AUSTRALIANS IN WAR.

With the.... AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT.

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From Melbourne to Bloemfontein.

MAJOR W. T. REAY.

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MELBOURNE TO BLOEMFONTEIN.

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS book is an answer to very many and kindly-expressed requests that I should put into the form of a compact volume the record made during the period in which it was my privilege to accompany, as a Press correspondent, the troops who formed the First Australian Regiment in South Africa. These requests came from many parts of Australia. They were mainly Victorian, but, in quite remarkable and gratifying numbers, South Australian. The "immortal custody of the Press" usually means burial in vast newspaper files, seldom looked at even by the conductors of the newspaper, still more rarely by the general public. The citizens of Australia—for, thank God, we may now speak of Australian citizenship as a reality—will, I hope, appreciate the more compact chronicle which this book is. From the record I have, in the process of re-compilation, eliminated matter of mere ephemeral interest, leaving only that which, in my judgment, would seem to be, for historic or other reasons, worth preserving. So far as circumstances permitted I have, however, thought it best to adhere to the original form. I would, therefore, beg the reader to recollect, when criticising the following pages, that they are not the work of a leisured man sitting in his easy chair and calmly constructing "rounded periods." On the contrary, they are the reproductions of Press letters, written under all sorts of conditions, rarely these including personal comfort. While sitting on a stone or ant-hill under the broiling South African midsummer sun, in camp or bivouac, in railway trains, and sometimes amidst the "thunder of war" itself, the work was done. The single merit frankly claimed for this book is that it is a faithful record, accurate in detail, so far as it is

humanly possible for the record of any one man to be in relation to movements, sometimes simultaneous, over a vast tract of country; and in every case a record written in the spirit of dispassionate fairness which it has ever been my chief endeavour, as a public writer, to observe and develop.

Since the Crimea, and prior to the outbreak of war in South Africa, our army engagements have been said to consist of a series of "little wars." The war of 1899-1900, although not at the outset appreciated at the importance which it afterwards attained, proved to be a struggle that made a special demand upon the fighting strength and resources of a great Empire. Before I returned from South Africa the British arms were victorious. We had driven the enemy before us, and had occupied the capital of the Orange Free State; and the army of Lord Roberts seemed to then have a task that could, not easily, but with assured success, be accomplished in the course of a few months. That the struggle has been so remarkably prolonged is evidence, not only of the difficult nature of the country in which the operations had to be conducted, and of the fighting capacity of the Boers, but of their absolute faith in their leaders, and of the skill of their commanders. Yes, the test of our powers as a nation has been far more serious than most of us could have imagined. Australians did their share, and the test was borne faithfully and well. With the part our citizen soldiers took in the war this book principally deals, and in that lies its claim to special interest in the minds of Australians. The movement towards Federation brought us to feel more sensibly than heretofore, perhaps, that these colonies are really an integral portion of the greatest Empire the world has ever seen, and that, as a people, we must be ready to defend that Empire against its enemies anywhere, should the occasion arise. Every province in Australasia was proud to be represented in the fight for the Empire in South Africa; there was no mistaking the feeling evinced when it was known that our country was actually at war. The loyalty of all the colonies of Great Britain, from

Canada to New Zealand, is deep-seated. All participated in the war, and all looked with patriotic pride upon the deeds in which their soldiers proved their high military capacity. Their pride in these deeds was heightened by the fact that, among Continental nations, as a rule, the sympathy appeared to be with the enemies of our Empire, and that these nations were represented in the struggle by skilled mercenaries. Australian soldiers had to fight, not merely against an unsophisticated, pastoral people, but against a people who had for years been providing arms and ammunition for the purpose, as some of their leaders subsequently avowed, of "driving the British into the sea," and against forces, in part at least, directed by skilled officers of Continental armies.

I have nothing to do here with what may be called the "politics" of the war. Like every other British citizen, I claim the right to hold opinions on that head, but would invite all classes of readers to sink political considerations for the time, and turn their minds to the phases of the matter with which alone this work deals—to the actual doings of our citizen soldiers. Let me say here that when I spoke on the subject of republication to the General Manager of the Melbourne *Herald*, for which paper I primarily acted, although I had also the honour to represent the *South Australian Register*, he at once gave me all the permission I wanted, a courtesy which I now beg to publicly recognise. I have endeavoured to set forth the work of the Australian Regiment from the time its units left Melbourne until the reorganisation took place, after the entry into Bloemfontein. As I was continually in touch with the Australians, and their "fortune of war" was my journalistic fortune for about seven months, and as many of them were personally known to me as comrades in arms before we went to South Africa, I can claim that in the following pages the effective work they did has been faithfully recorded.

WILLIAM T. REAY.

MELBOURNE, SEPTEMBER, 1900.

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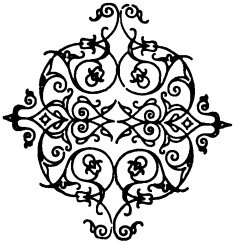

AUSTRALIANS IN WAR.

CHAPTER I.

ORGANISATION AND EMBARKATION.

When in fulfilment of the promise made, or at least implied, by our sending citizen soldiers to take part in the celebrations of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the several Governments of Australasia offered armed aid to the Imperial forces in South Africa, the approval of the people was prompt, and all but unanimous. When acceptance was signified, even the majority of those who disapproved of the offer joined in the general enthusiasm. Then the interest took a concrete form, and became local and personal. Volunteers were numerous, and the preliminary examinations were of absorbing interest to those who wished to enter upon the campaign, and to their relatives and friends.

We had supposed that mounted troops would have been the most serviceable in South Africa, and events proved that supposition to be correct. The Australian commandants sat in conference, and devised a scheme for sending an Australian Brigade of all arms in due proportions ; but the cable message of acceptance quite upset their plans and general expectations. The message said that infantry units of 125, under an officer not higher in rank than a Captain, would be preferred, but mounted infantry was not forbidden, and a colony sending more than one unit was permitted to send a Major. Plainly, the War Office did not, at that time, want the services of Australian senior officers. Arrangements were made in accordance with the London stipulations. Our men were quickly selected and equipped, the Victorian contribution being a unit of infantry, under Major G. A. Eddy, of the permanent staff, and a unit of Mounted Rifles, under the command of Captain Duncan M'Leish, an experienced volunteer, and one of the original officers of the Victorian Mounted Rifles.

As the enrolment and equipment of the contingents proceeded, the excitement of the general public was stimulated

by the telegrams which announced the invasion of Natal by the forces of the Transvaal and Free State Republics. Sir George White had taken command of the British forces then in the invaded colony, troops had arrived from India, and active measures were being taken in England to embark an army corps. Then came the news of the engagements with the enemy in the neighbourhood of Glencoe and Dundee, and at Elandslaagte, British victories so pronounced that people began to speculate as to whether the colonial contingents would arrive at the seat of war before the Boers were conquered and peace proclaimed.

But only a few days elapsed before it became apparent that the check received by the enemy was only a temporary one, for Colonel Yule, who had succeeded to the command of the advanced portion of the army after the lamented death, from a wound in the action of Talana Hill, of Major-General Penn Symons, found it necessary to retreat upon Ladysmith, and Mafeking and Kimberley were threatened. This was the position of affairs when the majestic steamship *Medic*, which had been chartered for the trip, was ready to receive our troops for South Africa.

The afternoon of Saturday, the 28th October, 1899, will ever be memorable in Melbourne, as that afternoon the first of our citizen soldiers detailed for service in a foreign land embarked on their voyage. A Tasmanian unit, 80 of all ranks, under Captain Cameron, had arrived in Melbourne on the previous day, and it accompanied the two Victorian units in a march through the streets of the city. On all sides the wildest enthusiasm was manifested, the city being decorated, and streets densely crowded. Public feeling was wrought up to a pitch of intensity by the quite unique and remarkable event in the history of the colony. It was a new experience for Victoria to thrust forward her sons to fight the Empire's battle ; a new experience to those upon whom had devolved duty of the kind that has enriched the annals of a warlike, but yet not a military, race. There was a bitter heart-wrench in the good-bye of that afternoon, such as Victorian mothers, wives, sisters, and sweethearts on their part, sons, husbands, brothers and lovers on theirs, had not known before.

The troops travelled by train to Port Melbourne, and embarked at the Railway Pier, where the mammoth steamer of the White Star line was lying. While the leave-taking caused many a pang to those related to the outward bound troops, amongst the soldiers there was the buoyancy of enterprise and confidence. Punctually at 4 o'clock in the afternoon the vessel cast off from the pier, which was crowded with officials and those relatives of the soldiers who had been admitted within the police-kept barrier, some distance above where the ship lay.

Probably most of the warriors would come back scathless from the great testing and convincing ground, to "stand a-tiptoe when the day is named" on which they "proved the mettle of their pasture" in the face of a keenly observant world. But all, no doubt, in varying degrees felt, as they strained their eyes to catch the last glimpse of their dear ones on the pier, that it might be the fortune of war that the glimpse was final. If you ask what sentiment ruled at the supreme moment of departure, what was the overpowering emotion into which all others focussed, I answer—Love. The great love of human kind for human kind.

Now, it is characteristic of men—perhaps of soldier men more than others—to pass easily from the most sombre thoughts to those which are cheerful or even gay. When, therefore, we—perhaps I may be allowed to speak as one of them—found it impossible to longer discern friends on the pier, we turned to those who had gathered on the convoying excursion steamers, and for a season enjoyed their society. Handkerchiefs, already much used and starchless, were kept constantly going, and those who hadn't got relatives or acquaintances on the excursion steamers vied with those who had in demonstrative interchange of sentiment. Dear heart, if they weren't Jones's friends, they were Brown's or Robertson's, and were we not all comrades, and didn't we claim a common interest—ah! so pathetic—in that laughing, weeping, joking, praying, deeply-stirred multitude?

But the time came when the great, dark masses of faces ashore had faded wholly from view, when even the most intrepid excursion steamer had come far enough, and the huge *Medic*, with her bow inclined towards the setting sun, was making rapid, yet almost imperceptible, way down the South Channel to the Heads.

The weather being so beautifully fine, the motion of the vessel was hardly felt, even by the keenly sensitive, on the run down the bay, and it was remarkable how speedily the soldiers "shook down" into their places. Arms were put away in the racks provided, and the heavy marching order kit disposed of as per regulation for such cases made and provided on board Her Majesty's troop ships. Then the bugles began to speak, and smart was the word for all ranks. The Mounted Rifles relieved the old stable picket, and a new one went on duty. Then came the watering order, closely followed by the "Feed," and the horses—a mounted man's first and permanent care—were made safe and snug for the night. Very comfortable indeed they looked in their stalls, most of them feeding well, and giving a well-kept promise that the percentage of losses for the voyage would not be large. The routine of a soldier's duty on shipboard had commenced.

CHAPTER II.

L'Affaire Cameron—Showing the Need of Federal Law.

The run to Adelaide was marked by wonderfully fine weather, yet a good many of the country lads, some on the sea for the first time in their lives, paid generous tribute to exacting Neptune. Their sufferings were not, in many cases, prolonged, for, with few exceptions, all got quickly over the period of seasickness, and derived that keen pleasure from the trip which the healthy novice of a maritime race almost invariably enjoys.

The noteworthy incident of the run to Adelaide was the attitude which Captain Cameron, of the Tasmanians, thought it his duty to adopt when the senior Victorian, Major Eddy, claimed the right to command all the troops on board. Cameron is a man of good military record. He began with the militia in County Down in 1870, and then got a commission with the 9th Lancers. He went through the Afghan War in 1879-80, and marched with Roberts to Candahar. Cameron was present at the battle of Candahar, and accompanied the memorable reconnaissance in force in 1880. He holds the Afghan medal, star and ribbon.

Cameron's contention was that troop ship regulations did not apply; that his duty to his Government required that he should carry on independently until he reported himself in South Africa. The questions incidentally involved were:—(1) Was the *Medic* a troop ship? (2) Do the Queen's regulations apply to a number of detachments from different colonies for whom their several Governments have obtained passages on the same ship? The clauses in the Queen's regulations bearing on the subject are as follow:—

"No. 1483.—A transport is a ship wholly engaged for Government service; a troop freight ship is a ship in which conveyance is engaged for troops, but which is not wholly at the disposal of the Government."

"No. 1551.—The command of the troops is vested in the senior combatant officer on duty, to whichever arm of the service he may belong. He is bound to exercise that command, and is responsible for any breach of discipline which may occur, whether the officers and soldiers embarked with him belong to the same regiment as himself or not."

Personally I am inclined to the view that the *Medic* was not, strictly speaking, a troop ship, and that, in the absence of Federal law, each colony's troops were separate and distinct commands, subject only to the colony's senior officer on duty.

"My position is one which I have advisedly taken," said Captain Cameron to me. "I wish to be perfectly courteous, and will work amicably with the others, but I made my

position clear in an interview with Major Eddy, to whom I said, 'If it is a question of an order, sir, I must leave your cabin. My position is that I shall serve Her Majesty in South Africa. Until I get to South Africa I am a Tasmanian soldier. You see, the colonies of Australia are Sovereign States, and the laws of one have no effect in any other.'"

"What about the giving of Imperial pay from the time of departure ?" was asked.

"It does not affect the position in my case," Captain Cameron answered; "I understand that we do not get Imperial pay till we reach South Africa."

"And if you get an order, and do not obey ?" was suggested.

"The course, then, would be to put me under arrest, and that would be to start an action for heavy damages, I fancy."

"Suppose the force on board this ship were engaged against some great Power, and the ship were attacked, who would command the troops here ?"

"Well," said Captain Cameron, "you have asked a question to which there is literally no answer. Preservation is the first law, and we should do the best we could, but no law exists for meeting that situation, nor is it a position that has to be considered. We are now dealing with ordinary circumstances and ordinary procedure."

"Would not the fact of your all receiving Imperial pay establish a commonalty which would make the Queen's regulations apply ?"

"As I have said, I am not informed that we Tasmanians will get Imperial pay till we reach South Africa."

"If," he remarked on another occasion, "when I get to South Africa, it is said to me that I am placed under a Victorian or any other officer, I shall serve him loyally and cheerfully, but my present instructions are to report myself in South Africa. On the voyage there my duty is to retain command of my own men in the fullest sense, and, in the absence of Federal law, I can recognise no authority on the part of an officer of any other colony than Tasmania."

The moot point was never settled, and, as it is not likely to arise again, its protracted discussion here would be unprofitable. Incidentally, however, it is useful in showing in what a chaotic condition we are until we get Federal law. Major Eddy did not persist, and any difficulty which might have arisen was obviated a few days later, when each of the Governments concerned appointed Colonel Hoad, of Victoria, to act as its staff officer for the voyage.

Commenting on the matter, the *South Australian Register* remarked at the time :—"It is interesting, in view of the point which has been raised by Captain Cameron, to recall an inci-

dent in 1897. The Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia Contingents, that were sent to London to take part in the Jubilee celebrations, travelled in the same mail steamer. Lieutenant-Colonel Rowell, of South Australia, was the senior officer, and as soon as he boarded the *Orotava*, Major Reay, who was in command of the Mounted Rifles, suggested that, for the time being, a Federal Brigade should be formed, and that, in virtue of his seniority, Lieutenant-Colonel Rowell should take supreme command of the men from the three colonies until London was reached. This was no more than an act of military courtesy, because the officers were not then on a troop ship. Captain Strickland, of West Australia, was agreeable, and the arrangement worked admirably." But courtesy and law, I may remark, are not necessarily synonymous. Had Rowell been a different man, I might have assumed a different attitude in 1897.

CHAPTER III.

Doings at Adelaide—The South Australian Company—Colonel Hoad Joins the "Medic."

On our coming to an anchor at Port Adelaide, a Government launch was quickly alongside. She conveyed a party of officers, who met and welcomed the troops. The senior was Colonel Rowell, who commanded the Jubilee detachment from South Australia, and with him were Major Hawker, Major Dean, and others. They bore an invitation from the Mayor of Adelaide, who wished to entertain the troops that afternoon. Subsequently the men were landed, conveyed by train to Adelaide, and received a most enthusiastic public welcome at the Town Hall.

The proceedings were marked by great enthusiasm. Speeches made by Chief Justice Way and Mr. Kingston were especially fine, both speakers rising to the occasion, and expressing sentiments none the less practical and democratic because marked by a high sense of duty to the Empire. The American flag was displayed, entwined with the British, and at one stage the band played "Yankee Doodle," amidst vociferous cheering. I sat next to the American Consul, and discussed with him pleasantly the significance of the phrasing of Uncle Sam's neutrality declaration, then new in the public mind. The return march to the station was through streets packed with people, who, although undemonstrative earlier, now cheered with a complete abandon which showed how deeply stirred and enthusiastic they were.

The South Australian Contingent, a unit of infantry, under Captain Howland, left Adelaide on Tuesday. Headed by a military band, they marched for a little over an hour through two or three of the principal streets. Many thousands of people turned out to bid the troops good-bye, and throughout the march enthusiastic huzzas almost drowned the stirring music of the band. The company headed for the parade ground at the rear of Government House, where, at last, their stay-at-home comrades were found drawn up to meet them as a guard of honour.

The send-off was marked by extraordinary enthusiasm. I accompanied Mr. Kingston, the Premier, and Mr. Holder in a cab which followed the troops. On the parade ground Mr. Kingston was greatly moved, shouting, "Good luck, boys. Well done." At the parade ground a special train was stationed to convey the soldiers. As the crowd roared its farewell to the local troops, who had marched at the rear of the contingent, a rush was made for the carriages, and the spectacle was wildly exciting.

The tug conveying the South Australian detachment on board was convoyed apparently by all the launches in port. The weather kept beautifully fine, and the sea was smooth. There were thousands of people on the water, bunting was most lavishly displayed, and the enthusiasm of the shore had its counterpart in that displayed out in the offing. The South Australians quickly got into their allotted places in the after parts of the ship, where they were near neighbours of the Victorian Infantry.

Colonel J. C. Hoad, Assistant Adjutant-General of Victoria, came on board the *Medic* at Adelaide. He was one of four Victorians authorised as special service officers in South Africa, the other three being Colonel C. E. Umphelby, commanding the Victorian Garrison Artillery; Captain G. J. Johnston, of the Field Artillery Brigade; and Captain J. H. Bruche, one of the Victorian Infantry Permanent Adjutants. Of these only Colonel Hoad travelled by the *Medic;* the others we were destined to meet later under varying circumstances.

There is a little history associated with a member of the South Australian unit. I refer to ex-Lieutenant Johnstone, formerly in the Victorian Infantry. When the prospect of service in South Africa first presented itself he inquired of the Victorian authorities if there was any "show" for him. None whatever, he was told. He offered his services to South Australia, was promptly accepted as a private, and caught the first train to Adelaide. There he was quickly made a corporal. On the day of embarkation he was promoted to the rank of sergeant. "What he will be when he comes back with South African laurels upon him depends upon a variety

of circumstances," I wrote at the time. As a matter of fact, he is now again a commissioned officer, and has received no more than his just due for good and gallant service in the field.

Some interesting parting scenes took place before the *Medic* got away from Adelaide. Just before sundown some fair Adelaide girls in a launch distributed ribbons amongst their favoured friends of the local detachment. Several of the men descended the gangway, and were very loving, but did not go far enough to meet the views of the interested soldier spectators, who hung over rails, and offered more or less appropriate observations.

"Why don't you kiss the girls?" was demanded over and over again. But the South Australians bashfully hung back. "I'll show you," presently exclaimed an eager, impatient, and quite willing member of the Victorian Mounted Rifles, who ran down the gangway, coolly kissed the girls all round, and returned amidst the vociferous plaudits of his comrades. To do them justice, the girls appeared to like it.

Calmly interested spectators of the scene were the grimy coal lumpers, assembled on the lighter alongside, and, at the time, having what one of them called "a bit of something to eat." The cynical and quite impregnable philosophy of these men was in contrast with the lively emotion shown by one of our midshipmites, who exclaimed—

"Well, I'm blowed. They're hard cases those chaps, ain't they?" I admitted that the idea was invested with a large degree of reasonableness.

Other and wondering spectators were three chubby little chaps, children of the lighterman, who viewed with open-mouthed astonishment a scene the like of which they had never seen in their lives before. Dear little chaps, they did not suspect that they were taking part, if only as spectators, in the making of a bit of the Empire's history.

"I'll keep your ribbon, little girl," shouted one brave boy. "And when I come back, if I do come back, I'll return it to you." If he came back!

CHAPTER IV.

Westward Ho—Some of the Men on Board—The Western Australians Embark.

Coaling at Largs Bay had reduced the ship to an awful state of griminess, but no sooner was the last black-faced trimmer over the side and our engines started than a great wash-down commenced. Not till it was over, and the ship made spruce again, could the soldiers get to military work. They helped in

the cleaning process, and after that came instructions to parade for examination of arms, accoutrements, etc. The result of the parade was highly creditable, but more elbow grease was used during the next few days, and everything and everyone smartened up. The quarters were very soon better kept than they had been, and a strong pull was applied to all "slack ropes."

The officers worked admirably, and a good tone prevailed. On Thursday the captain of the ship made his first inspection. He offered a few suggestions, but said that, on the whole, he was well pleased with the general conditions. On Friday he appeared for the first time in uniform, and made an offer to inspect the quarters of the Victorians and South Australians in company with the military officers. Very little to complain of was disclosed. Naturally, the man who converted his soiled clothes bag into a kit bag was discovered, and also the man whose ideas of neatness were represented by covering up his boots with his blankets.

"Never put your boots in your bed," was the admonition given. Later on, when it was found that some of the men were making premature demands for underwear, the direction was, "You must not change your shirts too often," and so on.

"Ah!" exclaimed one weary officer, "we ought to be smart if inspections will do it. What with the captain of the ship, the doctor, the transport officer, the assistant adjutant-general, and our own officers, nobody can say there are not enough inspections."

Captain Cameron, in charge of the Tasmanian Contingent, gave no chance for interference on the score of slack discipline. He went his own gait, had his men well drilled, and there was no part of the ship better kept than his. He and his officers messed with those of the other units, and joined in their recreations, as did the rank and file of the Tasmanians with their comrades. There was perfect cordiality, but no official relationship!

Captain Lascelles, of the Fusiliers, aide-de-camp to the Governor of South Australia, is an Imperial officer, who came with the troops from that colony under Captain Howland. It is noteworthy that Captain Lascelles and Colonel Hoad met while the latter was attached to General Hutton in England in 1890. At that time Captain Lascelles was very merry over the headgear worn by Colonel Hoad, who was then an officer of the Mounted Rifles. "Buffalo Bill," "Bushranger," and like terms were applied to the turn-up felt hat worn by the Australians in England. Australia has had its revenge. When he saw Captain Lascelles turn out at Adelaide, handsome in a hat of precisely the same kind which caused his merriment in England, Colonel Hoad drily remarked, "So you

have gone in for that hat, after all, old man ;" and Lascelles promptly and good-humouredly replied, "Yes ; and I am proud of it."

Captain Lascelles, a man with considerable experience, proved a most useful officer. He was made adjutant of the units acting in combination—Tasmania standing out—and was keen on the work. He gave the men, in their messrooms, lectures on extracts from the Queen's regulations, and explanations of what are military offences, and how they must be dealt with.

"Ignorance of the law," he explained at the first of these lectures, "is no excuse, and it is well for you to know the law under which you serve. I dare say some of you do not know the whole civil law under which you usually live, and perhaps you are none the worse for that." Certain remarks by learned authorities on that head are suggested by those observations, but the subject need not be pursued. It is a sound principle that soldiers should know what may happen to them in certain exigencies, and what is meant by regulations.

Another service man we had is Sergeant Hanley, of South Australia. He had been a Gordon Highlander, and also went through the Afghan War. He holds the medal and three clasps, having been present at three battles, and also the Afghan star. Sergeant Hanley was wounded at Majuba Hill, and looked forward with satisfaction to early renewing acquaintanceship with his old regiment.

