SOUTH AFRICA AND THE TRANSVAAL WAR

CHAPTER I

THE CRISIS AT HOME

"Patience, long sick to death, is dead. Too long
Have sloth and doubt and treason bidden us be
What Cromwell's England was not, when the sea
To him bore witness, given of Blake, how strong
She stood, a commonweal that brooked no wrong
From foes less vile than men like wolves set free,
Whose war is waged where none may fight or flee—
With women and with weanlings. Speech and song
Lack utterance now for loathing. Scarce we hear
Foul tongues, that blacken God's dishonoured name
With prayers turned curses and with praise found shame,
Defy the truth whose witness now draws near
To scourge these dogs, agape with jaws afoam,
Down out of life. Strike, England, and strike home."

—Algernon Charles Swinburne.

IN the face of the insolent Ultimatum which had been addressed to Great Britain by the South African Republic, the nation closed its ranks and relegated party controversy to a more appropriate season. The British people were temporarily in accord. A wave of indignation surged over the country, and united men of different shades of politics and of varying religious creeds, making them forget their private feuds, and remember only the paramount fact that they were sons of the Empire. There were some, it is true, who remained afar off—a few exceptions to prove the rule of unanimity, beings with souls so dead that never to themselves had said, "This is my own, my native land," and who yet looked upon the Boer as an object of commiseration. But these were, first, men linked either by birth or family ties with the Afrikander cause; second, fractious Irishmen and political obstructionists who posed for notoriety at any price; and, third, eccentrics and originals, whose sense of opposition forbade them from floating at any time with the tide of public opinion. Every one else cried aloud for a chance to uphold Great Britain's prestige, and the War...
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Office was so beset with applications from volunteers for the front that it was found almost impossible even to consider them. Nor was the excitement confined to officers alone. Recruiting went on apace, and not only did recruits pour in, but deserters, who had slunk away from regimental duty, now returned and gave themselves up, praying to be allowed to suffer any penalty and then march out to battle as soldiers of the Queen! Two Royal Proclamations having been issued—the one directing the continuance in army service, until discharged or transferred to the reserve, of soldiers whose term of service had expired or was about to expire; the other, ordering the army reserve to be called out on permanent service—some 25,000 men received notice to rejoin the colours. These in large numbers promptly appeared. The New South Wales Lancers, who had been going through a course of cavalry training at Aldershot, at once volunteered their services and started for the Cape amidst scenes of great enthusiasm. Other colonial troops were as eager to join, and the spirit of military rivalry throughout Her Majesty's dominions was both amazing and inspiring.

Queensland had the honour of opening the ball. Her sympathy with the policy of Great Britain and her loyalty to the mother country was shown in practical form. She intimated, in the event of hostilities, her willingness to send 250 mounted infantry and a machine-gun to the front. New Zealand followed suit; she also offered two companies of mounted rifles fully equipped at the cost of the Colony. These offers were gratefully accepted. Not to be behind-hand, Western Australia and Tasmania made similar offers, and Her Majesty's Government gladly agreed to accept one unit of 125 men from each. The Parliament of Victoria voted the despatch of a contingent of 250 men to South Africa, and the Governments of New South Wales and South Australia actively discussed similar measures. This expression of Colonial public opinion, embodying as it did the independent judgments of so many free juries, uninfluenced by personal or direct interests, had a significance which, besides being politically important, was eminently satisfactory. All Her Majesty's dominions, on which the sun never sets, were at this critical moment holding hands in a wide circle that encompassed the earth, and the picture of the small mother country with all her big children gathered around her in her hour of need was not one that the romance of history can afford to disregard.

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Before hostilities had actually begun, refugees from Johannesburg began to pour down to Natal and the Cape, and there were daily reports of insults received by the Uitlanders at the hands
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of the Boers. Ladies were spat upon, and passengers suffered indignities sufficient to make an Englishman's blood boil. Fresh troops began to arrive from India, and Sir George White, in a chorus of farewell shouts, "Remember Majuba," went off from Durban to Pietermaritzburg. This was on the 7th of October 1899. At that time the troops were thus distributed:

At Pietermaritzburg—1st Battalion Manchester Regiment and Mounted Infantry Company; 2nd Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps.
At Estcourt—Detachment Natal Naval Volunteers; Natal Royal Rifles.
At Colenso—Durban Light Infantry.
At Ladysmith—5th Lancers; Detachment 19th Hussars; Brigade Division, Royal Artillery; 10th Mountain Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery; 23rd Company, Royal Engineers; 1st Battalion Devonshire Regiment; 1st Battalion Liverpool Regiment, and Mounted Infantry Company; 26th (two sections) British Field Hospital, and Colonial troops.
At Glencoe—18th Hussars; Brigade Division, Royal Artillery; 1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment, and Mounted Infantry Company; 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps, and Mounted Infantry Company; 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers, and Mounted Infantry Company; 6th Veterinary Field Hospital.
There was also one Company 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps at Eshowe, and a detachment of the Umvoti Mounted Rifles at Helpmakaar.

Meanwhile, at Pretoria, the Boers, protesting at the notice taken of the "chimerical grievances of the so-called Uitlanders," made energetic efforts to appoint General Viljoen, a rabid anti-Briton, in place of General Joubert as Commander-in-Chief of the Transvaal forces.

The troops under Commandant Cronje, the hero of Potchef-stroom, advanced nearer to the border, in the direction of Mafeking, and in the expectation of attack, this town was securely fortified, while all the women and children were advised to leave. The fortification of Kimberley was also commenced. The European exodus from all quarters continued, defenceless men and women alike being subjected to insult and ill-treatment by the Boers. Mr. Kruger's birthday was kept at Pretoria with general rejoicing, and on the following day a telegram was sent by President Kruger to the New York World saying:

"Through the World I thank the people of the United States most sincerely for their sympathy. Last Monday the Republic gave Great Britain forty-eight hours' notice within which to give the Republic an assurance that the present dispute would be settled by arbitration or other peaceful means, and that the troops would be removed from the borders. This expires at five to-day. The British Agent has been recalled. War is certain. The Republics are determined, if they must belong to Great Britain, that a price will have to be paid which will stagger humanity. They have, however, full faith. The sun of liberty will arise in South Africa as it arose in North America."
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From this letter it was patent that Mr. Kruger was either pursuing his policy of bluff, or had made long and elaborate preparations for war with the British. On the same date an announcement was published in the town of Pretoria:

"Government House, October 11.

"Her Majesty's Agent at Pretoria was to-day instructed to make the following communication to the Government of the South African Republic: 'The Imperial Government have received with great regret the peremptory demands of the Government of the South African Republic conveyed in the telegram of October 9. You will inform the Government of the South African Republic that the conditions demanded by the Government of the South African Republic are such as Her Majesty's Government deem it impossible to discuss. With the delivery of the above,' the Imperial Government add, 'as the Transvaal Government stated in their Note that a refusal to comply with their demands would be regarded as a formal declaration of war, the British Agent is instructed to ask for his passports.'"

Of course, this news caused intense excitement, and all who had remained sanguine of peace now gave up hope. At Bloemfontein President Steyn simultaneously issued a Proclamation to the Burghers of the Free State. He said that "the sister Republic is about to be attacked by an unscrupulous enemy, who has long looked for a pretext to annihilate the Afrikanders."

He went on to say that the people of the Orange Free State were bound to the Transvaal by many ties, as well as by formal treaty, and solemnly declared, in the presence of the Almighty, that they are compelled to resist a powerful enemy owing to the injustice done to their kith and kin.

Solemn obligations, continued the Proclamation, have not protected the Transvaal against an annexation conspiracy. When its independence ceases, the existence of the Orange Free State as an independent State will be meaningless. Experience in the past has shown that no reliance can be placed on the solemn promises and obligations of Great Britain when the Administration at the helm is prepared to tread treaties under foot.

After giving a historical sketch of the wrongs which he alleged had been done to the Transvaal, President Steyn said: "The original Conventions have been twisted and turned by Great Britain into a means of exercising tyranny against the Transvaal, which has not returned the injustice done to it in the past. No gratitude has been shown for the indulgence which was granted to British subjects, who, according to law, had forfeited their lives and property. Compliance with the British demands would be equivalent to the loss of our independence, which has been gained by our blood and tears. For many years British troops have been concentrating on the borders of the Transvaal in order to compel it by terrorism to comply with
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British claims. The crafty plans of those with whom love of gold is the motive are now being realised. While acknowledging the honour of thousands of Englishmen who abhor deeds of robbery and violence, the Orange Free State execrates the wrongful deeds of a British statesman.

After expressing confidence that the Almighty would help and aid them, and counselling the Burghers to do nothing unworthy of Christians and Burghers of the Free State, the President concluded with the following words: "Burghers of the Free State, stand up as one man against the oppressor and violator of right."

Meanwhile Sir George White, accompanied by Colonel Ian Hamilton (Assistant Adjutant-General), Colonel Duff (Assistant Military Secretary), Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Henry Rawlinson, and Captains Brooke and Lyon, aides-de-camp, was proceeding on his journey to Ladysmith. The principal British camps were situated near Glencoe Junction and Ladysmith, and around these some twelve or fifteen thousand Boers were reported to be stationed between Sand- spruit, Volksrust, and Wakkerstroom, while on the western side the Natal border was threatened by the Orange Free State's forces, which were posted in the neighbourhood of Van Reenen's Pass.

A Proclamation, signed by Sir Alfred Milner and Mr. Schreiner, was issued in Cape Town, warning British subjects of their duty to the Queen, while at the same time the German Consul-General officially ordered his countrymen to remain neutral. A similar warning was given by the German Consul to Germans in Johannesburg. Preparations were made for the immediate landing of a Naval Brigade from the British battleships in Simon's Bay, and volunteers of all kinds hurried to tender their services for special corps. In Pretoria a further manifesto was issued, calling on Afrikanders to resist the British demands, and accusing Lord Salisbury, Mr. Chamberlain, and Sir Alfred Milner of pursuing a "criminal policy." It also declared that it was perfectly clear that the desire and object of Great Britain was to deprive the Transvaal Republic of its independence on account of the gold-mining industry on the Rand.

The manifesto went on to say that Great Britain had offered two alternatives—a five years' franchise or war. It pointed out that the difference between the two Governments of two years in the matter of the franchise had been considered as a sufficient justification for Her Majesty's Government to endeavour to swallow up the Republics, and it reminded the Afrikanders that God would assuredly defend the right.

The manifesto was signed "Francois Willem Reitz, Secretary of State." It created a profound sensation, and a million copies were printed in Dutch and English.

By this time General Viljoen, in command of the Free State
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artillery, was marching towards Albertina, and a party of Boers was encroaching on the Natal border near Berg. Newcastle was warned that a state of war had begun. It was abandoned by the British, and taken possession of by the Boers, while Mafeking held itself in readiness to withstand the enemy. At Sandspruit the Boers were scattered in various camps over a wide area, and on the Portuguese border the Barberton and Lydenburg commandoes were concentrating. Terrified refugees were still fleeing to the Cape in such large numbers that it was almost impossible to find accommodation for them, and large sums of money were being subscribed both there and in Great Britain for the relief of the unhappy exiles. Mr. Rhodes, as usual, gave munificently in aid of the sufferers, and Sir Alfred Milner exerted himself to save the unhappy victims of British and Boer disagreement from destitution. The treatment that these poor persons received from the Boers in the course of their journey caused intense indignation, and profound sympathy was felt for the homeless ones who thus suddenly had been cast adrift from domestic comfort to complete poverty.

It was now believed that, following the precedent of 1881, an attempt would be made to isolate Mafeking and Kimberley, and carry on irregular sieges at these places. The enemy's forces on the northern frontier of Natal were estimated at some 15,000 men, while at Mafeking and Kimberley they were supposed to number some three thousand each. On the east, the seaport of Lorenzo Marques now sprung into great importance, and the supposed neutralisation of the harbour was effected.

On the 11th of October Mr. Coningham Greene, the British Agent in Pretoria, left that place for Cape Town; and on the 14th General Sir Redvers Buller, as Commander-in-chief of the British forces engaged against the Boer Republics, started from England. The state of war had commenced in earnest. The Boers in hot haste began to issue further Proclamations, and President Steyn continued to call on his Burghers to "stand up as one man against the oppressor and violator of rights." Twenty-four hours later they were over the border, tearing up railway lines and severing telegraph wires, and thus cutting off communication between Mafeking, Vryburg, Rhodesia, and Cape Colony. The investment of Kimberley was imminent, but it was generally believed that the Diamond City was strong enough to hold its own till our troops should come to the rescue. The First Brigade of the Army Service Corps started on the 20th of October from Southampton, the second left on the following day, and the third sailed on Sunday the 22nd. About the same time the Canadian Government decided to contribute 1000 men for service in South Africa, and the New Zealand Contingent sailed for the Cape.

In spite of the energetic movements that were suddenly set on
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foot, a few pessimists ventured to declare that we would be bound to reap the results of our previous unpreparedness, and that in consequence of our procrastination and the weakness of the Government in not having taken the initiative and allowed us to mobilise earlier, the Boers would get a good six weeks' start—a loss it would be hard for the best tacticians or the finest fighting men in the world to retrieve. But the mouths of the grumblers were silenced. Every one was convinced that the fate of the nation was perfectly safe in the hands of Sir Redvers Buller and Mr. Thomas Atkins, and, so convinced, thousands upon thousands flocked to see them off, and roared their God-speed with cheery British lungs, albeit with sad and anxious hearts.

THE OCCUPATION OF DUNDEE

Late in September a force consisting of two battalions of infantry, a regiment of cavalry, and two field-batteries was hurriedly pushed forward to occupy Dundee. Affairs between the British and the Boers were nearing a crisis. It was beginning to be believed that the Dutchmen meant to take the initiative and strike a blow against our supremacy in South Africa, though some at home were still shilly-shallying with sentimental arguments as to the propriety of fighting our "brother Boer" at all. As we now know, it wanted but the smallest move on the part of the British to bring things to a head. Large commandoes were gathered together with a rapidity which would have been marvellous had the Boers not designedly brought about the issue of war, and the frontier of the northern angle of Natal was threatened. Dundee is an important coal-mining centre situated some forty-eight miles north-east of Ladysmith. Why it was chosen as our advance post is hard to decide. Its communications with Ladysmith were open to attack from either flank, and, in the light of after events, we see that the position there of a detached force was highly precarious. General Sir George White in an official despatch thus describes his action in the matter:—

"Since my arrival in the Colony I had been much impressed by the exposed situation of the garrison of Glencoe, and on the evening of October 10 I had an interview on the subject with his Excellency the Governor, at which I laid before him my reasons for considering it expedient, from a military point of view, to withdraw that garrison, and to concentrate all my available troops at Ladysmith. After full discussion his Excellency recorded his opinion that such a step would involve grave political results and possibilities of so serious a nature that I determined to accept the military risk of holding Dundee as the lesser of two evils. I proceeded in person to Ladysmith on October 11, sending on Lieutenant-General Sir William Penn Symons to take command at Glencoe."
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"The Boers crossed the frontier both on the north and west on October 12, and next day the Transvaal flag was hoisted at Charlestown. My great inferiority in numbers necessarily confined me strategically to the defensive, but tactically my intention was, and is, to strike vigorously whenever opportunity offers."

