now busy furbishing itself up, and veritably began to look as "fresh as paint." The guns received new coats, and the Bluejackets and marines made themselves spick and span. It is not often that Tommy waxes enthusiastic over Jack, but over the conduct of the Naval Brigade he was even eloquent. One writing home said:—"It was a good job the Boers did not make a stand at Bloemfontein, for it would have been a great pity to have had to destroy so fine a town. It would not have taken us long to have made the town a heap of stones, as in addition to our ordinary batteries, we had with us 'Joe Chamberlain' and five of his 'chums' belonging to the Naval Brigade. I hope when the war is over you at home will not forget the [Pg 189] splendid service of the Naval men. I for one shall never forget the way in which they dragged their heavy guns across a most difficult country, or the manner in which they handled them in the face of the enemy." On the 21st the Brigade, under Captain Bearcroft, was inspected by Lord Roberts, who made one of the charming and appropriate speeches which have always rendered him so popular. He thanked the Brigade for the excellent work done in the campaign, and wished good luck to those about to rejoin their ship. The Chief also eulogised the splendid service of Captain Lambton and his men in saving the situation at Ladysmith.

Meanwhile on the east and south of the Free State things were not entirely comfortable. Commandant Olivier and his hordes, with their usual cunning, assisted by their remarkable mobility, were flitting about, now withdrawing before General Brabant, now evading the equally cunning and active French, now laying in wait for unprotected detachments, or hanging about railway lines in order to wreck them, but making themselves scarce with lightning velocity when a hint of British reinforcements was given by the appearance of a dust-cloud on the horizon. Fortunately our officers on the principal line of communications were so vigilant and cautious that the rail, running through some hundred miles of hostile ground, was safely protected.

On the 23rd of March an unlucky incident took place in the neighbourhood of Karee Siding. Some officers of the Guards Brigade rode off from Glen Camp in the early morning to make arrangements with the local farmers for ensuring forage and supplies. Glen Siding is a station on the Orange Free State Railway some fourteen miles north of Bloemfontein. Near here the Brigade of Guards and a force of Mounted Infantry had been stationed owing to the destruction by the Boers of a bridge on the Modder. Other troops were posted at intervals along the line of rail in order to watch over the enemy and prevent any further efforts at dynamite wrecking. On this day the party consisted of Colonel Crabbe, 3rd Grenadiers (who greatly distinguished himself in the battle of Belmont, and was wounded); Colonel Codrington, Coldstreams; Adjutant Hon. E. Lygon, who was also wounded at Belmont; Captain Trotter, and an orderly, Private Turner of the 1st Cape Volunteers. Why, when officers of high rank were so extremely valuable, these two Colonels should have thus recklessly exposed themselves has never been satisfactorily explained. The day was spent in making a tour of the farms, and everything went well until the middle of the afternoon. While riding along close to a homestead called Maas Farm, the Guards party discovered that four mounted men were making for a kopje as though to head them off. Whereupon the party instantly advanced to meet the enemy. These promptly hid themselves [Pg 190] behind the friendly boulders, where they were joined by three other Dutchmen, who assisted them in pouring a smart shower of lead upon the approaching officers. These, with only four Lee-Metfords between them, made an effort to get at the unseen enemy, but in a very few moments all the members of the British band had dropped. Colonel Crabbe had a bullet through arm and leg, and his horse was killed. Colonel Codrington was injured in the thigh. Lieutenant Lygon was shot through the heart and died instantaneously, while Captain Trotter and Private Turner were also wounded. The situation was a lamentable one. The veldt was strewn with helpless men, while from the kopje the Dutchmen continued to fire, the flute-like song of the Mauser falling ominously on the ears of the gallant men who were unable to move a limb in defence. Then between the prostrate Colonels a debate took place. Now that resistance was useless, each invited the other to display a white handkerchief. One refused because he declared he couldn't—his handkerchief was a crimson one. The other refused because he vowed he wouldn't—his handkerchief was a British one, and never manufactured for waving at Boers. But, finally, he was brought to reason, and immediately on the display of the magic square the Boers ceased fire. They now emerged from their boulders, tended the wounded, spoke apologetically of their good marksmanship, and finally carried off their prizes to the neighbouring farm. Here the prisoners were fed and carefully looked after till evening. A messenger was sent to the Guards' Camp at Glen requesting surgeons and an ambulance to remove the wounded to their headquarters, and on the arrival of the medical party the officers were given up by their captors and allowed to return to camp in their charge. They were relieved of their warlike belongings, firearms, and glasses, &c., but their private effects remained in their pockets undisturbed.

The body of the Hon. E. Lygon was also removed, but the next day, in accordance with the wishes of his family, it was interred in the wild and lonely spot where he met his death.

On the 27th of March Sir Alfred Milner arrived at Bloemfontein on a private visit, and was met by Lord Roberts and his Staff. General French returned from Thabanchu after having occupied the town and captured the flour-mills.

Lord Kitchener also reappeared. His operations had been short and to the point. He came on the same day from Prieska, having received the submission of some 200 rebels, and put to flight such of them as had no taste for an encounter with “the man of ice and iron” as the Italians called the hero of Omdurman.

Towards Ladybrand news was less satisfactory. The British loyalists, owing to their sympathy [Pg 191] with their fellow-countrymen, were subjected to annoyance and cruelty. Many of them were captured, imprisoned, and some were sent to Kroonstad, which had been declared to be the capital of the Free State. Daily, English farmers were commandeered, robbed, threatened. The smart activities of Olivier had produced a lamentable effect on the state of affairs, as it was now impossible to afford full protection to the farmers in the south-east and east who had surrendered their rifles, and who were subjected to the vengeful barbarity of the Boers. The mistaken policy of leniency to the Free Staters was now being demonstrated, the “live and let live” principle having helped Olivier to gather together under his banner such of the enemy as had met us with a Janus-faced surrender. Those who fight and run away, live to fight another day; and on this cautious code the Free Staters had modelled their manners, so as to reserve themselves for further truculent exploits. Again British magnanimity was mistaken for weakness, and the temporary success of their manœuvres in the east was causing the Boers to indulge in reprisals of abominable kind on British born people, whose action in surrendering was the only possible one in the circumstances. A rumour existed that the late President Steyn had issued orders that all British burghers refusing to fight with the Boer army would be shot.

On the 27th of March a formidable figure was removed from the drama in South Africa. General Joubert, who had long been in somewhat delicate health (so much so that in his campaigns he was accompanied by his wife, who cooked for him), now suddenly succumbed to an acute attack of inflammation of the kidneys. General Joubert was much esteemed by all who knew him. In him the Boers lost not only a remarkable commander, but an enlightened and level-headed politician. It was declared that had the General succeeded to the Presidency in 1895, the whole Uitlander agitation would have ceased to exist. The deceased Dutchman had moderately progressive views, and he announced his belief that the demand for a five years’ franchise was a reasonable one. He also discountenanced the idea of war, and in many ways used the influence he had with his countrymen in the cause of reason and liberality of outlook. At times he seemed to desire friendly co-operation with Great Britain. For this cause he was accused by his more narrow countrymen of being half-hearted in the Africander cause, and was intrigued against by Mr. Kruger and such of the subsidised sympathisers as the President could gather around him. Still his attitude may be gauged by his famous speech in 1878:—

“I have been to England, and have with my own eyes seen the might of that mighty nation. And let me tell you that England is a very mighty nation—in my opinion the mightiest in the world. But, thank God, it is not almighty.” And his motto, which he invented for himself, was, “Trust in [Pg 192] God, and fight England.”

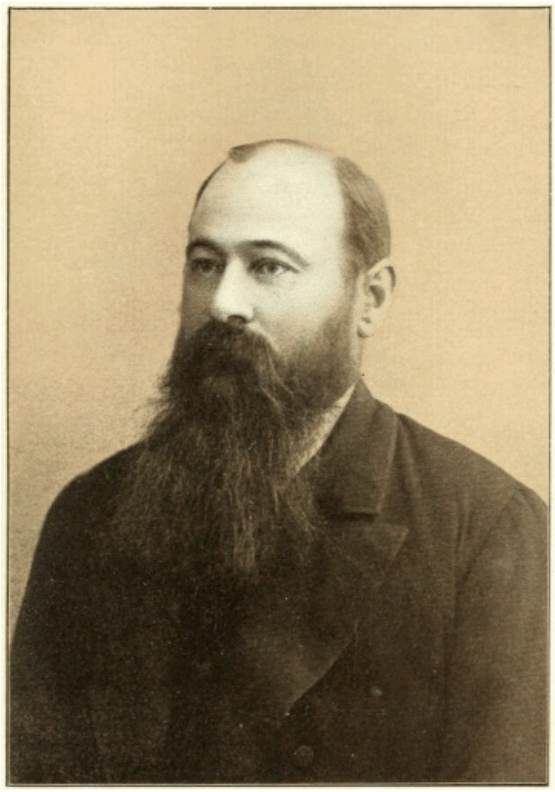
On hearing the news of General Joubert’s death, Lord Roberts sent the following to President Kruger:—

> “I have just received the news of General Joubert’s death, and desire at once to offer my sincere condolence to your Honour and the burghers of the South African Republic on the sad event.
>
> “I would ask you to convey to General Joubert’s family the expression of my most respectful sympathy in their sad bereavement, and to assure them also from me that all ranks of her Majesty’s forces serving in South Africa share my feeling of deep regret at the sudden and untimely end of so distinguished a general, who devoted his life to the service of his country, and whose personal gallantry was only surpassed by his humane conduct and chivalrous bearing under all circumstances.”