The *Medic* reached Albany on Sunday evening, and there was more demonstration. On Monday the troops landed, and were entertained by the local people, Sir John Forrest (the Premier), many members of Parliament, and Bishop Riley being prominent in the proceedings. The men of the Western Australian Contingent, an infantry unit, under Captain Moor, were sent on board on Sunday evening, but came ashore again with their comrades of the other colonies, and Albany was a great and happy town that day. What with demonstrations and detentions of other kinds, we did not get away until Tuesday morning. When we left, our passenger list had reached its maximum. Amongst the travellers was Captain Haig, of the Inniskilling Dragoons, who had been acting as aide-de-camp to the Governor of Western Australia, but who, consumed by anxiety to join his regiment, was now on his way to the theatre of war in South Africa. A jollier companion on a voyage, or a better comrade in the field, no man could wish to meet.

There were some special reasons, not wholly disassociated from fears of treachery and dynamite, why, at Albany, great care was taken to keep off the *Medic* those, other than official

visitors, who had not actual business on board. There were scores of men ashore who wanted to embark in any capacity, and it needed all the vigilance of the military and the ship's officers to check unwarranted would-be passengers. In due course, when we got to sea, a search for stowaways took place, but only one was found.

"I missed the last launch, sir," he explained to the captain, on being duly paraded (I have reason to know that he could have caught it).

"Ah! the next launch you'll get is at the Cape," remarked the skipper, as he ordered the belated one into the stokehole. There he well earned his passage to the land of the war.

CHAPTER V.

Voyage of the "Medic"—All Hands Vaccinated—Work on Board Ship—Development of the Soldier.

The first day out from Albany four doctors sat in consultation on the small-pox question—Major M'Williams (W.A.), Major Toll (S.A.), Captain Hopkins (Victoria), and Mr. J. R. Clay, the ship's surgeon. These were the consultants, and, alas! for the anti-vaccinationists, they unanimously decided that all hands ought to be inoculated. A few of us at once surrendered our arms without further ado, and next day the five detachments paraded in shirt sleeves to shed their blood for their country. In the case of the Tasmanians Captain Cameron made the thing optional, calmly remarking, "If you're not vaccinated, you'll probably die." The men from the tight little island have unbounded faith in their Captain, and patiently took their lymph. There were a few demurs on the part of Victorian Mounted Riflemen, but Captain M'Leish ordered compliance with the general rule.

The captain, his officers, and all the ship's people were inoculated, as well as the soldiers, in the quickest time on record, and never had surgeons so busy and jolly a time. How they did enjoy the blood-letting! For days afterwards conversation turned chiefly upon the invariable preliminary question, "How's your arm?" and was in the main a comparison of symptoms. About 90 per cent. of the cases were successful in the first instance. No serious ill effects followed, but there were for a time some very bad arms.

Throughout, the Mounted Rifles bore the heaviest share of labour. The care of their horses, feeding, watering, grooming, stabling, cleaning, and the almost incessant rubbing of horse equipment, all this was theirs, in addition to drills and maintenance of their personal kit and accoutrements.

"By gum! I wouldn't be one of them mounted chaps." I heard an infantryman remark one day. "Damned if they're ever done!"

Fine, merry, patient fellows throughout it all, alert and attentive, never seeming to tire, and the daily record always the same, "No complaints."

The routine of the troop ship after leaving Albany was very much the same as before. Early morning muster after reveille, sick reports, and fatigue work; later on the daily "wappenshaw," as it was called in the days of "Black Douglas," the weapon showing to be more modern. It was insisted that every man should produce his arms in good condition, and appear in marching order, to prove that his warlike gear was in its proper place, with all the leather right-fitting, soft, and serviceable. Then there were afternoon parades, musketry squads, bayonet squads, and inspection of quarters, which had to be, and were, kept in first-class order. Naturally, with practice, orderly work showed a steady improvement, and in these departments the gallant lads from Tasmania were always well to the fore. There is no doubt about the amount of work the men did. It seemed to me that drill was always going on somewhere, and what with bugle calls, ringing words of command, and the clash of arms, we were rarely permitted to forget the stern business before us.

Besides the eternal sound of firing exercises, in which the loading is done in dumb show, we had some in which "villainous saltpetre," or, to be quite accurate, cordite, spoke in its own sharp, snappy fashion. The targets were deal cases, and half-sections of infantry fired over the stern at them so long as they could be kept in view. Even in the finest weather there is a bounding motion in that part of the ship closest to the great palpitating twin propellers, and the tests were severe. Indeed, they had in them many of the elements of service conditions, for, the ship going nearly 12 knots an hour, the distance had to be quickly determined for each volley.

What struck me about the shooting of the Victorian Infantry, the first to engage in this exercise, was a generally good line, yet a marked variation of distances, although the officer in charge had named a specific one, to which presumably sights were adjusted, for where the bullets struck the water short of or beyond the target was quite obvious to the onlooker. The same condition marked the shooting of the Mounted Rifles. Generally the practice made was good. On several days officers tried their revolvers on tins and bottles dropped over the side, and a few of them made fair shooting.

It was on Sunday, the 13th November, that we had our first church parades. About a fifth of the whole force, including representatives of each colony, are Roman Catholics. In the absence of a clergyman, they joined together in prayer on the hurricane deck, under the leadership of Lieutenant M'Inerney, of Victoria. As is largely the custom in military arrangements for religious services, the remainder were presumed to be Anglicans. They attended a service held on the main deck. Captain Thornton, the master of the ship, officiated, and Commander Colquhoun read the lessons. That favourite and well-known military hymn, "Onward, Christian Soldiers," was sung with deep feeling, and there was an emotion telling of heart stir in the voices of hard, rugged men, to whom the sweet cadence was reminiscent of home and the loved ones there.

No sermon, no collection, just supplication and song, and these marked by a special fervour and earnestness begotten of the unique circumstances, for over a thousand miles of sea then separated us from the bright and peaceful land of Australia. We were cut off temporarily from the rest of the world and its happenings, while the future—ah! who could gauge what lay in the future of men bound for the war?

On the following day, shortly after eight bells in the afternoon, the fire alarm sounded, and there was a semi-smart getting to boat stations. It was only a trial, and I fancy that was quite understood by the soldiers, who remained wonderfully cool and unexcited. I mildly inquired of a high official concerning the boat which was to preserve their father to my children, and the hard, cruel fact was disclosed that Press correspondents were not provided for. The suggestion that they ought to have been was received with a marked coldness not unmingled with scorn. As two fully-armed sentries, whose bayonets gleamed viciously in the sunlight, stood on guard at each boat, I decided that, on the whole, it would be best to stick to the ship—even go down with her, if need be. This may sound heroic, but it really is not.

In the short evenings, before Lights Out (9 o'clock), there was the usual round of ship's amusements. It mattered not where you were, you heard the sound of the cornet, flute, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, or their superseders since the days of Daniel, and all kinds of music. There were a couple of concerts, one given by the South Australians, the other a joint effort, and our wealth of talent was displayed to appreciative audiences.

Jolly afternoons were those of sports days, and the solemn little fish of the Indian Ocean must have been startled by the sandgroper's wild battle cry, "Houghla, houghla!" Then there was the usual round of ship's games, much reading,

and occasional writing to folks at home. By way of a change, men nursed their vaccinated arms, and delighted in the soft comfort of self-pity. So many men, so many minds, and so many manifestations of what to the individual is amusing. For persons of almost every calling were serving in the ranks. Here a lawyer, who has left his practice—real or prospective—there a banker, who has resigned his post to see service in South Africa. University men, artisans of most kinds (but no tailor nor bootmaker), labourers of all sorts. Many were the sacrifices which had been made in order to secure inclusion in the Australian Contingent for South Africa.

Instruction in how to render first aid to the wounded was given by the medical officers to their respective units. Captain Hopkins showed the men how to turn to practical service each article of their field-dressing equipment. Majors M'Williams and Toll followed on similar lines, and most useful information was clearly and simply imparted and eagerly acquired.

In all there were 708 men on board the *Medic* when she left Albany—all of them picked men! In the cases of 250 of them Victorian doctors had examined and certified to the fitness of their teeth before they were allowed to embark. The whole 708 were men with appetites which grew in strength as the voyage progressed. By the courtesy of Chief Steward Barry, I am able to tell my readers what the victualling department had to supply in order that these men might have "the run of their teeth." During a period of 22 days the daily average quantity of food consumed was as follows:—

	lb.		lb.
Meat	1800	100 Eggs.	
Fresh Fish	25	35 gals. Milk.	
Bacon	20	Fresh Vegetables	336
Ham	20	Apples	80
Flour	700	Prunes	15
Potatoes	2000	Raisins	15
Oatmeal	75	Currants	15
Rice	100	Coffee	30
Biscuits	100	Tea	20
Butter	120	Cocoa	3
Cheese	70	Sugar	170
Split Peas	60	Golden Syrup	25
Green Peas (dried)	100	Jam and Marmalade	100
Beans	50	Salt	35
Barley	30	Pepper	5
2 doz. tins Salmon, Fruits, etc.		Mustard	10
20lb. Arrowroot, Quaker Oats, etc.		Curry Powder	4
20 Poultry.			

Then there are a number of small items, accounting for probably another 30lb. of food of some kind. The item meat includes fresh and corned beef, mutton, pork, lamb, sausages, ox-tails, tongues, and kidneys. The daily consumption works out just about 2½lb. of meat, rather over 2½lb. of potatoes,

and about a pound of flour—that is to say, 6lb. per man on these three items alone, to say nothing of the *et ceteras.* I have said that the men were temperate. But it was warm, thirsty weather, and the drink record gives interesting figures. Here they are :—

20 bottles Spirits.	400 bottles Aerated Waters, etc.
8 bottles Wine.	1000 bottles Beer.

Close upon a bottle and a half of beer per man per day looks like a fair allowance, and as there were a good many who didn't drink any, some of those who did had to carry a trifle more than their whack in order to maintain the average. This they appeared to accomplish with a marvellous equanimity.

In some cases officers offered prizes on the voyage to Cape Town for proficiency in drill, and the spirit thus aroused worked to the advantage of the competing squads. Not the least of the good was that it brought citizen soldiers to realise their own rawness. The old soldiers helped in the tuition, and, as Kipling reminds us, "There is no scorn so complete as that of the old soldier for the new." He adds, "A recruit must learn first that he is not a man, but a thing, which in time, and by the mercy of Heaven, may develop into a soldier of the Queen if it takes care to attend to good advice." A lesson this not always easy to learn.

"What do you think of them all ?" I asked, because I thought it my duty to ask, an experienced officer who has served the Empire in different parts of the world. I suspected what the answer would be, for I spoke to a gentleman.

"Really, I'd rather you excused my saying anything on the subject."

Duty demanded some little insistence on my part, and I remarked, inquiringly, "The material ?"

"Ah !" said the officer, "that's it ; first-rate material, first-rate material ; rarely have I seen as good."

It was from what he didn't say that I gathered his opinion that the material wanted a good deal of handling before it could be regarded as finished.

"They'll fight," I asserted, and again I had to interpret, from the tone and manner of his "Not the least doubt of it," the view that the fighting would be more to his liking if there was a greater certainty about the application of fire discipline, and a few military *et ceteras.*

Be opinions what they may, however, it was my privilege and pleasure to watch the steady development of the citizen warriors on board that ship from various stages of rawness on and on nearer to the standard of the trained soldier. And nobody was prouder of that development than were the men themselves.

Well, nay, splendidly behaved, the rank and the file may well be described. Day by day the lessons of discipline became more impressed upon them, and the civilian roughness which at first marked the bearing of some gave place to the orderliness of the soldier.

"Say, boss, you're not allowed up here," was the intimation of a slouching sentry to a passenger at Adelaide.

I venture to say that not a soldier on board the *Medic* would have addressed anybody in like fashion when the ship was abreast "the hole in the wall" on the South African coast.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FARMER'S BOY—HOW HE CAME TO VOLUNTEER.

It really does not matter from which colony he comes. Here he is on duty in the good ship *Medic*, on the 17th November, 1899, at a point in the Indian Ocean somewhere about 30 degrees south latitude, and 80 east longitude, bound for the seat of war in South Africa. He is a private soldier, and drawing pay as such for the first time in his life. At home he is a citizen soldier, giving gratuitous service in what was described to him and others as a "defence" force. His reward, a consciousness of doing public duty, plus, perhaps, some measure of gratification at wearing uniform and doing a little soldiering—both dear to the heart of the youthful descendants of a warlike people.

But now he is on foreign service, and draws pay. Probably, also, he is under the Mutiny Act, but it isn't certain. Probably, too, the Queen's regulations apply to his existing conditions, albeit that there's a doubt about it!

We talk together in the gloaming, when the work of the day is over, and the season of quiet and reminiscence has come for those who, for the nonce, are not attracted by the sing-song on the after hatch, or the boxing match on the clear space for'rd. He is smoking his pipe in the lee of the bulwarks on the main deck, from which even the vigorous and bracing breeze, straight from the ice-packs south of us, has not wholly carried away the rich aroma of horse.

I accept a light from him, and we start our chat.

"What occupation do I follow? Why, I'm a farmer, or I s'pose I should say a farm hand," he says, "for it's father's place, and I've never been on any other."

"Your father pays you wages?" I ventured.

"Well, y'see, he does and he doesn't. There are two of us boys, not countin' little Davy who goes to school. Jim and

me work about the place, y'see, and, of course, if we want a few shillin's we get 'em, but nothin' what y' might call reg'lar."

"You like the farming life ?"

"Oh, pretty well, but it's dull for a young feller. I'm the oldest, and Jim's twenty—only two years younger, and we're eight miles from the nearest town. It means a sixteen mile ride when we go in to drill, and the nearest neighbour is a mile off. It's dull, say, for young fellers, and, natur'ly, we want to see a bit of life."

"Therefore you volunteered for South Africa ?"

"Yes ; both me and Jim. But they say he's got varicose veins. Damned rot, I say."

Temptation to offer a few observations on the point of discipline involved in this remark I severely repress, and we talk on.

"You got through all right ?"

"Oh, yes ; they couldn't find anything wrong with me."

"I suppose you and your brother talked over the war before you decided to offer your services ?"

"Eh ?"

"You all talked over the war a good deal, I suppose ?"

"Well, in a sort o' way we did. We take in two or three papers, although we've only got a weekly mail to our place. We read all the papers, and, of course, all about the war specially. Then at meal time we always had a pitch about the news."

"Long before you had any idea of being here," I commented.

"Oh, Lord, yes ! I never thought about it at all till we saw that a lot o' chaps were volunteerin', and one day father cut in. 'I s'pose you'n Jim will be wantin' to go to t' war next,' and then we all laughed ; and mother sez, 'What nonsense, to be sure, you put into the boys' heads !' And the girls —my sisters, you know—they began kiddin' us about it."

"But you soon made up your minds ?"

"Yes ; when the Sergeant-major was takin' the names, I sez to Jim, 'We'll put ours down,' and he sez 'Righto,' and down they went. When we came back we told the old man, and he sez, 'Like y're damned impudence never sayin' a word to me,' and then he turns roun' and sez, 'Boys,' sez he, 'you've done quite right.' It was mother that made the fuss—at first, I mean ; but byemby she came roun', too, and when Jim was knocked out because o' the varicose veins, you should hear how she took on about the doctors, callin' them everything."

"Excuse my asking, but how did your mother put it—about your going ?"

"Oh, I don't mind y're askin'. Mother, you know, comes from an English garrison town, and she sed, 'I've seen troops

go away to the war'—the Crimea, I think she mentioned—'and one of my brothers went with them. We all cried, but we were all proud of him, and we'll be all proud of you, Bill, when you go to fight for y're country.' Oh, I tell you, mother, though she did make a bit o' fuss at first, wouldn't have kept me back in the end, and mother and me always got on well—yes, we always got on well," and there was a but half-stifled sob in the young fellow's voice as he added, "Wonder whether I'll ever see her any more!"

The best I could do here was a poor, feeble thing. A gesture meant to be comforting, and an offer of my tobacco pouch.

We re-filled our pipes and smoked for a few minutes in meditative silence. I was anxious to learn whether the youth at my side had ever formed any independent opinion upon the circumstances which led up to the war, and presently haphazarded the inquiry—

"You think the Outlanders ought to have been given the franchise on the British terms?"

The answer I had half-expected came swiftly, and with a simple candour.

"To tell you the truth, sir," said my companion, "I don't know much about that matter. I've never heard anybody explain it properly so's I could understand. Old President Kruger seemed to be playin' up, and Schreiner, too, seemed to be helpin' him, and it don't do to let these chaps have their own way, I s'pose."

"You have not studied what is known as the South African question?"

"No; to tell you the truth, I haven't. I don't quite see what the devil the trouble is all about."

"Well, in that respect, my friend, you are not very different from some pretentious folks who talk much about it. But may I ask, as you did not examine the question closely, what really caused you to want to take part in the war?"

"Oh, I dunno," came the reply, after brief cogitation. "S'pose it's because the other chaps wer' joinin', and there was so much talk about it. Then, I s'pose, it's the right thing to do to stand up for y're own country, for, of course, England's our country's well as Australia. Then there's the change a feller gets, and the experience, and every feller natur'ly likes to be in a thing when it's goin'."

"Then there's the honour of it," I suggested.

"Yes, I don't forget that," said my companion, promptly; "when there's only 125 to be picked, you like to think you're one of them."

"The fewer men the greater share of honour," says King Hal.

"Does he? Then, by jingo! he's right. Besides, there's a chap livin' up our way who's got a medal for, I think it was the Afghan War, and some chaps in our company have got the Jubilee medal. Now, I'd like to get a medal—in a war, I mean—and this may be the only show we'll have. I can't say as I've got any feelin' against the Boers, though they say they're cruel to the niggers; but I'm ready to fight for the flag of England, yes, and die for it, too, if necessary, just because it is the flag of England, and I don't care a—what's that bugle? Last post? Excuse me, sir; good-night."

And the modest, stout-hearted son of the Empire, whose real enthusiastic self was just being manifested when the bugle called, went off to his quarters, leaving me to determine for myself which, in the sum of the motives that brought him here, was the strongest, which the most meritorious.

CHAPTER VII.

"Long Ned"—He Fought When a Boy—The Spirit of Our Race Lives in Him.

A tall, gaunt-looking, big-boned man, whose bright eyes twinkle under large, overhanging eyebrows. His ample, dark locks falling over a somewhat low forehead, and his short, crisp, slightly-pointed beard plentifully interspersed with grey. Half-grimy still, though he has "cleaned" himself since coming off his term of duty in the stoke-holes. Enjoying the cool comfort of freedom from coat or vest; with shirt open at the neck, and sleeves well turned up, revealing a wealth of artistic tatooing, half-concealing more. Long and lithe of limb, with muscles like steel, and what little flesh he carries hard as leather. Fifty years of age confessed to, but looking more; 6ft. 3½in. in his stockings; fourteen stone in weight; just slightly bent. This is Long Ned.

Quite a remarkable and picturesque figure in his way, even though the great majority of Australians have never heard of him, and, even though painfully "nice" people do not regard a somewhile coal-heaver, soldier, sailor, engineer, and bushman as a person worth hearing anything about. For, from the standpoint of a certain class of society, how can there possibly be anything interesting in a mere, vulgar shilling a month man who is working his passage in the *Medic* across to South Africa?

Yet there are some who may feel that Edward Jennings—one who has, indeed, "in his time played many parts"—is almost as much worth a bit of printer's ink as the latest fiddle-playing prodigy, or even as the speech of the member for Mudborough.

Feeling this, and because I had heard much of Long Ned, I made a point to have a chat with him, and to learn something of a curiously varied career.

"They tell me that you were wounded in battle before you were fourteen years of age ?" I remarked.

"Quite true," said Long Ned, meditatively—and he talks without either Yankee twang or other speech-disfiguring peculiarity—"quite true. In 1863 I joined the 1st Pennsylvania Cavalry, and a few days later I got this (lifting his right arm, and showing a bullet scar). That was a few days after Gettysburg. I stayed in the cavalry nine months, and then got transferred to the Light Artillery, in which I served till the war was over."

"Oh ! You began, then, under the Stars and Stripes ?"

"Yes, and took part in several of the engagements. I was with Sheridan at the Cedar's Creek fight of 1864. You've heard of Sheridan's ride ?"

"Yes."

"I tell you when it was all over those left of us had just about enough."

"Did you remain long in the U.S. Army ?"

"No. I got the corps-badges of the 6th and 8th corps of the Grand Army of the Republic, for they don't give you medals, but you wear the badges on ceremonial occasions. I left the army, and went into the United States Navy. I was in the same ship as the present Admiral Dewey in the West Indies."

Here the spirit of reminiscence suggested something very humorous to my tall friend, for he sat and chuckled for a while.

"What's amusing you ?" I inquired.

"Well, you see, I didn't get any discharge from the navy."

"Wicked man. You deserted," I cried.

"No doubt of it," remarked Ned.

I remembered a little youthful affair of my own, and we shook hands.

"Yes," continued Ned, presently, "I went into the merchant service, and I was soon a member of the British Naval Reserve."

"Under the Union Jack this time, Ned ?"

"Yes, sir, under the Union Jack. And I came out to Melbourne boatswain of the *Salisbury* in 1874. I was discharged there, went to the bush, and worked hard, but didn't like it. I got back to sea again, and joined an American ship as mate."

"Back to the Stars and Stripes, eh ?"

"Yes ; but I soon got back to the Australian coast, and worked in the sixty milers (between Sydney and Newcastle), and other coasting vessels."

"Union Jack again, Ned. Now, tell me, which flag do you really prefer ?"

"Oh, the British. Everything is more regular under it, you know, particularly in the navy. The American Navy used to be all right, but now they're taking Dutchmen and all sorts. Give me the British."

"You made a home ashore ?"

"Yes ; at Adelaide, nine years ago. I am a petty officer of the Naval Reserve there at the present time."

"So I've heard. They say you appear mounted in your bluejacket's uniform at the military tournament, and that you haven't forgotten your cavalry seat ?"

Long Ned laughed.

"It is a bit funny," he said, "a sailor on a horse. But I unshipped one of those lancers the last time ; didn't I, Mr. Argent ?"

Chief Gunner Argent, of the South Australian naval forces, was sitting by. "You did, Ned," he admitted ; "you unshipped him."

"What weapon do you use ?"

"Oh, either sword or lance mounted ; the sword on foot against lance or bayonet. And I've done very well ; taken a good many prizes."

"You have made Adelaide your head-quarters ?"

"Yes ; I have a wife and a boy and girl there. The children are grown up. They're all right, and I have done all sorts of things in Port Adelaide, even engine-driving, for I've a third engineer's certificate as well as a mate's."

"Now, if it's a fair question, Mr. Jennings, what the devil brought you here ?"

"Oh, I don't know. I saw the rest of them going, and I thought I ought to have a go at it, too. The fact is, I had gone for the run in a vessel to Newcastle, and I came back boatswain of the *Willyama*, a collier belonging to the Adelaide Steamship Co., which supplied the *Medic* with coal. I applied for and got my discharge from the *Willyama*, and joined this ship for the run to the Cape as a stoker at a shilling a month."

"Hard work for a man of your length in the stoke-hole, Ned ?"

"Yes, pretty hard ; and I've had so many knocks and twists and back-hurts that I feel it at the start always ; I feel it at the start. But when you get warmed up to your work you're all right," said the tall man, fondling his great arms with his hard, rough hands.

"And at the end of the voyage ?"

"Oh, I shall be all right. I'd like to join the South Australians, but I'll find something. Anyhow, a sailor can't go far wrong."

Wonderful, gritty, self-reliant Long Ned. Cavalryman, artilleryman, soldier, sailor, bushman, engineer, American-born, British become. Men may entertain doubts when your judgment or your prudence is in question. But there is not the least doubt about your spirit. For is it not the spirit which has given the Anglo-Celtic race a proud pre-eminence the world over ?