Everything at this juncture depended on the rapidity with which our army at home could be mobilised and sent to the Cape, and though we took to ourselves some credit for the energy displayed by all concerned, we were really scarcely up to date in the matter of activity. For instance, in 1859 it took only thirty-seven days for France to collect on the river Po a force of 104,000 men, with 12,000 more in Italy, while in 1866 the Prussian army, numbering 220,000 men, were placed on the frontiers of Saxony and Silesia in a fortnight. But more expeditious still was Germany in 1870. In nine days she was able to mobilise her forces, and in eight more to send to the French frontier an army of 400,000 soldiers and 1200 guns! We had, it is true, to ship off our troops a distance of some 8000 miles, but, without counting this—a natural disadvantage—there were others—many others, the upshot of red-tapism—to be contended with. This Sir George White was beginning to feel, but his sufferings in regard to the initial delay were threefold later on.

To return to Dundee. It was maintained both by the Government and the people of Natal that the valuable coal supply should be protected, and an attempt was therefore made to guard it. The misfortune was that from the first Lieutenant-General Sir W. Penn Symons—who, before the arrival of Sir George White, commanded in Natal—seemed to be ill acquainted with the enormous forces that the Boers could bring to bear against him. It was true that he could not at that time be certain, any more than appeared to be the Government at home, that the Free Staters would join the Republicans; but to any one acquainted with the subject, the fact that President Steyn had pulled the strings of the Bloemfontein affair was sufficient evidence of a contemplated alliance. With the Free State neutral, the aspect of affairs might have been entirely changed, and Dundee, with Ladysmith to support it, might have held its own. As it was, these small places were from the first placed in the most unenviable quandary.

General Symons, on the arrival of Sir George White in Natal, took command of the forces in Dundee, and began active preparations for the reception of the Dutchmen.

The latter, immediately after the declaration of war, took possession of Newcastle, and our patrols soon came in touch with the enemy. In spite of their animated and aggressive movements, however, Sir W. Penn Symons was disinclined to believe that the enemy meant a serious attack upon Dundee, and though fully
Map of Northern Natal. Scale 15 Statute Miles to the Inch.
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prepared for hostilities, he was somewhat amazed when really informed of the rapid advance of the united Republicans. But he lost no time. He made inquiries, and satisfied himself that he was in a position of some danger and that he must promptly leap to action. The chief difficulty of the situation lay in the number of passes through which the Boers with their easily mobilised forces could manage to pour in bodies of men, and the limited number of British troops at General Symons's disposal. From the movements of the Boers it was obvious that the plan of attack had long been cleverly and carefully arranged. The Free State Boers on the 12th of October seized Albertina Station, near the Natal frontier, and took possession of the key, the stationmaster having to make his way on a trolley to Ladysmith. There, as yet, all was externally peaceful, as though no enemy were near, but a suppressed anxiety to be "up and at 'em" prevailed among the troops. Their ardour was in nowise damped by the incessant rain that fell, and converted the surrounding country into a wide morass, nor by the snow that followed, which gave the Drakenberg Mountains an additionally impregnable aspect and rendered them at once picturesque and forbidding.

A steady increase of the commandoes in the neighbourhood of Doornberg continued, and an attack within a few days seemed imminent.

Thereupon a large number of troops left Ladysmith for Acton Homes, where a Boer commando of four miles long was reported to be laagered. But the Boers retreated, and the troops remained some ten miles from Ladysmith, the Dublin Fusiliers alone moving back to Glencoe, whence they had come by train by order of General Symons.

At Glencoe we had, as before stated, some 4000 men, but report said that General Viljeon had an enormous force, nearly double ours in number, which was lying at the foot of Botha's Pass, one and a half miles on the Natal side of the Border. Besides this, General Kock had a commando at Newcastle. The invasion of Natal by the Boers in three columns was formally announced by an official statement from the Governor:

"Pietermaritzburg, October 16.

"Natal was invaded from the Transvaal early on the morning of the 12th inst., an advance being made by the enemy in three columns. On the right a mixed column of Transvaal and Free State Burghers with Hollander Volunteers marched through Botha's Pass. In the centre the main column, under General Joubert's personal command, crossed Lang's Nek and moved forward via Ingogo. On the left a large commando advanced from Wakker-
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stroom viii Moll's Nek and Wool's Drift. The object of all three columns was Newcastle, which was occupied on the night of the 14th, the central column having slept the previous night at Mount Prospect, General Colley's old camping-place. On Sunday an advance party of 1500 Boers, with artillery, pushed south of Ingagane, but the greater portion of this commando retired later in the day on Newcastle. A Boer force which had been concentrating at De Jager's Drift captured six Natal policemen. A picket of the King's Royal Rifles Mounted Infantry has exchanged a few shots with the enemy. This has hitherto been the only fighting.

"A large force of Free State Boers, estimated at from 11,000 to 13,000, is watching the passes of the Drakensberg from Olivier's Hoek to Collins's Pass. They have pushed a few patrols down the berg; but hitherto the main force has not debouched from the actual passes, which are being intrenched."

As will be seen, the advance of the foe seemed to be converging on Sir George White's position from all directions, and threatening Glencoe from the north, east, and possibly west. Still the troops remained cheerful and looked forward to a brush with the enemy. On the 18th hostilities were begun by the Free State commando moving about ten miles down the Tintwa Pass. They opened fire with their artillery on some small cavalry patrols, but their shooting was distinctly inferior, and no one was injured. They retreated on the advance of the 5th Lancers. Several more commandoes were known to have advanced to join a force stationed at Doornberg, some twelve miles from Dundee, and the enemy's scouts having also been seen some seven miles off Glencoe, an engagement was expected at any moment. An interesting account of this interval of suspense was given by an officer writing on the 16th October from Dundee, interesting and pathetic, too, when, in reading it, we remember that the gallant fellow to whom the writer alluded is alive no longer. He said:—

"Hitherto there has been no fighting at all, but our patrols are in touch with the enemy. I was out on my first patrol the day before yesterday since the declaration of war. My orders were to start at 6 a.m., push on about twelve miles along the Newcastle road, and stay out till about 6 p.m. I went out to a small hill about four miles from the camp and reconnoitred, and then went on to a place called Hadding Spruit, where I found a few people at the station and the stationmaster. This is at present the terminus of the line, all the rolling stock north of this having been sent south, and all the wires cut and instruments removed by the railway people. There is a large coal-mine here, and the people are in a deadly funk about being blown up. I pushed on to a large kopje, a few miles this side and west of Dannhauser, and climbed to the top, where I
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spent an hour or so, as from there one can see as far as Ingagane Nek, four miles this side of Newcastle, the place I sketched. Just as I looked over the top of the hill I saw two men on ponies with guns. They were talking to a Kaffir. I at once put them down as Boers, and thought of firing at them, but decided not to disclose my position and watch them. This was lucky for them, as I caught them later, and found them to be refugees flying from the Boers, who I discovered were in occupation of Ingagane and Newcastle, and had their patrols out nearly to Dannhauser.

"I then went on to Dannhauser, which consists of a railway station, two farms, a store, a couple of coolie stores, a mine, and a few huts. We approached with magazines charged and expected to see a Boer every minute, but found that they were not expected to come down as far as that till next day. I then made my way slowly back by the main road, and reached camp about 5 p.m., when I found that the other patrol (six men and an officer is the strength of each) had proceeded to De Jager's Drift and had not returned. A telephonic communication from the police-station at De Jager's Drift said, 'A large force of forty Boers have crossed Buffalo to cut off your patrol. Am trying . . . '-and then ended abruptly. It eventually transpired that the Boers rushed the police-station before the message could be completed. Thackwell, who was in command of the patrol, pursued twelve Boers up to the river. Then thirty-four crossed to our side, and twelve lower down, the twelve trying to cut him off behind. However, he retired on to a nek behind, and as they did not come on, he moved off in about half an hour by another road. This was lucky for him, as he saw the twelve men who had crossed by Landsman's Drift disconsolately coming down from a lot of rocks where they had been lying in wait for him on the road he had come by.

"There seems to have been something going on at Kimberley. I wish they would buck up here and do something. I am on picket to-night, which means no sleep and a lot of bother, as the picket is about seven miles from camp at the junction of the Vant's Drift and De Jager's Drift roads, where there is a chance of being plugged at. The picket on the Helmakaar road was shot at the other night.

"One of the armoured trains came up here yesterday—an ugly-looking beast with the engine in the middle, all covered with iron, so that only just the top of the funnel is visible. I do not believe in them. If any one puts a dynamite cartridge under a rail—pop! up goes the armoured train.

"I think this will be a very interesting war, as the railway will play such an important part in the tactics. Thus the other day we sent the Dublin Fusiliers down to Ladysmith to repel an
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expected attack at half-an-hour's notice, and brought them back the same night. . . .

"We are under an awfully nice General—one Penn Symons—a real good chap."

On the 18th of October the Carabineers were in touch with the enemy in the neighbourhood of Bester’s Farm a great part of the day, and Lieutenant Galway, son of the Chief-Justice of Natal, who remained to watch his troops off the kopje, was reported missing. The Carabineers were compelled to retire owing to being completely outnumbered by the Boer force, and had they not done so they would have run the risk of being cut off from their supports. There were some hair-breadth escapes, and Major Taunter, who was riding at the head of his squadron, came through a vigorous hail of bullets quite uninjured.

Major Rethman, in command of 300 Natal Mounted Rifles, also actively engaged the enemy near Acton Homes, but was also compelled to retire for fear of being cut off. Being quite conversant with Boer tactics, he refused to be drawn by the pretence of retreat made by the Dutchmen, knowing that concealed forces of the enemy in great numbers were waiting to entrap him. Major Rethman, believing in the old saw that brevity is the soul of wit, reported his loss as "one hat."

The Dutchmen now advanced. An armoured train, sent by Sir George White to bring in wounded from Bester’s Farm, returned discomfited, as the rails over the bridge four miles off Ladysmith had been tampered with. It was found that a farm, which had been deserted earlier in the day, was now in the occupation of the Boers, but these, though established on the south side of the line, made no effort to attack the train and allowed it to return unmolested. Rumours of fighting were in the air, and skirmishes between advance parties of British troops and Boers were the order of the day. A report reached the Glencoe camp that the Boers had been seen some seven miles off, whereupon Major Laming with a squadron of the 18th Hussars rode out to reconnoitre. Lieutenant Cape, the advanced officer’s patrol, discovered a strong advance party of the enemy, who delivered a heavy fire, but fortunately without result. This most probably was due to the swift and clever manœuvring of the Hussars.

The Carabineers and Border Mounted Rifles, who were in action nearly the whole of the 18th of October, returned to camp at three in the morning of the 19th. They were quite worn out and famished, having been for twenty-four hours without food, and three days and two nights in the saddle. Considering the excitement and fatigue, they were in excellent spirits. Their experience was a novel one, for on this occasion the Boers, who usually prefer to skulk
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under cover, made incipient rushes at certain points. They gave way, however, before the pressing attentions of the Maxims, and fled helter-skelter to cover again; but their departure was on the principle of "those who fight and run away live to fight another day." They reserved themselves for a more decisive effort.

At midday on the 19th a mixed train running from Ladysmith to Dundee was captured by the enemy about a mile off Elandslaagte Station, which stands about fifteen miles from Ladysmith, and is the first station from thence on the line. A war correspondent was taken prisoner, four Carabineers were wounded, and some horses and cattle seized. Telegraphic communication in the north was cut off, and four trucks of stores in the Elandslaagte Station were captured.

THE BATTLE OF GLENCOE

On the night of the 19th, Sir W. Penn Symons discovered that he was surrounded by the enemy. Three of their columns were converging on his position—one from the north-west under General Erasmus by the Dannhauser-Hattingspruit road; one from Utrecht and Vryheid by Landsman's Drift from the east, under Commandant Lucas Meyer; and a third under General Viljoen from Waschbank on the south, this latter being the force which cut through the Ladysmith-Dundee railway.

The Boer plan was to deliver simultaneously different attacks from all sides of the Glencoe camp. The column under Erasmus was to open the attack from the north-west, and falling back, was to draw Symons in pursuit away from his camp. Then Viljoen and Meyer were to close on the pursuers from either flank and annihilate them.

Fortunately this skilfully-devised programme was not fulfilled. For this reason: The force under Lucas Meyer was the first to arrive, and its leader, impatient to secure the glories of war, decided on an independent course of action. Before the other columns could put in an appearance he opened the attack. On the hills round Glencoe the Boers had posted cannon, and from thence at daybreak on the 20th of October Meyer's gunners began to fire plugged shells into the camp. A flash—a puff of smoke—a whizz and a crash! Hostilities had begun! By 5 A.M. all General Symons's troops were under arms. It was evident that the enemy were in force, and that their guns were some half-a-dozen in number. Their range was 5000 yards, but, fortunately, their shots, though well directed, flew screaming overhead and buried themselves in the soft earth, doing no damage whatever. A few tents fell, a few marquees were torn up. That was all. Our artillery soon came into
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action, at first at too long a range, but afterwards—from a position south of Dundee—with greater success. They then replied to the enemy’s challenge with considerable warmth and excellent effect; and, since our batteries numbered some three to one, by 11.30 o’clock the enemy’s Krupps were silenced. In the meantime the infantry, the 1st King’s Royal Rifles and the 2nd Dublin Fusiliers, formed for attack opposite the enemy’s position, which was situated some two miles off at the top of an almost impregnable hill. Huge boulders margined the sides of it, and half-way up an encircling wall added to the impassability of the position. But the word impossible is not to be found in the dictionary of a soldier, and General Symons gave an order. The hill was to be taken. The bugles rang out; the infantry fixed bayonets. Then was enacted another, only a grander, Majuba, but now with the position of the contending forces inverted. Doubtless the memory of that historic defeat inspired our men, for they evidently decided that what the Boer had done, the Briton also could do, and, spurred by their officers, who showed an absolute disregard of the possibilities of danger, went ahead and carried the crest in magnificent style. No such brilliant achievement of British infantry has been recorded since Albuera. But this, as we shall see, was not accomplished in a moment. It involved tremendous exposure in crossing an open plain intersected with nullahs under a terrific fire, followed by a long spell of dogged climbing, finally on hand and knees, over more than a mile of broken, sometimes almost perpendicular, ground, and in the midst of an incessant and furious fusilade.