On the afternoon of the 29th the funeral took place, and many wreaths were sent by the British officers in the Pretoria prison.

THE BATTLE OF KARREE

Karree Station is situated some seventy miles north of Bloemfontein, and here the Dutchmen were distributed on kopjes commanding the railway west and north. As they promised to be an impediment to further progress, Lord Roberts decided that they must be removed. Generals Tucker, Wavell, and Chermside, with infantry and artillery, were already in the vicinity. To join them General French started from Bloemfontein with reinforcements on the 28th of March. These consisted of a Cavalry Brigade composed of 12th Lancers, the Carabineers, the Greys, the Australian Horse, a Mounted Infantry Brigade, Kitchener’s Horse, and three Vickers-Maxim guns under Colonel Le Gallais.



Mr M. T. STEYN.

LATE PRESIDENT ORANGE FREE STATE.

From “South Africa” by permission of the Publishers.

The artillery planted their shells with admirable exactness on the kopjes west of Karree where the enemy had ensconced himself. Meanwhile, in a wonderful and almost invisible manner, an enveloping movement was organised, Colonel Le Gallais, the Mounted Infantry, and Kitchener’s Horse operating on the right wing, while General French with 1st and 3rd Cavalry Brigades were on the left. General Chermside’s Brigade was on the right centre, and General Wavell’s on the left centre. About midday the enemy was discovered near a farmhouse some two miles east of Karree. The Dutchmen then began to fire from some small kopjes, on the infantry. From this point they were routed by the smart action of the Norfolks, but they continually reappeared, there being some five thousand of them, under Grobler, occupying four different positions, with a frontage some three miles long. Both ends of the position were strengthened by trenches and guns. The right flank consisted of a thickly wooded hill connected with the main position by a ridge also covered with scrub. The left was protected by an incrustation of minor kopjes, and round these fastnesses the Boers clung tenaciously. [Pg 193]

The finest performance of the day was that of the East Lancashires, who, with comparatively small loss, eventually succeeded in moving the enemy from his main stronghold. The City Imperial Volunteers also distinguished themselves, the men advancing the first time under fire with the utmost coolness.

While the enemy were retreating from the assault of the Lancashires General French’s guns opened on them, and with such good result that the fight was practically at an end, for the Boers having begun to beat a retreat were forced finally to scuttle off as fast as legs would carry them. Till sunset the artillery continued to direct deadly attentions to the various kopjes, thus deciding the Dutchmen that their efforts to run and return would be of no avail. Dusk was setting in, and consequently the cavalry failed to pursue them, and they succeeded once more in getting away clear. Owing to the rapidity with which the night came on, most of the troops, who had experienced some very trying hours of fighting, bivouacked where they were.

The battery on the right centre was unable to come into action owing to the nature of the ground, which was sliced with ravines and blotched with irregularities, but nevertheless the upshot of the day’s work was satisfactory, as the country as far as the little town of Brandfort—important to us in our future operations—was swept clear of the enemy, and henceforth the British outposts covered the ground gained and preserved it from further incursions of the nimble Dutchmen.

The casualties were numerous:—

> King’s Own Scottish Borderers.—*Killed.*—Capt. A. C. Going. *Wounded.*—Lieut. E. M. Young, dangerously (since dead); Second Lieut. B. J. Coulson; Capt. W. D. Sellar. Norfolk Regiment.—Capt. E. Peebles; Capt. A. H. Luard. Lincolnshire Regiment.—Capt. L. Edwards. South Wales Borderers.—Lieut. W. C. Curgenven. Hampshire Regiment.—Lieut. C. N. French. 1st Dragoon Guards.—Capt. W. M. Marter (Brigade Major).

CHAPTER VIII

[Pg 194]

MAFEKING IN MARCH

Five months of beleaguerment and no nearer the end! Ruefully the caged crowd began to draw pictures of themselves as weird Rip Van Winkles, curious fossilised things that would some day be unearthed by the inquiring historian. They wondered whether Ginevra in her sealed oaken chest felt more lost to the world, more forgotten, more impossible of rescue! “We,” said some one who shall be nameless, “we are all modern Ginevras—only no one seems to look for us, and, by-and-by, perhaps no one will even mourn. It is five months, you see! Ginevra was probably asphyxiated in five hours, whereas we—we do the thing more sluggishly—more painfully—we starve mentally and physically by slow degrees. If we get air, it is air that is best not respired.” Nevertheless, these people sent forth to the world radiant accounts of their doings, and sported the mask of Punchinello over the visage of Melpomene. It was very British, this jocose unreserve that was a still more tragic reserve, this festivity on the lips with famine gnawing at the vitals.

Fever, the fever of heat, ennui, and mental and bodily depression, had begun to assail the unfortunate besieged. The climate of Mafeking—in ordinary circumstances most inspiriting—was becoming tainted, and the feeling of creeping malaria swept over all who were forced to remain cooped within the sorry regions. But the chief on whose wits the whole community depended defied the malign influence of his surroundings. During the day, with reserved, adamantine calm, he busied himself inventing the thousand and one projects by which might be defeated any possible move of the enemy, in reviving the spirits of his followers, and providing for their appetites, in fighting against the encroachments of disease and retaining the perfect discipline, which was no easy matter in so small a radius with so many conflicting emotions to be dealt with. At night, stealthy as a cat, he would creep forth to make the necessary investigations and acquaint himself with the state of the force opposing him, and if possible discover the Boer machinations of the future. Creeping along the veldt all eyes and ears, he gathered inspiration from a glimmer, the sound of a hoof, the flutter of bird and rustle of bush. Even the colour of the darkness in east and west gave him unspoken hints of designs nefarious—secrets or prophetic [Pg 195] warnings of movements to be. And then he would return from his mysterious peregrinations primed with notions ingenious and plans elaborate, and remain for the day under the roof of the verandah of the headquarters office concocting some of the multitudinous schemes which confounded the Boers and frustrated their best efforts at assault.

On the 3rd of March a little peace was secured owing to the disappearance of the Teuton who worked the huge gun. He had been what was described as “providentially potted.” On the other hand a more valuable life than that of the German mercenary had been sacrificed, for Sergeant-Major Taylor of the Cape Boys, who had been doing splendid work for his country, fell early in the morning mortally wounded. The Boers fired something under forty shells before breakfast, and might have pursued their activities the whole day had the loss of their chief gunner not damped their ardour and forced them to postpone their activities to a more convenient period. They nevertheless “sniped” at intervals throughout the following Sunday, doubtless with the righteous desire to avenge their artillery-man.

New brooms sweep clean. As a fresh gunner had come upon the scene, there now began some more active bombardment. But the activity was no longer what it had been, and but for the meagreness of the fare, and the fear that the rations might diminish till they became invisible, the besieged would have got on fairly well. On the 7th there died an adventurous Scotsman whose history would have delighted the heart of the late Robert Louis Stevenson. Major Baillie in his sparkling account of the siege gave a brief outline of his romantic career. “Trooper M’Donald joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in 1847, served in the Crimea (French and Sardinian medals and two clasps) and in the Indian Mutiny, was kidnapped when embarking home by Americans, fought for the North against the South, deserted the North and fought for the South, afterwards went to Australia, thence to New Zealand, and served in the Maori War, in which he was taken prisoner. Later he came to South Africa, served in the Basuto War with Sir Charles Warren’s expedition, Carrington’s Horse, the Bechuanaland Border Police, and transferred to the Cape Police, in which corps he has died of hardships and old age, fighting the Boers.” The Major went on to say: “He is not the only Crimean veteran we have here. Both the Navy and Army are represented. Mr. Ellis joined the Royal Navy in 1854, served in the Baltic and the Black Sea, came to Africa and served in the Galika War. Mr. Brasier served in the Crimea and the Mutiny, and there are others of whose records of service I am not so certain. The contrast between them and the cadet corps, utilised for orderly work, &c., is remarkable, and if the Boers [Pg 196] have their greybeards and boys fighting, why so have we.” The cadet corps was composed of youths ranging from the ages of ten to fifteen years, game little fellows who did their duty splendidly.

The great news of the capture of Cronje and his horde now served to raise the drooping spirits of the community. It was also reported that Snyman was on the move, and that Malan, who was opposing Colonel Plumer, had come into the neighbourhood of Mafeking. Sounds of rejoicing came from the Boer camp, and on the following day Boers with their field kit were seen to be clearing off. The information that the force was marching to Bloemfontein, that Cape Colony was being swept of rebels, that Ladysmith was relieved, now poured in, and caused the whole place to become simply inebriated with joy.

On the 9th of March, to commemorate the victory at Paardeberg, a special siege slip was published at the newspaper office. The news was announced in the form of a poster, and concluded with the effectively printed information: “Cronje a prisoner. Snyman to be hanged.” Copies were afterwards liberally pelted into the Boer quarter, who digested the news with their morning biltong.