CHAPTER VIII.

KRUGER—NOT THE TRANSVAAL PRESIDENT—A PROPHETIC INTERVIEW.

Let it be at once admitted that the conversation here chronicled was not with the President of the Transvaal. Few, indeed, have eluded the distinction of interviewing him, and what the future holds in store no man knoweth. No ; the Kruger with whom I chatted for a pleasant half-hour on board the *Medic* was a private soldier in the Westralian unit. One of the most cheerful and intelligent of men ; one, too, who has held considerable interests in his hands, and whose mirth is the merriest of all, albeit never loud, when his comrades call him "Oom Paul." There were things I learnt about him which marked out Kruger as an interesting personality. I had seen him at drill, and noted his smartness and accuracy. I had seen him doing sentry-go, and noted him as one who "knew his job."

"No, I'm not a Westralian," said the young soldier, in answer to my preliminary inquiry : "I'm a Victorian."

"So I had suspected," was my, perhaps, somewhat conceited and rather parochial remark. "Where do you hail from ?"

"Ballarat. I was born there, and was eleven years in the 3rd Battalion."

"Ah ! Under Colonel Williams ?"

"Yes, under Colonel Williams ; before him, under Colonel Greenfield ; before him, under Colonel Sleep. I know and like them all. I was proud of my drill with the Ballarat boys, rifle exercises, bayonet, everything, and, do you know, when I came West I kept it up—hanged if I know why—and it comes in now."

"How long have you served in the Westralian force ?"

"I never joined them until this thing came up. Then I volunteered, and they took me."

"Great stories are told, Kruger, about your doings with the rifle. Tell me something about your skill."

"Well, it's a bit awkward talking about yourself."

"Ah, indeed ! I assure you I have met quite a number of people who don't find it in the least embarrassing. In

fact, they rather enjoy the sensation. Go on, old chap. When did you start rifle shooting ?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, when I was under five years of age, so mad was I on firearms that I got down an old blunderbuss of father's and let it off. Of course, there was a row. A little later I got some powder from a store—I'm sorry to say I wasn't sent for it—and my brother and I were all but blown up. I did a lot of game shooting, and like that best. I always got my marksman's badge in the battalion, and did fairly well a few times at the local matches and at Williamstown. But I'm not fond of the fixed range nor the service rifle."

"You came West ?"

"Yes. At Ballarat I worked in a foundry, and studied engineering. I came West, and got the management of five mines. Then there was a slump, and I took to my rifle for a living. Do you know that, when I came away, I was making £9 and £10 a week shooting kangaroos ?"

"This is what developed your powers ?"

"Yes. I took part in a pigeon match a little time ago. The others had guns ; I used a rifle. They wanted to object."

"What kind of rifle ?"

"A Colt's repeater, a sixteen carrier. I paid £20 for it. I got sixteen birds out of twenty, fourteen without a miss."

"Could you do that with any other rifle ?"

"Well, I've tried the old Martini-Henry ; that isn't so good. I've tried the Snider, that's a bit better. Now, this rifle they've given us, the Martini-Metford, I don't know, and it takes a man some time to get into a new rifle. But I think I can use it, and——"

"Please go on."

"Well, I hesitated to say it, but I think I can be relied upon to hit anything—at least, anything as big as a man—within half a mile of me. I undertake to hit six out of eight lemonade bottles at distances within 150 yards."

"You get your range quickly ?"

"Yes, I've got into that, and the main thing is to be steady. The best thing for steadiness is to eat plenty of celery. Then you want to have a good memory for successful rifle shooting at unknown distances. You have to recollect what to do in the varying conditions of weather. It's wonderful how the weather affects shooting. You've got to carry in your head what to do, and for memory culture I take sage, thyme, and marjoram in equal proportions. It's really good. You try it."

I promised to, at the same time confessing that I was not sure what marjoram was.

"You do not happen to be called Paul," I insinuatingly observed.

"No, though the chaps call me Oom Paul," laughed my companion; "my name is Alexander."

"Alexander Kruger! A combination of great names. Of what nationality is your father, Mr. Kruger?"

"He is dead. He was a German, and my mother comes from the North of Ireland. She and my brother are still living at Ballarat."

"You're keen about the war?"

"Yes; as I told you, I left something to come here. There are a lot of us who came from Victoria. We've roughed it in the West, and we can do it in South Africa, take my word. So far as I am concerned, give me a pannikin of flour every day, and I'm all right."

When I first wrote the foregoing for publication I concluded with the observation:—"For the rest, I need only say that Private Kruger is a man 33 years of age, looking quite ten years younger. He is only 5 feet 6 inches high, weighs 10st. 4lb., and is as hard as nails. If he should happen to get the Victoria Cross in South Africa, these statistics may be found useful." Surely I was in my best prophetic vein in November. In February, at Slingersfontein, Kruger handsomely established his right to wear the Victoria Cross.

CHAPTER IX.

Arrival at Cape Town—Sir Alfred Milner Inspects—Australian Regiment Formed.

The *Medic* arrived at Cape Town on the afternoon of Sunday, the 26th November, after a passage of twenty-eight days from Melbourne. Everybody was in first-rate health and spirits. Only one horse failed to make the journey. The others, with two or three exceptions, were fit and well.

There will be nothing but agreeable recollections of the historic voyage to South Africa. True, it was a much longer one than we had expected, which is attributed to the fact that Australian coal is inferior as a steam raiser to the best Welsh, and to the detentions at Adelaide and Albany. Heavier weather was experienced a day before arrival. We steamed along the south coast, between Mossel Bay and Cape Aguilhas, in the teeth of a strong westerly wind, and against a heavy head sea, which occasionally came on board, and made men and things more than moist. The hatches had to be put on and battened down over the Mounted Rifles' quarters in the forehold, and, with a malignity which often characterises inanimate things, bags of chaff and other odds and ends would suddenly join the impetus of the rushing

waters and hit unoffending persons in the back. It was the one really lively day of the voyage.

The health of the men had been generally good. Although there were cases of influenza throughout the whole passage, in no instance did the symptoms become alarming, a fact largely due to the care and skill exercised by the medical men. On the surgical side only a few minor casualties were placed on record.

Coming along the shores of Table Bay on Sunday afternoon we were accorded a royal heliograph welcome by the dwellers in the pleasant seaside suburbs. Apparently a heliograph is part of the local household equipment. for there must have been quite thirty of those instruments at work upon our ship, the effect being dazzling and not a little bewildering.

In due course the pilot got on board, but he was not a communicative man. "All your fellows have gone up," was the most he found time to say on his rapid passage to the bridge, and we got no further war news from him. By and by came the Customs launch, and a couple of copies of the previous evening's *Cape Argus*. Then we learned something about the situation; that Ladysmith was cut off; that Gatacre was going up to the centre; that Lord Methuen, in command of the Kimberley relief column, had fought and won at Belmont, all of which was read aloud to the deeply interested Australians.

The peace of the Sabbath afternoon in harbour was not in the least disturbed by our coming. There were no demonstrations. Printed orders came off, embodying the ordinary disembarkation rules; and later on came a transport officer. The units were ready for landing and eager to get ashore. They had not long to wait. A berth at Loch Jetty was found before evening, and the great ship was brought alongside.

Then there was a busy time, and packing and carrying ashore went on for the greater part of the night. At daylight on Monday a horse gangway was rigged. All the animals were landed smartly, and without mishap. Column of route was at once formed, and, headed by Colonel Hoad, the Australians marched through Cape Town, and on to a camping place at Maitland, about six miles out.

It was between eight and nine o'clock when the column passed through, and Cape Town was still engaged in awakening and having its breakfast. Nobody seemed to know who the strangers were, and there was not a cheer worth mentioning. After the great series of demonstrations in Australia, this was a cooling start. Cape Town, its Mayor and people, had intended otherwise, I learn, but the military chiefs had neither heart nor mind for ceremonials. They were manag-

ing a war. Our landing parade state was as follows :—One staff officer, 2 horses ; Victorian Infantry, 125 officers and men, 9 horses ; Victorian Mounted Rifles, 125 officers and men, 156 horses ; South Australian Infantry, 127 officers and men, 3 horses, and 9 mules ; West Australian Infantry, 130 officers and men, 17 horses ; Tasmanian Infantry, 80 officers and men, 4 horses ; total, 588 officers and men, 189 horses, and 9 mules.

Our lads were sent into a camp close up to the western slope of Table Mountain, near which stands the Observatory, and also the residence of Mr. Cecil Rhodes. Coming soft-footed from shipboard on a particularly hot, dusty morning, the tramp out to the camping ground, no doubt, appeared longer than it really was. The horses were led all the way, and, on reaching their destination, were gently exercised before being picketed. The tents were smartly pitched, the 6th (Inniskilling) Dragoons, who were camped close by, turning out a party to help their Australian comrades, to whom they and other regulars gave a hearty welcome.

It was a new experience to Australians to find rations piled on the ground, but they had come to get more new experiences. The company cooks were not allowed time to seek fancy methods of preparing the food. The men wanted it anyhow. When it was ready, they fell to with a will and heartiness begot of fine robust appetites united to a long fast. The camp was on the bank of a sluit, or creek, in which there is a fine supply of fresh water, suitable for every purpose. The weather was hot, and many preferred the open air to the tents at night time. They were promised that they would soon get all the open air sleeping they cared for.

On the evening of arrival (Sunday) Colonel Hoad and the officers commanding the units dined at Government House. On the following Tuesday evening Sir Alfred Milner, the Governor and High Commissioner, paid an unofficial visit to the camp. The men were inspected in their own lines, standing at the doors of their tents, and the Mounted Rifles and horses ranked past. All the officers were then presented to the Governor, who was very cordial and complimentary. His Excellency delivered a short address.

"Colonel Hoad," he said, "I am delighted to see the Australians here. They are a fine lot of men, and look very fit indeed. The horses are in excellent condition, and I am surprised that you only lost one on so long a sea journey. I shall cable to the Governments of the several colonies represented here the pleasure I feel in seeing you here in camp to-day."

In a chat I had with his Excellency at Government House next day he reiterated his satisfaction with the appearance of

the Australians, and said that he had despatched cable messages of congratulations to the four Australian Governments concerned. The physique and soldierly bearing of the Australians were the theme of general and always favourable reference. The Mounted Rifles' horses were a bit wild, but they came in for commendation from such cavalry authorities as General Brabazon and General Babbington, who were genuinely surprised that after so long a voyage the horses should have landed so fit.

. Immediately on our being reported, General Forestier-Walker, commanding at Cape Town, decided to treat the *Medic's* five units, plus some New South Wales men yet to arrive, as one regiment. The units were sent into camp on that basis, and Colonel Hoad was placed in command. Already, therefore, there was a departure from the original plan, which was understood to contemplate making each unit an extra company of a British regiment. The new arrangement almost translated into a fact the proposals of the Australasian commandants that our contribution to the physical force in South Africa should take the form of a Federal Brigade.

Colonel Hoad, who had landed in the expectation that he was to have a place on the staff of Sir Redvers Buller, obtained a first-rate command, and from the officers of the units the regimental staff was made up. Major Eddy became second in command, the charge of the Victorian infantry unit devolving upon Lieutenant M'Inerney. Captain Lascelles, of South Australia, became Adjutant, and Sergeant Johnstone, of the same colony, was appointed regimental Sergeant-major.

CHAPTER X.

Re-equipment of the Regiment—The Order to Move—To Join the Kimberley Relief Force.

No time was wasted at Cape Town in a ceremonious inspection, but a few experts had a look at the uniform and equipment of the Australians, and passed a speedy judgment. Victoria fared fairly well, but the maroon facings had to come off the tunics of the Mounted Rifles, and all chevrons, bright stripes, and other decorations had to go in homage to Boer marksmanship. Anything likely to furnish a good aiming point for an enemy was dispensed with. The West Australians were promptly ordered to get out of their blue jumpers and putties, and get into khaki. Leggings appeared to be admitted as "not too bad," but it was quite plain that the army officials

preferred putties, and khaki putties at that. Therefore, the mounted men were equipped with that description of leg-wear.

All the units were fitted with garments of some sort out of the big supplies available, but the largest sizes of the ready-made stuff were not roomy enough to meet the chest development of some of our boys. The units were kept going marching to different Government stores where war gear is kept, and it is said that not more than thirty per cent. of the articles made to fit the British soldiers were big enough for the Australians.

Colonel Hoad condemned the South Australian boots as too light, and they had to be replaced. The personal equipment of the Mounted Rifles was increased by their being ordered to carry water-bottles, a provision considered necessary in view of the possibility of a man being separated from his horse. Bugles, trumpets, and other brass work were painted khaki. Some of the decorated hats moulted their gay feathers, but certainly did not look any the worse for that.

Most important of all, the single-loaders were all called in, and every man took the field armed with a Lee-Metford magazine rifle, and a short sword bayonet. Infantry officers discarded their swords, and each carried a rifle and bayonet. In appearance to the enemy they would resemble their men so closely that the cheerful practice of singling out and picking off the leaders would not be so easily pursued as it had been in the past.

The field service dressing supplied to the Australians is apparently out of date. It was replaced by a dressing of later pattern, which our surgeons admit to be better than that which it supersedes. We scored well on one point. The green rot-proof bell tents of the Victorians were the admiration of all expert beholders.

The necessary changes in equipment were quickly made, and Colonel Hoad soon reported that the regiment was quite ready to move to the front, each man carrying 300 rounds of ammunition. It is proper to say that the local re-equipment was not confined to the colonials. Several British regiments underwent it, and there was not a red coat to be seen anywhere—nothing darker than khaki.

The Government at Cape Town took over all the transport horses and equipage of the Australians for use in other parts of the colony. The Victorian waggon was declared to be eminently suitable for ordinary army service corps work, but the country in which our men were to work is such that buck waggons, ox waggons, and mule transport were favoured. These were to be furnished at De Aar, on the way to the front.

For it speedily became known that the regiment was to do duty with the Kimberley Relief Force under Lord Methuen. It was while we were equipping at Cape Town that the battle of Modder River was fought. The victorious Methuen crossed the stream, and pitched his camp on the northern bank.

Inviting as were the studies in black and white, British and Dutch, at Cape Town, in those busy and stirring days one could but look casually and hurriedly at them—just as casually as one noticed the sharp alternations of the old town and the new—the former, with its flat-roofed houses ever so ancient, and the latter with its smart shops, which compare favourably with those of Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide. It is not my business here to describe Cape Town or its charming surroundings. When we arrived the harbour was full of ships, mostly bearing the large numbers which distinguish Her Majesty's troopers. There were portions of a number of regiments camped about, and men in uniform one met everywhere. Not for many years had the old town been so martial in appearance, and when one found military officers in charge at the Post and Telegraph Offices, he was reminded what a change comes over the spirit of things when a country is at war.

None of the troops were detained long. They were hurried to the front as soon as possible after landing. The New Zealanders, who had arrived just before us, were entrained for De Aar on Monday evening, and were warmly cheered on their march to and from the railway station. All Major Robins's gallant fellows were in first-rate fettle, and ready for business. Magnificently have they done every piece of work entrusted to them throughout an unexpectedly protracted campaign.

CHAPTER XI.

At De Aar—The Ambulance Trains—Boer Prisoners.

Travelling a couple of days in advance of our troops, I arrived at the important junction station, De Aar, on the line to Kimberley, at one o'clock on the morning of Saturday, 2nd December. Every stopping place, also every bridge and culvert, on the line across the Karoo was then held by troops. Cape Infantry Volunteers had been a month employed holding the line of communication. This is arduous, trying, and highly important work, quite without the picturesqueness associated with the doings at the front, only scantily recognised by the general public, but highly appreciated by the mili-

tary authorities. The Boer sympathisers were numerous, and the settlement along the line of railway in continual peril. The men on guard were frequently called out at night, and armed parties made some smart passages from point to point. Men and trollies were kept for the purpose. The Boer prisoners brought down seem to have been allowed a but slightly restricted communication with their friends. This helped to foster sedition, as the authorities discovered, and several attempts to destroy the railway were made, but in each case the effort was frustrated.

The best country on the journey was passed in the dark, but with dawn we got some fine views. Then the Karoo, stony, waterless, dreary to awfulness. All the water-courses dry, save here and there a donga, or well. It is said that the country had suffered from a seven years' drought, but good water appears to be available wherever bores are put down. The eye is gladdened by bright green patches of cultivation, by vines and magnificent fig trees at the few points where the hand of man has been applied.

De Aar was under martial law, and hardly "the place to spend a happy day." After a general look around, without much in the way of profitable results, I ultimately camped on the railway station, and awaited the arrival of our regiment.

Grim evidence was afforded of the work being done in the front. The ambulance trains, fitted with bunks, carrying torn and bleeding human beings, were centres of pathetic interest. Most wounds appeared to be in the head and fore-arm, naturally most exposed. The worst cases were, of course, those in the bunks, the faces of the sufferers half-hidden by bandages. Those with slight injuries were able to walk about and bless their fortune. The men looked like cheap bundles of khaki rags and linen; at every turn were signs of pain and the shadow of death, for they had served their country up to the last service but one. All the same, they seemed cheerful enough, and they might well be, for it was good to see how admirably organised was the provision made by the strong hands of the Army Medical Department for those who go down in a fight.

That morning, on arrival at De Aar Junction, I had the pleasure of an early cup of coffee in the company of the officers of the Gordon Highlanders going to the front, the same regiment whose splendid courage at Dargai inspired the formation of the Victorian Scottish Regiment in Melbourne, with its adapted tartan. It seemed like meeting old friends. The Highlanders still wore kilts, but the experience of Impati was not forgotten, therefore sporrans were subsequently taken off, and khaki aprons worn.

During the day a batch of Boer prisoners, about 30, arrived from Modder River, where they had been captured in action. There was no attempt at uniform among them ; every man wore what suited him. A few articles, such as water-bottle or canteen, were of similar form ; but the men had, apparently, no regular outfit. Their clothing was carried in deal boxes, or made up in blanket swags like those of Australian bushmen. They were a sorry enough crowd as they waited about on the railway station, the dangerous-looking sword-bayonets glittering on the rifles of their guards. They were considered a rather more presentable lot than some previous batches consisting of low-class Dutch. Among them were a few of superior caste, including Dr. Krause, who came out from Germany to inoculate cattle against rinderpest, and had taken a prominent part in organising the Boer forces. From these prisoners it was gathered that they expected to be able to stop our advance at Belmont and Modder River, so the British success disheartened them, and some of them frankly said that they would like to get home.

Between two and three o'clock on Sunday morning a long-delayed train, carrying the Australians, steamed into the De Aar station. A telegram awaited Colonel Hoad, and the regiment was ordered to proceed to Orange River. I had just time to take a seat in the officers' compartment when the train moved on again.

CHAPTER XII.

At Orange River—Camp Life There—In the Presence of the Enemy.

The train journey to Orange River was quite without noteworthy incident. On the way I learned the particulars of the departure of our troops from the metropolis of the colony. Cape Town, headed by its enthusiastic Mayor, turned out twice to give the Australians a send-off, for they travelled in two parties, and each had a full share of the popular plaudits. The coolness of their reception on arrival was fully atoned for. The infantry left at about noon on the 1st December, and the Mounted Rifles a few hours later. The first reached Orange River about eleven o'clock on the morning of Sunday, the 3rd, and went at once into camp. The Mounted Rifles arrived at the railway station about 4 o'clock the same day.

On entrainment at Cape Town three days' rations were issued, consisting of tinned ("bully") beef, army biscuit—very hard—coffee, tea, sugar, and salt. Queensland corned beef, I found, played a prominent part in the rationing. Hot

water was supplied at the stations *en route*, and the men fared fairly well, albeit that it was a sharp change after the generous dietary scale of the *Medic*. Compliments were paid to the officers at several stopping places, and all ranks spoke in glowing terms of the great kindness shown by their loyal fellow-colonists in South Africa.

The process of disentraining was slow, because of the scant accommodation at a railway never intended for such extensive business as the war has brought to it. Some experienced cavalry officers, who watched the regular and methodical work of the mounted men, were most eulogistic in their comments. The horses had a good deal of knocking about on the train journey, and bore marks of abrasions.

Our transport was still at De Aar, Commander Colquhoun, who had travelled with the regiment in the hope of getting a suitable "job" at the front, being left behind with a party to bring it on when it was ready. The men carried their tents and equipment to the camping ground, which was far enough south of Orange River to make us little interested in the waters of that stream. The day was terribly hot, and the first test of the men's good humour was made. They bore it quite as the people of Australia had a right to expect.

With here and there an exception, for the first time in their lives our men lay down that night in the knowledge that they were a fighting force, with an enemy close at hand, and were at any time liable to be attacked. The patrols and outposts were strong, and the Westralians got the first tour of active service duty, as they furnished pickets. Major Eddy was the field officer with the outposts. Subsequently the several companies took outpost duty in turn day and night during the stay at Orange River.

The camping place was little better than a sandy desert; a veritable Gehenna heat prevailed, and the high wind blew the sand in great clouds all over us. Writing in my tent that blessed Sabbath afternoon, the aids to composition were showers of blinding sand, armies of the most persistent flies I have ever met, huge ground spiders, and vari-coloured scorpions. "Surely to Heaven the Soudan cannot be worse than this!" exclaimed a perspiring Victorian officer as he looked in. I was far too hot, tired, dirty, and parched with an unquenchable thirst, to palliate which there was nothing better than muddy water, to even faintly argue about it. It is a vile place, and I wouldn't have a thousand square miles of it at a gift.

The Mounted Rifles did not get into their camp till considerably after dark, owing to the delay in disentraining their horses. I wish to testify to the splendid way in which they were helped by their Tasmanian comrades, who pitched the

mounted men's tents for them, and rendered grand service, Captain Cameron, the Tasmanian leader, doing as much himself as his most stalwart private. A magnificent *esprit de corps* here marked the inter-relations of the units in the Australian regiment, and Colonel Hoad was equally admired and popular amongst all placed under his command.

On the whole, however, the camp life at Orange River was endurable. The weather was still hot, but as the nights were cool to positive coldness, the conditions were bearable. Good, rough rations were issued, including fresh meat once a day, a small supply of vegetables, soft bread, jam, tea, and coffee. Men can live and work and thrive on this fare. Water was pumped from the Orange River, and, although muddy-looking, was not really bad.

Close below the Cheviot Hill, as one of the outpost positions was called, stands a little cemetery, which I visited. Here are buried Lieutenant-Colonel Keith Falconer, of the 1st Northumberland Fusiliers, and Lieutenant Chas. Wood, North Lancashire, who fell near Belmont on the 10th November. Close beside them are interred the remains of a number of private soldiers who succumbed to their wounds in the hospital. A point of pathetic interest is the landscape in that little cemetery.

Commander Colquhoun, who, later on, arrived with the transport, now presented a brand new appearance, clad in khaki, and wearing one of our turned-up soft felt hats. He told me that he was taking very kindly to soldiering; and he had already done excellent work, first obtaining at De Aar, and then bringing on by rail, our transport. That included 135 mules, ten horses, a number of buck waggons, and other vehicles, and an army of 150 Kaffir drivers, under a European "boss." Colquhoun had a terribly hot time in De Aar, and is grateful for the courtesies shown to him by the Pembroke Regiment, whose astonishment at learning, a little late in the day, that their guest was a naval officer, can well be imagined.

Many of the wounded in recent battles were lying in the hospital, a considerable portion of them Boers. Never had wounded soldiers fallen into the hands of a more tender foe. The Boer sufferers were given quite as much care as that bestowed by the doctors and nurses on our own gallant countrymen. The afternoon we arrived, one of the Boers, who had died from his wounds, was buried by a party of the Gordon Highlanders, who marched with arms reversed, and preceded by wailing pipers. The utmost respect was paid to the remains of the dead foeman.

General Wauchope was in command when we reached Orange River, and the Australian officers were presented to

him. He left shortly afterwards for the front, where he took command of the Highland Brigade. With what tragic result the grim story of Magersfontein tells. A gallant gentleman met a soldier's death.