At 7.30 A.M. the head of the Hattingspruit column appeared; appeared but to vanish—for it was at once saluted by the 67th Field Battery, and being unprepared for this somewhat boisterous attention, made haste to beat a retreat. At 8.30 the infantry brigade was ordered to advance. Soon the Dublin Fusiliers and the Rifles, who had been reinforced by the Royal Irish Fusiliers, were steadily moving on, firing by sections, and using what cover the ground afforded. Overseas, from the hill described,
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and from another south of the road, the ever-active shells continued their grim music, while all around was the dense curtain of fine rain that drizzled down like wet needles from an opaque sky, making a screen between the opposing forces. But on and on, led by their gallant officers, our infantry continued to toil, their advance ever covered by the 13th and 67th Field Batteries—under the command respectively of Major Dawkins and Major Wing—while the enemy from above poured upon them volley after volley as hard as rifles would let them. When half-way up, where the kopje was girded by a flat terrace and a stone wall, the troops, scattered by the terrific fire, hot, drenched, and panting with their climb, made a halt. There, under the lee of the hill, it was necessary to get "a breather," and to gather themselves together for the supreme effort. The scene was not exhilarating. The grey mist falling—the scattered earth and mud rising and spluttering, the shrieking shells rending the air, already vibrant with the whirr of bullets—the closer sounds and sights of death and destruction—all these things were sufficient to stem the courage of stoutest hearts. Still the British band remained undaunted, still they prepared boldly for the final rush. Presently, with renewed energy the three gallant regiments, steadily and determinedly as ever, started off, scaled the wall, clambered up the steep acclivity, and finally, with a rush and a roar as of released pandemonium, charged the crest.

The rout of the enemy was complete. At the glint of the steel they turned and ran—ran like panic-stricken sheep, helter-skelter over the hill, in the direction of Landmann's and Vant's Drifts. Their retreat was hurried by cavalry and mounted infantry, and, so far as it was possible, in view of the inaccessible position, by the field artillery. At this juncture the enemy displayed a white flag—without any intention of surrender, it appears—but our firing was stopped by order of the artillery commander. Two guns and several prisoners were captured, together with horses and various boxes of shells for Maxim, Nordenfeldt, and Krupp quick-firing guns. Our wounded were many, and some companies looked woefully attenuated as the remnant, when all was over, whistled themselves back to camp. Their gallant leader, General Penn Symons, who had taken no precautions to keep under cover, but, on the contrary, had made himself conspicuous in being accompanied by a lancer with a red flag, fell early in the fight, mortally wounded. His place was taken by Brigadier-General Yule, whose position at that time was far from enviable. A message had been brought in by scouts, stating that some 9000 Boers were marching with the intention of attacking the British in the rear, and that at the very moment the advancing multitude might be cloaked in a dark mist that was gathering round the hills. Fortunately the hovering hordes
THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR—TRANSPORT LEAVING ENGLAND FOR THE CAPE.

Drawing by Charles J. de Lacia.
The Battle of Glencoe

failed to appear, and the first big engagement of the war terminated in a glorious victory for British arms.

From all accounts the two hostile columns numbered respectively 4000 and 9000 men, and against these forces Sir Penn Symons had at his command in all about 4000. Among these were the 13th, 67th, and 69th Field Batteries, the 18th Hussars, the Natal Mounted Volunteers, the 8th Battalion Leicester Regiment, the 1st King’s Royal Rifles, the 2nd Dublin Fusiliers, and several companies of mounted infantry. But on the Dublin Fusiliers, the King’s Royal Rifles, and the Royal Irish Fusiliers fell the brunt of the work, the task of capturing the Boer position, and the magnificent dash and courage with which the almost impossible feat was accomplished brought a thrill to the heart of all who had the good fortune to witness it.

Though the fight was a successful one, a grievous incident occurred. The 18th Hussars had received orders at 5.40 A.M. to get round the enemy’s right flank and be ready to cut off his retreat. They were accompanied by a portion of the mounted infantry and a machine-gun. Making a wide turning movement, they gained the eastern side of Talana Hill and there halted, while two squadrons were sent in pursuit of the enemy. From that time, though firing was heard at intervals throughout the day, Colonel Moeller, with a squadron of the 18th Hussars and four sections of mounted infantry, was lost to sight. The rain had increased and the mist covered the hills, and it was believed that in course of time this missing party would return. But the belief was vain. In a few days it was
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discovered that they were made prisoners and had been removed to Pretoria. The following is a list of the gallant officers who were so unluckily captured:—

Colonel Moeller, 18th Hussars; Major Greville, 18th Hussars; Captain Pollok, 18th Hussars; Captain Lonsdale, 2nd Battalion Dublin Fusiliers; Lieutenant Le Mesurier, 2nd Battalion Dublin Fusiliers; Lieutenant Garvice, 2nd Battalion Dublin Fusiliers; Lieutenant Grimshaw, 2nd Battalion Dublin Fusiliers; Lieutenant Majendie, 1st Battalion King’s Royal Rifle Corps; Lieutenant Shore, Army Veterinary Department, attached to 18th Hussars.

An official account of the circumstances which led to the capture was supplied by Captain Hardy, R.A.M.C., who said: "After the battle, three squadrons of the 18th Hussars, with one Maxim, a company of the Dublin Fusiliers, a section of the 60th Rifles and Mounted Infantry, Colonel Moeller commanding, kept under cover of the ridge to the north of the camp, and at 6.30 moved down the Sand Spruit. On reaching the open the force was shelled by the enemy, but there were no casualties.

"Colonel Moeller took his men round Talana Hill in a south-easterly direction, crossed the Vant’s Drift road, captured several Boers, and saw the Boer ambulances retiring. Colonel Moeller, with the B Squadron of the Hussars, a Maxim, and mounted infantry, crossed the Dundee-Vryheid railway, and got near a big force of the enemy, who opened a hot fire, and Lieutenant MacLachlan was hit.

"The cavalry retired across Vant’s Drift, 1500 Boers following. Colonel Moeller held the ridge for some time, but the enemy enveloping his right, he ordered the force to fall back across the Spruit. The Maxim got fixed in a donga (water-hole). Lieutenant Cape was wounded, three of his detachment were killed, and the horses of Major Greville and Captain Pollok were shot.

"The force re-formed on a ridge north of the Sand Spruit, and held it for a short time. While Captain Hardy was attending to Lieutenant Crum, who was wounded, Colonel Moeller retired his force into a defile, apparently with the intention of returning to camp round the Impati Mountain, and was not seen afterwards."

The following list of casualties shows how hardly the glory of victories may be earned:

Divisional Staff.—General Sir William Penn Symons, mortally wounded in stomach; Colonel C. E. Beckett, A.A.G., seriously wounded, right shoulder; Major Frederick Hammersley, D.A.A.G., seriously wounded, leg. Brigade Staff. — Colonel John Sherston,1 D.S.O., Brigade Major, killed; Captain

1 Colonel Sherston, D.S.O., of the Rifle Brigade, in which he held the rank of Major, was a son of the late Captain Sherston, of Evercreech House, Somerset, and a nephew of Lord Roberts. He entered the army on February 12, 1876, and on the Afghan War breaking out two years later was appointed aide-de-camp to his uncle, then Sir Frederick
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Frederick Lock Adam, Aide-de-Camp, seriously wounded, right shoulder. 1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment.—Lieutenant B. de W. Weldon, wounded slightly, hand. 1st Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers.—Second Lieutenant A. H. M. Hill, killed; Major W. P. Davison, wounded; Captain and Adjutant F. H. B. Connor, wounded (since dead); Captain M. J. W. Pike, wounded; Lieutenant C. C. Southey, wounded; Second Lieutenant M. B. C. Carbery, wounded dangerously, face and shoulder; Second Lieutenant H. C. W. Wortham, wounded severely, both thighs. Royal Dublin Fusiliers.—Captain George Anthony Weldon, killed; Captain Maurice Lowndes, wounded dangerously, left leg; Captain Atherstone Dibley, wounded dangerously, head; Lieutenant Charles Noel Perreau, wounded; Lieutenant Charles Jervis Genge, wounded (since dead). 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifles.—Killed: Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. Gunning, 1 Captain M. H. K. Pechell, Lieutenant J. Taylor, Lieutenant R. C. Barnett, Second Lieutenant N. J. Hambro.—Wounded: Major C. A. T. Boulthbee, upper thigh, dangerously; Captain O. S. W. Nugent, Captain A. R. M. Stuart-Wortley, Lieutenant F. M. Crum, Lieutenant R. Johnstone, both thighs, severely; Second Lieutenant G. H. Martin, thigh and arm, severely. 18th Hussars.—Wounded: Second Lieutenant H. A. Cape, Second Lieutenant Albert C. McLachlan, Second Lieutenant E. H. Bayford.

The Boer force engaged in this action was computed at 4000 men, of whom about 500 were killed, wounded, or taken prisoners. Three of their guns were left dismounted on Talana Hill, but there was no opportunity of bringing them away.

Our own losses were severe, amounting to 10 officers and 31 non-commissioned officers and men killed, 20 officers and 165 non-

Roberts. He was present in the engagement at Charasiah on October 6, 1879, and the subsequent pursuit of the enemy, his services being mentioned in despatches. A similar distinction fell to his lot in connection with the operations around Cabul in 1879, including the investment of Sherpore. He accompanied Lord Roberts in the famous march to Candahar, and was present at the battle at that place, when he was again mentioned in despatches. His services during the operations were rewarded with the medal with three clasps and the bronze decoration. In 1881 he took part in the Mahsod Wuzeree Expedition, and on August 20, 1884, he received his company. He served with the Burmese Expedition in 1886-87 as D.A.A. and Q.G. on the Headquarters Staff, and was again mentioned in despatches and received the Distinguished Service Order and the medal with clasp. On October 15, 1898, A.A.G. in Bengal.

1 Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Henry Gunning, of the 1st King's Royal Rifles, was the eldest son of Sir George William Gunning, fifth Baronet, of Little Horton House, Northampton, the Chairman of the Conservative Party in Mid-Northamptonshire, by his marriage with Isabella Mary Frances Charlotte, daughter of the late Colonel William Chester-Master, of the Abbey, Cirencester, and was born on July 17, 1832. Educated at Eton, he entered the army as a sub-lieutenant on March 26, 1873, and was gazetted to the 60th Foot (now the King's Royal Rifle Corps) as a lieutenant on September 9, 1874. He served in the Zulu War of 1879 with the third battalion of his regiment, and was present at the action of Gingindlovu and the relief of Ekowe, afterwards serving as adjutant of the battalion throughout the operations of "Clarke's Column," for which he wore the medal with clasp. He was gazetted captain in August 1883, was an adjutant of the Auxiliary Forces (the 5th Militia Battalion of the King's Royal Rifles) from March 1886 to March 1891, having obtained the rank of major on June 25, 1890. In 1891-92 he took part in the war in Burma, being engaged in the operations in the Chin Hills in command of the Baungshe column, for which he wore a second medal with clasp. His commission as lieutenant-colonel bore date April 16, 1898. Colonel Gunning, who was in the Commission of the Peace for the county of Northants, married in 1880 Fanny Julia, daughter of the late Mr. Clinton George Dawkins, formerly Her Majesty's Consul-General at Venice.
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commissioned officers and men wounded, and 9 officers and 211 non-commissioned officers and men missing.

Though General Symons was known to be at the point of death, his promotion was speedily gazetted, and it was some consolation to feel that the gallant and popular officer lasted long enough to read of the recognition of his worth by an appreciative country. The following is an extract from the *Gazette*:

"The Queen has been pleased to approve of the promotion of Colonel (local Lieutenant-General) Sir W. P. Symons, K.C.B., commanding 4th Division Natal Field Force, to be Major-General, supernumerary to the establishment, for distinguished service in the field."

An officer who was taken prisoner by the enemy, writing home soon after this engagement, made touching reference to some of the killed and wounded: "Poor Jack Sherston! Several of the officers here saw him lying dead on the hill at Dundee. When he left with the message entrusted to him he said to me, 'I shall never return.' Poor Captain Pechell! He had a bullet through the neck. General Symons was wounded and thrown from his horse, but he remounted and was conducted to the hospital, where he learnt that the height had been taken by our troops. His health improved a little, but he died on the following Tuesday. What a list of losses already! It is terrible to think that our own cannon were fired by mistake on our men, killing a large number. I saw M'Laichlan when he was wounded with a bullet in his leg. He went about on horseback saying that it did not hurt him, but at last he had to go to the hospital. My bugler, such a pleasant fellow, was hit in the head, the body, and the throat, and killed on the spot. . . . From a wounded officer, who is a prisoner, I hear that poor Cape had a bullet in the throat and another in the leg. He emptied his revolver twice ere falling. He is progressing towards recovery. . . . He had the command of our Maxim gun which fell into the hands of the enemy. The entire detachment which worked the gun was killed or wounded. At that moment bullets were whistling all round us. Cape, I think, has been exchanged for one of the enemy's wounded. I suppose that he will be sent home invalided. I wonder what the future has in store for us? It is really heart-breaking to think that we are penned in here without being able to do anything but wait."

**ELANDSLAAGTE**

Amongst other things, it was known in Ladysmith on the 18th of October that General Koch's commando was moving to the Biggersberg Pass on the way to Elandslaagte. The advanced guard of the Boers finding a train at the Elandslaagte station,
Elandslaagte

attempted to seize it, but the driver with remarkable pluck turned on steam, and, though pelted with bullets, got safely to Dundee. The second train was captured, however, and with it its valuable cargo of live stock, and two newspaper correspondents, who were made prisoners. Finding that the enemy was gathered in force round Dundee, and that an attack there was hourly to be expected, and, moreover, that several Free State commandoes were shifting about round Ladysmith, the inhabitants of that town had an uneasy time. Major-General French, who had but recently arrived from England, was directed by Sir George White to make a reconnaissance in force in the neighbourhood of Elandslaagte. He moved his cavalry in the pouring rain some twelve miles along the Dundee road, but besides locating the enemy, and beyond the capture of two of their number, who seemed not ill-disposed to be made prisoners, little was done. On the following day, Saturday, another reconnaissance was made. General French with Lieutenant-Colonel Scott Chisholme and the Imperial Light Horse, the Natal Volunteer Artillery with six guns, supported by half a battalion of the Manchesters, with railway and telegraph construction companies, started in the direction occupied by the enemy on the preceding day. General French's orders were simple and explicit, namely, to clear the neighbourhood of Elandslaagte of the enemy and to cover the construction of the railway and telegraph lines. The troops slowly proceeded along a low tableland which terminated in a cliff. On a plain below this cliff lay the station and village of Elandslaagte, and round and about this settlement mounted Boers were swarming. These no sooner espied the British than they made off as fast as their nimble steeds could carry them, ascending in the direction of a high kopje some 5000 yards away. Those who remained in the station were fired on by our Volunteer Battery, while a squadron under Major Sampson moved round to the north of them.