On the 11th (Sunday) a truce was observed. The Colonel, writing at that date, said:—

> “Our men, sitting upon the parapets, held a friendly conversation with a detachment of the enemy, and an enterprising photographer endeavoured to get them into line while he photographed them, but they were evidently suspicious, and feared the temptation to turn a Maxim upon them instead of a camera would prove too great. Small parties appeared throughout the day, and amicable relations were maintained until dark.”

The Boers outside were a hardy and stalwart lot, brawny and uncouth and unkempt, though from a distance not unpicturesque. In their rough-and-tumble attire no two were alike. Some were slouching in velveteen coats and soft felt hats, others in black jackets with “billycocks,” and all with the inevitable well-worn neckerchief that some one suggested might “come in handy for turtle soup.” Their bandoliers and their Martini and Mauser rifles gave them a certain uniformity of aspect, but otherwise they seemed the most motley gang that the hands of fate could have shuffled together. Some of the Boers did not approve of the camera, and were inclined to suspect the British of attempting dodges equal to their own, but others took a pride in being portrayed.

A remarkable, almost a pathetic, feature of Mafeking fighting was the strange ability of both sides to fraternise when hostilities were suspended. The fact was that the combatants were linked together by ties of relationship so mysteriously interwoven that the fights partook of the nature of civil war—brothers and cousins-in-law, and, in one case, two brothers, contending on either side of the battlefield. Naturally, when the bloody business of their lives was ended, they [Pg 197] were inclined to foregather, to compare losses and make kindly inquiries strangely inconsistent with the trend of their antagonistic pursuits. The Colonel further reported:—

> “Sergeant Currie has been promoted to the rank of a commissioned officer. He has thus risen by gallantry and hard work from a third-class private to be a lieutenant within five months. Early on Monday morning (12th) the enemy recommenced the bombardment with their six-inch gun, which had been comparatively silent the previous week, now firing shrapnel. Used against troops in the open the fire of these projectiles is ineffectual as long as cover can be obtained, but they are more dangerous to persons passing to the front from the streets of the town. A detachment of Colonial native troops, under Lieutenant Mackenzie, made an advance on Jackal Tree Fort, the position originally occupied by the siege gun on the south-western heights. The Boers got wind of the movement, and evacuated the position before it could be carried through. To cover the advance on Jackal Tree Fort, a detachment of Baralong natives were despatched to make a feint attack on Fort Snyman, a new work recently erected by the Boers, and threatening the most advanced western position. They succeeded in creeping to within thirty yards of the enemy, many of whom were sleeping outside, and when near the fort poured in two or three rapid volleys. Trooper Webb got sufficiently close to the fort to blow out the brains of one of the enemy. The natives then beat a rapid retreat, in accordance with instructions previously given to them, having inflicted some losses upon the enemy. In the brickfields the Cape Boys were reinforced by a detachment of Protectorate troops under Captain Fitzclarence.”

All were much perturbed at the sad news of the death of the genial young trooper, Webb of the Cape Police, who was shot through the head while on guard in the brickfields. This gallant fellow had been previously wounded in October, and had been carried off under fire by Trooper Stevens, and had only just returned to duty when he lost his life—possibly in revenge for the act described above.

According to Colonel Baden-Powell’s despatch of this date, a raiding party of Baralongs, who had gone out on their own initiative, encountered a patrol of the enemy, and opened fire upon them, killing one man, whose rifle and bandolier they secured. The enemy retired for reinforcements, but the Baralongs ambushed these reinforcements from a convenient ditch at Madibi Siding, and the enemy fell back in confusion, losing six men. The Baralongs, being unable to cope with long-range fire, then commenced to retire on Mafeking, having captured two horses with saddles and bridles. Finding the Boers were in pursuit, and fearing the arrival of reinforcements from the investing forces, however, they returned to a kopje in the vicinity of Madibi. Here they maintained their position until dark, and then made good their retreat into the stadt, having lost one killed and bringing in a few wounded. Three of the party were missing.

It was impossible to prevent the Baralongs from retaliating by raids of this description upon [Pg 198] those whom they called the murderers of their women and children. Mr. C. G. Bell, however, rendered invaluable service in dealing with the natives, and a board was appointed by the Colonel commanding to go thoroughly into the native question.

The Colonel described the effects of the bombardment on the following day:—

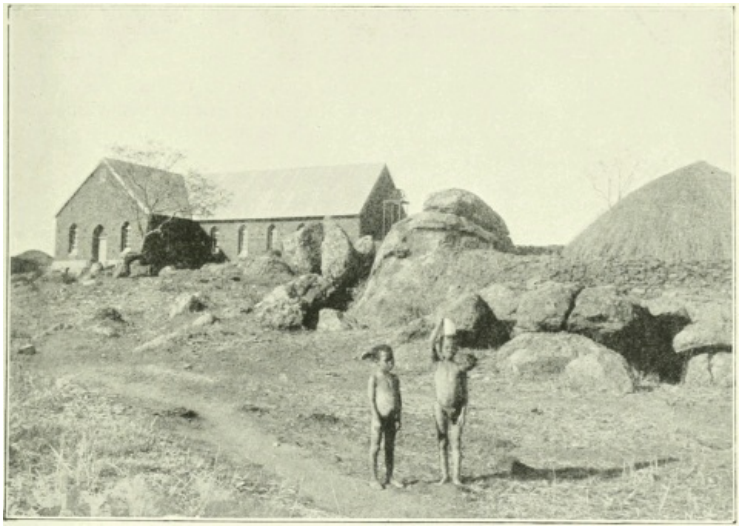
> “On Tuesday a shrapnel shell, bursting just about my bomb-proof, sprinkled the wall of the fire brigade office with bullets, which entered the bedrooms of Dixon’s Hotel. These

were unoccupied, but afterwards a steel-plated shell passed through the wall of the office, and when spent fell beneath the table, and was scrambled for by the staff of clerks. In the afternoon a shell, bursting in the court-house, killed two natives and wounded four, slightly injuring another. All these belonged to an unfortunate working party who happened to be passing at the moment. A woman was also slightly wounded."

The conduct of the Boers towards the natives varied according to the policy of the commandant engaged in subduing Mafeking. A Scottish farmer who remained some ten miles south of the heroic hamlet, said that in the beginning of the war the Boers were not so severe on the natives as they were later on. About Christmas-time natives began to come out of Mafeking and loot cattle to take back into the town. Then the Boers were ordered to give no quarter to natives. If this order had had reference to those found looting cattle, it would only have been according to the rules of warfare, but the Boers were told to shoot down any strange native found in the veldt without a pass from their people; and this was done in a very large number of cases, their bodies being left to rot on the veldt as if they were dogs. In some cases they had come out of Mafeking, which need hardly be wondered at, in view of the scarcity of food amongst the natives there. Considering the risk run, it was wonderful how natives could be found willing to creep through the Boer lines with despatches; but the natives are certainly anything but cowards.

Towards the middle of March the attitude of the Boers towards the natives improved, and they began to allow fugitives to escape through their lines. The reason for this change of front was attributed to a desire to conciliate the Baralongs in the event of Boer defeat, and to keep them from raiding into Boer territory when their time for reprisals might come.

Native spies brought in all manner of rumours, to the effect that Colonel Plumer's armoured train had reached Pitsani Pothlugo, notable as Jameson's starting-point on his famous raid, and that the enemy was concentrating at Ramathlabama to prevent the advance of the relieving force. But news certainly lost nothing by passing through the medium of native channels, and the inhabitants of Mafeking were not over credulous. The great ideal of the Bechuanas was Dr. [Pg 199] Jameson, and he, it was averred, was coming down from Buluwayo with an army to relieve Mafeking. One rumour had it that the famous raider had totally annihilated a Boer laager with a bomb from a balloon! Over an extensive area, west and south of Mafeking, all the natives had been compelled to leave their homes, and were placed near the Transvaal border with a view—it was thought—to prevent despatches passing through to Mafeking. Whatever the object, such a proceeding, especially in the wet season, was very cruel. The poor people were robbed of their herds and household goods, and driven away, and deposited like cattle wherever the Boers thought fit to place them.



Native Church, Mafeking.

On the 18th the Boers were found in occupation of the new trench which had just been triumphantly constructed by the besieged. It was, as Mr. Neilly said, "like the soldier crab who gets into the shell of a winkle when the winkle has gone out for a walk. As a rule the soldier crab keeps what he has gained, but in this case the winkle came back and recovered his shell." He did so very promptly. Lieutenant Feltham and a small party advanced and threw bombs at the intruders, which caused them quickly to evacuate their trenches. Then some of the Bechuanaland [Pg 200] Volunteers "speeded the parting guest" with a smart fusillade from the flank, and the prized trench was recovered.