CHAPTER XIII.

STILL AT ORANGE RIVER—THE WOUNDED AND THEIR WOUNDS—TALK WITH THE BOERS—WORK OF NEW SOUTH WALES LANCERS.

There was a dining-room at the railway station here, and many of the officers had their meals in it. Such a strain upon the resources of the place had never before been imposed, and it was amusing to see distinguished soldiers making good the deficiencies in attendance. Here a general officer fossicked for the bread, there a full colonel emerged triumphantly from the kitchen with the cup of tea for which he had long waited. All the hurry and bustle of the few attendants could not overcome the shortage in cups, and it was first come first served alike with generals and subalterns, all in the most perfect good humour. For my part, having tried the dining-room, I usually preferred my tent and the regulation ration. If Tommy Atkins could live on it, I could.

A considerable array of hard facts quite negatived the idea which obtained for a while amongst some that a contribution of Australian troops would be of no real assistance. The arrival of our regiment was opportune, and the troops had not an unemployed day. They furnished all manner of details, outposts, patrols, guards, sentries, and fatigue parties. I have every reason to think that their work gave satisfaction; indeed, there was excited a good deal of surprise in professional quarters that citizen soldiers could, and would, work so well.

After the battles at Belmont and Modder River the wounded, both British and Boer, were, in the first instance, treated by the surgeons at the front. The antiseptic field dressing of the new order appeared to be thoroughly effective, for the wounded progressed wonderfully well. The more serious cases were sent to Orange River as soon as possible, and placed in the hospital tents, under the control of General Wilson, of the Medical Staff. Here also were treated medical cases sent from the front.

It was my privilege, on the 5th December, to accompany General Wilson on his morning tour through the hospital tents, and to see the effects of Mauser bullets upon our brave fellows who were hit in the fighting under Lord Methuen. It

is wonderful that human beings could be pierced by the bullets as some of the men were, and not only survive, but make rapid recovery.

In one case a bullet entered a soldier's neck, passed down through the left shoulder, and came out under his arm. The entrance and egress wounds were no more dreadful to look at than a couple of vaccination marks. In several cases men who were shot through the upper part of the body, the bullets boring passages right through them, were, after a week's treatment, almost convalescent. More serious, of course, were the cases in which bullets have gone through the stomach. In one instance the kidneys and liver were punctured, and the man was doing well.

"The remarkable thing," said General Wilson, "is the almost entire absence of cases requiring operations. The Mauser bullets go right through bone or anything without splintering or breaking, as our Martini bullets would do."

"Our Lee-Metford bullets do more harm?" I asked, for I knew that the General had wounded Boers in his charge.

"Yes," was the reply; "rather more."

In a few instances bullets remained in the bodies of wounded soldiers, and the sufferers were sent to Wynberg (Cape Town), there to be subjected to the searching examination of the X rays, prior to operations which might be thought necessary. Several of the men I saw had received more than one hit, and the bullet boring was marked by all manner of eccentricities. Quiet, patient, and cheerful sufferers are our wounded men, and if I were asked to name the dominant note in the hospitals, it would certainly be an intense anxiety to get well as quickly as possible, and back again to the front.

The wounded Boers, as it has been my pleasure to mention before, have been treated with a tenderness which marks the Britisher as a generous foe. Poor fellows! it was obvious that they were surprised at it, for they had been led, by their mischief-making leaders, to expect something very different. They had a good time in the hospitals, and the less seriously injured smoked the pipe of peace the live-long day, for they had only to express a wish for tobacco and matches, and the wish was gratified. One fine-looking, middle-aged man to whom I talked spoke excellent English.

"I hear you are a man of property, sir," was my speculative opening, after we had talked about his health for a few minutes.

"No," was the reply; "I am a Government surveyor, and I just make what I can when there's work to be done. Sometimes there is a payable piece of work, such as laying out a town; but I don't make quite so much as President Kruger."

All present, Boers included, laughed at this little hit at the noble and pious person who ran the Transvaal.

"We have to find all our own gear, and give our services without pay," continued the wounded surveyor; "you British don't do that."

I agreed that we did not—that is to say, not always, and remarked, inquiringly—

"But some of your men are paid?"

"Only the artillery," was the reply, "and they get a little more than usual in time of war."

"You get rations?" I assertingly inquired.

"Not for the first eight days," replied my new acquaintance. "For that period we supply ourselves."

"Yes," gruffly interposed a rough-looking Boer, who was lying alongside the first speaker, "and after the eight days the rations are commandeered from our friends."

There was another laugh, in which all Mr. Kruger's "subjects" joined. After this, let nobody tell me that the Boer is a person without sense of humour.

It seemed to me that those wounded men would be well pleased to renounce Krugerism, and that, when British rule was established in the Transvaal, they would not be found amongst the objectors.

"You'll make a big fight at Pretoria," I ventured to say, in conclusion to the wounded surveyor.

"I don't know, sir," was the reply; "but I suppose you'll make it hot enough for us if we do."

A New South Wales Lancer who was under treatment for dysentery in the hospital was Trooper Pestall, a fine-looking young fellow, of Captain Cox's Company, which passed through Melbourne on the way to Aldershot for training early in 1899. Pestall was strong enough in the cool of the evening to talk a little about the doings of some of the company since their arrival in South Africa. It seems that of the company, originally about 100 strong, 70 were able to stay at the Cape and take service against the Boer. The others returned to their several businesses or appointments in Australia.

It was rather over a fortnight since the Cornstalks reached Cape Town, and they had been busy ever since. The horses intended for their use had not arrived from Australia, and the men were supplied at the remount depôt at Stellenbosch, a short distance out of Cape Town. They were at once despatched north, but at De Aar Junction a separation took place. Captain Cox, with the larger body, was ordered to Naauwpoort, and twenty-nine men, under Lieutenant Osborne, joined Lord Methuen, who was then here at the Orange River. The men were mounted on somewhat small horses, but fairly

suitable, and were attached to the infantry under Major Melton.

"On our very first day," said Pestall, "we got an idea of what active service is. We were engaged scouting the greater part of the time, and had several exchanges of shots with the Boers on the hill near Belmont."

"Anybody hit ?"

"Trooper Bardy was the first man hit, and, so far as I know, the only one. He got a bullet graze in the arm, but it is not at all serious. Then one of our horses put her foot into a cat hole, and broke her neck. That is the worst that happened to us—on the first day. Yes, we went through the Belmont fight. Then, next day, in company with the 9th Lancers, we managed to stop a party of Boers who were retiring from a hill by getting round the side of it, but the force was too strong for us to charge, and when the Boers opened fire on us we got behind another kopje, and gave it to them with our carbines. Meanwhile the Boer artillery was shelling our men from another hill, and appeared to be pretty strong, though I don't think the shells did much damage. We pounded it into the Boers at varying distances down to five or six hundred yards, and made them retreat before sundown. One of our men, Trooper Byrne, was out all that night. He had been put in charge of a prisoner, and got separated from the main body, but the prisoner was a good guide to him, kept him clear of the other Boers, and finally brought him safely to our lines about eight o'clock next morning."

"A curious incident," I remarked. "Evidently that Boer preferred to be a prisoner."

"Yes ; several of them did. We got a number of prisoners at different times. They were all glad to have done with the fighting. I understand that the man who guided Byrne was sent down to Cape Town and released."

"What more did you do ?"

"We went on to Modder River, and, as you know, it was a pretty hot day. There we were engaged as an escort for a battery of artillery, and captured a lot of Boer cattle. It was a big fight, extending over a front of about five miles, and the Boers being well posted, their artillery on the hills, and many of their men entrenched on both sides of the river, they had all the advantages of the position, and our side had all the risks. The Boer artillery opened upon us at a distance of two miles away, and they did no damage, so far as we were concerned. Two of our battery horses were killed, but not a man of the battery or escort was touched all day."

"After that ?" I inquired.

"After that it was pretty trying," was the reply. "We were a day and a night without water ; and when we got

a chance for a drink I suppose we went at it too greedily; that is what has given me dysentery."

Pestall made a rapid recovery, and was soon, I understand, discharged from the hospital.

CHAPTER XIV.

March to Belmont—Some Trying Work—What the Boer Had Been Doing.

Just as day was breaking on Friday, the 8th December, the Australian regiment marched into Belmont, after a long and trying tramp. There was an impression that our move up from the Orange River station was the outcome of information that the Boers were threatening Lord Methuen's rear. Whether in large or small numbers depended very much upon the man who was telling the direful news. Sometimes there were only three hundred of the enemy—just a small commando. At other times six or eight thousand would be named as the number of Boers who were making ready to, or had, actually pounced upon a suitable place for effectually blocking any reinforcements or supplies for Lord Methuen.

With such talk of this kind were we entertained—or, should I rather say, we entertained ourselves, at Orange River. As a matter of fact, our condition was one of profound ignorance of the movements of troops, whether our own or the enemy's, outside our own camp. Hearsay ruled all along the line. For some sufficiently good reason, I have no doubt, we were ordered to proceed by route march to Witteputs, a hamlet on the way to the Modder River. In order that we might start early enough on Thursday morning, some of us stayed up all Wednesday night. Not a good plan this when there is a heavy day's work in view. Tents were struck, packed, and loaded in the transport waggons before sundown, therefore on Wednesday night we lay on the open veldt, with the soft African zephyrs curling our hair, and the hard African spiders, centipedes, and such like uncanny things disputing with us the possession of mother earth. It was the regiment's first night in the open, and a promise of many more such before the war was over.

A regimental reveille sounded at 2 a.m., but it was shortly after five when we got away, and it was fully two hours later before the last vehicle of our long transport train, made up principally of mule carts, crossed the Orange River. I rode with the advance guard myself, and fried in the early sun with it while waiting for the main column to come up. Besides furnishing advanced and rear guards, escorts for

ammunition and baggage, the Mounted Rifles did a tremendous amount of patrolling, and did it generally well. It was a fearfully hot day, and the infantry, it appeared to me, marched a good deal too heavily laden.

The Australians, it should be said, were unaccompanied by other troops, save that we had four of Rimington's Guides to show us across country. We had no artillery, and only two Maxim guns. But we never got touch with the enemy, and no shots were fired. We took a few Kaffir prisoners, one in possession of eight horses reasonably suspected of being intended for use by the Free Staters.

It was afternoon when our main column reached Witteputs, a distance of eleven miles, and there we heard startling news. It was to the effect that 4000 Boers were in the vicinity, that an attack might at any time be expected, and that Lord Methuen had been cut off from his base by a force which surrounded Enslin, between Belmont and the Modder River. It was anticipated that the Gordon Highlanders and a few other troops at Belmont would be assailed within a few hours.

At Witteputs there was only a company of the Munster Fusiliers, and twenty mounted infantry. The Fusiliers had entrenched themselves, and occupied a good position. We went into bivouac close beside them, Colonel Hoad deeming it imprudent to go on a mile and a half to Fincham's Farm, a veritable oasis in the desert, where we had intended to halt, and where there is plenty of shade and a magnificent water supply. Our men simply had to do the best they could on the burning plain beside the trenches, and it was a cruel afternoon.

Immediately on our arrival, an order was received by telegraph to send at once to Belmont sixty Mounted Rifles and medical supplies. Horses were rapidly watered and fed, and, Captain M'Leish in charge, away went our sixty men, and Surgeon M'Williams. They rode the ample ten miles to Belmont under an hour, were heartily welcomed, and at once started patrolling, at which they were kept all night. Neither men nor horses can be spared when an exigency of war presents itself, and there appears to have been a full expectation that the Boers would attack Belmont at dawn next morning. The orders for our main body were, therefore, "March at midnight, and reach Belmont by daylight, for you may be wanted at once."

This, together with the quite reasonable prospect of being ambushed in the dark, furnished sufficient excitement. At Fincham's, which I made my head-quarters, the proprietor was most anxious to do what he could for the troops, although they lay so far away from him. The farm is almost like a small castle in appearance, and belongs to a family who have been in South Africa from early in the century. Lord Methuen

spent two days there on his march north, and, as travelling troops always camp near it, Mr. Fincham had a lively time. Strange to say, he escaped molestation by the Boers, as, indeed, have a number of loyal farmers whose homes we passed on our march.

The luxury of once more sitting at a table I fully appreciated at Fincham's, as also the substantial fare and fresh milk placed upon it by a kindly host. I did very much better than our men on that occasion ; particularly so as I persuaded Mr. Fincham to lend me a large tub standing in the yard, and I enjoyed the luxury of a bath in the open air. It was not until afterwards that I remembered that the Kaffir women servants would have me in view all the time. But things like that don't count for much in war time.

Early in the evening column of route was formed, the baggage train being well closed up on the rear, this having been accomplished in the waning daylight. The men were then permitted to lie down on their arms until midnight, when we moved off, as ordered, through an inky darkness, just occasionally illumined by startlingly bright and fantastic streaks of lightning. It was pleasantly cool, but showery, the first rain we had seen since arrival in South Africa. The pace was necessarily slow, owing to the need of precaution, and the occasional breakdown of a mule cart ; but the citizen soldiers got over the ground well, and the dawn saw us at Belmont, all complete, men, horses, and baggage. There was no Boer to fight, and we went quietly into camp without any adventure. Twenty-one miles, with baggage, well within twenty-four hours, is a good march for infantry, and Colonel Miles, who succeeded General Wauchope in the command at Orange River, wired warm congratulations to Colonel Hoad in response to a telegram reporting our arrival.

We now learned what the giddy Boer had been at. It seems that he invested Enslin, where there was only a handful of troops, and blew up part of the railway line two miles further north, thus cutting Methuen's communication. But the 12th Lancers were speedily on the scene, and relieved Enslin. From Belmont a repairing train was sent to make good the damage to the railway line, but the Boers had artillery in position, and three shells just missed the train, which at once returned to Belmont. Lord Methuen was not inactive meanwhile. A battery of artillery sent from the Modder River forced the retirement of the Boer guns, and at once the engineers started upon the work of repairing the line. Here at Belmont, the *locale* of Methuen's first great fight, we camped virtually on the battlefield, which was strewn with cartridge cases, and smelt strongly of dead horse.

Belmont is a dirty, dusty point on the railway line, and the water supply for horses is distant a Sabbath day's journey. Our men were in good health and spirits, despite their fatigue, and by evening were well rested, and fit enough for anything. They were to stand to arms at 3 o'clock next morning, in readiness for whatever the Boer may bring. It was the "real thing" now, and the Australians had got over the thrilling sensation and eye-glistening caused by orders to them as sentries to use their bayonet or fire into persons who did not promptly stand when called upon at the outpost line.

In this connection Sergeant Walker (Victorian Infantry) had a piece of work at Orange River. An artillery officer, who had been out getting remounts, and was accompanied by a servant, drove up to the outposts, and hadn't got the password. He tried to bluster his way through, and told Walker that he "didn't know his job." The Sergeant demonstrated that he did, and the officer went to the guard tent. He was ultimately passed in, under escort, and, presumably, had to explain his conduct to somebody. Sergeant Walker stood fully vindicated. Indeed, all our men did their duty with a thoroughness which provoked general admiration.

CHAPTER XV.

Belmont Battlefield—Grim Relics—At Thomas's Farm.

In the cool of the evening I traversed a considerable part of the Belmont battlefield. There were many signs of the struggle, although already hunters after relics had been over every square foot of ground. I climbed the kopje, a precipitous hill of stones quite 150 feet high, which appears to have been the Boer main position, and noted the sconces which the enemy had made by the simple process of piling the boulders, so as to form bulwarks to front and flank, at the points regarded as suitable for riflemen. Quite obviously the Boers had by far the better position in this fight. Three kopjes on the right of the railway line, alongside which runs the road, absolutely command the approach from the Orange River station, and Lord Methuen had either to fight or make a considerable detour to the left in order to get on his way. The objection to the latter course is, that it would have left the railway in the hands of an enemy in rear. The country in front—that is to say, to the left of the Boer kopjes—is flat right down to and for a mile beyond the railway station, and the only practicable infantry approach was close by the foot of the rises in and out of the bits of cover formed by the there slightly undulating ground. The charge

business on the flank, few of the
For not many of them did, as
leader named Fischer, is said to
so that there could be no retirem

The British killed in the fight w
Thomas's Farm, about two miles
Some of the Boer dead were indi
mits of the kopjes—that is to say, a
on the bodies, which remain parti
I counted five corpses huddled tog
and face protruded, there a blacke
knees in another place, and seve
grim and ghastly heap of decaying
of the Boer warriors who served t
heights of Belmont. Huge vultur
who do their work so thoroughly
change of diet very soon. At th
on dead horse, and our pickets on
guard to the Boer corpses.

The British stationmaster here h
had given information concerning t
of the Boers, and for this so
of a commando decided to try him.
denials. "I did my duty," he said
of trust, and would do the same
any allegiance." The Boers admit
was set at liberty.

Early the next morning I drove
out, which I had commandeered,
River—to Thomas's Farm, about t
Milk, eggs, butter

upon which the family sat during the action. Thomas, who knows every inch of the surrounding country, told me that he strongly advised Lord Methuen to go on to Jacobsdal, and thus menace the Free State capital, as the best way of relieving Kimberley. "I don't know anything about soldiering," added Mr. Thomas, "but I know the country." It is reasonable to assume that Lord Methuen had fully considered the advantage of the several courses open to him before deciding upon his line of advance.

Belmont did not improve on acquaintance, though I shall always entertain pleasant recollections of the Dutch cakes at Thomas's farm. It was horribly hot, and a nasty red dust was continually flying, permeating, staining, destroying everything. It is a great country for ostrich farming, and a number of these immense birds, quite tame, were continually stalking through the camp. Our men got a few feathers—not feathers to fly with, be it known. I might have secured some also, but, as the ostriches were private property, I presumed that the feathers were. When Lieutenant M'Inerney turned out one morning he stepped into the presence of six ostriches standing in perfect line in front of and facing the door of his tent. Every head was erect and steady, and the resemblance to a cavalry guard of honour was so striking that one easily believes that the genial Victorian officer is a man whom the ostrich delights to honour.

Our Mounted Rifles had a hard gruelling that day while seeking after the Boers, said to be on our right front. They appear to have seen only small parties, presumably the enemy's patrols, and found them sensitive and shy. No close touch was obtained. Three Kaffirs, riding good and well-equipped horses, were brought in by the Victorian patrols. They were unable to give a satisfactory account of themselves, and were identified as servants of a Boer who, when war broke out, openly joined the armed forces against us. The probabilities are that the Kaffir boys were spies, acting under orders, and they were detained, pending further information.

Mention of the Boers who voluntarily and gladly took service against us reminds me that, at Thomas's Farm, I was asked by a companion to look carefully at a handsome young woman, who, on her part, courted the scrutiny so strangely invited. The question that followed explained the situation. Did I not think that she resembled one of the Boer wounded whom I saw at Orange River? Yes, I thought she did, and the girl exclaimed, "Oh, I hope he's a prisoner! I hope he is! He didn't want to fight, but he was commandeered, and had to go. If I knew he was a prisoner I should be happy!" Her lover? asks the reader. No; her brother. Alas! there were many such cases in this fratricidal war. The fighti

men of the family were called upon to march out to whatever fortune might betide. The women folks were left to mourn and wonder how their dear ones fared. I hoped fervently that the poor girl's brother was in the hands of the generous people against whom he all unwillingly bore arms, but my mind naturally reverted to the partially buried heaps of decaying humanity out on the summit of a kopje two miles away. For aught any of us knew, all that was left on earth of that missing brother lay there.

At the same house I heard that three mere lads were amongst the wounded prisoners after the Belmont fight. "You may go down to Orange River for treatment," said Lord Methuen, "or you may go home." They decided to go home. It cannot be said that we treated our prisoners badly. One of the Boer medical staff, who was captured a week previously, was sent to Cape Town. On notifying the authorities that he was a non-combatant, he was promptly liberated, and passed through Belmont on his way back to his friends. On the other hand, the Boers were not fighting with very much heart on that side of South Africa. One badly wounded prisoner, whose brother had been killed the same day, was brought in by British bearers, but the dew of death was already on his forehead, and his dying message to his countryman was, "Tell them not to fight any more."

When I saw the gallant Gordon Highlanders at De Aar the officers carried their claymores, and their shoulders showed their rank distinctions. While we were at Belmont they went to the front, and I observed that officer and man were dressed exactly alike, and that each carried a rifle. More than that, a khaki apron covered the front of the kilt. Only the front, mark you—a Gordon Highlander does not think it necessary to cover the rear.

When our men on an outpost line first made the acquaintance of baboons, a company of these creatures were disporting themselves on the side of a distant kopje. "Native bears, by jingo!" exclaimed a Gippslander, and when he was enlightened, he thought of his far-off, peaceful home and sighed. These strange, man-like creatures; the Kaffirs, with their herds of goats and ingeniously built kraals; the ostriches, birds of the earth; together with the great variety of birds of the air, made a remarkable *tout ensemble* for the many untravelled amongst the citizen soldiers serving the Empire in South Africa.

CHAPTER XVI.

FORWARD AGAIN—MARCH TO ENSLIN—ROBERTS HAS AN ADVENTURE—BEGINNING OF MAGERSFONTEIN.

We were not destined to remain long at Belmont, and on the morning of Sunday, the 10th, we once more marched north, under orders, for Enslin, a railway point about eighteen miles south of the Modder River. The weather was cloudy and delightfully cool—indeed, there were some drops of moisture from the stingy African sky, but nothing which amounted to honest rain. How some of us would have enjoyed the sensation of being wet through.

As there were Boers about, our column was carefully screened by Mounted Rifles, and the leading party of the infantry advance guard marched in extended order as a fighting line. Two guns of the Royal Horse Artillery accompanied us, and, Sabbath morning though it was, our men were in distinctly fighting humour. Our way lay over the level veldt in country which improved with almost every mile we made northward. In our front and on our flanks were the inevitable kopjes—without these I believe there would have been no Boer war—and the nearer ones had to be examined before we passed by or between them. Nature has made easy the work of those who oppose the advance of an army from the south—yet Lord Methuen did advance.

Before we reached Graspan, about ten miles from Belmont, we saw evidence of Boer handiwork, and of skilful operations of British engineers who followed the destroyers, and made good the damaged railway and the telegraph line. There is a fine well at Graspan, and there our horses and mules were watered, while the men rested an hour. A few kraals, outside which the Kaffirs were enjoying in the open air a late Sunday morning breakfast of mealies, constituted Graspan. Even the railway ganger at the siding is a blackfellow, and the nearest farms are those of Dutchmen. At one of these the white flag trick had been recently played, a small patrol being first invited to have some coffee, and then fired upon by the foe within, three of the patrol being wounded. A sergeant of the Rimington Guides, who gave me an account of the Graspan fight, is certain that, had the British been stronger in cavalry, the flying Boers would have had an exceptionally bad time. Personally, after looking at the ground, and hearing of what was done, I saw what a useful part Mounted Rifles might have played. The British had a hard piece of work cut out for them at Graspan. They did it—suppose I say like Britishers: nothing more is necessary.

Our march was quite devoid of noteworthy incident, but we came into a decidedly interesting situation. Enslin is a rail-

way station—that is all. There is a modest station house, but no other building in sight. Early that week the place had been unsuccessfully attacked by the Boers, as stated in a former chapter. On our coming, the other British troops went on by train to the Modder River, and the Australians, under Colonel Hoad, were left to hold Enslin. Dispositions for the defence of the post were made at once, and the infantry had a "pleasant Sunday afternoon" digging a shelter trench. Our troops held a post which was regarded as likely to be attacked, and I believe that the dominant note was struck by a weary private lying on the veldt just outside my tent, and whom I heard dreamily murmur, "I wish the bally Boer would come."