The first two shells caused considerable consternation among the Dutchmen, but they were soon returned with interest. Though the enemy used smokeless explosives, their battery was revealed by the yellow flash of the guns in the purple shadow of the hill. These
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guns were worked with marvellous accuracy, but, fortunately, many of the shells—fired with percussion fuses—dug deep into the sand before bursting. The Volunteer Battery found their own guns so inferior to those of the enemy that there was little chance of silencing them, and General French, seeing there was no question of occupying Elandslaagte with the small force at his disposal, moved his guns back towards his armoured train, telephoned to Sir George White, and withdrew in the direction of Modder’s Spruit. There he awaited reinforcements from Ladysmith. These at 11 o’clock began to appear: One squadron of the 5th Dragoon Guards, one squadron of the 5th Lancers under Colonel King, and two batteries of artillery, the latter having come out at a gallop with double teams. Then the infantry arrived under Colonel Ian Hamilton, the second half-battalion of the Manchester Regiment, a battalion of the Devonshire Regiment under Major Park, and five companies of the Gordon Highlanders under Lieutenant-Colonel Dick-Cunyngham, V.C.

At 3.30 p.m. General White arrived on the scene, but the executive command of the troops engaged remained in the hands of General French. The Boers were discovered to be magnificently posted on a horseshoe-shaped ridge about 800 feet above the level of the railway to north of the Ladysmith-Dundee road, standing almost at a right angle from the permanent way, though some 2000 yards removed from it. On the side nearing the rail-road the ridge was crowned with a peaked kopje, which hill was connected by a nek with another eminence of the same kind. These hills were held by the enemy, while their laager was situated on the connecting ridge. The position was strewn on both flanks by very rough boulders which afforded excellent cover. On the main hill were three big guns strongly posted at three different points so as to command a wide expanse of country and leave a retreat open over the hills in the direction of Wessel’s Nek. Facing the ridge was a wide expanse of veldt rising upwards in the direction of Ladysmith.

At four—an unusually late hour for the commencement of hostilities—the first gun boomed out; the range was 4400 yards. A few moments of furious cannonading, then the enemy’s guns ceased to reply. The silence enabled the artillerists to turn their attention on a party of the foe who were annoying them with a persistent rifle-fire on the right flank at a range of 2000 yards. It was an admirable corrective, and the Boer sharpshooters retired discomfited. Meanwhile the infantry had been brought up in preparatory battle formation of small columns covered by scouts. The position of the infantry was then as follows:

The first battalion Devonshire Regiment, with a frontage of 500 yards and a depth of 1300 yards, was halted on the western
LIEUT.-GENERAL J. D. P. FRENCH.

Photo by Lambert Weldon & Son, Folkestone.
Elandslaagte

extremity of a horseshoe-shaped ridge. The opposite end of this ridge, which was extremely rugged and broken, was held by the enemy in force. The first battalion Manchester Regiment had struck the ridge fully 1000 yards to the south-east, just at the point where it begins to bend round northwards. The second battalion Gordon Highlanders were one mile in rear.

Now, no sooner had the Devonshire Regiment commenced to move forward than they attracted the shell of the enemy, but owing to the loose formation adopted, the loss at this time was slight. In spite of the furious fire, the regiment still pushed on to within 900 yards of the position, and then opening fire, held the enemy in front of them till 6 p.m. The batteries also advanced and took up a position on a ridge between the Devonshire and Manchester Regiments, about 3200 yards from the enemy. Then began an animated artillery duel, the roar of guns mingling with the thunder of heaven, which at this juncture seemed to have attuned itself to suit the stormy state of the human tempest that was raging below. At this period considerable damage was done. Captain Campbell, R.A., was wounded, an ammunition waggon overturned, and many men and horses were killed or injured. For some time the interchange of deadly projectiles was pursued with vigour, then the 42nd Field Battery came into action. The Imperial Light Horse now moved left of the enemy's position; some mounted Boers at once pushed out and engaged them. Soon after this the guns from above ceasing firing, our gunners turned their attention to the mounted Boers, who rapidly fell back. Then, as the sun was setting and dark clouds were rolling over the heavens and screening the little light that remained, the infantry pressed forward. The plan was that while the Devonshire Regiment made a frontal attack, the Manchester Regiment, supported by the Gordons with the Imperial Light Horse on the right, were to advance along the sloping ridge, turn the enemy's flank and force him back on his main position. This movement was to be supported by the artillery, which was to close in as the attack developed.

The Devons, under Major Park, marched out, as said, leading the way across the plateau and into the valley coolly and deliberately, though under a terrific fire from above. The Boer guns, which were served with great courage, invariably gave tongue on the smallest provocation, and the ground was ploughed up in every direction with bursting shell. But fortunately few of the gallant Devons were hit. Later on they drew nearer the position, and the regiment, halted under cover of convenient ant-hills, and opened fire. The rifles of the enemy were not slow to reply. Their Mauser bullets whirred like swarms of bees around the heads of the plucky fellows, who, heedless of them, dauntlessly advanced to within some
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350 yards of the summit of the hill. There they awaited the development of the flank attack.

Meanwhile the Manchesters, with the Imperial Light Horse and the Gordons, were winding round the lower steeps, the Gordons bearing to the right through a cutting in the hills. Here, ascending, they came under the artillery fire of the enemy, the Boers having moved their guns. Shells, and not only shells but huge boulders, dropped among the advancing troops, crushing and mutilating, and leaving behind a streak of mangled bodies. But though the ordeal was terrible, and the sound and sight of wounded and bleeding were enough to paralyse the stoutest heart, the ever "gay" Gordons plodded on, passing higher and higher, while their officers leading, cheered and roared them up the precipitous ascent. Thus they clambered and plodded, with men dropping dead at their elbows, with torn and fainting comrades by their sides. A storm of rain from the gathering thunderclouds drenched them through to the skin, but they heeded it not. A storm of bullets from the Boers sensibly diminished their numbers, but they never swerved. Then their gallant commander fell. Colonel Dick-Cunyngham, the honoured and beloved, was shot in two places. Several other dashing Scottish officers were wounded, but many still heroically stumbled and reeled over the boulders, some even waving their helmets to pretend they were unhurt, and to encourage their companions to the great, the final move.

At last the signal for the charge was sounded. The bugle blared out and was echoed and re-echoed. Then came flash of bayonet and sound of cheering throats, the rush of Devons, Manchesters, Gordons, and dismounted Imperials—a wild, shouting mass making straight for the enemy's position.

To account for the presence of the Devons in the grand mêlée it is necessary to go back somewhat, as the great assault was not accomplished in a moment.

Our men were advancing in short rushes of about fifty yards, the Boers all the while lying under cover and shooting till the troops were within some twenty or thirty yards of them. Then the Dutchmen, as suited their convenience, either bolted or surrendered.

When the end ridge was gained and the guns captured, the enemy's larger was close in sight. A white flag was shown from the centre of the camps. At this Colonel Hamilton gave an order. The "Cease fire" was sounded. There was a lull in the action, some of our men commencing to walk slowly down-hill towards the camp. Suddenly, without warning, the crackle of musketry was heard, and a deadly fire poured from a small sugar-loaf shaped kopje to east of the camp. For one short moment our men, staggered by the dastardly action
Elandslaagte

and the fierce suddenness of the attack, fell back, and during this moment a party of some forty Boers had stoutly charged uphill and effected a lodgment near the crest.

But this ruse was a failure and their triumph short-lived. The 1st Battalion Devonshire Regiment, who, as we know, had been holding the enemy in front during the commencement of the infantry attack, and had since then pushed steadily forward, had now reached to 350 yards from the enemy. Here they lay down to recover breath before charging with fixed bayonets. Five companies assaulted the hill to the left and five to the right; and a detachment of these, arriving at the critical moment when the Boers were making their last stand, helped to bring about the triumphant finale.

Like the lightning that shot through the sky above, the Boers, at the sound of the united cheers, had fled! Some scampered away to their laager on the Nek, and from thence to other kopjes. Others filed in troops anywhere, regardless of consequences. While they were in full retreat, and the mists of darkness, like a gathering pall, hung over the scene, the 5th Lancers and the 5th Dragoon Guards charged the flying enemy—charged not once nor twice only, but thrice, dashing through the scattered ranks with deadly purpose, though at terrible risk of life and limb. Never were Boers so amazed.
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The despised worms—the miserable Rooineks—had at last turned, and, as one of them afterwards described it, they had "come on horses galloping, and with long sticks with spikes at the end of them, picked us up like bundles of hay!"

The cost of victory, however, was heavy. Roughly estimated, we lost 4 officers and 37 men killed; 31 officers and 175 men wounded. Ten men were missing. The Boers lost over 300 Burghers killed and wounded, besides several hundred horses. Their hospital with wounded prisoners was placed under the care of the British hospital, they having only one doctor, who, with his primitive staff, was quite unable to cope with the arduous work of attending the multitude of sufferers.

Numbers of the enemy of all nationalities—Germans, Hollanders, Irish, and others—were made prisoners, and among them were General de Koch and Piet Joubert, nephew of General Joubert. General Viljoen was killed. The mongrel force, estimated at about 1,200 strong, was commanded by Colonel Schiel, to whom it doubtless owed its excellent tactical disposition. This officer was wounded and taken prisoner. The Times gave somewhat interesting character sketches of prominent Boers who were killed or wounded on this occasion:—

"General Koch was Minute-Keeper to the Executive, and was President Kruger's most influential supporter. His son, Judge Koch, was appointed to a seat on the Bench, but was not popular, and was regarded as a puppet. The fighting Koch is not to be confounded with the General Koch, who belongs to Vryheid, and is a sterling warrior.

"Advocate Coster was State Attorney at the time of the Reform trials, but resigned owing to President Kruger having insulted him at a meeting of the Executive. He was an accomplished man, a member of the Inner Temple, and was very popular with the Dutch Bar.

"General Ben Viljoen was responsible for most of the fire-eating articles which appeared in the Rand Post.

"Colonel Schiel was court-martialled in past days for shooting four natives whom he accused of insubordination."

The courage of the Boers during this battle was immense. About two thousand were engaged, and these, though certainly aided by the strength of their position, fought valiantly, facing doggedly the heavy consummately well-directed fire of the British artillery, and returning it with undiminished coolness.

An interesting incident is mentioned in connection with the battle. When the fire of the British guns became overwhelming, eight plucky Boers dashed forward from cover, and, standing together, steadily opened fire on the men of the Imperial Light Horse, with the evident purpose of drawing their fire, while their comrades should change position. Out of this gallant little band, only one man was left to tell the tale!
THE BATTLE OF ELANDSLAAGTE CHARGE OF THE 5th LANCERS.

Drawn by R. Caton Woodville.
Elandslaagte

The following is the casualty roll of officers killed at the battle of Elandslaagte:

Imperial Light Horse.—Colonel Scott Chisholme,1 commander, killed; Major Wools Sampson, bullet wound, thigh, severely; Captain John Orr, bullet wound, neck, severely; Lieutenant William Curry, bullet wound, foot, severely; Lieutenant Arthur Shore, bullet wound, chest, severely; Lieutenant and Adjutant R. W. Barnes, wounded severely; Lieutenant Lachlan Forbes, wounded severely; Captain Mullins, wounded; Lieutenant Campbell, wounded; Lieutenant Normand, wounded. 21st Battery Field Artillery.—Captain H. M. Campbell, bullet wound, chest, severe; Lieutenant W. G. H. Manley, shell wound, head, severe. Staff.—Captain Ronald G. Brooke, 7th Hussars, bullet wounds, thigh and head, severe. 1st Battalion Devonshire Regiment.—Second Lieutenant H. R. Gunning, severely, bullet wound in chest; Second Lieutenant S. T. Hayley, severely, bullet wounds in hand and leg; Second Lieutenant G. F. Green, severely, bullet wound in forearm; Captain William B. Lafone, slightly, bullet wound. 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment.—Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Curran, bullet wound, shoulder; Captain Charles Melvill, bullet wound, arm, severe; Captain William Newbigging, bullet wound, left shoulder, severe; Captain Donald Paton, bullet wound, thigh, severe; Lieutenant Cyril Danks, bullet wound, scalp, slight. 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders.—Killed: Major H. W. D. Denne, Lieutenant C. G. Monro, Second Lieutenant J. G. D. Murray, Lieutenant L. B. Bradbury. Wounded: Lieutenant-Colonel Dick-Cunyngham, bullet wound, arm, severe; Major Harry Wright, bullet wound, right foot, severe; Captain J. Haldane, bullet wound, leg, severe; Captain Arthur Buchanan, bullet wound, right side, severe; Lieutenant M. Meiklejohn, fractured humerus, severe; Lieutenant C. W. Findlay, bullet wound, arm and thigh, severe; Lieutenant J. B. Gillat (attached from Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders); Second Lieutenant I. A. Campbell, bullet wound, head and chest, dangerous; Lieutenant A. R. Hennessy (3rd Batt.), bullet wound, head and chest, severe.

The following tribute to the memory of Colonel Scott Chisholme is taken from Mr. John Stuart's correspondence to the Morning Post:

"No death has been more severely felt than the Colonel's. He was a good man and a good soldier, brave to the point of recklessness, a wonderfully-inspiriting leader, and, as I judged from about

1 Colonel John James Scott Chisholme, who was killed at Elandslaagte, belonged to the 5th (Royal Irish) Lancers, and who was detached on special service in South Africa, came of an old Scottish family, the Chisholmes of Stitches, Roxburghshire, his family seat being situate at the latter place. He was the only son of the late Mr. John Scott Chisholme (who assumed the name of Scott in 1853 under the will of his uncle, Mr. James Scott of Whitecaugh), by his marriage with Margaret, eldest daughter and co-heir of the late Mr. Robert Walker of Munrells, Stirlingshire, and was born in 1831. He entered the army in January 1872, his first services being with the 9th Lancers, and reached the rank of captain in March 1878. From that year till 1880 he served with the 9th Lancers in the Afghan War, was present at the capture of Ali Musjid, took part in the affair of Siah Sung, where he was severely wounded, and in the operations around Kabul in December 1879, when he was again wounded, and obtained mention in despatches, being rewarded with the brevet of major (May 2, 1881), and the medal with two clasps. He reached the substantive rank of major in December 1884, and from that year till 1889 was a major of the 9th Lancers, when he was transferred to the 5th Lancers. He was Military Secretary to Lord Connemara when Governor of Madras from 1888 to 1891. He reached the rank of lieutenant-colonel in August 1894, and that of colonel on August 12, 1898.
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a month's knowledge of him, single-minded, fervent in all his work, passionately in earnest. His regiment almost worshipped him. On the day of the fight their keenness was increased because he was keen, and they ignored the hardships they had gone through because he shared them and took them lightly, and did his best to improve matters.