On the 20th the Boers appeared to be breaking up their western laager, and on the 23rd it was discovered that the enemy had evacuated his positions in the brickfields. These were promptly annexed and dismantled by the Mafeking men. Major Panzera had what some one called "a real sporting day." From morn till night he plied his Hotchkiss and kept the Boers active till dusk. After dark the acetyline searchlight built by the railwaymen was erected at the main work, but no demonstration from the direction of the enemy took place. Then started off Lieutenant Murray and trooper Mallalen (Cape Police) to reconnoitre. On reaching the enemy's sap they crawled round cautiously on hands and knees to investigate. It was a ticklish moment, but they were

rewarded. They peered in and made the discovery that the Boers had vanished. They crept still farther along the connecting trench to the rear of the main work and made assurance doubly sure. The Dutchmen were flown. So rapid had been their flight that biltong, biscuits, and journals were left behind. Quick as thought the trench was dismantled. Then Sergeant Page (Protectorate Regiment) burrowed about for the mine which he and Mr. Kiddy had laid in the direction of this trench in the early days of the siege. The Boers had "slimly" unearthed the dynamite, and presently it was discovered that the evacuated trench was connected by a copper wire with the enemy's line. This was carefully cut. Then its direction was traced, and a neat little plot of the Boers exposed itself to view. They had arranged some 250 pounds of war gelatine and dynamite in the trench, which, at a given moment, a touch from the wily Dutchman on the look-out was meant to explode and blow some of the garrison into the air.

This failure served to depress the Boers, and for a time their siege gun ceased fire, something having gone wrong with its works. Colonel Baden-Powell was very proud of the brickfield's success and those who contributed to it. Colonel Vyvyan, Inspector Marsh (Cape Police), Majors Panzera and Fitzclarence, Inspector Browne, Lieutenant Currie (Cape Police), Sergeant Page, and trooper Thompson (Cape Police), were all eulogised in general orders.

(Captain). (Sergeant).
THE CAPE TOWN HIGHLANDERS.

Photo by J. E. Bruton, Cape Town.

The captured newspapers afforded great satisfaction to the beleaguered company, for they recounted the entry of Lord Roberts to Bloemfontein, the surrender of Cronje, and the relief of Ladysmith. The intelligence was intensely heartening, and the garrison seemed to gain in backbone—not that it had ever been deficient in that quality. But now its obstinate resistance of the Boers was resumed with renewed zest. [Pg 201]

It must be noted that besides the Baralongs, who defended their own stadt, were four other black contingents—the Fingoes, under Webster; the Cape Boys, under Lieutenant Currie, B.S.C.P., who succeeded Captain Goodyear when that officer was wounded; a detachment of Baralongs, under Sergeant Abrams; and a Zulu crowd, called the "Black Watch," under Mackenzie. All these contingents "put their backs into it," and rejoiced in making things as hot and uncomfortable for the enemy as they could.

In default of other amusement some of the inhabitants interested themselves in the Dutch snipers, and began to grow so familiar with them that they resorted to the primeval mode of christening, that of designating each individual by his personal attributes. One would be called "Bow-legs," another "Bluebeard," or "Draggle Beard," and so on. One Rip Van Winkle was particularly admired. Despite his years and his probable "rheumatics," he would take up his post from dawn till dusk, and snipe with persistence worthy a better cause. His patience and perseverance somewhat endeared him to the garrison, and there was felt to be something missing in the excitement of life when it was found that he, like many of his compatriots, had been "curried," otherwise "dished," by Lieutenant Currie, B.S.C.P., and his ever-active contingent. These cheery fellows in off moments were ready enough to exchange jocosities with the foe, almost treating him, despite his barbarism, as one of themselves.

The correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette* quoted a sample scene to describe the style of friendly intercourse that took place.

"Cape 'boy' to Boer: 'Could you hit a bottle?' 'Yes, I think so. Put one up.' (A hand rises cautiously to the top of the British trench, and a black bottle is deposited there.)

“Boer: ‘I can’t see it. Put it higher.’ (The Cape ‘boy’ balances a hat on the head of the bottle and says, ‘There you are; you can see that.’) The Boer fires, and the bullet flies wide.

“Cape ‘boy’: ‘Wide to the left.’ (Boer fires again and asks, ‘Is that nearer?’)

“Cape ‘boy’: ‘Rather high.’ Boer fires a third shot that comes through the loophole.

“The Cape soldier announces the result, and the Boer, fearing that he will lose his good reputation for marksmanship, and angered by his bad display, sings out—

“‘Look here, you rooinek, we were sent here not to shoot bottles, but men.’”

Curiously enough many of the Boers were hopelessly ignorant and unsophisticated. They hardly knew what they were fighting for, and one raw individual was heard to declare that he didn’t believe the Queen had caused this war, but the foreman of the English Raad. They retained their [Pg 202] bumptiousness in all circumstances. After a victory they would brag of the number of British killed, about 80,000 as a rule, their news being gleaned from the imaginative columns of the *Standard and Diggers’ News*. On the subject of defeat they were reticent, but fairly confident that the Dutch flag in a month or two was bound to be floating over South Africa.

On Sunday the 25th, a great Siege Exhibition took place—an exhibition notable for its originality. Among the articles on view were bonnets which had been trimmed with “siege” materials by ladies of the town. These were never tired of showing their usefulness and versatility, but, as Lady Sarah Wilson—a host in herself—declared in the *Daily Mail*, “even the dogs played a prominent part in the siege. One belonging to the base commandant was wounded no less than three times; another, a rough Irish terrier, accompanied the Protectorate Regiment in all its engagements; a third amused itself by running after the small Maxim shells, barking loudly and trying hard to retrieve pieces; while the Resident Commissioner’s dog, a prudent animal, whenever she heard the alarm-bell tore into the bomb-proof attached to her master’s redoubt, and remained there till the explosion was over. The sagacious creatures rendered themselves most valuable, for no sooner had the warning bell announced the firing of a shell than the town dogs began to bark loudly in all quarters, thus enabling persons who, owing to the direction of the wind or other circumstances, had failed to note the signal, to escape to their shelters.” The natives were much more apathetic, and Reuter’s correspondent gave curious instances of their stupidity and *laisser faire*. “They would gather in great crowds round the soup-kitchens in the town, and when bells were rung warning them that the enemy’s 6-inch gun had been fired they were too lazy to take cover in the lee of the surrounding buildings, and had to be driven to do so by means of sticks and sjamboks. Many would rather die than work, and were too lazy to attempt the now comparatively safe journey to Kanya.”

It was annoying to hear perpetual rumours of relief and to find relief as far off as ever. Runners continually brought in telegrams of congratulation, which added not a little to the bitterness of incarceration. At one moment Plumer seemed to be coming; he was said to be only eleven miles off, and the town was in ecstasies; at another bombardment began briskly as ever, and spirits descended to zero. One of the besieged, writing home on March 22, said:—

> “Things are going on as usual. Every one is heartily sick and tired of the siege. Colonel Plumer, with 1500 men, is only about thirty-five miles away, with provisions for us.... Every one here feels the want of more, better, and varied food. A friend of ours was very ill for ten days, and the only comforts the doctor could order were two tins of milk [Pg 203] and some lunch biscuits! There is no margarine left in the town, and the Commissariat Department is calling in all the starch. The hospital is very full; and there is a good deal of malarial and typhoid fever.... Sometimes the bread is awful, black, and made from locally-crushed oats, with all the husks on, simply split in long pieces. We are all downright hungry, and cannot buy a bit of food, except on some special occasion. Last Sunday Weil’s store was allowed to sell certain articles of food, *e.g.* pea flour and margarine; former, 2s. 6d. a tin; latter, 3s. per lb. The crush outside the store was so great that women fainted, and some were waiting for hours, and then unable to get in.... The railings of the park and tennis-courts are used for firing, and we are authorised to use our fences for the same purpose. Our meat is good, but poor and tough. We almost entirely depend upon the natives looting enemy’s cattle, and sometimes we have horse-flesh, but that I cannot manage, so on those days I am hungrier than ever.... My husband is quarter-master-sergeant in charge of the rations—not a very enviable billet. The whole town is on rations. We are all under martial law, and Colonel Baden-Powell looks after us all, and we may be very thankful that the defence of Mafeking has been entrusted to such a capable man.”

The menu was not variegated. You took your choice between a species of porridge (made from the husks of oats fermented for some hours prior to boiling) and a noxious brown biscuit, or, as the Indians called it, “chupattie.” But it had none of the savouriness of the chupattie, and was described as a cross between a ship’s biscuit and a baked brick. It was certainly filling at the price, so filling, in fact, that those who devoured it suffered from what was styled “hippopotamus on the chest” for some hours afterwards.