Lieutenant Roberts, of the Victorian Mounted Rifles, had an adventurous time. He was sent out from Belmont under instructions to get touch with a body of the enemy, said to have been seen sixteen miles off. He left, on the forenoon of the 9th December, with a corporal and ten men, twelve all told, and had a busy day scouring the country to the north-east—that is to say, on the border of the Free State, into which he penetrated about six miles. The party had been expected by the Colonel commanding at Belmont to return the same day, but Roberts, wishing to first accomplish his purpose, did not hasten his backward movement, and, just at nightfall, he came upon a Boer laager, at which some thirty fires were burning. He estimates that not less than three hundred Boers were camped at the place.

Roberts, with three of his men, dismounted, and strove to reach the laager on foot, knowing that the footfall of horses would alarm the enemy. But distances across the veldt are deceptive, and when he had walked over a mile the laager fires were extinguished, and darkness fell. It was no easy matter to find his horses again, and then there was nothing for it but to wait for daylight. This the party did, lying on the veldt, and there getting what rest they could snatch in intervals of watching. Two men had been sent into camp to report, and thus admit of action being taken if it were deemed prudent, but no force was sent out to attack.

At daylight Roberts rode up to a deserted laager. There were the remains of the Boer fires, the offal of two newly-slaughtered bullocks, and some bundles of pointed sticks—used, it is suggested, to facilitate the display of white flags. The enemy had disappeared. The Victorians had been without food for hours, but they commandeered some eggs from a deserted farm, and some good, sweet hay for the horses, and spent the whole of Sunday hunting after the commando, but without success. They reported at Belmont, and subsequently joined us at Enslin.

"For goodness sake," said the chairman of the *Herald* board of directors before I went away, "do not get shot;" whereat the general manager, in his brisk, business-like way, remarked—"Dead men furnish no copy," or words to that effect. Really, I may claim to have exercised the greatest caution in regard to what turned out to be the Battle of Magersfontein, for, on the afternoon of the day we arrived at Enslin I viewed it through a pair of glasses from the top of a kopje over twenty miles away. There were a good many Australians on that kopje, and a good many murmurers. We had hoped to take a part in this fight, but it seemed that it was our fortune only to help constitute Lord Methuen's reserve. Not very exciting, but decidedly safe. Personally, I would have got further on, but already correspondents who had taken liberties were getting into trouble—indeed, one of them had been escorted back to Cape Town, and, moreover, it was not certain yet whether the Australians would march towards Kimberley or Jacobsdal. From the latter town it was suspected, too, that the Boers might send a force against us. I dared not move, for we were in momentary expectation of a local fight or marching orders.

Meanwhile, the battle went on without us. We sat on our chief outpost kopje, watched the puffs of smoke, occasionally saw a flash, and could just make out a speck in the sky, which was apparently a war balloon, sent to the front the previous week. When a puff of smoke at one kopje was closely followed by the appearance of a ball of mist at another, we said, "That is a shell bursting, and they've got the range exactly." It cost nothing to make these observations, and they might have been true. Who knows? Our basis of fact was slender enough—mere smoke, indeed; but a robust imagination is quite capable of filling in mere details. As for me, I do not pretend to a capacity for describing a battle going on over twenty miles away. To do that probably requires a maximum amount of practice united to a minimum amount of conscience.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BATTLE OF MAGERSFONTEIN—SOME OF THE DETAILS—HOW THE HIGHLANDERS SUFFERED.

We were now at the beginning of that ever memorable week in which, for the first time, the eyes of England were opened to the real nature of the task before her. Till Methuen's failure the war, in the light of public opinion, had gone well enough. We had won a few showy victories. Glencoe and Elandslaagte looked very creditable on the contents

bills and in the special editions of the illustrated papers. At Graspan, at Belmont, and at Modder River Lord Methuen's Kimberley relief column had steadily, though at some cost, pushed the enemy back. We had met the Boer, and we had everywhere beaten him in the field. True, there had been such unfortunate circumstances as the affair of Nicholson's Nek. Gallant and enterprising, General Symons fought the battle of Talana Hill to show the Boers, as he said, that British troops could attack them in a fortified position and beat them. He proved his theory at the cost of his life, and next day the troops retired, and were only saved at the cost of another bloodthirsty engagement. On our side we had the monopoly of the big headlines, and that satisfied the public. On the other hand, the Boers had many reasons to feel triumphant. They had hemmed in Ladysmith with a wall of fire and steel; Kimberley seemed to be in the hollow of their hand; and the reduction of Mafeking, closely invested, seemed but a matter of a few days.

Lord Methuen's task was purely and simply to relieve Kimberley. Starting from Orange River, he covered a distance of 50 miles without serious opposition. The remaining distance of 25 miles, the railway being destroyed, was to be covered by a big engagement somewhere about the Spytfontein kopjes, and a quick rush on the diamond city. From eight to ten days was allowed for the whole expedition. When as many weeks had been occupied, the British Government began to wake up to the magnitude of the work which it had undertaken, and to do what it had been advised by its most discerning critic to do at the very outset of the war—to send sufficient troops.

Modder River was practically an artillery duel. Of the two combatants we suffered the more. Cronje, had he chosen, might, on the evidence of the respective list of casualties, have claimed the engagement as a victory. He preferred the more tangible advantage of retiring to a position where he was confident the British force opposed to him would shatter itself in ineffectual assault.

The Magersfontein position may roughly be described as a triangle of veldt between two converging lines of irregular kopjes, covering a distance of several miles. The difficulty of this naturally strong position was immensely increased by the Boers, who, recognising the weakness of Methuen's force, spent the eleven days before the attack in constructing a series of entrenchments to the east and west, which perfectly protected their flanks. How complete such a defence was, and how superbly the methods of those rude farmers prevailed against the utmost skill of science, we had yet to learn.

As I have said, on Sunday, the 10th, the day we arrived at Enslin, the British bombarded the Boer position. For two hours thirty-one guns poured shrapnel and lyddite upon the front of Magersfontein kopjes without eliciting a single reply. No Boer gun spoke. The enemy either lay secure in his trenches, or was away from the place altogether. Our bombardment meant nothing but the news that the attack would be on the morrow. In the early dawn of the Monday, in pitch darkness and drenching rain, the attack commenced. The Highlanders were marched forward in quarter column. It was to be an assault with the bayonet. What the plan of battle was no one knew. No one knows now. The lead was given to the Highland Brigade under General Wauchope. It has been said that the gallant Scotsman altogether differed from Lord Methuen's plans, and that he went knowingly to his death. That statement has since been denied by his widow, and I, for one, accept the denial.

The Highland Brigade advanced in quarter column as if on parade. Suddenly a single rifle shot rang out, and, as the order was given to deploy, and the column was still in confusion, a murderous fire was poured in from a distance of less than 300 yards. The result was awful. The 73rd Regiment, which headed the attack, was literally cut to pieces. One man in six went down. In daylight not a man could have escaped. Wauchope fell, two Colonels were down, officers dropped by the score, and the repulsed brigade was in confusion. Perhaps the finest thing of this tragedy of the Highlanders is that, without officers, in the darkness, and against an unseen foe, they rallied, and they went back. Under such odds, decimated, broken, without command, these men actually got into the Boer shelter trenches—a feat almost incredible.

But, so far as the result of the fighting was concerned, the battle was lost. For the remainder of the day—for nine hours—the remnants of the Highland Brigade were kept under fire. Nothing in the whole story of the fight is more dreadful than that. What actually happened no one will ever know, since the best judges are silent in death. But I was on the spot almost before the firing had ceased, and this is what I have gathered from men who took part in the fight :—

On Sunday afternoon, about three o'clock, and amid a drizzling rain, Lord Methuen moved forward an advance column from his base at Modder River. In addition to the Guards' Brigade, the column included the Highland Brigade, consisting of the Black Watch, Gordons, Seaforths, Argyle and Sutherlands, and Light Infantry ; also the howitzer and several field and R.H.A. batteries, a naval 4.7 gun, and a balloon section. The naval gun took up position about three miles north of the river, and started shelling the Boer position

at 6000 yards. A strong force of artillery, cavalry, and infantry made a detour to the north-east, and the artillery opened fire, but failed to draw the enemy.

The Boers were posted on a long hill at right angles to a bend of the river, and from which, at acute angles, a succession of hills jutted out to the front. Between two of these the main Boer laager was established, and it is estimated that the enemy was not less than eighteen thousand strong. The action was commenced by the big gun with Lord Methuen opening fire at a range of about four miles. After a trial shot the gun was charged with lyddite, and the first shell fell right into the laager. Two lads who were engaged making coffee for the Boers were frightened by this trial shot, and made a speedy exit from the laager. They got clear just in time, and it is on their testimony that the destination of the shell is known. They cannot speak as to the effect, because they were looking too closely to their own safety to make any observations. They came down the hill close beside the laager, and gladly surrendered to the British. Our artillery fire was maintained with slight intermissions throughout the whole of the afternoon, and, as I have said, provoked no reply. Meanwhile the howitzers, field artillery, and infantry advanced along the side of the river for some distance, and then halted for the night.

It is supposed that the General's intention was to attack the enemy's left flank at the point where the main hill sloped towards the plain, or, rather, series of undulations which formed the flank. The men were exposed to the fury of a thunderstorm which occurred during the night, and had a comfortless time. About half-past three a general advance took place, and just before daylight General Wauchope, with the Highland Brigade, was close in front of the Boer position. From the fact that his brigade was then in line of quarter column, apparently he did not realise how close he was. Presently he touched a wire entanglement. Immediately a light which had been observed on the hill disappeared, a single shot was fired, and then came a perfect tornado of lead from front and flank into the devoted brigade. Varying orders were given, some crying "Advance," others "Retire." The Black Watch went on; the Seaforths, Argyle and Sutherlands, and the Gordons fell back. General Wauchope himself was caught in the entanglements. First his own servant, then an officer, and afterwards several men tried to rescue him, but they all fell riddled with bullets. The Black Watch is said to have lost between three and four hundred men in that terrible fire.

Mr. H. J. Whigham, an American correspondent, writes:—"Back they came, nearly as far as the rise which was afterwards known as Horse Artillery Hill, about 1500 yards from

the trenches, and there they rallied, as far as four battalions, all mixed and confused in the darkness, with not two-thirds of their officers left, could be said to rally. Perhaps, if the commanding officer had not fallen at the first shot, something might have been done to retrieve the disaster. But it is the fate of night attacks that, if they fail, they fail beyond repair. As it was, an attempt was made to re-form and charge with the bayonet—this time more to our right front, from where the enemy were pouring in a cross fire upon the brigade. But with companies, and even battalions, mingled together, with officers separated from their men in the darkness, and whole batches of men without officers at all, the attempt, gallant as it was, and even successful up to a certain point—for the Highlanders got into a few Boers lying out among the bushes in small shelter trenches—the final result remained the same."

Daylight came quickly, and disclosed the Boer position. At the foot of the range where they had established themselves they had dug trenches ten feet deep, and between 300 and 400 yards in front of those trenches were the skilfully-made barbed wire entanglements running the whole length of the trenches. A position hard to assail, yet it is a fact that some of the gallant Black Watch actually reached the trenches, and did service with their bayonets before falling under the rain of lead from the terraces of men on the side of the hill.

Daylight increasing, four batteries of artillery opened fire from the centre at one mile range, and the howitzer battery on the right and the R.H.A. on the left started shelling the Boer trenches at 4000 yards. In spite of the terrific artillery fire our infantry could not get near the enemy's trenches. About nine o'clock the Gordons attempted to rush the trenches, but without success, and although the Highland Light Infantry actually succeeded in reaching some of the trenches, they were ultimately compelled to retire owing to the severe cross fire, bringing, however, a number of prisoners with them.

For the most part, our artillery shelled an invisible enemy. Firing continued briskly on the right flank up to and after sunset, the 13th and 62nd batteries and the Horse Artillery shelling from a knoll on the right and front. About dusk three Boer guns posted on a line of kopjes on the left front opened on our batteries and the Lancers, but without doing much damage, and they soon ceased firing. Our troops then withdrew in perfect extended order, and bivouacked on ground about two miles to the rear of our furthest point of advance. Ambulance parties were out all night, and a large number of the wounded were brought into the base at Modder River, a considerable number, however, only being recovered on the following day.

Mr. H. J. Whigham's account of the doings from this point is a perfect condense of the statements I managed to collect. He writes as follows :—

"We waited under a hot sun, wondering from hour to hour what the outcome of the battle would be, until, about half-past one, an order came down from the General to the effect that the Highlanders were to hold the position until dark, when the Grenadiers and Scots Guards, and what was left of the Gordons, would attack with the bayonet. This was exceedingly pleasant for the Guards, who had to spend the afternoon in anticipation of a bayonet charge out of which not two men in five would have come alive. It is only fair to say that the officers who received the order faced the situation with perfect equanimity, never doubting that their men would follow them. Fortunately the events of the afternoon saved a fine brigade from what must have been practical annihilation.

"Between half-past one and two the Highlanders, unable any longer to suffer the continued fire from the trenches, took the opportunity of a heavy cannonade to retire upon our guns, and in so doing retreated a good deal farther than was intended, leaving the brave gunners absolutely unprotected, until the Scots Guards went in to support them. It was pitiful to see staff officers urging the poor Highlanders to rally again, and sad to hear the doleful wail of the bagpipes as the pipers strove in vain to rouse the fighting spirit of the Scotchmen. It must be remembered that the brigade had suffered the fatigue of a night march without food, and practically without sleep; after being led like sheep to the slaughter, they had been left for nine hours under a persistent fire from the trenches, with no protection from sun or bullets; to expect them to rally and fight again in the afternoon was to expect the impossible. Still they did rally behind the guns, and were preparing to go forward again, when suddenly the enemy's guns, till then silent, opened fire upon our limbers and cavalry, round which the Scotchmen were assembling. That was the last straw. When the first shell burst, the men, who were in close order, huddled together in dispirited fashion, turned their backs deliberately on the enemy, and streamed back as far as the General's flag.

"This was enough for Lord Methuen, who had, perhaps, hardly realised up to this point how decisive his reverse had been. With one brigade worn out and cut to pieces, it would have been sheer madness to sacrifice the Guards in another night assault. The Ninth Brigade, under Colonel Pole-Carew, had made a demonstration on our left, and had failed to discover any means of delivering a flank attack. The day was lost, unless, indeed, the enemy should evacuate his position during the night, as he did at Modder River. Evi-

dently Lord Methuen had still hopes of such a movement, for he made no attempt to withdraw his troops to Modder River under cover of darkness. Unfortunately, on this occasion, we had not turned his flank, and we had hardly made our attack in front sufficiently convincing, in spite of the noble efforts of our artillery, to induce General Cronje to fall back upon another position.

"After a bitterly cold night on the veldt we awoke to find the Boer trenches just as full of men as they had been on the previous evening, and we had no choice but to go back to Modder River with the best possible grace, which we did about eleven o'clock on Tuesday morning. The Boers, not sorry, perhaps, to see us go, showed their good spirits by some exceedingly pretty artillery practice as the column retreated. But their shells, though well aimed, were singularly ineffective, and our men paid about as much attention to them as they would have done to a shower of snowballs. Altogether, it was a sad day for Scotland, yet there was a little cold comfort in the thought that, though one brigade was ruined, the rest of the division showed no signs of demoralisation."

Magersfontein meant to us a loss of nearly a thousand killed and wounded, and the memory of it will endure for many a year.

One of the most modest of the Magersfontein heroes is Captain Probyn, of the Army Medical Corps, who served throughout the campaign with the Gordons, and with whom I had several interesting chats. His testimony places it beyond all doubt that, after the fighting was supposed to be suspended, the Boers fired on the ambulance waggon. Thinking that they might not have seen the red cross flag, Captain Probyn took it off the waggon, and placing himself in front of the vehicle, waved the flag over his head. The effect was only to provoke a new stream of bullets. How the intrepid surgeon escaped is a wonder to everybody. Ultimately the waggon had to retire.

Probyn worked in the field all that disastrous day, and although the bullets, with their pussy-cat preamble and final whizz, worried him at first, "after a while," he says, "I began to get almost regardless of them. But I did feel a bit ill when a man fell dead on each side of me. Down I went, too, for the time being, and I just had the sensation that I was going to get it in the head. 'Are you hit, sir, are you hit hard?' I heard one of the men say. This roused me, and I went on again."

Amongst other stories of the big fight is a particularly grim one. That renegade Britishers, including some who had left their own country for their country's good, were fighting against us is unquestionable.

"Don't kill me, I'm a Glasgow man!" shrieked one of them as he threw up his hands before a stern Highlander, who had reached the Boer trench.

"You're a disgrace," was the reply, as the Highlander ran his bayonet through the man's quivering body.

I believe this to be a true account, but I have not been able to verify it beyond all doubt; therefore plainly say so. How far these renegades were rendering enforced service against us is a question to which no satisfactory answer was forthcoming, and, naturally, much depends on it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE AFTERMATH OF THE BATTLE—TREATMENT OF THE WOUNDED—THE HIGHLAND BRIGADE BURIES ITS DEAD.

"There'll be many a sore heart in Scotland to-day," remarked one of the Highland Light Infantry, with whom I talked at Modder River on the subject of the holocaust at Magersfontein, for he reckoned that by this time the sad news would be known in the dear land, so many of whose gallant sons fell under the withering fire of the Boers at daylight on Monday. "Yes," he continued; "and the worst of it is that nearly all the killed were men lately called in from the reserve, the majority married men with families." That is, indeed, the side of war which gives pause to the Jingo, which teaches the most thoughtless men to realise what horrible work war is. And there were many sad hearts there when I arrived on the battlefield. Not that the troops were depressed—the British soldier is not built that way. But many had fallen, and it had been a sad day.

Several trains laden with wounded had been sent down to the hospitals in the rear, but there still remained many sufferers awaiting their turn. The best in the place had been given to them, and the fact that some lay in the open, roundabout the hotel, in the garden of which stood the headquarters' tents, did not imply neglect; for each night was delightfully calm and cool after a hot day, and probably the open air was the best place for the parched and fevered wounded men. The medical staff had had a busy time, and were still very busy. "Why," said one of them to me, "before we had got our ambulance waggon opened up ready for work the wounded began to come in. Some had crawled away from the trenches and walked in, and it was a pathetic sight to see them assisting each other along—a man helping a fainting comrade, being, perhaps, more in need of aid himself than he to whom he gave his kindly and generous help."

Yes, the medical staff had much to do, and did it with a kindness, tenderness, and devotion which won the hearts of all who observed. First, it had been a fight between Britons and Boers. Then it was human science and skill battling against the natural effects of terrible wounds, with the varying fortune incidental to the circumstances. Sometimes the odds in favour of grim death were too heavy, and in the midst of kindly ministrations the sufferer passed quietly away. But it may be claimed that the medical staff did everything short of miracles, saved many a man's life, many a wife's husband, many a child's father. The ambulance trains were a triumph of organisation. In great corridor carriages couches, covered with hair mattresses, were placed, an upper and lower tier on each side, the whole length of the car. In the passage between the couches the red cross nurses, the Florence Nightingales of to-day, moved noiselessly and deliberately about their duties. Sweetest of women these, their work the noblest on God's fair earth.

The kitchen car was fitted with every requisite, and busy men prepared the sufferer's food from a stock of material which enabled the surgeons to order practically what they liked, with a remarkable certainty that the order would be fulfilled. The most costly wines and other stimulants were at hand, and there is no better equipped druggist's shop in Melbourne than the pharmacy car of one of those trains. Doctors and nurses were suitably accommodated, and, altogether, it may be said that, however poorly the British soldier is treated when hale and well, neither thought nor money is spared to ensure his comfortable conveyance to a hospital should he fall wounded on the field of battle. And, as I have previously said, the wounded enemy fares, in our hands, quite as well as does one of our own soldiers.

Lord Methuen fully acknowledges the uniform kindness with which our fallen men were treated by the enemy after the fighting was over at Magersfontein. The Boers carried water to them, and generally facilitated their removal, but took the precaution of blindfolding our bearers before they were admitted into the position. The blindfolded men were faced outwards, allowed to take up their burden, and then ordered to march, being warned that if they attempted to turn their heads they would be shot down. No heads were turned. The Boer is up to all sorts of tricks, and he does not make presents to the enemy. A surgeon who carried a revolver under his red cross badge was politely asked to surrender the weapon. He refused to do so, therefore the Boers took both him and the revolver. That surgeon will play the game fairly next time.

How am I to describe the sadly impressive scene at Modder River on the evening of the 13th of December? The sun has just set, and the period of twilight has commenced. The great heat of the day has passed, and although there is not a breath of wind, the air is cool and refreshing. The whole British camp at Modder River is astir. Not, however, with the always gay bustle of war-like preparation; not with the laughter and jest which—such strange creatures are we—almost invariably come from the lips of men who dress for the parade which precedes a plunge into battle. There is this evening a solemn hush over the camp, and the men move from their lines in irregular and noiseless parties, for the time their pipes put out of sight, and their minds charged with serious thought. To what is given this homage of silence as the soldiers gather, and mechanically, without word of command or even request of any kind, leave a roadway from the head-quarters' flag to a point a quarter of a mile away, where a dark mound of upraised earth breaks the monotonous flatness of the whitey-green veldt? For these are mere spectators, deeply interested, it is true, yet still only spectators. What, then, is afoot? Civilians, hats off, and attention every one. The Highland Brigade is about to bury its dead.

Stand here at the head of the lines of spectator soldiers—here where that significant mound is; here at the spot selected as a last resting-place—and observe. The whole Brigade, some of the regiments sadly attenuated, is on parade, and has formed funeral procession, under Colonel Pole-Carew. First come the pipers, and it is seen that they have for the nonce discarded their service kit, and are in the full dress of their several clans. "Savage and shrill" is the Byronic description of the pibroch, which, in the "noon of night," startled the joyous revellers before Waterloo. Now it is a low, deep wail, yet voluminous and weirdly euphonious, that comes from the music-makers of the Highlands, and every heart stands still to listen. Oh, so sad it is! "The Flowers of the Forest"—("He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down")—they are—playing, shall I say? No; rather does the music flow out from the very souls of the pipers in a succession of strangely harmonious moans, and soul calls to soul. Yet beneath it all, beneath the dominant note of heart-bursting sorrow, lurks that other element—"the savage and shrill." Yes, indeed; soul calls to soul through these pipes—calls for sobs and tears for the brave who have fallen—calls for vengeance on the yet unbeaten foe. The Highland Brigade is burying its dead.

Following the pipers marches a small armed party. It would have been the firing party, but volleys are not fired

over soldiers' graves in time of war. Then the chaplain, in his robes, preceding the corpse of General Wauchope (who had fallen at the head of his men), borne on a stretcher. One of the bearers is of the dead man's kin—a promising young Highland officer. Then come the several regiments of the Brigade, the Black Watch leading. The men march with arms reversed, stately, erect, stern, grim. They lift their feet high for the regulation step of the slow, funeral march. But observe that even in their grim sternness these men are quivering with an emotion which they cannot control—an emotion which passes out in magnetic waves from their ranks to those of their comrade spectators of England and Ireland, and brings tears to the eyes and choking sobs to the throats of the strong and the brave. "Talk not of grief till thou hast seen the tears of warlike men!" The Highland Brigade is burying its dead.

In a separate grave, at the head of a long, shallow trench, the body of General Wauchope is laid, in sight of and facing the foe. The chaplain advances, and the solemn service for the dead is recited in a clear and markedly Scotch voice, while all bow their heads and either listen or ponder. A grief-stricken kinsman's quivering hand drops earth upon the body at the words, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," and the grave of the General is quickly filled in. There, beside the trench already lie the corpses of fifty officers and men. They had been carried to the burial place earlier in the day. There, at the end nearer to the General's grave, the officers are laid. Beside them their comrades of minor rank in life, all brought to a worldly level by the hand of death, are placed in the trench. It is an excavation only about three feet deep, but it is twelve feet wide, and the dead men are put feet to feet in two parallel rows, twenty-five on each side. They are fully attired, just as they were brought in from the battlefield, and each is wrapped in his blanket. The sporan is turned over on to the dead face, and the kilt thrown back, the rigid limbs showing bare and scarred in the unfilled trench. The Highland Brigade is burying its dead.