"During the fight he only took cover once or twice, going from troop to troop, praising and encouraging the men in words that were always well chosen, for no man could phrase his blame or praise more aptly. At the last ridge he stopped to tie up the leg of a wounded trooper, and was shot himself in the leg. Two of his men went to his assistance, but he waved them off, telling them to go on with their fighting and to leave him alone. Then he was shot in one of the lungs, and the men went to his help, but while they were trying to get him to cover, a bullet lodged in his head and killed him. The last words he was heard to say were, 'My fellows are doing well.' His fellows will always remember that.

"I may be allowed to recall one or two interesting recollections of the Colonel. One is the speech he delivered when the Maritzburg Club dined him and his officers. Both he and General Symons spoke. Neither man was an orator, and yet each was more convincing than many orators, speaking simple, soldierly, purposeful words, words whose simplicity drove them home. Almost a week before the battle I saw the Colonel arranging his camp. He had taken off his tunic and helmet, and did twice as much direction as any other officer, and he worked as hard as any of the men. It was then, when I saw his vigour in full activity, that I realised his wonderful capacity for work—a capacity of which I had often heard, but which I had not been able to comprehend before.

"The last time I saw him was at the outspan before the battle began. He came to a group of us and gave one or two orders in such pleasant words that one knew that to obey him must in itself be a real delight. Then he sat down and gossiped with us, first about his luck in the morning, when a shell that hit the ground between his horse's feet had failed to burst, and afterwards about luck in general. He advised the officers to tell their men to sleep while they could, and then he said, 'Now I'll go and get half-an-hour's sleep myself.' But at that moment an aide-de-camp came saying that General French wanted to see him. When the Colonel returned, it was to order his regiment to saddle up and prepare to mount. In half-an-hour he was leading the attack on the first kopje.

"I like to think that before death smote him he knew that the battle was won, and that his fellows had done well, as he expected that they would, as he had helped them to do by example and generous encouragement."
Elandslaagte

A private of the Gordon Highlanders, in a letter dated Ladysmith, November 2, gave a vivid account of the charge of the Gordons at Elandslaagte, and described how Lieutenant-Colonel Dick-Cunyngham was wounded when leading his men, and that officer's chagrin at his being rendered impotent. He said: "We charged three times with the bayonet, and my gun was covered with whiskers and blood, though I don't remember striking anybody, but I was nearly mad with excitement, shells bursting and bullets whizzing round like hail. I was close behind the commanding officer when he was wounded. He was shot and had to sit down, but he cheered on his men. 'Forward, Gordons,' he cried, 'the world is looking at you. Brave lads, give it to the beggars, exterminate the vermin—charge.' He then started crying because he could no longer lead his battalion, and he would not retire from the field until the day was won. He is a fine man to lead a battalion—as brave as a lion. The Gordons were the last line, and we raced through the Manchesters and the Devons and the Light Horse Volunteers, all charging together."

Here we have a proof how much the morale of soldiers may be influenced by their immediate chief.

The Natal Advertiser in its account of the final scene said:—

"By a quarter past six the Devonshire Regiment, the Gordon Highlanders, and the Manchester Regiment, with the Imperial Light Horse, were in a position to storm the Boer camp from the enemy's front and left flank, and the signal for the bayonet charge was sounded. Then was witnessed one of the most splendid pieces of storming imaginable, the Devons taking the lead, closely followed by the Gordons, the Manchesters, and the Light Horse, in the face of a tremendous, killing fire, the rattle and roar of which betokened frightful carnage. . . . A bugler boy of the 5th Lancers shot three Boers with his revolver. He was afterwards carried round the camp amid cheers."

So many acts of gallantry were performed that they cannot all be related. It is impossible, however, to allow the wondrous pluck of Sergeant Kenneth M'Leod to go unrecorded. During the charge this gallant Scot was twice struck, once in the arm and once in the side. He however continued to pipe and advance with the Gordons to their final rush. Presently came more bullets, smashing his drones, his chanter, and his windbag, whereupon the splendid fellow had to give in.

Perhaps the most heart-rending period was that following the last gleam of daylight, when the Medical Staff went forth to do their melancholy duty. All were armed with lanterns, which, shining like pale glow-worms, made the dense gloom around more impenetrable still. Yet, groping and shivering through the black horror of
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the night, they patiently pursued their ghastly task with zeal that was truly magnificent. Dead, dying, wounded, were dotted all over the veldt. There, bearded old Boers, boys, Britons in their prime, were indiscriminately counted, collected, tended, the Field Hospital men and Indian stretcher-bearers working incessantly and ungrudgingly till dawn. Gruesome and heart-rending were the sights and scenes around the camp-fires when such wounded as could crawl dragged themselves towards their comrades. Pitiable the faces of the survivors as news came in of gallant hearts that had ceased to beat. A pathetic incident was witnessed in the grey gloom of the small hours. One of the bearers chanced on an ancient hoary-headed Boer, who was lying behind a rock supporting himself on his elbows. The bearer approached warily, as many of the enemy were known to have turned on those who went to their succour. This man, however, was too weak from loss of blood to attempt to raise his rifle. Between his dying gasps he begged a favour—would some one find his son, a boy of thirteen, who had been fighting by his side when he fell. The request was obeyed. The little lad, stone-dead, was discovered. He was placed in the failing arms of his father. The unhappy old fellow clasped the clay-cold form, and hugged it despairingly to himself, and then, merciful Providence pitied him in his misery—his stricken spirit went out to join his son.

An officer who was wounded, and who spent the night in the terrible scene, thus described his own awful experiences: "I lay where I fell for about three-quarters of an hour, when a doctor came and put a field-dressing on my wound, gave me some brandy, put my helmet under my head as a pillow, covered me with a Boer blanket which he had taken from a dead man, and then went to look after some other poor beggar. I shall never forget the horrors of that night as long as I live. In addition to the agony which my wound gave me, I had two sharp stones running into my back; I was soaked to the skin and bitterly cold, but had an awful thirst; the torrents of rain never stopped. On one side of me was a Gordon Highlander in raving delirium, and on the other a Boer who had his leg shattered by a shell, and who gave vent to the most heart-rending cries and groans. War is a funny game, and no one can realise what its grim horrors are till they see it in all its barbarous reality. I lay out in the rain the whole of the night, and at daybreak was put into a doolie by a doctor, and some natives carried me down to the station. The ground was awfully rough, and they dropped me twice; I fainted both times. I was sent down to Ladysmith in the hospital train; from the station I was conveyed to the chapel (officers' hospital) in a bullock-cart, the jolting of which made me faint again. I was the last officer taken in. I was then put to bed, and my wound was dressed just seventeen hours after I was hit.
Elandslaagte

They then gave me some beef-tea, which was the first food I had had for twenty-seven hours."

The amazing spirit of chivalry that animated all classes, general officers, medical officers, chaplains, and even stretcher-bearers, in this campaign has been the subject of much comment. It was thought that modernity had rendered effete some of the sons of Great Britain, and the war, if it should have done no other good, has served to prove that times may have changed, but not the tough and dauntless character of the men who have made the Empire what it is.

The following, from a Congregational minister of Durban, who had volunteered to go to the front as honorary chaplain to the Natal Mounted Rifles, in which corps many of his congregation enrolled, is of immense interest. It gives us an insight into the inner core of valour—the valour of those who, unarmed, share the dangers without the intoxications of the fight. It runs:—

"The Lancers, who were mistaken by the Boers in the growing darkness for a body of their own men, fell upon them and turned a rout into a wild flight. Commander Schiel was very furious at losing the battle, and said he would like to kill every man, woman, and child in Natal. In this he was the exception to the rule, for the captives whom we liberated said the Boers had treated them with great kindness. After the battle Dr. Bonnybrook and I spent the night on the field of battle, and also followed the retreating Boers for a distance of six or seven miles, searching for and tending the wounded and dying. In the early hours of the morning we came to a Boer field-hospital, and shouting out, 'Doctor and Predicant,' we entered and rested, and slept there awhile. By daybreak we were out again. About six miles from camp Dr. Bonnybrook rode up to twenty-five mounted and armed Boers, and told them they were his prisoners. Ordering two to take the weapons of their comrades, he marched them into camp prisoners. For an unarmed man to accomplish alone, this was an exceedingly brave thing to do. After the battle one of the captured held up his gun and said, 'Look through this. I have not fired a shot. I am a Britisher. They forced me to come.'"

Among other heroes of Elandslaagte was Lieutenant Meiklejohn of the Gordon Highlanders. This young officer, one of the "Dargai boys," helped the charge in an endeavour to embarrass the Boer flank. Supported by a party of Gordons, so runs the narrative, Meiklejohn waved his sword and cried out to his party hastily gathered round him. But the Boer ranks were alert, and poured in a deadly fire on the gallant band. Lieutenant Meiklejohn received three bullets through his upper right arm, one through the right forearm, a finger blown away, a bullet through the left thigh, two bullets through the helmet, a "snick" in the neck, while his sword and scabbard were literally shot to pieces. He has by now lost his right arm, but, happily, being left-handed, it is hoped he may remain in the profession he is so well calculated to adorn.
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A private soldier in the 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders recounted an extraordinary personal experience. He said:—

"We, the Devons, Imperial Light Horse, and others, had a fight at Elands-laagte with the Boers, and I never enjoyed myself so much before. You first have to get christened to fire, and then you think nothing of the shells bursting about you, and the bullets which go whistling past like bees. We went forward by fifty-yard rushes, and at every rush you could hear a groan, and down would go one of our comrades, either killed or wounded, poor chap. When we were miles from the enemy they opened fire on us with shell, and as we were going along in mass, one of the shells burst on the left of the company, and one of our men of my section—Bobby Hall—got shot dead with a piece of the shell going straight through his head. That was what made more than one wish to turn and run. But what would Britain do if her soldiers ran from the enemy? At last we got to where we could get a shot at the Boers with our rifles, and you may bet we gave them more than one, as perhaps the papers have told you. I got through the rifle-fire down to the bayonet charge on the hillside, when I felt a sting in the left arm, and looking down, found I was shot in the wrist. In changing my position I got shot in the centre of the forehead. The bullet did not go straight through. It glanced off my nose-bone, and came out above my right temple. . . . On looking round, I was just in time to see the blood squirt from the first wound. I shifted my position in quick time, for I did not want another from the same rifle. I lay still after doing this for a while, when the thought came to me to get my wrist bandaged and try to shoot again. On changing my position I got a bullet right in the 'napper.' I was out of action then, for all was dark. I heard the officer I was going to get the bandages from say, 'Poor chap! he's gone.' But no, I am still kicking."

THE RETREAT FROM DUNDEE

Owing to the Boers having posted their 15-centimetre gun on the Impati for the purpose of shelling the camp and town, the troops and inhabitants removed to a position some three miles south of Dundee village. The movement was fraught with many discomforts. Rain fell in torrents, making the roads a mass of slush and enveloping everything in a thick mist, while provisions, which had been hastily gathered together, were scarce. On the following day, Sunday, an attempt was made to return to camp, but the Boer firing continued so active that the project had to be abandoned. Thereupon, on Sunday night the whole column, having first loaded four days' supplies from their old camp and set there lighted candles sufficient to cause such an illumination as would suggest to the Boers an idea of occupation, quietly stole away. No one exactly knew their destination. At nine of the clock the Army Service Corps waggons moved to the camp, were loaded, and by midnight commenced rumbling along in the damp obscurity. The advance column, after passing through Dundee, where it was joined by transport and rear-guard, proceeded along the Helpmakaar road on the way to Ladysmith.

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MAJOR-GENERAL SIR W. PENN SYMONS, K.C.B.

Photo by E. Stanley & Co., London.
The Retreat from Dundee

On Monday afternoon the first halt was called, but the rest was of short duration, for at ten the column was again plodding along through the miry roads in hourly dread lest the whole scheme should be spoilt, and the Boers suddenly arrest the course of the two-mile-long column.

And they had indeed good reason for alarm. They were forced to plod through a narrow pass in the Biggarsberg range of mountains, so narrow indeed that a hundred Boers might have effectually barred their way. Here, through this perilous black cylinder of the hills, they marched at dead of night. It took them between the hours of half-past eleven till three, stumbling and squelching in the mire, and knowing that should the enemy appear, should they but shoot one of the oxen of the leading waggon of the convoy, and thus block the cramped defile, all chance of getting safely through to Ladysmith would be at an end. This was by no means a happy reflection to fill men's minds in the dripping, almost palpable, darkness of the night, and the resolute spirit of the gallant fellows who unmurmuringly stowed away all personal wretchedness and stuck manfully to their grim duty is for ever to be marvelled at and admired. Fortunately the Dutchmen, "slim" as they were, had not counted on the possibility of this march being executed at all, still less of its being executed in pitch darkness. They were caught napping, and the party, who had left kit, provisions (except for the four days), and everything behind them, who were now drenched to the skin in the only clothes they possessed, at last reached Sunday River in safety.

Here they eagerly awaited an escort of the 5th Lancers, which had been detached by Sir George White from Ladysmith to meet them. These, to the great joy of the worn-out travellers, appeared on Wednesday afternoon. On that evening the column again started off for a last long wearisome tramp, the men, who had not been out of their clothes for a week, being now ready to drop from sleeplessness and exhaustion. But valiantly they held on. Not a word, not a grumble. All had confidence in General Yule and his officers, who shared with the men every hardship and every fatigue; each realised his individual duty to make the very best of a very bad job, and pluckily kept heart till the last moment. Torrents of rain fell, making the night into one vast immensity of slough and pool, but the stumbling, straining left, right, left, right, of the retreating men continued ceaselessly through the weary hours. On Thursday morning, the 26th, to their intense relief, they found themselves at last in the long-looked-for camp at Ladysmith.

The excitement of arrival was almost too much for the exhausted, fainting troops, but the cheers that went up from a thousand throats brought light to their sleep-starved eyes and
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warmth to their chilled frames. There was rest at last—rest and safety, food and warm covering, though of a more practical than artistic kind. The Devons—who had just come grandly through the fight at Elandslaagte and looted the Boer camp of innumerable saleable odds and ends—out of their newly-gained wealth "stood treat." In the joy of their hearts each of the men subscribed sixpence, and the gallant Dublin Fusiliers, the heroes of Glencoe, who, all unwashed and unshorn, now looked like chimney-sweeps rather than the warriors they were, were invited to a fine "square meal." It is difficult to imagine the condition of those battered braves after their week of hardship, fighting, and privation, and sticklers for etiquette would have been shocked at the manners and customs enforced by warlike conditions. One who dined with the Dundee column gave the following graphic description of the luxurious repast:

"To begin with, there was no sort of furniture either in the messroom or the anteroom. If you wanted to sit down, you did so on the floor. We each got hold of a large tin mug, and dipped it into a large tin saucepan of soup and drank it, spoons not existing. A large lump of salt was passed round, and every one broke off a piece with his fingers. Next you clawed hold of a piece of bread and a chunk of tongue, and gnawed first one and then the other—knives and forks there were none. This finished the dinner. Add to this two or three tallow-candles stuck on a cocoa tin, and the fact that none of the officers had shaved, or had had their clothes off for a week, and had walked some forty-five miles through rivers and mud, and you will have some idea of how the officers' mess of one of the smartest of Her Majesty's foot regiments do for themselves in time of war. Not a murmur or complaint was to be heard."