March 27th was described as the hottest day in the siege, the mud walls of Mafeking being liberally dosed to the tune of 200 shells by Creusots and quick-firing Krupps. As many as 250 shells were said to have been fired into the town, while the 100-pounder was responsible for 70. Sergeant Abrams, of the Cape Police, an officer who had been in the thick of the whole siege, was

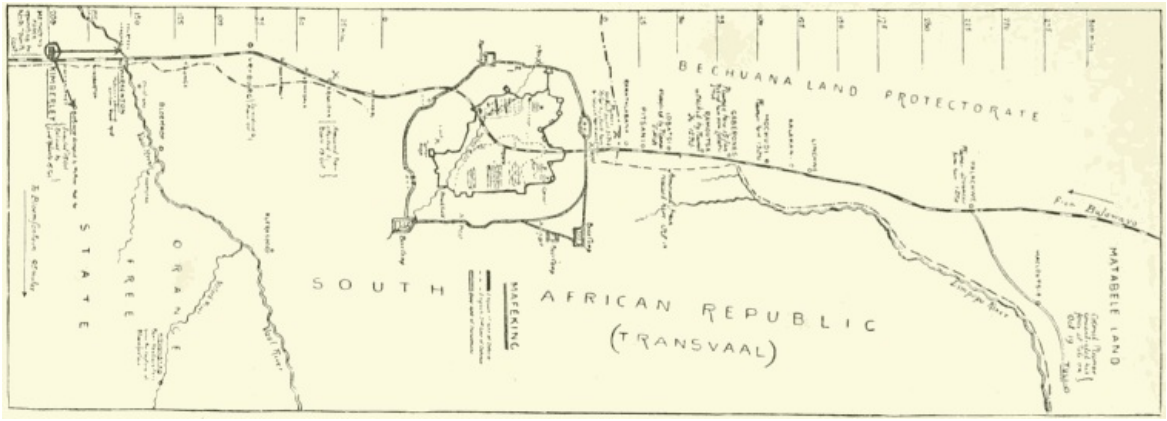
caught by a high-velocity shell and had the misfortune to lose his foot. Some of the shells penetrated the bomb-proofs, and one or two persons were more or less injured. It was calculated that during the sixty-four days of the siege as many as 1300 shells from the 100-pound Creusot, independently of minor missiles, had descended in the midst of the valorous community. Some of the shells were sold as curios and fetched as much as five guineas apiece; rarer ones sold for ten or twelve. The losses of the garrison up to this date were: Killed and missing: 7 officers and 93 men, besides 53 native and other non-combatants. Wounded: 11 officers and 38 men, besides 114 native and other non-combatants.

The congratulations of the Lord Mayor of London on the relief now arrived, and all began to hope that "coming events cast their shadows before." But cruel disappointment followed. [Pg 204]

Heavy firing was reported from the north on the 31st, and there was tremendous excitement. One and all agreed that it was Colonel Plumer coming to the rescue. They hoped, they prayed, and when at last the sounds died away hope died with them. The next morning explained it. General Snyman sent in a letter under a flag of truce requesting Colonel Baden-Powell to send an ambulance for Colonel Plumer's dead! A horrible description of the battlefield "strewn with corpses" followed, and caused deep concern to those who were the cause of the gallant enterprise which had cost so many lives. Fortunately only three bodies were found, but these had rifled pockets, while the boots of one had been removed. The action of removing boots from the dead savours of the barbaric, but it must be remembered that the Boers, and indeed some of our own men, were almost soleless. War brings about strange conditions and strange ethics. A trooper, one of the remnant of the Light Brigade, told a strange story of how on that "great occasion" he came on the corpse of a Russian officer magnificently booted, while he himself could barely hobble in his tatters. He could not resist the prize, and possessed himself of the much-needed apparel. He was in the act of going off in triumph when his conscience smote him; he returned, and taking off his own boots reverentially clothed the feet of the dead man! He appeased his qualms by arguing that exchange was not robbery!

COLONEL PLUMER'S OPERATIONS

Colonel Plumer lived in the hope of joining hands with Colonel Baden-Powell at Mafeking, and messages were successfully interchanged between the two officers. Life in the north was occupied mainly with skirmishes and the repairs of railway lines and culverts, which were needed along almost every mile of route. Between Gaberones and Crocodile Pools the engineers worked arduously, under the protection of an armoured train and a strong body of dismounted men. Very useful information was received of the Boers' whereabouts from papers contained in a Boer mail-bag captured between Sequani and Sauerpoord. The Boers were found to be in force at Crocodile Pools, and to have in their possession two cannon and two machine-guns, and here it was evident they meant to harass any progressive movement of the British.



Map showing the Advance from the North and the South for the Relief of Mafeking.

The above sketch-plan of Mafeking shows the Boer trenches and the British lines of defence round the town, with the localities and dates of the principal fights which have taken place between the besiegers and besieged. Above and below the plan (though not, of course, upon the same scale) there is a map of the country between Kimberley and Tuli. The margin is divided into spaces of twenty-five miles, measuring from Mafeking north and south, and the advance of Plumer from the north and of Methuen from the south is shown step by step.

On the 11th of January Colonel Plumer, with a portion of his forces, arrived near Mochudi. The Boers—about 200—were reported to have gathered some thirty miles to the south-east, while others were entrenched on the kopjes by the railway at Crocodile Pools. With them were said to be guns in charge of German officers—an objectionable discovery for the British, who were almost gunless! There was reason to suppose that discontent reigned among the Boers owing to [Pg 206] scarcity of provisions, and that they were longing to throw up the sponge and return to their farms. They found life in the trenches and kopjes not what is vulgarly described as "all beer and skittles," and began to think of the coming seasons which would find them empty as the fabled grasshopper in winter.

Some of the troops also proceeded to Gaberones, where three armoured trains were kept active.

On the 12th a Boer patrol made an effort to burn a bridge a mile north of the station, but was frustrated by the promptness with which Lieutenant Wallis brought No. 3 armoured train on the scene. When the enemy fell back on the station they were welcomed by No. 1 armoured train under Colonel Llewellyn, and the welcome was so unexpected and so hearty that the enemy bolted. Owing to the darkness they got off in safety. Reconnaissances were made, and it was discovered that the Boers were located one mile south of Crocodile Pools.

Major Bird made a reconnaissance on the 23rd of January—with four squadrons of the Rhodesian Regiment—in the direction of a Boer laager. In consequence of a storm of rain operations could not be carried as far as intended, but some of the enemy were dislodged from a hill, and two horses and two Transvaal flags were captured.

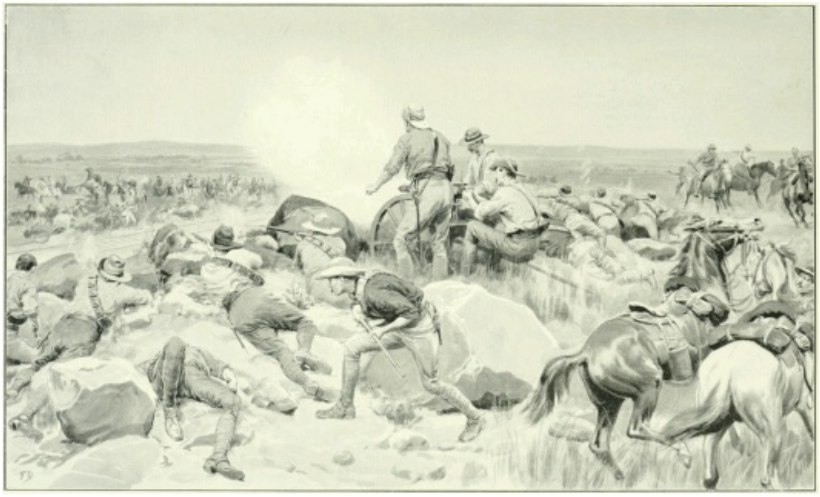
On the 31st an animated artillery duel took place between Colonel Plumer and Commandant Eloff, and on the following day it was some satisfaction to see the Boers busily engaged in repairing the havoc wrought by the British 12½-pounder on their fort. On the 2nd of February more activities took place. Major Bird, with 150 mounted infantry and one 7-pounder, made a demonstration on the right flank of the Boer position. This occupied a ridge running for a mile and a half from south-west to north-east. In the centre of the ridge was a nek, which was protected on either side by a fringe of Boer sharpshooters. This nek became the object of British attention, and Lieutenants Harland and Blunt with their men poured on it some forty volleys, to which the Boers replied, but without serious effect. While the rattling of musketry was kept up by the mounted infantry, a 7-pounder, manned by the British South African Police, escorted by troopers under Captain Maclaren, shelled the nek. Whereupon the Boers brought into play a 12½-pounder, which forced the British 7-pounder to retire. The weapon, however, was met by one of its own calibre, which was posted near Basuto kopje, and a spirited contest ensued. On the 4th of February the hostile guns were silenced by well-directed shells adroitly dropped by Lieutenant Montmorency in the middle of the Boer fortress.

Colonel Plumer, though still too weak to make a decisive move on, was bent on energetically [Pg 207] annoying the Boers, but night escapades for some time were stopped by infamous weather. On the first opportunity Major Bird devised a midnight attack, which, unfortunately, was more costly than successful. In dense darkness, on the night of the 11th of February, the troops deployed at the base of a thorny and rocky ridge at Crocodile Pools Bridge, where the enemy was entrenched. No sooner had the men neared the summit than they came on wire entanglements and thorny scrub, and in surmounting wire and bush they necessarily made some noise. This set the Boer dogs barking and the Boer pickets blazing with their rifles. Thereupon Major Bird ordered a bayonet charge. He had forbidden rifle fire lest it should betray the position of the storming party. Before the men could get to close quarters, however, the Dutchmen exploded dynamite mines and followed the fracas with volleys of musketry. The result was disastrous to the British, and Major Bird ordered a retreat. Captain French (Royal Irish Regiment) was among the killed. Seven of the party were more or less severely injured. At first the Boers refused to give up the dead and wounded. When Archdeacon Upcher and Father Hartmann, under cover of the white flag, made the demand, they declared that they could not respect the symbol, as General Buller had stated that the British would no longer respect it. They eventually gave up five of the dead, but refused for some time to part with the wounded. Among these were Major Straker and Colonel Hon. H. White (British South African Police).