Once more the chaplain steps forward, and a new funeral service is commenced. Again great, powerful men weep. Some grow faint, some pray, some curse. "Oh, God! oh, God!" is the cry which comes from bursting hearts as comrades are recognised, and soil is sprinkled over them by hard, rough hands, which tremble now as they never trembled in the face of a foe. Then the burial parties get to work, gently as a sweet woman tucks the bedclothes round her sleeping child. The soft soil falls kindly upon the shreds of humanity beneath. Men cease to weep, and catch something of the "rapture of repose" of which a poet has sung. Mother Earth

has claimed her own, and the brave are sleeping their last sleep in her kindly embrace. Again the dirge of the pipes, and the sweet strains of "Lochaber no more" fill the evening air.* The Highland Brigade is burying its dead.

Meanwhile, the cable has carried its budget of sad messages to the old land. There, in a wee cottage by the bonnie burn side, the bereaved mother bows her aged head and says, "Thy will be done." There also the heart-broken once wife, newly-made widow, pours out the anguish of her soul as she clasps her fatherless bairn to her warm bosom. Her man comes no more. For the Highland Brigade has buried its dead.

CHAPTER XIX.

A New South Wales Company—Highlanders at Enslin—Something About Rations—State of the Regiment.

Late on the night of 9th December an infantry unit from New South Wales, which had arrived at Cape Town a few days previously, arrived at Enslin, and became part of the Australian Regiment. A fine-looking lot of young fellows, under Captain Legge, looking very fit after a ninety hours' ride in the train. They bore the letter "A" on their shoulder straps, and, to elicit an answer, I asked an officer what it meant.

"Australia," was the reply.

"So I had suspected," I rejoined; "a good, comprehensive, Parkes-like way of describing men from New South Wales."

"Ah," said the officer; "we did it in anticipation of Federation, and we thought you'd all do it."

But it did not appear that the Cornstalks expected to form part of an Australian Regiment. On the contrary, they fully anticipated being attached to one of the British. It seems to me that, federal as they are, they did not regard a bit too favourably the then existing arrangements. The new-comers brought their swords, chevrons, and the like, but quickly shed all this glitter and got into fighting form. The accession of the New South Wales infantry brought our strength up to about seven hundred. The representatives of the mother colony soon showed themselves smart, active, and what one officer called "judgmatic." They worked splendidly, and were as quiet and well-behaved a lot of young fellows as you could wish to see.

"Men, this is not my fault," are the words which General Wauchope is reported to have uttered when he fell riddled with bullets in front of the Boer trenches at Magersfontein. There continued to be much talk still on the subject of the disaster; it was the absorbing topic of interest, and conversa-

tion turned on two questions, "How did it happen?" and "What are we to do next?"

The brave General's body had been raised from the grave where the Highlanders laid it, and carried by rail to a little hamlet near Magersfontein, within about two hundred miles of Cape Town. There in the local cemetery it was re-interred. General Wauchope's charger was sent home, and thus a pathetic episode of the campaign appeared to have closed.

The second battalion of the Gordon Highlanders, the old 75th, joined us at Enslin on the 16th. These gallant fellows had emerged from the disaster of Sunday with a loss of nearly fifty killed and wounded. Two of their officers were amongst the killed, and three were wounded. The heroes of Dargai are not the sort of men who quarrel with the fortune of war, and to say that they were dissatisfied with that Sunday's business is only to declare that they are human.

Many tales of the battle did these Highlanders tell; plain, unvarnished tales they were, characterised, if the story were a personal one, by a modesty and reserve which almost everywhere marks those who belong to the veteran regiments of the service. They might be little more than recruits, but they early recognise that it is not for the individual to boast of his prowess. The regiment expected certain things of the man. If he didn't fulfil the expectation he was not fit to belong to the regiment, therefore he did, it may be, heroic things. And, bad as the Boer is in some respects, he recognises gallantry in others. For instance, one of the Highland Brigade was found lying in the scant cover of a small tuft of salt bush. He was shot through the head, and lay with his rifle firmly gripped in his dead hands. Around the corpse were counted three hundred empty cartridge cases, showing with what grim determination had the man carried on his part of the fight while the bullets fell in showers around him before the coming of that which passed through his brain.

"That man was a soldier," was the Boer tribute to the gallant foe.

The stories of individual gallantry multiplied daily, and the medical staff figured well in them. Some of the doctors will probably get the Victoria Cross, fit reward for courage and intrepidity under fire while doing their duty to the wounded. But I suspect that many a meritorious case will be overlooked, simply because it did not happen to be observed by the right eyes, and failed to get into the official despatches. It is quite marvellous how so many of the doctors escaped.

What with the Gordons, a section of the Engineers (who had done wonders to improve the water supply), a section of Artillery, the Rimington Guides, and our own men, the force at Enslin under Colonel Hoad was now considerable. Our men had been very hardly worked, and their rest much broken

by the arrangements for standing at arms at uncanny hours. Moreover, it is a gusty, dusty place, and the amount of grit he got in his food was such that the soldier might be pardoned the suspicion that he was eating more than his appointed peck of dirt, and getting it all at once.

"In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love." On the veldt all men's fancies lightly turn to thoughts of "tucker." What ye shall eat and what ye shall drink were matters about which thought had to be taken, or the end of the Australian Regiment would have been quite too absurdly prosaic for anything. That an army travels on its stomach is a very old figure of speech, and it expresses a great deal. Not the least important of the work done by the force in South Africa was that of the Army Service Corps. For it had to keep the several camps supplied with provisions —if possible with fresh provisions. So far, except when actually travelling by rail or road, we had fresh meat and bread, with one exception, daily. A supply train sent from Orange River reached Enslin camp about two o'clock in the morning very regularly, and it seemed to me that the food was good. Perhaps the fresh meat was hardly sufficient for Australians, the allowance being a pound a man per diem, all bone weighed in. Sometimes the proportion of bone was so large that the actual eatable allowance per man was materially reduced.

As we had had some three weeks' experience of the rationing, and found it so even and regular, the scale may be given. Here is the usual daily allowance per man :—Fresh meat (beef or mutton), one pound ; bread, one and a quarter pounds ; coffee, third of ounce ; tea, sixth of ounce ; sugar, three ounces ; compressed vegetables, one ounce ; salt, half ounce ; pepper, thirty-sixth of ounce. The reserve ration was the same, except that preserved meat was served instead of fresh, and hard biscuits (five to the pound) instead of bread. "Forty-niners" these biscuits are called, because they are perforated with all but fifty holes. Some men gauge alike their dental capacity and their appetites by the number of holes they can dispose of while working through one of these biscuits.

"I have never," remarked a medical officer, "been able to cover more than thirty-six holes yet at one meal."

Personally, with the aid of a cup of coffee, I have "gone" the whole forty-nine at breakfast, and my teeth stood the strain admirably. These biscuits, by the way, with some of the bully beef over from dinner, make a good "cracker hash" for tea, if the cook knows how to handle them. My own attendant succeeded in doing so fairly well, but an attempt to serve up the remnants of the hash as rissoles was not the great success I had anticipated. The bread was from the

field bakeries at Orange River, and was not always good. Some of the medical officers attributed a prevalence of diarrhœa—in only a few cases did it take serious form—less to the water than to sour, ill-baked loaves. The compressed vegetables were a combination of potato, cabbage, turnip, carrot, and parsnip, and the greatest of these, apparently, was the carrot. I never got to like compressed vegetables.

What a valuable thing is the Wolseley pocket-book, favoured of war correspondents. It is of small moment to the commentator who is not satisfied with things (as the pocket-book says they ought to be) that the instructions given are out of date, and the circumstances unsuitable for following them. I heard some amateur criticisms, the basis of which was the famous pocket-book, but give me the commanding officer who finds short and effective ways of doing things, and who is guided less by inexorable rule than by the plain dictates of common sense. In all that he had done since assuming command of the Australian Regiment I had not necessarily agreed with Colonel Hoad, but he is unquestionably a man who knows how to meet the exigencies of changing circumstances. When it seemed likely that the well water here was causing sickness amongst the men, and the doctors said it would be wise to boil it, the Colonel got hold of a four hundred gallon iron tank that was lying idle, had it cleansed and filled, dug a fireplace under it, and soon had a big pot going. Then, if a man drank unboiled water, it was his own fault.

I lived, at Enslin, next door to a medical trinity, for in the tent nearest mine were Majors M'Williams and Toll, and Captain Hopkins. Alas! two of that happy party sleep the sleep that endures! The medical brethren dwelt together in the most perfect peace and amity. Those of the sick who were not in hospital were paraded before them every morning, and to any perplexing case the thought of the three minds, the combined knowledge and experience, were given, usually with the happiest results, for the interval between the beginning of the sick stage and the record, "fit for duty," was rarely more than a few days.

A quietly merry trio were our doctors, and perhaps not the least potent of their remedies was the magical influence of their sunny good-humour and unvarying cheerfulness. Just in front of them the dispensing tent was pitched, and the doctors could wish no more careful, attentive, and gentle lieutenant than he who was our Sergeant-Compounder, Ahearn. When the South Africa military project was mooted in Victoria, Ahearn, who was a corporal in our medical corps, offered his services. But no medical party was sent, and Ahearn was ultimately accepted as a private in the Victorian infantry unit. He was soon orderly to Doctor Hopkins, and his promotion was rapid. He was given charge of the phar-

macy department, and was so expert in dental cases that they were all left in his hands. Very first-rate work was done then and afterwards by Sergeant Ahearn.

In his official despatch, sent to the Victorian Secretary for Defence at this time, Colonel Hoad said :—"The men suffer very much from dysentery, but every precaution possible is being taken in the way of boiling water, etc.

"The regiment is now formed as follows :—Colonel J. C. Hoad, commanding ; Major G. A. Eddy, second in command ; Captain G. R. Lascelles (Royal Fusiliers) Adjutant ; Regimental Sergeant-Major, A. W. Johnston ; Quartermaster-Sergeant, J. Paul. Regimental staff, 5 ; New South Wales, 125 ; Victorian Company, 123 ; Victorian Mounted Rangers, 125 ; South Australian Company, 125 ; West Australian Company, 130 ; Tasmanian Company, 80 ; Lieutenant-Commander Colquhoun (unattached), 1 ; total, 714.

"Commander Colquhoun has since joined the Naval Brigade.

"Whether Lord Methuen will work the troops as one force I am unable to say. We were just within sound of the fighting at the Modder River on the 10th and 11th.

"I have been C.O. of the troops at this station since arrival. There is no crime in the regiment, and the men are as fit as can be expected. I expect hourly to hear of a move from here."

CHAPTER XX.

Our First Shot—The Rimington Guides—Ethics of Commandeering.

The first shot from a member of the Australian Regiment was fired near Enslin on Saturday, the 16th. Private Inglis, of the Mounted Rifles, one of the Jubilee Detachment, enjoys the distinction of having fired it. Probably he also enjoys the consciousness that it did no damage. It had been necessary to gather firewood for camp purposes, and a party of Western Australians, escorted by two Mounted Riflemen, was detailed to accompany the mule waggon and bring back a load. The party was in charge of Lieutenant Campbell (W.A.), and Quartermaster-Sergeant Pearce, Mounted Rifles, went in the waggon.

On our men approaching a half-dismantled house, about five miles from camp, and apparently within the Orange Free State, five mounted Boers suddenly emerged and fired upon the Australians. It was one of those favourite Boer surprise parties, but it was hardly strong enough. None of the shots took effect, and as our men numbered thirteen rifles, the odds were very much in their favour. Inglis was smartly off

his horse and let fly, but the Boers had not waited to ascertain the effect of their fugitive sort of attack, and disappeared in a cloud of red dust. They had fired at a range of about 800 yards, and apparently in the wild fashion of men in a great hurry.

Care had been taken in approaching the house, or the Australians might have fared badly. Indeed, there is nothing the Boer seemed to enjoy better than assembling in armed parties at some farm, and there waiting for the British. The thing was done the same week near Belmont. A Captain of Mounted Infantry, his Lieutenant, and three men were killed, and several wounded. A patrol had been ambushed. The Boers who play this game generally have their horses at hand and get away. About the time of the Modder River fight it was played with such effect that only six out of a British party of twenty reached the house. It is said that in the presence of cold steel the Boers wanted to surrender, but it was Tommy's turn now ; there was no restraining officer at hand, and the bayonet did its grim work unchecked. These things are amongst the happenings of the campaign, but, of course, there are parallels for them in European war.

On returning to camp early the same evening, Lieutenant Campbell reported his adventure, and it transpired that five horsemen, evidently identical with the sniping Boers, had been seen during the afternoon by one of our high-placed outposts. Colonel Hoad sent out a mounted patrol under Lieutenant Staughton, and what was left of the fading daylight was used for reconnoitring, but no Boers were seen. The incident showed with what caution small parties should move in this unsettled country. The officer with a lofty, contemptuous disregard of the enemy is not necessarily the best kind of man to have charge of a patrol. Rather the wary, careful, tactful man, who is quite prepared to take necessary, but incurs no unnecessary, risks.

The Rimington Guides are cut out for patrol work. Most of them speak Dutch and Kaffir, besides English ; they know the country well, and, better still, they know the wiles of the foe. Our Mounted Rifles of all ranks have learned invaluable lessons from the Guides. They did not require to be taught courage. The Rimingtons have shown them how to combine this prime soldierly quality with tact and caution. Indeed, we were all learning. One day I had occasion to ride out with a mounted patrol who were seeking a commando of Boers on our west. It was necessary for me to return earlier than the patrol, and I came back alone, not even thinking of danger. Thus does the contemptuous pride of race reveal itself. But the thing did not happen again. The Boer sniper was everywhere, and if his name was not legion, it was something like it.

This campaign was prolific of lessons for everybody concerned, and I learnt my share. There was also, however, for some of us confirmation in actual experience of views held and promulgated in Australia. Of nothing was I more convinced, in those days at Enslin, than of the soundness of my own opinion, when it was proposed to send troops from Australia, that mounted rifles would be especially valuable. The Australian Regiment had, up to this, but one company of mounted men, the Victorian unit, and it had had an amount of work to do beyond reasonable expectation of the capacity of horses, not to speak of men.

On the march Captain M'Leish had really no body of men under his own immediate command. His company was broken up into small parts, forming an advance guard, rear guard, flanking parties, and patrols. In fact, the column moved, and properly moved, within a screen of Mounted Rifles so far as about a hundred men could provide it. And as the patrols and others had a good deal of backwards and forwards, outwards and inwards riding, it may be fairly said that some of those engaged covered quite double the distance marched by the column. A march of twenty miles for the infantry meant, therefore, something like forty for some of the Mounted Rifles.

That is all right, and quite endurable so far as it goes, but if at the end of the march the company had to furnish patrols in front of the camp outposts, and do it at once, the work was overdone. "But we must have the patrols," say the responsible officers, "and we have no others." Instead of a company, we ought to have had a battalion of Mounted Rifles for the work we had been given to do. The regiment Australia had proposed to raise, and which Sir Charles Holled Smith would probably have commanded, must have included a due proportion of mounted men. As it was, our horses were badly gruelled. Two died in one day. "Oh, it is the horse disease!" was one of the explanations. My opinion is that the horses died of pure exhaustion, owing to a strain which stress of circumstances imposed upon them. There are limits to equine endurance, and I just suspect that sometimes orders were given by men who do not quite realise what these limits are.

Although at this stage the Australian Regiment was fretful and impatient because it was not in the forefront of the fighting, its position was an honourable one, and it did good service. Modder River was at that time Lord Methuen's head-quarters. Honeynest Kloof, held by regulars, was next in rear, fourteen miles away; then came Enslin, where we were, eighteen miles from the river. In rear of us troops were stationed at Belmont and at Witteputs. They, of course, like ourselves, would have very much preferred to have been

further forward, but they had to find what comfort they could in the statement that all north of the Orange River was the front.

Moreover, that statement was strictly true. We were in the midst of a considerable number of disloyal Cape colonists, many of them Boers who have, within late years, crossed over from the Orange Free State to establish their homes under the Union Jack. They were quite willing to accept all the advantages of British rule, but blood is thicker than water, and on war breaking out these people, almost to a man, either openly or furtively, placed themselves in opposition to the British cause. Many left their homes, at considerable sacrifice to themselves, and joined some commando; others stayed at home and acted as spies upon the British movements.

These last were naturally the more difficult to deal with. It is known that our every movement was carefully watched and reported upon. Several prowling Dutchmen were arrested before our arrival, and two of them were so vociferous in their protestations of friendship for the British that they were set at liberty. It was regarded as remarkable, first, that shortly afterwards this place was attacked by a thousand Boers, and troops had to be sent from Modder River to drive them away; secondly, that the two liberated prowlers, plus three armed friends, reappeared after our coming. They were arrested, and required to "show cause," as lawyers say, why they should not be treated as spies.

Brief mention of these things is sufficient to explain the situation, to show how necessary it was for Lord Methuen to not only fight the foe in his immediate front, but to see that his rear was adequately protected. To help in affording that protection, and to guard the right rear flank on the frontier of the Free State, were the functions of the Australian Regiment at Enslin. A great deal of work had to be done daily, for there was no end of patrolling and watching day and night. The troops not thus employed were kept busy digging trenches, building parapets, and otherwise providing against a possible, and not improbable, new attempt by the enemy to seize the railway line and the valuable military positions formed by the kopjes on both sides of it. Both on our east, in the Orange Free State, and on our west, in British territory, parties of the enemy, more or less considerable, were seen every day, and Colonel Hoad had an anxious time.

The Boer was heard of all round us, and the whole line from the Orange to the Modder River, had to be maintained in strength. This employed a lot of troops. Three companies of Gordons went to Graspan, the scene of one of Lord Methuen's fights, five miles south of us. Sergeant Geary and ten Victorian Mounted Rifles were also detached with them. Some regiments were split up into fragments, a company

here, a company there, all along the railway from Cape Town to Modder River, the longest line of communication that was ever established since Napoleon's disastrous march to Moscow.

Our one Major, Eddy, had so much more than a man's fair share of toil that Captain Cameron, Tasmania, was given Major's duty, another evidence of how much better the Australian commandants' scheme would have been than that actually worked, there being a palpable insufficiency of senior officers for the due working of a regiment, especially when so large a proportion of the force was continually on outpost. Captain Selheim, a Queensland officer, was, about this time, attached to us. Why, as an infantry man, he went to the mounted unit, which did not want officers, and not to the infantry unit, which did, I do not know, unless it was that the Queenslander, a big man, prefers riding to the tiresome operation known as padding the hoof.

A certain amount of commandeering was done by the patrols. Rebel Dutchmen, who had deserted their farms and left their poultry behind, saw them no more.

"It isn't a bit of harm," said one of the Rimington Guides, by way of explanation, "to take all the food you can get on the farm of a man who has cleared out and joined the enemy."

"But," I remarked, "the fact of a farm being deserted does not necessarily prove that the owner is a rebel."

"I think it does," was the reply; "for, even suppose he cleared out some weeks ago for fear of the Boers, he must know that we are now in occupation, and would have returned, as many have done."

Having in mind several recent acts of treachery on the part of farmers, it was not considered safe for small or unarmed parties to visit farms within a few miles of us where supplies might be purchased. Kaffir boys made good messengers, and some of us were able to make more grateful additions to the commissariat. I had goose for dinner, as the guest of an officer one day, and I know it was not a commandeered bird, but one honestly paid for.

A waggon carrying supplies for Modder River halted here on its journey north at a period when the men were at leisure. It was a profitable halt for the enterprising waggoner. He asked what he liked for tobacco, sardines, tea, candles, etc., and sold out in a few minutes. He took on a cask of vinegar wherewith to excite enthusiasm at Modder River. His waggon was much lighter, his pocket heavier, before he had finished with the Australians. Of course, the trader was a Scotchman. It was always so. At Orange River, De Aar, and wherever else trade was to be done in those troublous times, the enterprising exile from the land o' cakes did the best part, if not the whole, of the trade. He took big risks, but generally got profitably through.

CHAPTER XXI.

Trip to Orange River—A Sleeping Giant—Christmas Approaches—Letters from Home.

I went, one "slack" day, by train to Orange River. There was a considerable British force there, including the New South Wales Mounted Rifles. The rules governing the movements of travellers were being very strictly applied, for the place was under martial law, and no precaution to guard against the knavish tricks of the Boer was abated. Naturally, the Orange River bridge, a magnificent structure, was of superlative value to our forces, and the Boers knew it. We all acquired a wider and fuller appreciation of the enemy's powers and resources than we had entertained a month previously. There did not appear to be much water in the river, but heavy rains in the Free State would quickly broaden what, in flood time, must be a very great stream.

I was able, at Orange River, to assist in getting some needed supplies for some of the troops at Enslin, and the wonder was that, although the local storekeeper could charge whatever he liked, and be sure to get it, his figures remained at such a reasonable level that a ten-pound note went a long way. Grog was at pretty stiff prices, and the big firm who controlled the supply all along the line appeared to be coining money. It's an ill wind, etc. Many poor folks suffered by this war, as we realised when the foraging parties brought in pickings from the *lares et penates* of half-wrecked houses, or the engineers commandeered the material of a deserted building in order to round off the new ramp at our railway siding. There was some talk of annexing the piano still at the ruins of a cottage said to have been occupied by a magistrate, but it was not removed. In all this there was suggestion of domestic misery, but those who were engaged supplying provisions or extras to the troops did not find the least cause for complaint.

Passing through Belmont, I chatted with some of our fellow-subjects of America, for the Canadian Regiment occupied the post immediately in rear of ours. "I'm getting very tired of it," said one of these stalwart volunteers; "we expected a short, sharp campaign, and a quick return. This watch and wait business is very tiresome." Yet the Australians had a shade more of it than their Dominion cousins—watching and waiting, plus a great deal of laborious work.

Interesting are the inscriptions which Tommy Atkins loved to make on the walls of the railway carriages when he was going to the front. For instance: "Private X. Lancers, proceeding to avenge Majuba." "Private Y. 12th Royal Lancers, on the way to death or glory," and so forth. These men know what war means, yet they're always eager for it, as also

are delicately-made officers, eagerly solicitous about morning baths, and resentful of a "stranger" in their tea. Civilisation has not made us effete.

Noble specimens of great physical manhood one sees wherever British troops are. Some first-rate ones were in the lines of the Gordon Highlanders alongside us at Enslin. One particularly, whom I saw at Orange River, may be mentioned. He was a Sergeant of the Munster Regiment, which furnished quite its full proportion of tough cases. The Sergeant had to wait on the station for a train to Modder River, and knowing that such a wait might mean anything from ten minutes to ten hours, he asked the military police to warn him, and was soon fast asleep. Full length on the hard ground he lay, in all his accoutrements, no pillow, no covering. And from eight in the evening till one in the morning he slept like a particularly good baby.

"There's a man for you," commented an officer who admired the great proportions of the sleeping giant. "I should like to see him drawing rations. A soldier, every inch of him, as hard as nails." On just such much-enduring men in her army and navy must our Empire depend.

It seemed now quite beyond doubt that we should remain at Enslin over Christmas, and the anxiety of the excellent Mrs. Bob Crachit over her Christmas dinner was as nothing in comparison with that of one of the companies who preferred to make its own "duff." The Victorian units were amongst those who accepted ready-made puddings, obtained from Cape Town, thankfully and with an infinite confidence in their fellow-man, the maker.

It was while the Christmas pudding question was a burning one, and the cleavage between parties—*i.e.*, that which favoured the camp-made article, and that which didn't—was very marked, that I was accosted by a sergeant who was looking for some revolver ammunition other than Dum Dum.

"Why won't Dum Dum do?" I asked.

"Oh, we want to shoot a horse that's broken his leg," was the reply.