Their state must certainly have been pitiable, for it will be remembered that on the retirement from Dundee rations for four days only were loaded, and provisions for two months, besides all officers' and men's kit and hospital equipment, were left behind.

And, sad to say, so also were the wounded. It was necessary for their future well-being to desert them. The men who had so gloriously led to victory now found themselves stranded and in a strange position—the vanquishers at the mercy of the vanquished! Most melancholy of all must have been the plight of those unhappy sufferers when they first learnt that their comrades were marching farther and farther away, and that they, in all their helplessness, must be left lonely—unloved, and perhaps unintended—in charge of the enemy. One dares not think of the agonies of those sad souls—the nation's invalids—bereft of kindly words and kindred smiles; one cannot linger without a sense of emasculating weakness on the
Sir W. Penn Symons—Glencoe

sad side-picture of battle that, in its dumb wretchedness, seems so much more paralysing than the active horror of facing shot and shell in company with glorious comrades in arms. Let us hope there was some one to whisper to them, to persuade them that all was for the best; that the safety of their sick selves and their sound mates depended on this retreat, this wondrous retreat which, when the tale of the war in its entirety shall be told, will shine like a dazzling light among records whose brilliancy in the history of British achievements cannot be excelled. Perhaps, too, they had faith to inspire them with the certainty that all that they had suffered in that dark hour for their country and for the weal of their fellows, would be remembered to their glory in the good times to come.

While the retreat was going forward Glencoe's gallant hero was breathing his last. After hopelessly lingering for three days, General Sir W. Penn Symons passed away. He expired in the hands of the enemy at Dundee hospital on Monday the 23rd of October. The next day he was quietly buried with profound signs of mourning.

SIR W. PENN SYMONS—GLENCOE

By the death of Major-General Sir William Penn Symons, the British army lost a brilliant and distinguished soldier, and a man of great valour and courage. He came of a Cornish family, the founder of which was a Norman knight who came over with William the Conqueror. The eldest son of the late William Symons, Recorder of Saltash, he was born in 1843, and in 1863 joined the South Wales Borderers—the old 24th Regiment. He became lieutenant in 1866, captain in 1878, major in 1881, lieutenant-colonel in 1886, and colonel in 1887.

His first experience of active service was in 1877, when the Borderers took the field against the Galekas. In the Zulu War of 1879 he served with distinction, but was not present at the battle of Isandlwana, being away from his regiment on special duty. In 1885 he served as Deputy-Assistant-Adjutant and Quarter-Master-General, organising and commanding the Mounted Infantry in the Burmese Expedition. Being honourably mentioned in despatches for his services with the Chin Field Force, he received a brevet-colonelcy. In 1889–90 he was given a brigade in the Chin-Lusha Expedition, was again mentioned in despatches, made a C.B., and received the thanks of the Government of India. He commanded a brigade of the Waziristan Field Force in 1894–95 with like distinction, but he will best be remembered in connection with the campaign on the North-West Frontier of India in 1897–98, after which he was made a K.C.B. In 1898 he gave up his
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appointment in India and took command of the British troops in Natal.

He was one of the best shots in the army, his military hobby in fact being musketry, though he was also a great authority on the subject of mounted infantry. He was a keen sportsman, an excellent linguist. He was highly respected by all who knew him. As an evidence of how he was regarded by his brother officers, one may quote from the telegram which was sent from Sir G. White to the War Office on the morrow of the battle of Glencoe. The communication said: "The important success is due to his great courage, fine generalship, and gallant example, and the confidence he gave to the troops under him."

Mr. Winston Spencer Churchill's remarks about him, in a letter to the Morning Post, show how fully he was appreciated for his social as well as for his military qualities.

"So Sir Penn Symons is killed! Well, no one would have laid down his life more gladly in such a cause. Twenty years ago the merest chance saved him from the massacre at Isandhlwana, and Death promoted him in an afternoon from subaltern to senior captain. Thenceforward his rise was rapid. He commanded the First Division of the Tirah Expeditionary Force among the mountains with prudent skill. His brigades had no misfortunes; his rearguards came safely into camp. In the spring of 1898, when the army lay around Fort Jumrood, looking forward to a fresh campaign, I used often to meet him. Every one talked of Symons, of his energy, of his jokes, of his enthusiasm. It was Symons who had built a racecourse on the stony plain; who had organised the Jumrood Spring Meeting; who won the principal event himself, to the delight of the private soldiers, with whom he was intensely popular; who, moreover, was to be first and foremost if the war with the tribes broke out again; and who was entrusted with much of the negotiations with their jirgas. Dinner with Symons in the mud tower of Jumrood Fort was an experience. The memory of many tales of sport and war remains. At the end the General would drink the old Peninsular toasts: 'Our Men,' 'Our Women,' 'Our Religions,' 'Our Swords,' 'Ourselves,' 'Sweet-hearts and Wives,' and 'Absent Friends'—one for every night in the week. The night I dined it was 'Our Men.' May the State in her necessities find others like him!"

THE BATTLE OF REITFONTEIN

On the morning of the 23rd, thirty men of the 18th Hussars rode into camp at Ladysmith, after having had some exciting adventures. The facts were these. On the arrival at Glencoe
The Battle of Reinfontein

camp of the news of the Boer defeat at Elandslaagte, General Yule had detached a force to cut off the flying Boers. Unfortunately, the Hussars who were sent out for this purpose were themselves cut off, but at last, with the enemy at their heels, succeeded in fighting their way down a dangerous pass, and eventually effecting their escape. This, too, without the loss of a man!

To return to the great retreat. While General Yule was falling back to effect a junction with General White, the latter officer conceived a brilliant plan to ensure the safety of the returning force. He was aware that Yule’s column was marching via the Helpmakaar road, Beith, and the Waschbank and Sunday River Valleys, and therefore, to cover the movement, he sent out a strong force to the west of the road. The force consisted of the 21st, 42nd, and 53rd Field Batteries, 1st Devons, 1st Liverpools, 1st Gloucesters, 2nd King’s Royal Rifles (just arrived from Maritzburg), 19th Hussars, 5th Lancers, Natal Carabiniers, Border Mounted Rifles, and Imperial Light Horse.

The enemy was already strongly posted on the kopjes a mile and a half west of the railway and two miles south-east of Modder Spruit station, in all, some seven miles from Ladysmith. It was necessary, therefore, to keep him well occupied, and divert his attention from the Dundee column. On both sides firing soon commenced, but our guns were promptly silenced. Then the British took up a position three-quarters of a mile west of the railway, and for some twenty minutes kept up a heavy artillery fire supplemented by sharp volleys from the infantry. Before long the kopjes were cleared and the object of the British attack accomplished. The main body of the Boers retired in the direction of Besters, a point to the south of Ladysmith, where, in the circumstances, it was more advisable for them to be. In this battle a great deal of sharpshooting, especially at officers, took place on the part of the foe, who also resorted to their old tactics of discharging their guns and running away, again discharging them and again running—a trick they had been mightily fond of in their dealings with the Zulus, and which was calculated to tire out the fleetest antagonists. Colonel Wilford of the 1st Gloucester Regiment was mortally wounded. Sir George White had a narrow escape, as the Boers turned their artillery on the Staff, and their first shell came screaming within fifteen yards of the General. Captain Douglas, 42nd Battery, had also a marvellous escape, his horse having been wounded and his haversack ripped open by a splinter. In this smart engagement, as Sir George White in his official statement declared, “Our side confined its efforts to occupying the enemy and hitting him hard enough to prevent his taking action against General Yule’s column.” The manœuvre, as
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we know, was eminently successful, but was not executed without cost to those who assisted in it. The following was the official list of the officers killed and wounded:

1st Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment.—Killed: Lieutenant-Colonel and Colonel Edmund Percival Wilford. 42nd Battery Field Artillery.—Wounded: Lieutenant S. W. Douglas, shell-graze of abdomen, slight. 53rd Battery Field Artillery.—Major Anthony J. Abery, shell-graze of right knee, slight; Lieutenant Arthur Montague Perreau, bullet wound, right leg, severe; Lieutenant George Herbert Stobart (from 34th Battery), bullet wound, finger, slight. 19th Hussars.—2nd Lieutenant A. Holford, bullet wound, slight. 1st Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment.—Lieutenant Carlos Joseph Hickie, slightly.

The Boers, triumphant, entered Dundee about the same time as General Yule and his worn-out troops were being enthusiastically greeted in Ladysmith. They attacked the Dundee Town Guard, putting it to flight, and turned many civilians out of their houses. Later, they mounted two big guns at Intintanyane, some 4,500 yards from the Ladysmith camp, and their energies pointed to further activities.

LADYSMITH

Here it may be as well to review the geographical position of this now famous place. Ladysmith, as a position for purposes of defence, is very badly situated. It lies in the cup of the hills, and stony eminences command it almost in a circle. Towards the north is Pepworth’s Ridge, a flat-headed hill fringed at the base with mimosa bushes. North-east is Lombard’s Kop, which is flanked by a family of smaller kopjes. South of this hill and east of Ladysmith is a table-headed hill called Umbulwana. South of this eminence runs the railway through the smaller stations of Nethorpe and Pieters towards Colenso. To the west of Pepworth’s Ridge is Surprise Hill, and other irregular hills which rise from four to five hundred feet on all sides. The place is watered by the Klip River, which enters the valley between the hills on the west, twists gracefully in front of the town, and turns away among the eastern hills before making its way to the south. The position, commanded as it was on every hand, was not an enviable one, but the glorious fellows who had fought in two brilliant engagements were in no wise disconcerted.

Yet all were on the alert, for the Boers had now closed in round the town, and an engagement was hourly expected. A little desultory fighting took place, but when the British troops advanced, those of the Orange Free State at once retired towards the border. The town, however, was somewhat harassed for want of water, owing to the Boers having cut off the main pipes. The inconvenience was merely temporary, as the Klip River, which runs
OFFICER OF THE NINTH LANCERS.

Photo by Gregory & Co., London.
Ladysmith

through the main position, was fairly pure, and there were wells which could be made serviceable. A captive balloon was inflated by the Royal Engineers, and was used for the purpose of making observations, much to the annoyance of the Dutchmen, who had securely perched themselves at points of vantage on the surrounding hills. They were at this time on the north and east, having laagered south-east of Modder Spruit and Vlaak Plaats, some seven miles from Ladysmith, and were preparing to arrange a closely-linked chain of earthworks that should effectually surround the garrison. An exchange of shots now and then, however, was all that took place for a while between the contending parties, though both sides were evidently gathering themselves together for some definite move. The situation was thus described by a captive in Ladysmith:—

"Saturday and Sunday have passed without any demonstration being made by the enemy. The camp has again assumed its condition of readiness and watchfulness. On Saturday afternoon it was rumoured that General Joubert, with the commando encamped at Sunday River, was experiencing difficulty in transporting the 40-pounders across the spruit, which was swollen after the heavy rains. Small parties of Boers are constantly on the alert, and are harassing the British outposts.

"Scarcely a day passes without the outlying pickets being fired upon. The latest reports say that the enemy are gathered in considerable force on Dewdrop Farm.

"Great excitement has been caused in the Artillery camp by the capture of a supposed spy, who was caught in the act of tampering with the guns. The man had eluded the vigilance of the sentry, and had opened the breech of one of the 15-pounders when he was noticed. He was promptly arrested. When asked what he was doing, he said he was a lieutenant in the 18th Battery. Questioned further, he contradicted himself, and said that it was quite by accident that he opened the breech. He admitted that he belonged to Johannesburg. He was marched off in custody of the guard. The sequel of the story has not been made public.

"No camp followers are allowed, and all here have been ordered to leave. The enemy are now undoubtedly closing round Ladysmith. A large commando is reported to be on the Helpmakaar road, and a large camp has been formed between the Harrismith Railway Bridge and Potgieter's Farm. The camp on Dewdrop Farm extends for four miles. The enemy have an exceptional number of waggons. The Boer patrols are very venturesome; they have approached within three and a half miles of the town, and one party actually removed carcasses ready dressed for consumption from within the slaughtering lines."

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The prospect was far from cheering, particularly as Sir George White was well aware that his field-guns were ineffective against the powerful guns of position which the enemy were handling with unpleasant dexterity. At this critical period the united forces of Ladysmith and Glencoe only amounted to some 10,000 men, more than half of whom were infantry. The General, however, put the best face he could on the matter, telegraphed home for big guns—and waited!

General Joubert now expressed his opinions on the causes of the war. His ideas, published in the German journals, were of interest as showing the sentiments of the opposite camp:—

"It was evident to our Government after the Jameson raid, that Great Britain would be forced in time by various sordid elements into a war of extermination with the Boers. It was equally clear that this danger could only be averted by armaments on a most extensive scale. We were conscious that the impending war of annihilation would incur the sharpest condemnation on the part of the other European Powers, but history had taught us that not one of these Powers would be roused to intervene in our favour. In these circumstances we had to rely on our own strength.

"By indefatigable zeal and heavy sacrifices to augment our forces, and yet to secrete them from the observation of the British—these were the objects of our noblest exertion. Well, we succeeded, and hoodwinked the British. Spies were permitted to obtain glimpses of our obsolete artillery, but until the war was on the point of breaking out they had no suspicion of the formidable extent of our stores of modern material.

"We counted on the unreliability of the British announcements concerning their own preparedness, and attended as little to their cries of ‘To Pretoria!’ as did the Germans in 1870 to the Parisian boasters who shouted ‘À Berlin!’ Without completely denuding her colonies of troops, Great Britain cannot possibly despatch more than about 85,000 men to South Africa. Of this imposing force, only half will be available for the chief battles. It may be possible for Great Britain to effect the landing in various places of these troops by the middle of December. I estimate, however, that the losses in prisoners, killed, sick, and wounded will amount in the meantime to some 10,000. There will thus remain 75,000 men.

"Even should we fail to prevent the junction of the British troops under Sir Redvers Buller and be compelled to retreat, the British army would become from natural causes so debilitated that it would represent a force for operative purposes not exceeding 35,000. The remainder would have to be employed in protecting lines of communication extending some 700 miles.

"Our lines of depots, on the contrary, are in home territory. They are constructed at regular distances in three directions, and barely 500 men are necessary to cover them. Excellently-organised communications have been established between them, and if any one of them be seriously threatened, the stores—if rescue be impossible—will be destroyed.

"Moreover, defensive warfare—to which we need not think, however, of resorting for a long time to come—is fraught with far greater advantages to us than offensive operations. With a change of terrain there will be a change of tactics. In Natal and the south we have to deal with unfamiliar conditions. On the high plains of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State we shall be at
The Battle of Lombard’s Kop

home, and the British will meet opposition from us and from Nature at every step of the way, and at all times be prepared for action on two or three fronts. In this way will be developed a guerilla warfare of a most inconceivably bloody character, such as the British will be unable to endure for more than a few months.”