On the 26th of February Colonel Plumer, after many strenuous efforts and continued fighting, occupied the enemy’s position at Crocodile Pools, the Boers having taken themselves off and gone south to Lobatsi. Trains were now moving from the Pools to Ramoutsa. A cairn was erected over the spot where the valiant officer, Captain French, met his fate. The wounds received by Major Straker in the disastrous night attack were mending slowly, and great hopes were entertained of his ultimate recovery.

Colonel Plumer and his little force, numbering some 700 in all, continued to suffer many harassments, to fight and to struggle manfully for the assistance of Mafeking, whose relief they believed could not be long delayed. To help in this relief was their perpetual aim, and to this end Colonel Plumer accumulated a vast quantity of stores at Kanya, some sixty miles to the west of Crocodile Pools, so that when opportunity should offer the starving braves might not have to wait for provisions. For some weeks the troops had been fixed on a string of kopjes to the north of the Metsima Suma Bridge, while the Boers’ laager, strongly fortified, occupied another ridge in the vicinity. Both Britons and Boers from their elevated posts could command the river above named, and the Notwani River for some miles. On the 26th of February, for some unaccountable reason, [Pg 208] the Boers suddenly made themselves scarce, and suspicion grew that events elsewhere were demanding their prompt attention. The disappearance caused some sensation, as it was reported —erroneously as it afterwards proved—that not a Boer was visible between the British and Mafeking. Thereupon Colonel Plumer decided to be up and doing, and an advance on Lobatsi (situated some forty-five miles from Colonel Baden-Powell’s kingdom) was organised. First of all telegraph lines and rails were repaired, an armoured train being sent forward to Pitsani Pothlugo to protect the operations. This work accomplished, rations for thirty days, the base hospital, &c., were transferred to Lobatsi.

There on the morning of the 6th of March Colonel Plumer’s force arrived. The efforts of the relieving party were now directed to the reconstruction of the railway and bridges which had been wrecked by the Boers in October. These were slowly got into working order. Reconnaissances were pushed south with a view to farther advance, and provision was made for the protection of the railway behind him as Colonel Plumer advanced.



COLONEL PLUMER’S GALLANT ATTEMPT TO RELIEVE MAFEKING FROM THE NORTH.

Drawing by Frank Dudd, R.I., from a Sketch by F. J. Mackenzie.

At daybreak on the 13th of March a column of some 300 men with three guns marched towards Kanya on the west, while Colonel Bodle (B.S.A.P.) with 150 men and a Maxim proceeded towards Pitsani. When the former party had succeeded in reaching a place some twenty miles beyond Lobatsi camp they were suddenly ordered to return. Captain Maclaren with his party, though fairly worn out after a long day’s tramp, at once obeyed orders, marched throughout the night, and by dawn on the 15th had retraced his steps. The reason for the recall was this. Colonel Bodle’s advanced scouts had come upon swarms of the enemy to the north of Pitsani, and the colonel with his small force had been compelled to retire in hot haste. His position was a ticklish one, for all round, in every available kopje, the Boers had ensconced themselves, and only by great nerve and splendid presence of mind was it possible to execute anything like an orderly retreat. But these qualities were possessed by Colonel Bodle, who promptly retired his ambulance and waggons, covering their move by forming his troops in Zulu fashion in crescent shape. Unluckily the right horn of the crescent, under Lieutenant Chapman, was pounced upon by some hidden Boers, who succeeded in making three or four of the party prisoners, and capturing a box or two of ammunition. Owing to an accident to his horse Lieutenant Chapman was thrown and captured. Corporal Galt nearly shared the same fate, but while he was engaged in a smart tussle for freedom, Colonel Bodle came to the rescue and put the Boers to flight. The Dutchmen then commenced to follow at the heels of the column, approaching to within some 2500 yards of the camp, doing some damage among cattle with their smokeless guns, which with [Pg 209] difficulty could be located. Their fire was eventually returned, but not before Lieutenant Tyler (West Riding Regiment) had fallen a victim to a shell, which caught him in his tent and killed him instantaneously. The next day (the 16th) the Boers pursued their aggravations, and the British, as usual, gave a very good account of themselves, though their gunners had neither range-finder nor range-table. An animated artillery duel lasted for some hours, and was only terminated at sunset by the successful landing of a shell in the midst of the Boer guns. This served to silence them for the rest of the day. That done, the troops retired, most of the force moving from Lobatsi back to Crocodile Pools (whither stores, &c., had been removed by rail during the whole of the previous night), while Colonel Plumer and the mounted men took the direction of Kanya. On the 17th of March the armoured train voyaged towards Lobatsi, where it was saluted by the Boers, who had returned in hordes with marvellous celerity, and were hovering round that place.

The enemy had now placed a 1-pound Maxim and a 12½-pounder on the east side of the line 4000 yards to the south of the main camp, but fortunately the right flank was protected by the Chief Bathoen, who defied the Boers to enter his territory. The left flank, however, engaged Colonel Plumer’s attention, and there was every fear that the enemy, repulsed on the western border, might fall in force upon the Rhodesians. The Dutchmen were now busy in wrecking the rail south of Lobatsi, and preparing to meet any further advance made by Colonel Plumer with stout resistance. On the 18th, somewhat exhausted with fruitless toil and endless marching and fighting, the troops were once more at their starting-point on the ridges overlooking the Metsima Suma and Notwani Rivers, Colonel Plumer’s force now occupying the position there formerly held by the Boers.

On the 21st Commandant Snyman entertained himself with a little journey to Lobatsi and gaily bombarded it, in ignorance that it had been evacuated by Colonel Plumer’s force, and explosions on all sides announced that he also was engaged in the destruction of the railway. While the Boers were away, the Baralongs made hay—they utilised the shining hour by looting some of the Boer cattle and driving them in triumph into Mafeking. There, the result of Snyman’s attack on Plumer was in its way approved; the town enjoyed temporary repose. The bombardment lessened for a day or two, and the besieged were buoyed up by the hope that Colonel Plumer was pursuing his advance.

To intercept the same the enemy had taken up positions at Maritzuni and Ramathlabama, but they at the same time had to engage themselves with a native chief in the south. This personage, [Pg 210] who had hitherto been friendly to them, working on the good old principle of “kick a man when

he's down," had heard of the Boer reverses in the Free State, and promptly seized his opportunity.

On the 25th Colonel Plumer left his base camp with a force of infantry and as little impedimenta as possible, and invaded the Transvaal, making two rapid night marches for the purpose of threatening the Boer lines of communication. In this way, though he found himself too weak in men and guns for really aggressive operations, he determined to make himself a thorn in the side of the persecutors of Mafeking, and keep the Boer hordes too busily engaged to allow of their attempting serious operations on their own part.

Early on the morning of the 31st Colonel Plumer, with 270 mounted men, some infantry, and a Maxim reached Ramathlabama, where the Boers were said to have made their headquarters. The advance guard under Colonel White proceeding within six miles of Mafeking, encountered a Boer commando, whereupon Captain Kensman on the left and Major Bordan on the right simultaneously became engaged. Desperate fighting ensued, the Boers almost doubling the British. The Dutchmen formed a semicircle, vainly endeavouring to outflank the party east and west, while Colonel Plumer's small force, fighting "tooth and nail," retired slowly, the squadrons covering the retreat of the unmounted men for a good ten miles till the force reached its base. Owing to the close proximity of the Boer laagers, reinforcements of Dutchmen and guns were constantly at hand, while Colonel Plumer was entirely at a disadvantage. Little cover was available, and the railway embankment, which was his only protection, was barely two feet high. Captain Crewe, a most popular officer, was mortally wounded while covering the retreat of the rest, as was also Lieutenant Milligan while gallantly defending his position.

Some interesting particulars of the fighting outside Mafeking came in a letter from a trooper.