I was able to direct him to some Mauser cartridges, and then fell into a reflective mood. The more merciful Mauser for the poor beast which had to die, the Dum Dum for our fellow-man, the Boer, and this at the season of peace on earth, to men of good-will. Surely the human puzzle is the greatest of all puzzles! It is proper to say here, however, that, later on, the Dum Dum ammunition was absolutely withdrawn.

Meanwhile the heavy mails showed that we were not forgotten at home, and the camp was full of Christmas cards. "Season's greetings to their comrades on service in South Africa" was inscribed on the handsome card, a copy of which came to each member of the 1st Victorian Infantry Battalion

from the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men at home. The First Battalion men lined up and gave the senders three hearty cheers.

Mail day was an irregular institution with us. You might, perchance, learn that a steamer from Australia had reached Cape Town, but that gave you no idea of the time at which letters which she might carry for you would be delivered. The whole service was spasmodic and distracting, and the tours made by the letters before they reached their destination showed that the management did not in the least object to a few hundred miles additional carriage of anything bearing a postage stamp. Some, at least, were fortunate enough to get news from folks at home. I leave my readers to picture in their minds the eagerness with which the mail deliveries were looked forward to, the crowding around the company distributors, the nervous haste with which envelopes were torn open, the deep satisfaction of those whom the post had favoured, the heart-bursting disappointment of the man who had expected a letter, and the reply to whose anxious inquiry was, "Nothing for you." I have seen strong, rough men almost cry at this intimation. Oh! those letters, the connecting links between husbands, sons, and brothers here, wives, parents, and sisters in the dear land from which we came. Might I not easily devote a column to the deep pathos of mail day at Enslin? Yes, and all the easier because I happened to be sometimes amongst the disappointed.

Thus had I written in December at Enslin. It was with a heart charged with gratitude to the kindly people especially concerned that, four months afterwards, while at Bloemfontein, I wrote:—"My reference to the disappointments on mail day has moved a host of kind folks with whom I have no personal acquaintanceship to write to me, as a lady gracefully puts it, 'so that your disappointment, should this letter reach you, may be in some part lessened.'" Oh, what a holy, what an inestimable thing is human sympathy!

Writing from Adelaide, one correspondent told me that she cried when she read of my disappointment. Really, I almost cry at the thought that one could be so chastely loving towards a poor, far-off scribe whose home letters had miscarried. There were some remarkable delays. For instance, a Victorian received at Bloemfontein the whole of the letters—ten or twelve, I am told—written to him by his wife during his nearly six months' absence. He will probably be a strong believer henceforth in the saying that all things come to those who wait. But, oh! that weary waiting, that sad season of heartache, of golden promise renewed every time the great, bulging mail bags were dropped at the door of the Quartermaster's tent and as often broken! Oh, that season of soul-starvation, of fond craving so often mocked and so long unsatisfied!

My very kind correspondents will be able to appreciate that Victorian's happiness, as he lay down on the veldt, with the good and loving news from home softening his pillow and enriching his dreams.

We awoke to the sound of pipes at Enslin camp those times, for most of the Gordon Highlanders remained with us, and their reveille insisted upon being heard. The pipers were astir shortly after five, and took up a line with long intervals between them. Then, it seemed to me, each one "ganged his ain gait," and all the winged creatures, as also the creeping things with which this part of the earth is so prodigally endowed, stopped to wonder what the row was about, while sleeping human beings awoke to the duties and possibilities of a new day. "The Gordons say" was such a frequent prefix to observations amongst us that one realised how fully the Australians had fraternised with their distinguished comrades, and how they came to swear by them. Besides their pipers, the Highlanders had a band, and we enjoyed some delightful music from it--sacred selections on Sunday evening ; all sorts on other occasions. The Gordons, too, had some expert tatooers amongst them, and some of our boys would come home with figures of Highland lassies indelibly inscribed on their arms or breasts. Yes, we became very fond of the Gordons, and they seemed to like us.

It was no unusual thing to see members of the Australian Regiment walking about the camp in the costume of Gordon Highlanders, or displaying the badges of that regiment. "Borrowed plumes, sir," remarked a South Australian to me, as, glorious in red and tartan, he passed my tent—on the way to be photographed, I believe. But not all the plumes were borrowed. As required by law, an auction sale of the effects of the Gordons killed at Magersfontein was held, and the Australians were large buyers. They gave high prices for badges and other articles which took their fancy ; therefore the amounts available for the kindred at home would be appreciably larger than if the sale had taken place amongst men less enthusiastic, and not so well provided with cash, as are the Australians. Yet one didn't feel quite pleased at seeing our men tricked out in the garments of those whom the Highland Brigade so recently laid in a common grave, near the spot where they fought and fell on that disastrous day beyond Modder River.

CHAPTER XXII.

Some Victorian Officers—They Visit Enslin Camp—"Little Bobs" Announced.

On a second visit I made to Orange River during the week before Christmas I met Colonel Umphelby, and as he was bound for Modder River, we travelled back together as far as Enslin. The commanding officer of Victoria's Permanent Artillery was in great form, and fit for anything. He had had a busy time in the Censor's department at Cape Town, where he wrestled with telegrams in English, French, German, and even Portuguese, and apparently with a great deal of success. But he was insistent upon getting active service, and was attached to the staff of Colonel Barker, who commands the Howitzer Brigade of Royal Artillery. This, however, amounted to little, for the brigade had been split up into sections, and the commanding officer was virtually out of work, as also was his Victorian attache.

Colonel Umphelby was chafing under a feeling that he was losing time, but said that he had already acquired some valuable experience. He did not want to spend too long a period away, he told me, holding that, if he got a few months, it was his duty then to return and give some other officer a show, provided that the campaign extended far into the following year.

With R.A.A. on his shoulder straps, and the word "Australia" brassed over the regimental ribbon on his helmet, Colonel Umphelby boldly declared himself in the midst of all sorts and conditions of British soldiers. And he bore himself for what he was—a soldier, every inch of him.

On his way back from Modder River to the base Colonel Umphelby stayed a night at Enslin, and there was a pleasant re-union of Victorians. Readers may recollect that several permanent artillerymen were included in the Victorian unit. It was remarkable how quickly they discovered that their highly-esteemed—I might almost say beloved—commanding officer was in camp. They all paid their respects, and Colonel Umphelby had a long chat with each. Gunners of all ranks, it matters not what their particular military job happens to be, swear by each other, as well they may.

Hardly had Colonel Umphelby left us when the train from Modder River brought Captains Bruche and Johnston, two well-known and much-liked Victorian officers, who were doing duty at the front. A hearty cheer in the infantry lines testified that the men of the First and Second Battalions of Victorian Infantry had recognised their popular Adjutant, although, as Bruche was now disguised in a half-developed beard, the recognition involved effort. "The luckiest man

in South Africa," he was called here, for he left days after us, and followed our arrival, but, on reporting himself for duty, was at once sent to the front, where he was attached to the 3rd Grenadier Guards, under Colonel Crabbe, a battalion of which Captain Lygon (pronounced Leegon), brother of Lord Beauchamp, was Adjutant.

Captain Bruche got his baptism of fire in the disastrous business at Magersfontein. He was just in time for it, and went through it all. "It was a curious sensation," he says, "to, for the first time, hear the bullets whistling over your head, and the shells—yes, the shells were even more distracting." It goes without saying that our officer bore himself like an Australian. He has become a thorough Guardsman; indeed, it is remarkable how quickly he has acquired the knack of viewing things from the Guardsman's point of view, which is not invariably that adopted by outsiders.

There had been rumours that Lord Methuen had delivered a sort of scolding speech to the Highland Brigade. I am glad to hear, from Captain Bruche, that the rumour was as unfounded as I should believe it to be wholly uncharacteristic of Lord Methuen, judging by such experience as I gained while, for six weeks, serving under him in London. The speech actually made was, Captain Bruche says, a rallying and cheering one.

Captain Johnston was not in time for the big fight at Magersfontein. Very soon after it he joined the 62nd Battery of the First Division of Field Artillery, under Colonel Hall, and he saw some of the daily plugging that went on. There was always an artillery salutation soon after dawn, a sort of "Good-morning. How d'ye do?" The Boer courteously replied, generally with shell which failed to burst, just to show that he was snugly ensconced in his natural fortress, and was staying for breakfast. These trivial interchanges usually closed the day's operations. Captain Johnston realised that he came to Enslin for instruction, and he learned all he could. He warmly eulogised the Imperial gunners, and said how much he was indebted to the officers for making available to him the experts in their several departments (usually non-commissioned officers), in order that he might be able to get a thorough knowledge of the various guns used.

I have reason to know, on the other hand, that Captain Johnston proved himself a valuable officer with the battery, and that some Australian notions he carried with him, far from being despised, were warmly welcomed. He had formed some opinion as to the relative merits of English and Australian systems into which I need not enter here.

The greatest news for everybody on war duty in South Africa was that which came to us, on the 24th December, in an official telegram. Writing from London at the time of the

Jubilee, I ventured the statement that the most popular man in England, both with the army and the citizens generally, was the gallant soldier familiarly and affectionately known as "Little Bobs." It mattered not where one went. To a swell mess-room, to a military smoke night, where Tommy was supreme; into the streets on a ceremonial occasion; anywhere, the appearance of Lord Roberts was the signal for a burst of cheering. Australian citizen soldiers in South Africa did not know the hero of Kandahar as intimately as he is known by regiments of regular soldiers, but that they knew enough about him to hold him in high esteem, and fully share the confidence which soldiers of all ranks place in him, was abundantly manifest when the news came that the conduct of the war was to pass into his much-tried and capable hands.

The message received by our Colonel was as follows:—"It is officially announced that Field-Marshal Lord Roberts has been appointed to supreme command of the British Army in South Africa, and that General Lord Kitchener will act as chief of his staff. It is assumed that Sir Redvers Buller will continue to hold the chief command of the forces operating in Natal." To say that this news provoked a great sigh of relief from all the Queen's soldiers in South Africa is neither to strain language nor overstate the situation. Although, for sufficient reasons, the Australian camp was my head-quarters, I moved up and down the line a good deal, and knew what was being said by officers, non-commissioned officers, and men. And the feeling, rightly or wrongly, was that the task before us was beyond the capacity of at least some of the men prominently engaged in it. Gallant men they were, all of them, but not necessarily filling the posts where their special powers might be best employed. At least that was the quite dominant idea. That Roberts and Kitchener were coming was the best news that the army in South Africa had heard.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Christmas Day at Enslin—Message from the Queen—Australasians in Cape Town.

To Australian citizens far away from home, assembled on the wide South African veldt, and there doing duty as soldiers and sons of the Empire, what a strange Christmas Day it seemed! How hard to realise that it was the great feast of Nativity, that the bells were ringing in Christian churches, that the glad strains of the "Adeste Fideles" were being borne on millions of human voices the world over. But if no sound of rejoicing wherever Christian people dwelt in

settled communities reached our ears, listening hearts in the Australian Regiment heard and were gladdened.

"A Merry Christmas to you!" was the greeting quite in the usual phrasing as comrade met comrade, and as hand clasped hand and eye looked into eye the knowledge of a mutual consciousness that at best it was a queerly merry Christmas was established. Everyone thought of home, of the dear home circle, and the vacant chair in it—his chair—and reflected on the contingencies of war. Would it be his fate to return, to reoccupy that chair, resume his place as father, son, brother? But these meditations were just for a moment; just for a moment the tender weakness of the good, the true, and the brave. Sense of duty quickly asserted itself, the proud heart triumphed. We had come to do the Empire's work, and we intended to do it fully, fairly, and at any cost.

"Here's to the loved ones at home on Christmas Day, and here's to the glad reunions we all look forward to when the cruel war is over," was the toast of the time. The Christmas sentiment was in the air at Enslin, and, indeed, at all the camps on the long line of communication between Cape Town and Modder River. Tents were decorated with improvised bannerettes and tufts of evergreen bush, for lack of holly. In this connection the Westralians in our lines took the palm for excellence. And much kindly hospitality was offered all round.

Alas! all the expected plum puddings did not arrive. What matter? We should have them later on, and then celebrate an extension of Christmas. Meanwhile there was honest roast beef and real fresh potatoes, there was fresh bread, tinned fish, jam, and, for those who ordered it, beer. All perfumed with human kindness. The Tasmanian Company, which undertook to make its own plum duff, altered its plans at the last moment, and made jam roley-poley instead. A generous slab of this came to my tent, with apologies that it was so substantial. I thank the Lord for His good gifts, and trust to a sound digestion. None of that slab went to waste, although, in order to have it hot, it had to precede my yet unready ration of roast beef.

At dinner time Colonel Hoad, genial and Christmas-like, was much in evidence. Forth he went to visit all his host, bid them good-morrow with a modest smile, call them friends and countrymen. If you choose to think that adaptation of bluff King Hal mere high falutin, there's no law to restrain you. What I mean to convey is that the commanding officer, before sitting down to his own dinner, visited every tent in the lines, and his words were, in effect, the same at each. "A Merry Christmas to you, men—as merry as it can be for you away from your dear ones at home—and good luck, men; good luck in our first fight." Each tent cheered heartily, and,

as the Colonel passed on, his own emotion—the offspring, I fancy, of an acute sense of grave responsibility, was obvious, particularly when he came to his old comrades, the Mounted Rifles.

"A Merry Christmas to you under the circumstances, lads," I heard a private put it as I passed a Victorian tent, and really, under the circumstances, Christmas at the Enslin camp was as merry as we could make it.

I did not stay at Enslin the whole day. Fortified by the assurance of a staff officer that there was no important movement intended for a few weeks, I started on the afternoon of Christmas for a necessary business visit to Cape Town, and arrived there next morning. Everything was very quiet all along the 610 miles of railway ride—everybody merely marking time while awaiting the coming of Roberts and Kitchener. On these men now were the British hopes fixed. Part of the journey I made with Lieutenant Osborne and the forty New South Wales men under his command who had been doing such good service with Methuen, and who had been ordered to join their comrades at Naauwpoort. Osborne was bearded like a pard—a very different person was he then from the fresh young man to whom Colonel Price and I bade farewell at Port Melbourne early in the year. His face now bore the peculiar mark made by experience and responsibility. A strong, self-reliant man, proud of his Lancers, and regretting only that, although at Belmont, Graspan, and Modder River they had lined up to charge, no charge was ordered. There had been stories to the contrary, but Osborne's lances were yet unstained with human blood, and all his men answered to their names at roll-call.

Sensational incidents sometimes occur on a railway journey. A Kaffir thief made his way from the third class to the special military saloon car, in a compartment of which an officer, a press *confrère* and I were enjoying our beauty sleep. The intruder deliberately turned up the electric light, seized my *confrère's* nether garments, and bolted. Surely he was the meanest Kaffir on earth who attempted to rob a journalist. The scribe woke just in the nick of time, and wasn't there a noise! The thief got on to the footplate, and, despite our united effort, escaped. My friend picked up his purse on the line of the fugitive's flight. He also recovered his trousers, which was rather fortunate. Although hailing from the land of cakes, he had not the least ambition to land at Cape Town as a Highland regiment.

A Christmas message from the Queen was put in orders that week. Her Majesty wired to the General commanding-in-chief as follows:—"I wish you and all my brave soldiers a Happy Christmas. God protect and bless you.—V.R.I." Needless to say that the message was appreciated by all ranks.

And while Her Majesty was praying the Almighty to protect and bless her brave troops the pious Boers were all solemnly celebrating, in their laagers, the great Nativity festival, and asking the God of Battles to fight for them against their enemies. On both sides, of course, there was perfect sincerity. Religion is really a most perplexing factor in the affairs of distracted humanity. The Sovereign's message was read on parade by Colonel Hoad, who then called for three cheers for the Queen. The response was so hearty and vociferous that it caused a stampede amongst the English artillery horses. It was probably their first experience of an Australian cheer. A Christmas message also came from the Lord Mayor of London, as follows :— "Kindly convey to troops kindly Christmas greetings from citizens of London, admiration, and sympathy with their struggles." Language a bit mixed, owing probably to the Lord Mayor bringing a frugal mind to bear upon the great city's outlay for telegrams, but the sentiment all right.

Former Australasians at Cape Town had held a meeting a few days before, and decided to send some holiday cheer to our troops in the field. Having regard to railway difficulties, the lateness of the movement, and to a system of laying on hands said to obtain when a certain class of goods was in transit, it was deemed impracticable to provide a Christmas dinner. But some £80 were subscribed, and a committee appointed to administer the amount. Of this commitee, Mr. J. W. Rail, manager of the National Mutual Life Association, was chairman, and Mr. Pilcher, a New Zealander, honorary secretary. They made purchases for the Australian Regiments, the New Zealanders, and the New South Wales Lancers, and the same colony's Mounted Rifles respectively, these bodies being stationed in different places.

The delivery was undertaken by two former Melbournians, natives, indeed, of our great city. One is Mr. W. Black, a successful architect and engineer at Enslin, who served as a lad in the office of Major Purchas, of Melbourne. The other is Mr. Horace Liddle, son of an old-time Melbourne solicitor, and brother of Dr. Liddle, of Elmore. Liddle is, or was, a Johannesburg representative of many interests, and did duty as a trooper in the town at the time of the Jameson Raid. Just before the declaration of war he was advised to clear out, and did so. With these gentlemen I travelled from Cape Town as far as De Aar. There they waited for the goods train carrying the Cape people's gift.

The *Herald's* cable message conveying the season's greetings to Colonel Hoad's regiment was warmly appreciated at Enslin. Christmas cards had reached us from private persons and from some of the military folks, as I have reported, but it was reserved for the *Herald*, on behalf of Victorians, to

give us a few words of timely greeting by cable from the land we had come from. We were grateful, as well as pleased, to know that amongst the multitude of his affairs, political and social, the editor recollected that we, far from home, were human beings who yearned for human sympathy, and suffered from home-sickness a bit more acutely than usual at the Christmas and New Year seasons.

CHAPTER XXIV.

NEW YEAR'S DAY DOINGS—A HUNT FOR THE REBELS—THE QUEEN'S CHOCOLATE—LORD HOPETOUN REMEMBERS VICTORIANS.

Some idea of the work done by the Victorian Mounted Rifles may be obtained from a brief recital of the way in which they spent New Year's Day. In order that the loyal farmers of the district might be inspired with confidence, get a real object lesson in connection with the British military occupation, and in order also that a laager of rebel Dutch might be positively located, mounted troops went out independently from Enslin, Belmont and Honeynest Kloof, at each of which places a military station exists. The Enslin force originally consisted of sixty Victorian Mounted Rifles, but owing to other demands on the company, the number was, at the last moment, reduced to fifty. Captain M'Leish went in charge, and as there were busy rumours about the Boers holding kopjes *en route*, and the consequent strong possibility of some fighting, I accompanied the expedition.

Seeing the old year out is not necessarily unpleasant when you know that you can give the sun a good start before you arise on New Year's morning. My misfortune was, and it is a misfortune common to a good many, that people insisted upon carrying on competitions in seeing the old year out close by my tent, and in doing it noisily, with much conflicting sing-song and diversified recitative effort, grave and gay, and more or less meritorious. It was magnificent, but it was not war. Our turning out at half-past two in the morning was war. At least it was quite disagreeable enough to come under that appellation. A hurried cup of coffee and a bit of army biscuit, and by half-past three we were in the saddle. Morning broke as the little column moved across the spacious veldt towards an opening between the kopjes on our west, and the alleged delights—much vaunted and overrated—of seeing the sun rise were ours. But ablutions had been necessarily scant, morning devotions disgracefully abridged, if not reduced to a minus quantity, and the sensation that we hadn't been to

bed at all lasted till we were well on the journey, and had to keep eyes and ears wide open.

The day was hot, but not unbearable. The work of our men was so well and intelligently performed that I never felt prouder of the Mounted Rifles than I did while riding by the side of Captain M'Leish, and observing how thoroughly, and withal how adroitly, each piece of country was examined by the scouting parties, and with what care and exactness messages were brought in to the commanding officer. Fifty mounted men can spread themselves over a lot of country, and still leave a small formed body to show a fighting front, always providing that the detail is skilfully worked out. In Captain M'Leish's hands that was assured, and no foolish risks were incurred. Over miles of veldt, here and there a great amphitheatre of it lying between a circle of kopjes, over stony ridges, thorn-bush hills, and sometimes morass, was our way. We visited all the farm-houses *en route*, most of them the abode of Dutch people whose loyalty is questionable, and the most useful impression to produce on whom is that Britain is a great power, and must ultimately win. These people appeared to be peaceful, but from this house and from that a son had yielded to the Boer commando, and was in arms against us. These things, and others which it was necessary to learn, we ascertained partially from the farms, partially from the picturesque Kaffir kraals, several of which lay on our road. Here and there we got word of the rebels, and by noon we had reached a point about twenty-five miles from our camp with a knowledge that the enemy's laager lay about five miles in front of us.

Lieutenant Thorn was given charge of the patrol sent towards the laager, really a well-known farm close under the foot of a long line of low hills not far from the town of Douglas. To reconnoitre, and not to fight unless attacked, were our orders; therefore the patrol had a long job, while the main body took up a position and awaited what the Dutchmen or fortune might send. Thorn did his work well. He seized a Kaffir herdsman belonging to the rebels, and from him we got a good idea of the number and dispositions of the enemy. The latter, meanwhile, lay in the farm-house and waited for our patrol to come within range. Ten of them were seen to enter, and, possibly, there were a score or two more in the buildings, independent of those in the kopje close by. Such a volley they could have given our men. Thorn did his business effectively just out of range, and the Boer declined to accept his standing invitation to come out into the open. Our main body was then moved forward by Captain M'Leish, but even this did not excite the enterprise of the enemy. Largely outnumbering us as he did, he preferred to stay in

doors on that warm New Year's afternoon. But our work was done. We quietly withdrew and rode back to camp.

As there was a good chance of a cut-off on the way, the home march had to be carried out with all due caution, but the day passed without casualties. I stopped about eight miles out and had a cup of coffee with a Dutch family. A visitor present, also a Dutchman, gave me a pressing invitation to visit his farm, then a few miles in the rear. And his dark eye seemed to twinkle as he remarked that I would find every comfort there. I promised to go—some other day, of course. I mentally resolved that it would only be with an armed party. A Mauser bullet does not improve the flavour of farm produce. We reached camp at seven o'clock, having had nearly sixteen hours' work, and traversed between fifty and sixty miles. Men and horses came in tired, but by no means knocked up. M'Leish is a man who knows how to manage a long march with a minimum of fatigue to all concerned.

The perils of patrolling are exemplified by what happened to a small party of the Munster Fusiliers Mounted Infantry, who, on Sunday, had a ride from Belmont towards Jacobsdal. A boy subaltern and four men the party consisted of, and they halted at noon at a deserted farm-house. One man was left to keep a look-out, the rest off-saddled and sat down to their lunch. Then the giddy Boer came—Sunday though it was. How many of him is not known. He announced his presence by firing upon the sentry, who at the time was standing by his horse. The man was shot through the left thigh, but scrambled on to his horse and rode off. Another bullet passed through the same thigh before the rider had gone far, and the man came down. Meanwhile his comrades had stood to their horses and exchanged a few shots with the Boers, who were hidden in a kopje. Then there was a general dispersal. One of the Fusiliers got back to Belmont camp ; the other two were made prisoners and taken to Jacobsdal. The officer found and stood by the wounded man. Happily one of our patrols, under Lieutenant Roberts, had occasion to go out to investigate the movements of some vehicles seen by our outposts. The patrol found the distressed Fusiliers, and Sergeant Wallace was sent into camp for assistance. Colonel Hoad promptly instructed Surgeon M'Williams, who was quickly in the saddle, and, in default of an ambulance waggon, a spring cart was ordered out for the conveyance of the wounded man. I learned from Surgeon M'Williams that the wounds would not prove fatal, neither had the man's thigh-bone been fractured, although a Mauser bullet had passed through it. The Fusiliers were brought to Enslin and received every attention, the wounded soldier being ultimately sent by train to the hospital at Orange River.