General Joubert then protested that the Boers were fighting merely for the freedom of their own “narrower” Fatherland, and not with a view to the destruction of British preponderancy in South Africa. He acknowledged the bravery of the British soldiers, but imagined that hardships and deprivations would so demoralise them that they would be unable to hold out against an enemy superior in numbers.

“In these circumstances,” he continued, “do not accuse me of boasting when I frankly say that victory will be ours. Every one of us is filled with the same conviction and unshakeable faith in God, that He will remain as true to us in this as in former wars, and that He will not allow the blood shed and to be shed in this struggle, that will probably last yet a year, to extinguish us and our children.”

THE BATTLE OF LOMBARD’S KOP

Towards the end of October Sir George White decided that something must be done to protect his line of communication with the south. The Boers were spreading out in crescent form and drawing gradually nearer to the town. On the north were troops commanded by General Joubert. On the west was a Free State commando, and on the east was General Lucas Meyer, who owed us a grudge after the events of Talana Hill. Reinforced by troops from General Erasmus, he now desired to press towards the railway with a view to seizing it at some point south of the town. It was necessary at all costs to put a stop to this scheme. Colonel Ian Hamilton with an Infantry Brigade was therefore despatched on the 27th to Lombard’s Kop, a hill some five miles east of Ladysmith. There he bivouacked for the night, with a view to clearing the enemy out at the point of the bayonet on the morrow. He never brought his plan into execution, however, for Sir George White, having been informed of the size of Meyer’s force, ordered him to fall back on the town. On Sunday the 29th it was discovered that the Boers were intrenched in lines that extended over twenty miles, while “Long Tom,” their six-inch gun, was perched on Pepworth Hill, its big ominous muzzle being situated some 7500 yards to the north of Ladysmith. In addition to this formidable weapon, field-guns with a range of some 8000 yards were posted about in well-concealed positions. For the protection of our line of communication it was necessary that the enemy, though three times as strong as the British force, should be dispersed, and that night, at half-past ten o’clock, Colonel Hamilton again set out with three battalions, the Devons,
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the Gordons, the Manchesters, and a Brigade Division of Artillery. The night was dark but clear, and the troops marched along the Newcastle Road to Limit Hill, a strong kopje some three miles north of Ladysmith, and half-way between that town and Pepworth Hill. There they bivouacked for the night. While this party was moving as described, a small force under Colonel Carleton, composed

of four and a half companies of the Gloucestershire Regiment and six companies of the Royal Irish Fusiliers and No. 10 Mountain Battery, was moving towards Nicholson's Nek with a view of seizing it. But of Colonel Carleton's column anon.

On Colonel Ian Hamilton's right flank, towards Lombard's Kop, was Colonel Grimwood, with the 1st and 2nd King's Royal Rifles,
BEFORE LADYSMITH—HORSE ARTILLERY GALLOPING TO TAKE UP A NEW POSITION.

Drawn by R. Caton Woodville.
The Battle of Lombard’s Kop

the Liverpools, Leicesters, and Dublin Fusiliers, three Field-Batteries, and the Natal Volunteer Artillery. On the extreme right, when day broke, was General French with a Cavalry Brigade and some volunteers. The idea was, that while Colonel Grimwood was shelling the Boer position to the north of Lombard’s Kop, General French should prevent any attempt to turn his right; the enemy’s artillery silenced, Colonel Grimwood was to drive him along the ridge running to Pepworth, and, under cover of the British guns, press the Boers towards their centre. Meanwhile our centre, under Colonel Hamilton, was to attack a hill where the enemy was in force, rout him and join in the general scheme, while Colonel Carleton protected the centre from a flank movement. Unfortunately “the best laid schemes o’ mice and men gang aft agley,” and General White’s admirable scheme failed, as we shall learn. An artillery duel began operations, and this continued for two long hours, while the warm spring morning developed, and the Boers, who had been warned of our plans and had changed their position during the night, were laughing in their sleeves at the capital surprise they had prepared. They had drawn off their men from the point that was to have been the objective of our centre, and extending and reinforcing their left, were calmly waiting our attack. The artillery duel continued till seven o’clock, our batteries with great difficulty searching out the enemy’s position. Colonel Grimwood, with two battalions of the King’s Royal Rifles, held the kopjes and ridges in front of Farquhar’s Farm, while mounted infantry and troopers of the 18th Hussars, supported by the Liverpools and Leicesters, were posted on the hills on the right. Behind them came the artillery, who directed their fire at the hill above the farm, where the enemy was supposed to be intrenched.

The Boers, who in great hordes had streamed from the hills like a mountain torrent and concealed themselves in the surrounding ridges, now made all Colonel Grimwood’s plans impossible. He seemed, indeed, in danger of being annihilated by sheer force of superior numbers, when troops from the centre were pushed forward to his support. A smart engagement ensued, the Boers making energetic efforts to penetrate the line between the Infantry and Artillery, while the 53rd Battery changed front to meet the attack and the 5th Lancers struggled to form up on the left of the rifle regiments. But the enemy’s automatic quick-firing gun vomited forth its death-dealing steel with such persistence that the cavalry was forced to retire at a gallop. The gunners again came to the rescue, and six field-batteries, spread over in a semicircular front of three-quarters of a mile, sent their shrapnel over the heads of the infantry to crash on the ridges occupied by the Boers.

At this critical moment, when the turmoil of warfare was at its
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hottest, and when our gallant troops were struggling unsuccessfully to hold their own against an overwhelming number of the enemy, a message came from Sir George White to retire. Some sort of a panic had taken place in the town, owing partly to the fact that the Boers were threatening it from another quarter, partly to the persistent shelling of "Long Tom," which, as some one described, was like a voluble virago, determined to have the last word! All efforts to silence the horrible weapon had failed, and for some three or four hours it had sent its eighty-four-pound shells shrieking into the town. There was no resource but to fall back, which was done to the appalling detonations of the Boer guns all going at once, while "Long Tom," like some prominent solo-singer, dominated the whole clamouring orchestra. To silence him and to cover the retreat, a Lieutenant of the Powerful, in charge of a gun drawn by a team of oxen, went out on the road between Lindon Hill and Ladysmith. Before the gun could be got in position, however, "Long Tom" had spotted it—barked at it—overturned it, and killed several of the oxen. But his triumph was short-lived. Another rival performer had come on the scene, namely, the twelve-and-a-half-pounder of the Naval Brigade. It came, saw, and conquered, knocking out "Long Tom" at the fourth shot!

The whole action of the Naval Brigade reads like a fairy story. Ladysmith on the point of exhaustion, with all its troops engaged and no big guns wherewith to meet the terrific assaults of the six-inch cannon on Pepworth Hill, was almost in despair. At the eleventh hour up came the Naval Brigade under Captain the Hon. Hedworth Lambton of H.M.S. Powerful with 280 Blue-jackets, two 4.7 guns, and four twelve-and-a-half-pounders. Then the affair was done. It was just one, two, three, and away—for the fourth splendidly-directed shot saved the situation.
The Disaster of Nicholson's Nek

In this engagement great feats of daring were accomplished, feats which have now become so general that we have almost ceased to gasp in wonder at the heroism of the "mere man" of the nineteenth century. When the regiments were forced to retire from the death-laden region of Lombard's Kop, Major Abdy of the 53rd Battery R.A., dashing across the plain under a storm of shells from a quick-firing gun, brought his battery between the enemy and the straggling mass of retreating soldiers. Horse and man rolled over, but the fire of the 53rd never slackened till the imminence of danger was past. The correspondent of the Standard, who was present, said: "When the moment came for the battery to fall back, the limber of one of the guns had been smashed and five horses in one team had been killed. Captain Thwaites sent back for another team and waggon limber, and brought back the disabled gun under a concentrated fire from the enemy, who were not more than four hundred yards distant. Lieutenant Higgins, of the same battery, also distinguished himself for gallantry. One of the guns was overturned in a donga. In the face of a close and heavy fire the Lieutenant succeeded in righting the gun and bringing it into a place of safety."

The following is a list of killed and wounded among the officers who were engaged on Lombard's Kop:

13th Field Battery, R.A.—Major John Dawkins, wounded, slightly. 42nd Field Battery.—Lieutenant James Taylor M'Dougall, killed. 69th Field Battery—Lieutenant Harold Beleher, bullet wound, forearm, severely. 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifles.—Major W. T. Myers (7th Battalion), Lieutenant H. S. Marsden, and Lieutenant T. L. Forster, killed; Lieutenant H. C. Johnson, bullet wound in shoulder, severely. 2nd Battalion King's Royal Rifles.—Major H. Buchanan Riddell, bullet wound, abdomen, severe. 1st Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment.—Captain Willcock, bullet wound, shoulder and wrist; Captain Bertram Fyffe, bullet wound, forearm and chest, severe; Captain Frederick Staynes, bullet wound, forearm, severe. Royal Army Medical Corps.—Major Edward G. Gray, killed. Natal Mounted Rifles.—Lieutenant W. Chapman, killed.

THE DISASTER OF NICHOLSON'S NEK

The circumstances which attended the movements of Colonel Carleton's column are even now somewhat fraught with mystery. He carried out the night march unmolested until within two miles of Nicholson's Nek. Then some boulders, loosened evidently for the purpose, rolled down the hill, and a sudden crackling roll of musketry stampeded the infantry ammunition mules. The alarm became infectious, with the result that the battery mules also broke loose from their leaders, practically carrying with them the whole of the gun equipment. The greater part of the regimental small-arm ammunition reserve was similarly lost. In consequence of this
misfortune, Colonel Carleton's small force, after a plucky fight and heavy loss, had to capitulate. The real truth about the affair may never be known, but for the lamentable result Sir George White in an official dispatch, with heroic courage—greater perhaps than any required by warriors in the field—took upon himself the entire blame. The General knew well that the failure of his programme in the engagement of Lombard's Kop had inevitably brought about the disaster to the isolated force.

The list of officers taken prisoners by Boers was as follows:—


Some details of their misfortune were given by the prisoners in Pretoria, and they serve to throw more light on the subject.

Colonel Carleton, as we know, was sent towards Nicholson's Nek to hold it and prevent the Free Staters from coming to the assistance of the other Boers. Having lost his reserve ammunition and the water of all the battery through the stampede of the mules, he set to work to construct a defensive position. But stones were scarce and the defences were slender, and by the light of dawn his position was revealed. At this time a long-range fire was opened from three hills to south and west, dropping from 1500 yards into the position, and taking it both in flank and in rear. From his observations Colonel Carleton discovered that General White's scheme had failed—that it was being abandoned. In consequence of this failure the whole Boer force was enabled to swarm from all directions towards the isolated column. Firing fierce and incessant, exhausted the already worn-out Irish Fusiliers, while the advanced companies of the Gloucesters were severely mauled by the Martini bullets of the enemy. The hill was now completely surrounded, the ammunition expended; still Colonel Carleton had no idea of giving in. The bayonet was left, and by the bayonet he meant to stand or fall. Suddenly a wounded officer ordered the white flag to be raised. It was then hoisted, but uncertainty prevailed as to the authority for
The Disaster of Nicholson's Nek

the exhibition of the flag, and some of our men still continued to fire. However, the mischief was done, and the surrender was merely a matter of moments.

The most vivid account of the disaster, from an outsider's point of view, was given by the Times special correspondent at Ladysmith. He wrote:

"This column, consisting of six companies of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, four and a half companies of the Gloucestershire Regiment, and No. 10 Mountain Battery, left camp on Sunday night at 10.30, with the object of occupying a position from which it would be able to operate upon the right of the Boer position on Pepworth Hill. The column was guided by Major Adye, of the Field Intelligence, and a staff of the headquarters guides. Their destination was Nicholson's Nek, a position which, when reconnoitred from this side, appeared to possess the necessary tactical advantages for a detached force. Nicholson's Nek lies about four miles up Bell's Spruit, a donga due north of Ladysmith. The men blundered along in the darkness, the Irish Fusiliers leading, the battery in the centre, the rear being brought up by the Gloucestershire Regiment. There seems no doubt upon one point, and that is, the enemy were aware of this part of the movement from the beginning. Probably they were aware of the whole of the plans for Monday, for in Ladysmith it was impossible to say who was a Boer agent and who not. However that may be, it is certain that the enemy were on the flanks of the column all night, one of the survivors positively stating that he constantly heard the snapping of breeches, and once the peculiar noise which a rifle makes at night when it is dropped.

"Two hours before daybreak, while the column was in enclosed country, either a shot was fired or a boulder rolled into the battery in column of route. The mules stampeded, and easily broke away from their half-asleep drivers. They came back upon the Gloucestershire Regiment, the advance party of whom fired into the mass, believing in the darkness that it was an attack. This added to the chaos; the ranks were broken by the frenzied animals, and they dashed through the ranks of the rearguard, carrying the first and second reserve ammunition animals with them. It became a hopeless panic; the animals, wild with the shouting and the turmoil, tore down the nullah into the darkness, and the last that was heard of them was the sound of ammunition-boxes and panniers as they were splintered against the boulders. The hubbub of those few minutes was sufficient to have alarmed the enemy. By a strenuous effort the officers succeeded in getting the men again under control, and when daylight came they seized the first position which presented itself, and which was about two miles short of the original goal. They were forced to take advantage of the first kopje, as Boer scouts were all round them, and the day was ushered in with desultory firing. It was a sorry position which they had chosen, and the men were in a sorrier plight. All their reserve ammunition was gone, and though they had saved pieces of the screw-guns, they were not able with these pieces to patch up a single mounting.

"The position itself was a flat kopje commanded on the south by a self-contained ridge. To the east was another kopje, which commanded the top of the position at about 500 yards. On the west were two similar spurs, also commanding the position at short ranges. The summit of the kopje was a plateau, all the sides being gradual slopes except the eastern, which was almost
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sheer, this latter being the side from which access had been gained. From below it appeared a defensible position, but when once the top was reached it was evident that it was commanded from all sides. The men busied themselves attempting to build breastworks. The Gloucestershire companies, with their Maxim gun, were given the northern face to hold, two companies being detached on to a self-contained ridge of the position which lay on the south side. The Irish Fusiliers had the precipitous flank to defend.