> "On our latest patrol we had a real exciting time. We went to have a look at Mafeking, and actually saw the promised land, but we had to pay dearly for the sight. We marched from here (halfway between Kanya and Mafeking) on March 30th, and arrived at Ramathlabama on the 31st at 9 A.M. Between 300 and 350 men went, with one Maxim, all under Colonel Plumer himself. We were all mounted except thirty men of E Squadron. We formed a camp at Ramathlabama, and at 11 A.M. all the mounted men moved off towards Mafeking, our unmounted men and the Maxim remaining in camp. Our troop and Crewe's scouts formed the advance guard under our skipper, Colonel White. We rode on about eight miles, and then we got our first glimpse of Mafeking. We raised a bit of a cheer on spotting the place. Very soon we saw a large body of Boers coming up in front at a fast pace, while others were working round our flanks. We started firing at 1000 yards, with hardly anything to see to fire at. Their fire was high at first, but some of them soon got the range. We had to retreat, as we were far outnumbered, and the Boers were working away at our flanks. Moreover, they had an unlimited supply of ammunition, their base being a mile or two away, while we had to go slow with ours. So we retired by alternate squadrons. [Pg 211]
>
> "We were nearly caught once. The Boers were coming round on our flank, and were making for some Kaffir kraals whence they would have had us fairly on toast. Our skipper, however, spotted the move in time, and we raced them for the first place and won. Crewe's men, who were sent to the second kraal, also got there first. We made them turn tail and bolt, and they were never afterwards quite so keen in getting round our flank. Our skipper worked splendidly. It was a running fight for about eight miles, lasting from 1 P.M. till 6 P.M. When we reached the camp we found that Colonel Plumer had decided to abandon it, and had already sent the waggons off an hour before. We had to cover the retreat of the unmounted men, who had been in turn covering the retreat of the Maxim. There was a very warm time over that business. The unmounted men nearly got caught. Our casualties were pretty heavy—52 in all—12 killed, 26 wounded, and 14 missing. Altogether 75 horses were killed, wounded, and missing. Don't get the idea that we were disgracefully licked. We retreated certainly and were chased by the Boers, but we retreated in perfect order without any confusion. Moreover, in retreating we were doing as we were intended to do. Colonel Baden-Powell had some move he wished to make at Mafeking, and we were to draw away as many Boers as possible, and we certainly were successful in that. There must have been at least 600 or 700 against us."

In the fight at Ramathlabama the following were taken prisoners:—Captain K. Maclaren, Captain F. Crewe, Captain Duncan Robertson, all badly wounded; the two last mentioned since dead. Staff-Officers Cecil and Granville and nine soldiers, of whom six were more or less severely wounded, were also captured.

Owing to the absence of war correspondents with Colonel Plumer's force this officer's unceasing efforts to match the Boers and rescue Colonel Baden-Powell received none of the publicity they deserved. It has been possible only from private sources to gauge the terrible tension of the situation, and the truly noble activity that was maintained in the face of a most alarming outlook. Of the heroism of the commander little has been said, but from a few lines written by a trooper we may understand how his gallant conduct stimulated his men. He said: "It was a good fight, and our men behaved very well. Plumer was slightly wounded, but behaved splendidly. He sent his horse away and walked behind the dismounted men, encouraging them when they were retreating."

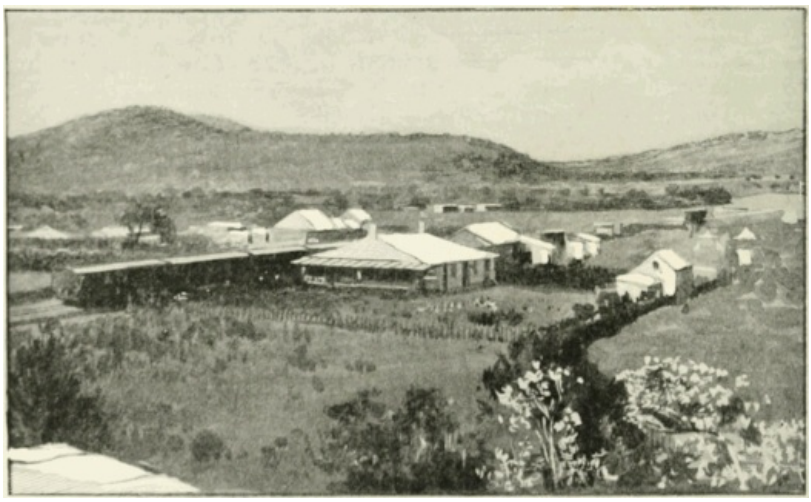
Colonel Bodle and Captain Rolt (adjutant) were also slightly wounded.

Some splendid service was rendered by Sergeant-Major Manning (5th Dragoon Guards), on whom the whole work of staff officer afterwards devolved. [Pg 212]

Another writer shows the trying circumstances in which Colonel Plumer's campaign was conducted, circumstances which, when the historian of the future sets to work, cannot be disregarded:—

> "On the 31st ult. we got as far as six miles from Mafeking, but had to retire after four hours' heavy fighting, losing 48 killed, wounded, and missing. We have had a very rough time indeed, always fighting against much superior odds armed with splendid artillery, living on short rations, without tents or any other shelter, wet through with the rain, and scorched with the sun, and yet the people at home never give us a thought. We have been so hard up for tobacco that men have been smoking tea leaves. We have not had a thing from home, not even the Queen's chocolate, and yet we have done as much in our small way as the troops down south. Of course, we have had no big battles, as we have not the men or guns, but we have had constant patrols and skirmishes, nearly always losing men killed or wounded, or both. We have also suffered very heavily with fever and dysentery, and all our hospitals are full."

These lines in their bald simplicity are quoted because they, like the work they describe, were originated with no view to effect nor applause, and serve exactly to describe the modest deeds of perpetual valour which were perpetrated by our countrymen, and which by force of circumstance were left to waste their smartness "on the desert air."



Lobatsi Railway Station

[Pg 213]

LIST OF STAFF

The following is a list of appointments to the Staff of the Eighth Division, which left England in February:—

EIGHTH DIVISION

Lieutenant-General on the Staff—Major-General (temporary Lieutenant-General) Sir H. M. L. Rundle, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., R.A.

Aides-de-Camp (2).

Assistant Adjutant-General—Colonel G. E. Harley, C.B.

Deputy-Assistant Adjutant-Generals—Major A. E. J. Cavendish, *p.s.c.*, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders; Captain G. I. Walsh, Leicestershire Regt.

Assistant Provost-Marshal[11]—Lieut.-Colonel R. H. Morrison.

Principal Medical Officer—Lieut.-Colonel W. A. May, Royal Army Medical Corps.

Medical Officer—Major J. W. Jerome, Royal Army Medical Corps.

Chaplains—Rev. C. F. O'Reilly; Rev. F. J. P. Jellicoe.

Divisional Signalling Officer—Captain C. H. Bennett, Worcestershire Regt.

16th BRIGADE

Major-General on the Staff—Major-General B. B. D. Campbell, M.V.O.

Aide-de-Camp.

Brigade-Major—Captain E. F. O. Gascoigne, D.S.O., Grenadier Guards.

17TH BRIGADE

Major-General on the Staff—Major-General J. E. Boyes.

Aide-de-Camp.

Brigade-Major—Captain C. B. FitzHenry, 7th Hussars.

At the same time a Ninth Division was formed under the command of Lieut.-General Sir Henry Colvile, consisting of the 3rd (Highland Brigade), Colonel (Major-General) H. A. Macdonald, C.B., and 19th Brigade, Colonel (Major-General) H. L. Smith-Dorrien. For particulars, see Vol. V.

FOOTNOTES:

[11] Graded as a Deputy-Assistant Adjutant-General.

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APPENDIX

KURUMAN[12]

At time of the surrender of Kuruman it was impossible to obtain complete details regarding the gallant defence of the place. The following short story published by the *Cape Argus* serves to throw light on deeds too brave to be overlooked:—

“On the 15th October 1899, the Cape Police, Vryburg, 96 miles north-east of Kuruman, evacuated their station without giving battle to the Boers; the detachment with one Maxim and 110 men retiring on Kimberley. The commanding officer, Major Scott, Cape Police, committed suicide *en route*. Refugees came into Kuruman on the 16th and following days.

“On the 23rd October communication was cut off from Kuruman except by wire to Koopmansfontein, and on the 5th November all wires were cut. Information reached Kuruman that the South African Republic and Orange Free State Boers, assisted by rebels from that and surrounding districts, intended to march on Kuruman and hoist the ‘Vierkleur.’

“The defence of Kuruman was commenced by Captain Bates,[13] C.P. (formerly captain B.B.P. under Sir Frederick Carrington), assisted by Sergeant Hemsworth, C.P., and Captain Dennison, Intelligence Department. On the 19th October, Colonel Kekewich, officer commanding forces Griqualand West and Bechuanaland, instructed the force to endeavour to prevent Kuruman falling into the hands of the enemy. The officer commanding, Captain Bates, had orders to defend the place, and the Kuruman defence force was raised, consisting of, approximately, 54 Cape Police and Special Police (whites), 62 Bastards and natives—total, 116.

“Redoubts were built on the north, south, east, and west sides of the main camp, which was fortified with trenches and stone walls loopholed and raised with sandbags.

“On the 12th November 1899, a letter was received from Commandant Visser (signed Fighting General), demanding the surrender of Kuruman voluntarily in the name of the Z.A.R. and O.F.S. Governments, saying that he was at Pakani, six miles off, with his commando, and failing compliance with his demand he would attack and take Kuruman by main force at 7 A.M. the following day. A reply was sent that should he attack he would have to take the consequences of his illegal act, as no instructions had been issued by the Colonial Government to evacuate the town.

“At 9 A.M. on the 13th November a commando of about 400 men came at full gallop towards the Soeden Mission Station, three miles from Kuruman. Coming within range (1500 yards) the redoubt on the eastern side opened fire on them with their rifles. The enemy halted, and then at once retired out of range. After about ten minutes, one portion, 250 strong, advanced towards the Mission Station, the other, 150 strong, moving to the ridge above the Court House. At 10 A.M. the commando from Soeden attacked the western redoubt held by Corporal Childs, C.P., with six whites and seven natives. Heavy firing took place. At about 5 P.M. the enemy, who had during the day occupied a ridge about 400 yards from the redoubt, retired, and in so doing lost heavily—they were seen falling from their horses. Our men behaved splendidly. The estimated Boer loss was six killed and fourteen wounded; ours, one native killed. Captain Bates rode up during the

day to encourage the men, and both going and returning was received with heavy volleys from the Boers, but both he and his horse returned unhurt. While the fighting was going on Corporal Barnes, C.P., and nine men volunteered to take an extra supply of ammunition to this redoubt, about 1000 yards in the open, under heavy fire, and remained there to the end of the attack without any further casualty. Firing from all the enemy's schanzes was kept up during the night.

"At dawn next day it was discovered that the enemy had built schanzes (stone entrenchments) all round our redoubts at distances varying from 1200 to 900 yards, and commenced firing volleys into our positions. We replied, and our losses this day were one native slightly wounded and five horses badly wounded. The enemy stuck to their schanzes and continued firing heavily on us daily until the 19th November, when to our surprise they withdrew to Pakani.

"On the 20th November our scouts, who were sent to find out the enemy's movements, returned, stating that they were retiring towards Vryburg.

"On the 26th November it was reported by our scouts that the Boers had formed three laagers, one at Mooifontein, 30 miles away; one at Magagapirie, 20 miles off; and one at Botitilotse, about 18 miles off; the total commando numbering about 1100 to 1200 men, and a large number of waggons. [Pg 216]

"On the 1st December a headman, Seloa, reported that the Boers were waiting for a cannon from Pretoria, and were coming again to attack us or starve us out. Captain Bates strengthened the forts as much as possible to resist shell fire.

"On the 5th December the enemy arrived with from 1100 to 1200 men under Visser, of the Transvaal, now Commandant, and Field-Cornet Wessels, of the Free State, but without any cannon. They commenced by attacking Captain Dennison's (Intelligence Officer to Commanding Officer, Kimberley, Colonel Kekewich) redoubt on the east, but were repulsed. The enemy made five night attacks on this redoubt and a smaller one held by Private Brown, Special Police, about 300 yards on the S.E. Their mode of attack was as follows:—They built schanzes within 500 yards of these redoubts, surrounding them, and threw up small schanzes of stone and bags within thirty or forty yards of the redoubts early in the night and attacked about two or three o'clock in the morning, retiring from time to time to these small schanzes. They thus succeeded in pushing off the sandbags from our redoubts on the S.E. side, but were driven back, losing about four killed and ten or twelve wounded. This redoubt was held by Private Brown, three white men, and two natives, the enemy numbering from sixty to seventy men. Our casualties were one white man wounded. During these attacks a bullet (presumably an explosive one) struck inside the east fort or redoubt, badly wounding two whites and two others slightly. Firing was kept up night and day for these five days. The enemy ceased their attacks and went in for volley firing and sniping, coming nearer our redoubts by building schanzes during the night. These two redoubts had to be abandoned, as the loopholes of sandbags were shot away, and there was no means of building them up agin. The enemy occupied them after being abandoned for two nights, and also took possession of a store in a hollow about 800 yards from the main camp, between it and the Court House. This left only one of our redoubts occupied by our defence force, and which commanded the water. Corporal Gash, C.P., was in charge. Our horses had to be watered at night.

"The Boers made several attempts to cut us off from the water, but were prevented by our pickets, who were placed in entrenched positions to cover our cattle and horses while watered. The Boers must have fired away an enormous quantity of ammunition, and they had five waggon-loads of it. A unique armistice was arranged on Christmas Day. F. C. Wessels, of the Free State, wrote to the Commanding Officer saying that if we would not fire on them this day, the Boers would not fire on us. This was agreed to, and word was sent round to all the schanzes and redoubts notifying this. The men came out, but to our surprise, as one of us was going to bathe, a volley from the Transvaal Boer schanzes on the east was sent after him. Wessels went to inquire the reason, and was told that the Transvaal commando would not agree to this armistice, whereupon Wessels arranged with us that the Free State men, who were on the south and south-east side, would not fire on us, and our men, running the gauntlet of the Transvaal fire for about 20 yards, went under cover of the Free State schanzes, and British and Boer bathed together at the bathing-place. This circumstance caused a split in the Boer camp, and Wessels with 150 men of the Free State burghers left for the south, presumably towards Kimberley. The Boers continued firing and sniping daily. Up to this we had one white (Private Ward, C.P.) and two natives killed, seven whites and seven natives wounded. Of the animals 23 horses were killed and wounded and three oxen killed. We were holding out and were confident of doing so for another two months, when on the 1st January 1900, a New Year's gift arrived in the Boer camp in the shape of a 9-pounder. They started shelling at dawn, with common shell, the redoubt on the north side; then came to a ridge on the south and shelled the main camp, four shells falling in the camp without doing any serious damage. They then fired on the western redoubt without hitting it. On going to their schanzes about 2000 yards on the eastern side, they shelled the only remaining redoubt on that side, held by Corporal Gash, C.P., and 15 men. The 90th shell breached the redoubt, the 91st and 92nd striking it, and the 93rd falling inside. The men in the redoubt got into the trenches, which, owing to the stony nature of the ground, could not be dug deep, and were subjected to such a heavy fire from three of the enemy's schanzes, that they were compelled to surrender.

"Captain Bates then saw that as the key of the position had fallen, and that reinforcements could not possibly arrive for weeks or months, it was hopeless to continue to hold out.

"Thus Kuruman was surrendered after seven weeks, and its defence was principally due to

Captain Bates. Captain Dennison and Sergeant Hemsworth and Captain Bates were sent to the Pretoria gaol (as they were supposed to know too much, whatever that meant), and the Magistrate was sent to the State Model School with the other officers."

FOOTNOTES:

[12] See Vol. iii. p. 25.

[13] This officer's name was originally given as Baker in telegrams home.

TRANSCRIBERS' NOTES

Page vi: Christo standardised to Cristo after "Scene of Fighting at Monte"

Page vii: Reit standardised to Riet after "on north bank of the"

Page vii: Majesfontein standardised to Majersfontein (two instances)

Page vii: Koodoesrand standardised to Koodoosrand after "Spyfontein, retreating to"

Page viii: landdrost standardised to landrost after "and arrested the"

Page 9: " added after "180,600 of all arms."

Page 13: no corrected to not after "now engaged stronger," cf. Hansard

Page 22: "Homes were destroyed mothers and children stricken" as in the original, without punctuation

Page 30: Kimberly standardised to Kimberley before "man stared at the three objects"

Page 33: Accent on détour not standardised as part of a quotation

Pages 34, 152: Variable spelling of mosquitoes/mosquitos as in the original

Page 36: horseflesh standardised to horse-flesh after "Cronje had to be paid for in"

Page 39: Duplicate the removed from "for the the team of mules"

Page 40: duplicate an removed in "having detected an an unusual haze of dust"

Pages 40, 54: Inconsistent hyphenation of rear-guard as in the original. Retained as part of a quotation

Page 56: . added after "for the rest of the day"

Page 60: Infanty corrected to Infantry in "Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry"

Page 62: mid-day standardised to midday before "came the rumour that French"

Page 65: reveille standardised to reveillé after "a volley by way of"

Page 69: insistance as in the original

Page 71: silhoutte corrected to silhouette before "which gradually grew clearer"

Page 88 [Illustration]: (added before Colour-Sergeant)

Page 93: Accent on débris not standardised as part of a quotation

Page 101: depot standardised to depôt after "converted into the advanced"

Page 115: shortlived standardised to short-lived after "Rest was"

Page 116: Mr. Shcreiner corrected to Mr. Schreiner

Page 120: Horseflesh standardised to Horse-flesh before "was diversified by bread"

Page 122: head-quarters standardised to headquarters after "subsequently established his"

Page 123: Lyttleton corrected to Lyttelton after "While this was going on above, General"

Page 128: caligraphy as in the original

Page 132: Lee-Mitfords corrected to Lee-Metfords after "been hit by Mausers or"

Page 133: Inconsistent hyphenation of horseflesh as in the original. Retained as part of a quotation

Page 148: unchallengably corrected to unchallengeably after "kopjes, kopjes, kopjes—ours,"

Page 148: . added after "rifle fire was raging on the left"

Page 150: Lieutenan corrected to Lieutenant before “C. H. I. Jackson”

Page 177: martrys corrected to martyrs after “calls for its ministers and”

Page 182: Llandrost corrected to Landrost after “Mr. Papenfus, whose services as”

Page 189: fourteeen corrected to fourteen after “on the Orange Free State Railway some”

Page 190: markmanship corrected to marksmanship after “spoke apologetically of their good”

Page 192: ensconed corrected to ensconced after “where the enemy had”

Page 200: lookout standardised to look-out after “the wily Dutchman on the”

Page 210: Inconsistent hyphenation of halfway as in the original. Retained as part of a quotation

Page 216: agin as in the original

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SOUTH AFRICA AND THE TRANSVAAL WAR, VOL. 4 (OF 8) ***

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