"From earliest daybreak Boer scouts were reconnoitring, and about eight o'clock mounted Boers could be seen galloping in small groups to the cover at the reverse of the hill on the west. Later two strong parties of mounted men took position on the far side of the two hills commanding the kopje from the west. About nine o'clock these two parties had crowned the hills and opened a heavy fire at short ranges right down upon the plateau. Our men made a plucky attempt to return this fire, but it was impossible; they were under a cross-fire from two directions, flank and rear. The two companies of Gloucesters holding the self-contained ridge were driven from their shelter, and as they crossed the open on the lower plateau were terribly mauled, the men falling in groups. The Boers on the west had not yet declared themselves, but about 200 marksmen climbed to the position which the two companies of the Gloucesters had just vacated. These men absolutely raked the plateau, and it was then that the men were ordered to take cover on the steep reverse of the kopje. As soon as the enemy realised this move, the men on the western hill teemed on to the summit and opened upon our men as they lay on the slope. They were absolutely hemmed in, and what had commenced as a skirmish seemed about to become a butchery. The grim order was passed round— 'Faugh-a-Ballaghs, fix your bayonets and die like men!' There was the clatter of steel, the moment of suspense, and then the 'Cease fire' sounded. Again and again it sounded, but the Irish Fusiliers were loth to accept the call, and continued firing for many minutes. Then it was unconditional surrender and the men laid down their arms."

An officer of the Gloucestershire Regiment described the affair thus:

"Hospital, Wynberg, 9/11/1899.

"We were ordered out with six companies of Royal Irish Fusiliers and No. 10 Mountain Battery, Royal Artillery, to make a night march through the Boer lines and hold a hill behind their right flank till the rest of the troops took us off, which they expected to do about 11 A.M. As it turned out, they were not able to do this, but they did keep the Boer guns employed, luckily for us. We started off at 8.30 P.M., and got to the foot of our hill about 2 A.M. The Royal Irish Fusiliers were in front, then the battery and S.A.A. mules, and last ourselves. The Royal Irish Fusiliers had got part way up the hill—a very steep one—when three mounted Boers galloped down amid clouds of dust, rolling stones, &c. They started off the battery and S.A.A. mules, the Boers firing as they passed. The mules cut right through the regiment, and all was chaos for a time.

"It was pitch dark, and the noise of the mules and the loads and the stores falling about was enough to put any one off. Several men were hurt, some got in next day, some are missing.—Part of Stayner's, Fyffe's, and my company were cut off from the rest altogether, and when we got them in some sort of order, we had quite lost the rest of the column. The orders were to push on, no matter what happened, and every one left to look out for himself.

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GENERAL JOUBERT.

Photo by Elliott & Fry, London.
The Disaster of Nicholson's Nek

After some time trying to find the path, we came across a straggler, who told us which way the regiment had gone, and eventually we found them on the top of a hill. We were ordered, as soon as we got on the hill, to put up sangars, which we worked at by the light of a very small moon till daylight. Then the Boers began on us all round, not very many, till about half-past eight. From then till 2.30 the fire was hot, and hottest at 2.30, when our ammunition being almost down and the fire devilish from all sides, we had to give in.

"I got a grazing shot on my left hand and a bullet in my right forearm early (about 8.30 A.M., and two more grazers—right thigh and left elbow)—later, finally, a bullet from behind through the right shoulder about a quarter of an hour before the end. I don't know who gave the order to 'Cease fire,' The firing could not have gone on five minutes more on our side for want of ammunition, and the Boer fire was tremendous from all round. It was like 'magazine independent' at the end of field-firing. The astonishing thing is so few were hit. If we had had our guns and ammunition, I think we could have held on until night and then got off, but there were 1200 of them, they said, to our 800, not counting gunners, and you could not till the very end see a dozen of them. The way they take cover is simply wonderful. All the prisoners were marched off at once and sent by rail to Pretoria. It was a terribly hot day, and no shade or water except what the Boers gave us. They were very good about water, giving us all they had, and fetching more from the bottom of the hill, one and a half mile away."

An officer of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, writing from Staatsmeyler Schule, Pretoria, said:

"We were all taken prisoners, together with the Gloucester Regiment and a Battery of Mounted Artillery, which accounts for us being in Pretoria so soon. As we were going up the hill in the dark, a small party of Boers dashed through our ammunition mules, causing them to stampede. By this move we lost all our mules, 200 in all, and with them all our ammunition and artillery. . . You don't know what it means shooting a Boer; he is behind a rock, and all you can ever see is his rifle sticking out. For the last hour of the fight I had a rifle and ammunition which I took from a dead man, and blazed away for all I was worth. Then we fixed bayonets and prepared for a rush, when the 'Cease fire' sounded. Our senior Captain has told me that my name has been mentioned to our Colonel, who was commanding the force, as having caused a lot of men to rally. We were all then taken prisoners, except two officers killed and eight wounded, and marched to the Boer laager, and sent off that night to a station twenty miles distant in waggons. While we were in their laager they treated us extremely well, and gave us food and tobacco. All you read about the Boers in England is absolutely untrue. They are most kind to the wounded and prisoners, looking after them as well as their own wounded, and anything they've got they will give you if you ask them, even if they deprive themselves. We came up to Pretoria in first-class sleeping-carriages, and the way they treated us was most considerate, feeding us and giving us coffee every time we stopped. The day we arrived we took up quarters on the racecourse, but we have been moved into a fine brick building with baths, electric light, &c. They provide us with everything, from clothes down to tooth-brushes. They also feed us, and we are constantly getting presents of vegetables and cigars from private people. In fact, we can have
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everything we like except our liberty; for some reason or other they won't at present give us parole, and we are surrounded by sentries. There are close upon fifty officers in this building, and they have got any amount of wounded ones in different places. They say they won't exchange the officers at any price."

As this letter had evidently to pass through the hands of the prison censor, we may take the eulogies of the Boers for what they were worth! However, it is but just to own that there are Boers and Boers. For instance, it is a fact that Captain Gerard Rice, who was wounded in the ankle and unable to move, offered a Boer half-a-sovereign to carry him off the field. The man refused the money, but performed the action with great kindness.

Father L. Matthews, chaplain of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, who was captured at Nicholson's Nek on October 31 and subsequently released, gave the following version of the disaster:—

"We were sent out to occupy the position with the object of preventing the two Boer forces from joining. We started at 8.30 on Sunday night, marched ten miles, and got to the hill at 1 A.M. The first mishap was that the mountain battery stampeded and scattered the whole lot of mules. We formed up again and gained the top of the hill. The guns were gone, but not all the ammunition. I do not know what stamped the mules. They knocked me down. It was pitch dark.

"We had one hour's sleep. Firing began just after daylight. It was slack for some time, but the Boers crept round. Then the firing became furious. Our men made a breastwork of stones.

"After 12 o'clock there was a general cry of 'Cease fire' in that direction. Our fellows would not stop firing. Major Adye came up and confirmed the order to cease fire. Then the bugle sounded 'Cease fire.' In our sangar there was a rumour that the white flag was raised by a young officer who thought his batch of ten men were the sole survivors.

"We were 900 alive, having started perhaps 1000. I think that many of the battery men escaped. Our men and officers were furious at surrendering. The Boers did not seem to be in great numbers on the spot, but I heard that the main body had galloped off.

"The men had to give up their arms. The officers were sent to Commandant Steenekamp. The officers then ordered the men to fall in. The officers were taken away from the men and sent to General Joubert. On the same day the officers went in mule-waggons and slept at some store en route, and next day took the train at Waschbank for Pretoria. The officers are very well treated, and so, I have heard, are the men. There has been no unpleasantness in Pretoria. The officers are in the Model School, and are allowed to walk as they please in the grounds.

"I think that the surrender was a great blunder, and was caused by a misunderstanding. Major Adye was much put out. The white flag was not hoisted by the Irish Fusiliers."

Father Matthews puts the case mildly. Some of the officers of the Irish Fusiliers were so exasperated at the exhibition of the white flag, that they set to work and smashed their swords rather than give them up.
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The final figures of the losses sustained at Nicholson's Nek were as follows: The total of missing of the Gloucsters and Royal Irish Fusiliers was 843. Thirty-two of the Gloucesters, 10 of the Fusiliers, and 10 of the Mountain Battery were found dead on the field, while 150 wounded were brought into camp at Ladysmith. Between 70 and 100 of the men escaped and got back to camp.

THE SIEGE OF LADYSMITH

It was now found necessary to issue a proclamation giving all strangers the option of leaving the town at twenty-four hours' notice. In spite of this notice, however, many civilians remained. Meanwhile, shells continued to drop uproariously, if harmlessly, into the town, while the balloon corps worked steadily in their task of locating the hostile guns. The enemy objected to that original form of spy; and aimed at him many a shot, but, fortunately, without effect. The Naval Brigade, always animated, active, and efficient, completed the mounting of the long-range guns which were to add to the safety of the place and the discomfort of its besiegers. On the whole, the position was becoming somewhat serious, particularly for those whose nerves were unaccustomed to the uproar of diurnal thunderstorms. Lord Wolseley has somewhere said that "the effect of artillery fire is more moral than actual; it kills but very few, but its appalling noise, the way it tears down trees, knocks houses into small pieces, and mutilates the human frame when it does hit, strikes terror into all but the stoutest hearts." It may be imagined that the early days of this experience must have been somewhat embarrassing, though later on, so attuned became the nerves, even of women, that they engaged in shopping in the midst of bombardment, quite unmoved.

On 2nd November at 2.30 p.m. the telegraphic communication with Ladysmith was interrupted, but it was undecided whether the Boers had got sufficiently far south to promote the interruption or whether the wires had been cut by Dutch sympathisers or small scouting parties of the enemy. The Boers applied for an armistice with a view to burying their dead, their real object most probably being, as in many previous cases of a similar nature, to obtain time for refitting their heavy guns. This request was refused, but they were permitted to bury their slain under a flag of truce. Meanwhile, General Joubert's force received large reinforcements of Free State burghers under the command of Lucas Meyer, and additional commandoes from the Middleburgh and Leydenburg districts under Schalkburger were expected.

After this the siege of Ladysmith began in real earnest. "Long Tom," though temporarily incapacitated, soon resumed his volubility,
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and was assisted by another of his calibre nicknamed "Slim Piet." Curiously enough, the first house hit during the siege was a commodious bungalow-shaped residence with large verandah belonging to Mr. Carter, the author of the now well-known "Narrative of the Boer War." The owner fortunately had left before the bombardment, and the premises were then occupied by nurses.

Lieut. Frederick Egerton, of the Powerful, who was wounded

by a shell in the left knee and right foot, was promoted to the rank of Commander in Her Majesty's fleet for special services with the forces in South Africa. But his promotion came too late. He expired after some hours of suffering.¹

The Boers by now had established batteries on Grobler's Kloof,

¹ Commander Egerton was a nephew of the Duke of Devonshire and of the first Earl of Ellesmere. He was the son of the late Admiral the Hon. Francis Egerton, M.P. for East Derbyshire, 1858-66. Commander Egerton, who was in his thirty-first year, entered the

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a commanding eminence from whence they could attack both Ladysmith on the north and Colenso on the south. Women and children vacated the place, and the trains coming in and out had to run the gantlet of the Boer fire, both Nordenfelt quick-firing guns and Mauser rifles being brought to bear on the refugees. The Boers, however, continued to salute the town without much effect, while the naval gunners replied with telling emphasis. They succeeded in dismounting the Boers’ 40-pounder which had been so comfortably posted on Pepworth’s Hill.

The carriages and platforms on which the naval guns were mounted at Ladysmith, and which proved so important a feature in promoting the defence of the place, were specially designed by Captain Percy Scott of the cruiser Terrible. In regard to this officer’s resourcefulness the Times expressed an opinion that is worthy of remembrance:—

“Captain Percy Scott, of the Terrible, came to the rescue, adding one more to the numerous instances in which this country has owed to individual resource and initiative its escape from the disasters invited by the incompetence of the War Office. There is no need to inquire just now into the balance of political and military considerations which determined the policy of making a stand at Ladysmith. It is enough that that policy was definitely adopted in ample time to allow of providing Ladysmith with the long-range guns which its position renders peculiarly necessary, dominated as it is by hills on three sides. Why were such guns not provided? Why was it left to fortunate accident to furnish the garrison at the very last moment with the means of defence? The conclusions of German military science, as will have been noted by all who read the interesting account of German manoeuvres which we published yesterday, are all in favour of saving the lives of the infantry by a very free use of artillery at long ranges. The country around Ladysmith seems to be one that calls loudly for even a more lavish artillery equipment than might normally suffice. Yet, in spite of science and of common-sense, the Ladysmith garrison, occupying a predetermined position open to artillery fire from all sides, was left absolutely destitute of long-range guns, and none too well provided with field-artillery. But that Captain Scott proved himself able, just in time, to improvise out of the rough materials at hand an effective gun-carriage, there would have been nothing to prevent the Boers from using their big guns at half the distance they have actually had to keep.”

At this time British troops were withdrawn from Colenso and navy seventeen years ago. He became a lieutenant in 1891, and in 1897 he was appointed gunnery officer in the cruiser Powerful, having specially qualified in gunnery. He possessed honorary certificates from the Royal Naval College, but he had had no previous experience of war service.
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moved farther south, and Boer armies continued to close round Ladysmith. Isimbulwana Hill, lying east of Ladysmith, was taken possession of, and a force advancing from Dewdrop, on the west of the town, moved south towards Colenso, and there on high ground posted its guns. Yet, in spite of this, the town showed itself to be "all alive and kicking." Though cut off from the telegraph, it sent out pigeon-posts; though engirdled by Boers, it made sorties of the most animated description, and literally laughed at the hint of surrender. On the 2nd, Colonel Brocklehurst made an attack on the enemy's laagers with a force of cavalry, mounted infantry, and mounted volunteers, surprising the Dutchmen and driving them back with comparatively small loss, and on the following day fighting lasted for some hours between the British cavalry, supported by field-artillery, Imperial Light Horse, and Natal Mounted Volunteers, and the Republicans. Many shells were pitched into the town, and an artillery duel rampaged with such relentless vigour that the general sensation to those who remained enclosed in the town was as though a thunderstorm with earthquake was passing over the place. Nothing worse happened, and the enemy for a while were driven back to their camp and some thirty or more prisoners were taken. Major Charles Kincaid, 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers, with nine wounded prisoners, was exchanged by the Boers for eight of their countrymen in similar plight. Others of them were not fit to travel. The enemy continued active, replacing disabled guns with new ones and dragging fresh powerful weapons to bear on the situation. On the 4th of November they announced their annexation of Upper Tugela, and a counter-proclamation of the nature already quoted was issued by the Governor.

A large commando of the enemy commenced the bombardment of Colenso, and the troops forming the garrison of that place fell back on Estcourt, where was stationed a force of considerable strength. By "considerable strength" it must be understood that the force was sufficiently strong for purposes of defence, though not for purposes of offence. As a matter of fact, the force in Natal was not, and has not since been, sufficiently strong for attack of a foe in such powerfully intrenched positions. From beginning to end our military commanders on that side of the theatre of war were sorely handicapped by the tardy recognition by the Home Government of the gravity of the situation. But here it is now desirable that something should be said of the early history of the towns of Mafeking and Kimberley, which, like Ladysmith, were by this time almost completely isolated, rails and telegraph wires having been cut around both places respectively.