It was understood at the time that the boy officer in charge of that party of Munsters had resolved to make better tactical dispositions next time he halted for lunch at a deserted farm in the Orange Free State. Let me in justice add that the boy officer won the admiration of everybody by the plucky way in which he stood by the wounded private.

It was at this stage that Captain J. H. Bruche, of Victoria, who had been serving with the Guards, on his own application became attached to the Australian Regiment. In the first instance he served as a regimentally attached officer, but, later on, he was to take up the duties of Quartermaster. Under Sergeant-Compounder Ahearn, the surgeons' orderlies and others regarded as suitable for the duties of stretcher-bearers were exercised daily, and everybody in camp was kept busy at something. That the work done was appreciated may be understood when I quote a message from General Elliot-Wood, who had succeeded to the command at Orange River, and who visited our camp on New Year's Day. "Tell your men," said the General to Colonel Hoad, "that everything I have heard of the Australians is perfectly satisfactory."

During my absence the New Year's sports were held, and seem to have been much enjoyed. I learned that the mule race was worth coming miles to see. It was difficult to get a line at the starting post, much more difficult to disturb that line once it was formed. I have observed that mules are not so pliable as politicians. Be it noted that the Gordon Highlanders, and also the Royal Horse Artillery, co-operated in the sports meeting. Sergeant Walker, of Victoria, was chairman of the joint committee of management, and won "golden opinions from all sorts of people."

Nobody better than the Australians appreciated the kindness of Her Majesty the Queen in sending to each of her soldiers fighting in South Africa a little New Year's gift. It consisted, as everybody knows, of a package of chocolate, and I have since known of five sovereigns being offered for one of these packages. Yes, offered and refused! Every Australian recipient was proud in the possession of Her Majesty's present. The chocolate was wrapped in an oblong package, in some instances tied with a special ribbon. A good portrait of the Queen appears in the centre of the cover; on the left of the portrait the Crown surmounts "V.R." as a monogram; and on the right are the words, "South Africa, 1900." Across the foot of the cover is inscribed—"I wish you a Happy New Year—Victoria R. and I." Nobody, of course, thought of eating that chocolate. Marks of Royal favour are not thus dealt with. The packages were carefully preserved, and in most instances forwarded at once to the dear folks at home.

The Earl of Hopetoun is one of Australia's former Governors who does not forget us. On a number of occasions since he left Melbourne, Lord Hopetoun has made—which isn't quite the same thing as found—opportunities for showing his friendliness towards the community over which he formerly presided, and over which we are all glad to know he will preside again in the new capacity of Governor-General of Australasia. In the heart of South Africa Victorians heard from him. The following letter explains itself :—" Dear Colonel Hoad,—I am sending you some tobacco for my Victorian friends who are so nobly fighting the Empire's battles with you in South Africa. I hope your men will find it to their taste. I beg you will convey my best regards to your officers and men, and tell them how proud the ex-Governor of Victoria is of them. With best wishes, yours sincerely, HOPETOUN." This is dated 28th December, from Hopetoun House, and when it was received the Earl's gift was on its way from Cape Town. Now, our men were, for the most part, well enough off to be able to ordinarily buy their own tobacco, but that does not in the least detract from Lord Hopetoun's kindness, nor from our citizen soldiers' full appreciation of it. *Apropos* of his Lordship's wish that the men would " find it to their taste," let me say that the man who loves his pipe found it hard to satisfy himself on " Boer " tobacco, often the only kind procurable in South Africa.

CHAPTER XXV.

QUEENSLAND TO THE FORE—THE BATTLE AT SUNNYSIDES.

We had reached the end of the third week spent by the Australian Regiment between the kopjes at Enslin. Save that the Christmas holidays came in it, the week was much the same as others. Extensive patrolling by the Mounted Rifles, the occupancy of the outposts by day and night, standing to arms at half-past three in the morning, and so on. But no fighting. In the latter respect we were, indeed, no worse off than the bulk of the British troops in the country. It was still a general mark-time, except that here and there a skirmish took place.

To keep a camp in a thoroughly sanitary condition is not only important, but involves the exercise of a great amount of vigilance on the part of officers and the application of rigid rules. On this score there was no room for reproach, and what may be called the sanitary discipline was strict. A good share of the fatigue work was undertaken with a view of keeping the men in the best of health.

The situation at Modder River had undergone no material change. Our troops were camped in their old position, on the north side of the stream, and the enemy lay snug and sure (of himself) in the kopjes and behind the trenches which constituted the position at Magersfontein. On the morning of Boxing Day, instead of the customary light artillery salutation, the British opened fire with the big naval gun, and the 9th and 12th Lancers, with some infantry, went out to reconnoitre the position. This drew the Boer fire, and disclosed the disposition of the enemy's artillery, which it was important to know. The only blood shed in the proceedings was that of three horses. The reconnaissance had a curious sequel. The Boers regarded it as a preliminary to a night attack, and made ready for business. A few shells were fired early in the evening, but, after dark, so pronounced was the enemy's nervousness, that he put in twenty minutes blazing away with rifles and machine guns at—nothing. The idea that the British were creeping up in the dark had thoroughly alarmed him, and it is reckoned that he expended over 100,000 rounds of ammunition. The most advanced British posts were quite outside the range of this fire, and our men were quietly and leisurely celebrating Boxing Night. The Boers had falsely, but perhaps not unnaturally, alarmed themselves. Their dislike to a night attack, such as might possibly bring the bayonet into play, was ineradicable.

Queensland was the first Australian colony to yield tribute in human life to the great Imperial cause which called so many of our citizen soldiers from their homes and peaceful occupations under the Southern Cross. While our Mounted Rifles were cruising about looking for Dutch rebels on New Year's Day, the Queenslanders were fighting. And a very good account they gave of themselves.

On the 3rd January I came down to Belmont, where the Queenslanders were stationed, and from which about two hundred of them marched on New Year's Eve. They formed part of a force four hundred strong, chiefly Canadians, but including two field guns. The purpose was to discover and destroy a Boer laager in a position known as Sunnysides Kopjes, about thirty miles north-west of Belmont, therefore within British territory. A forced march of twenty-two miles on Sunday was the first stage, and precautions were taken by Colonel Pilcher, the commanding officer, against what it is feared has happened too often before—Kaffirs running in front of the British and warning the Boers. No one was allowed to leave the farms *en route*, and a body of Boers, about 180 strong, was fairly surprised. They quickly got into fighting form, however, and were not easily displaced from a strong position.

Colonel Ricardo commanded the Queenslanders, and took part in the main attack, and all the Queensland officers at Belmont, with the exception of Lieutenant Glasgow, left in charge of a small camp, were engaged.

Lieutenant Adie, of Queensland, was one of the first under fire, and the first to fall, shot through the fleshy part of the stomach, but not mortally. He, with a patrol of four men, stumbled upon and drew the fire of a score of the enemy, and three of the party fell. Immediately afterwards artillery got to work, and for some time shelled the position. In the infantry attack which followed the Queensland riflemen bore a leading part, and behaved splendidly under fire, taking the fullest advantage of cover, yet maintaining a steady and persistent advance, which speedily impressed the enemy with the fact that to stay much longer would be to wait for Australian bayonets.

The Boer fire was rapid and continuous, and yet it did little harm, so skilfully was the advance managed. After a two hours' conflict, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon the enemy ran up the white flag, and our troops occupied the position. The enemy had cleared out, leaving their tents, waggons, equipment, and forage behind. They did not, however, all get away, forty-two being made prisoners. Not unwilling prisoners most of them, I fancy.

The Queensland loss was Private Victor Jones, killed, and Lieutenant Adie, dangerously wounded, while two others were slightly wounded. Poor Jones has the melancholy distinction of being the first Australian citizen soldier killed in the war. The men of Adie's patrol were Privates Herman, Butler, Rose, and Victor Jones, of Rockhampton. They rounded the point of a kopje, and saw four Boers retiring. The Queenslanders dismounted, and Adie called upon the quartette to surrender. At that moment ten more of the enemy appeared, descending the kopje, and Adie opened fire. The reply was a smart volley, and down went Adie and Jones, the latter with a bullet through his heart, dying instantly. Both men's horses were killed.

Rose and Herman got away under fire, but seeing Adie covered with blood, Rose returned, caught Butler's horse, and brought it to the wounded officer. Adie staggered to his feet, and managed to mount, but, unhappily, the bit had come out of its mouth, and the animal bolted. Adie had but one serviceable arm, and held on for a time. Then, faint from loss of blood, he fell from the horse in a state of semi-unconsciouness. He soon partially recovered, and, assisted by Herman, got to the ambulance, where Dr. Dodds took charge of him. Rose had stayed to give Butler a mount behind him, but, before Butler could avail himself of it, a bullet passed through Rose's thigh, and his horse was shot dead. Butler and Rose made

the best of their way in on foot, the sound man tenderly aiding his wounded comrade. The incident demonstrated the splendid fashion in which the members of the patrol stuck to their officer and each other in a time of deadly peril.

For a time the officer was despaired of, but he recovered. Adie was the second Queensland officer wounded, for Captain Byron was hit at Modder River. The Boers left six men dead on the field, and about a dozen wounded, but they admitted a loss of 14 killed. Seven wounded Boers were attended to by the British, and it is believed that 20 more were wounded. The laager was completely broken up, and a mischievous commando (under Commandant Maritz) dispersed.

I have used the word Boers to describe the enemy. Not without a degree of propriety, but it should be understood that the laager was occupied almost exclusively by rebel Dutchmen, citizens, that is, of Cape Colony.

The little town of Douglas, close by the scene of the fight, had for months been terrorised by this assemblage of the enemy. The residents welcomed the relief afforded by Colonel Pilcher's column, and particularly welcomed the rations brought by the generous colonials, for the Boers had commandeered so extensively that Douglas folks were starving. Canadians and Queenslanders are mutually proud of the opportunity afforded them on the first day of the year to come under fire for the first time shoulder to shoulder. All the criticisms I have heard on the Queenslanders are in the highest degree favourable, and you have only to look at the men to realise that it could hardly be otherwise.

Under a shower of bullets they chatted and laughed and chaffed each other in the coolest fashion, and greatly surprised experienced Imperial officers dealing with "green" troops.

The British commander found it necessary to order the inhabitants to leave Douglas, and gave them escort into Belmont. The women and children were kindly assisted by the Canadians, and here and there a great soldier was seen carrying a baby for a wearied mother. The refugees were treated with every consideration, and made as comfortable as possible; while the names of the disloyal farmers and others were carefully collected for use on the day of reckoning. There is little doubt that those of the enemy who got away found a refuge in the laager nearer Enslin which was reconnoitred by Captain M'Leish on New Year's Day.

During my stay at Belmont I revisited Thomas's Farm, and spent a couple of hours with the British-Dutch family. The numerous Scripture texts on the walls, some in English, others in Dutch, testified to the ruling sentiment—one intensely religious. Old Testament teaching rather than the new appears to dominate the Dutch farmers hereabout, and they

are always quite sure that the Lord is on their side. Indeed, in the Boer laagers, devotional services are held twice a day, and the parson is an important and influential man. It is largely owing to him that the war is prolonged. One of our stout-hearted Presbyterian chaplains, who, at a recent burial, met the Dopper minister, had an argument about spiritual matters with him, and wound up by saying, "Your people have commandeered men and goods most freely. Please forgive me if I am rude in saying that you seem to think you have also commandeered the Almighty." Picturesquely put if you will, but, in my opinion, absolutely true.

At Belmont I had an interesting chat with a Canadian volunteer, who, like most of his comrades, is fretful under enforced delay in the accomplishment of the business which has brought us all to Africa. For the Canadians, like the Australians, were anxious to get on. In capacity for sitting down quietly to long waits our comrades from the British Isles beat us easily. Perhaps it is just as well they should. How far our impatience was owing to the "unfledged valour of inexperience," as Lytton calls it, and how far to variety of temperament, you are as well able to judge as I. My Canadian friend was enthusiastic about the American sentiment towards Great Britain. "Before the Cuban war," he said, "the United States people seemed to have a spite against us. That is all gone, and hundreds of them wanted to serve with us; but our Colonel got more Canadians offering than he could take. When we came here with our pockets full of dollars, and found that we couldn't pass them, it seemed as though you had a spite against us," he added, with a smile; "but, of course, we know you hadn't."

I learnt that some of the Canadians had been exploited by the Cape money changers. Dollars are inconvenient when the currency of the country consists of sovereigns, half-crowns, and shillings. I had a talk, too, with Colonel Otter, who is in charge of the Canadians, and is a first cousin of the officer commanding the Victorian Rangers. "We have never met," said the Canadian, who is a younger-looking man than the god-father of the Melbourne Scottish Regiment, but not unlike him in face, figure, and manner.

CHAPTER XXVI.

First Invasion of the Free State—A Reconnaissance—Victorian Mounted Rifles Lead—The Camp Alarmed.

Captain J. H. Bruche left the Guards, and became attached to our regiment at the New Year. He was soon afterwards appointed to the position of Quartermaster, *vice* Lieutenant Pendlebury, who had been doing Quartermaster's duty, in addition to much company work, and having a far too busy time for any one man. Ration trains usually came in the wee small hours, and a Quartermaster had to be a man who knows how to use his wits at two o'clock in the morning—almost as difficult as the exercise of two o'clock in the morning courage. Lieutenant M'Inerney had been working under disadvantages with a company sparsely officered, and welcomed the relief to his chief subaltern which the change afforded. In the general orders appeared the following well-deserved compliment :—"The commanding officer desires to express his entire satisfaction with the manner in which the duties of Quartermaster have been carried out by Lieutenant Pendlebury."

On Saturday, the 6th, we once more got on to the fringe of a fight, but without getting into it. A few of the Rimington Guides—known as the "tigers," because of the cat-skins they wear round their hats—were with us there. They went out patrolling in the direction of the Free State, and came upon sixty Boers, one of whom they shot before—"skedaddling." This was thirteen miles from our camp, and there was an intense desire on the part of the Australians to carry the investigation, and possibly the shooting, a bit further, but the powers that were forbade.

On Saturday night we had a rather elaborate concert. The Highlanders and each of the Australian units sent their best show men, and the programme was amazingly good. Sergeant-Bugler Gleeman, the South Australian violinist, charmed a large company by his wonderful playing, and I never saw such magnificent club-swinging as was displayed by a Gordon Highlander. We had, too, plenty of comicalities, and some Scotch dances with names which I did not chance to catch. They take some catching. The mere Anglo-Saxon ear seems to be poorly adapted for such a purpose. The concert was held on the slope of a kopje, at the foot of which a stage, improvised out of a buck-waggon, was brilliantly lighted with candle lanterns borrowed from the tents. Oh ! we did the thing in style, even though a spluttering candle occasionally went out, and the great, stout-lunged Gordon sergeant who acted as chairman had occasionally to promote, with a bit of stick, the activity of the footlights. We were on the

outskirts of the camp, and an officer next to me somewhat spoilt my evening by early pointing out what a splendid, well-lighted mark we were for a Boer shell. But the profound peace which the Australian Regiment has established at Enslin wasn't mitigated—shall I say?—by the letting off of so much as a Chinese cracker. This was, for the time, the most peaceful retreat of full-blooded warriors that the exigencies of war ever created in the history of Africa.

Tuesday and Wednesday, the 9th and 10th January, were for some of us two highly exciting yet absolutely bloodless days. It would almost seem, indeed, that the Boers entertained a particular dread of the Australian Regiment, for the way in which they kept clear of it, or any of its parts, became a subject of jest amongst us. Forth our men went, time and again, seeking, nay, begging, for an interview, and filled with great expectations of feats of arms. But their rifles were never used. The enemy, coy to a fault, resolutely declined to wait for them. We heard, mayhap, that he was there—*i.e.*, at the place where we sought him—on the previous day, or a few hours before our arrival. Occasionally, too, we caught furtive glimpses of his back, just before he performed his favourite disappearing trick, and the earth swallowed him up. Only on New Year's Day did we actually find him in any force, and he was just a bit strong, and we had been forbidden to attack. So the bullet music was still reserved. Apparently for the baptism of fire, so long looked forward to, we had not been sufficiently prepared.

Major-General Babbington, who commanded the cavalry brigade at Modder River, came to Enslin on Monday, 8th January, had a conversation with Colonel Hoad and Lieutenant-Colonel M'Bean, commanding the Gordons, and, it is understood, decided upon a plan of proceedings. Just what the proceedings were to consist of was kept a profound secret, for we had always to take precautions against spies, and the small army of Kaffirs who are employed for transport purposes is not necessarily composed of only trustworthy men. As the reader need not be kept in the doubt and suspense which afflict the war correspondent, and cause him to stay up all night for fear of missing a big thing, it may at once be stated here that what was in view was a reconnaissance into the Free State—really the first material invasion of the enemy's country. Our patrols had examined parts of it often enough, and the knowledge they had gained Major-General Babbington availed himself of and found useful. Previously there had only been small patrols engaged. A reconnaissance in force was now proposed.

During Monday a force from Modder River marched to Honeynest Kloof, a few miles north of us. It consisted of

about five hundred cavalry, ten guns, and about a hundred English mounted infantry. At daybreak on Tuesday this force moved south-west into the Free State. Simultaneously our company of Victorian Mounted Rifles, under Captain M'Leish, moved in a parallel direction from Enslin, and a mixed body of Canadians and Queensland Mounted Rifles, with several guns, went out from Belmont and marched almost due east. The total number engaged was about twelve hundred men. I accompanied the Victorian Mounted Rifles, whose orders were to move in the direction indicated, but as early as possible to get touch with the cavalry brigade on our left.

It was "boot and saddle" at half-past four, and at five we were well on the road. The morning was cool, and a fine rain fell—a rain so penetrating in character that for a part of the forenoon we had to wear overcoats. At eight o'clock we got contact with the cavalry patrols, and received a message from the General that we were doing well, both as regards formation and direction, for we marched as a small and extended main body, within a wide screen of scouts, across veldt so open that from the kopjes in front of our camp objects could be seen upon it with the naked eye for a distance of quite ten miles. We passed several of the farms whose owners had fled on the outbreak of war, and whose property had been carried off in the fashion already described. We passed also some kopjes which had to be examined with much circumspection, and the advance was necessarily slow.

At eleven o'clock we reached Randam, the name given to a finely-built, deserted house—almost a mansion, in fact—by the side of which is a magnificent dam of splendid water—the best I have seen amongst the many in that country. At this point we got a view of the cavalry brigade in its full strength, and bearing to the right. So much did it bear in that direction that it was soon directly in our rear, and, for the rest of the day the Victorian Mounted Rifles, which had really been a little ahead all the time, led the first invasion in this campaign of the Orange Free State. A distinguished honour, which all ranks fully appreciated.

A mile beyond we received the General's order to halt, and there was a couple of hours' waiting, during which nosebags were put on the horses, and such stores as our haversacks contained used for the invigoration of the inner man—who had started on a somewhat scant breakfast. At this period speculation was rife as to what great things the General was going to do. Had he received information that the Boers were in laager somewhere amongst the hills to the south or the east? Had the morning movement been a mere feint, and must we now be prepared for a dash at Jacobsdal, within three hours' easy riding? We were finding our own answers

to these questions, when a report came from an advanced party, under Lieutenant Thorn, that some Boers were seen on a hill about three miles in front. The brigade had reached Randam, and halted there. Captain M'Leish and Lieutenant Roberts (the latter having acquired an especially good knowledge of the country) were in consultation with the General. M'Leish at once suggested that he should be permitted to advance and examine the kopjes. The General assented, and the rest of our day's work was fixed and determined.

It was a heavy, arduous, and might have been perilous work, but presenting few difficulties to such men as ours, and it was admirably done by all concerned. I should have said earlier that, in order to make up for ten Victorians, under Sergeant Geary, then at Graspan, Corporal Noblett, of South Australia, and four Westralians were mounted for the day, and worked satisfactorily with our men. The Corporal, with a small scouting party, saw at one time twenty dismounted men on a distant hill, Private Atkinson pursued a horseman at another stage, and there were other reports of the Boers being in twos and threes at various points. I believe that in some instances the men seen were Kaffirs, for we came upon a number of them at a farm the Boer owner of which had cleared out, leaving his native herdsmen to look after the horses and cattle. The Kaffirs declared that a Boer patrol from Jacobsdal had visited them at noon, had, from a kopje, watched the approach of the cavalry brigade, and had then made off round a natural screen of kopjes, no doubt to report the British doings. This was probably true, although Kaffir stories are not always like proofs of Holy Writ. In any case, the most careful search, pushed far into the midst of the kopjes, and only relinquished when night was closing in, failed to discover the enemy in positions which he had been said to occupy. Some cattle kraals (hand-piled stone wall enclosures) on a hillside suggested recent occupation, but were not positive proof of it, and the country, so far as we had penetrated, was reported clear.

Searching the kopjes meant in some instances climbing the precipitous sides and patrolling the undulating surface on the top, therefore the work entailed considerable effort, and proved the mettle of our horses. General Babbington was delighted with the Victorians, and said so. "They're a fine lot of men, and they know how to find their way across the country," he remarked to Captain M'Leish; "I wish I had three or four hundred of you." As I personally witnessed the whole of the work in detail, if, indeed, I did not take part in it, I am in a position to say that the compliment was well deserved. Particularly good service was given on three or four occasions by Corporal Mawley's group, consisting of him-

self and Privates Atkinson, Gifford, and M'Lean, all Gippslanders, the last-named being a son of the Premier of Victoria. So far had the four been carried by their spirit of enterprise that at one stage we thought we had lost them. But they are not the sort of men to get lost in such country as this. A Rimington Guide and three of our men got separated from us for the night, and remained with the cavalry. But Australian bushmen generally found the going a good deal easier than some to which they have been accustomed at home. We got back towards Randam pretty tired, but by no means done up. The cavalry brigade remained at Randam—in fact, it had not come any further—for the night, and we rode back to our own camp at Enslin, with orders to return first thing in the morning.

Some of the Belmont force surprised a small party of the enemy who were just sitting down to dinner at the farm of a Boer commandant, named Lubbe. The enemy escaped, but not the dinner. Our patrol took charge of that, and ate it while it was hot, subsequently expressing the highest admiration of Boer cooking. It was a little ungrateful, perhaps, that the house which afforded such good cheer should forthwith have been destroyed by a charge of gun cotton. That is the kind of thing that happens in the dread conditions established by a state of war.

The incidents of the day included one which might have been tragic. Colonel Pilcher, in charge of the Belmont force, got a view of the Mounted Rifles while the latter were busy examining the kopjes, and concluded that they were Boers. He put his column in order of battle, and advanced to the attack. Fortunately, we had seen one of the Queensland patrols. Corporal Noblett and Lance-Corporal Bidstrup had been sent over to get touch, and report who we were. They appear to have arrived just in time. "You can consider yourself very lucky that you did not get a shell into you," said Colonel Pilcher. "We sighted you some time ago, and took you for Boers, and have been following you up. It is all the fault of those hats of yours. They may look very nice, but they're a mistake here. We were confused a few days ago in a similar way, because the Queenslanders wear them. You'll have to get helmets. But for the rifles you carry I would doubt your word that you are not Boers." Thus did the gallant and plainly disappointed Colonel muchly impress the astonished Australian corporals. Not a customary way of doing things, but perhaps Pilcher was right about the hats.

Lieutenant-Colonel Ricardo, in charge of the Queenslanders, afterwards told me that the danger of the Belmont force firing upon ours was real. "The guns were loaded," he said—"in fact, they remain loaded, and, I am told, will have to be fired

off before the charge can be got rid of. Your fellows had a most narrow escape." Judging from other remarks Ricardo made, I should not be surprised to know that those whom our patrol saw on the kopjes and took to be Boers were actually Queenslanders, for it is claimed that they had been in the vicinity of the suspected hills before we reached them. While I do not put it as a fact, I do not hesitate to present it as a probability that at one period during the reconnaissance Victorians and Queenslanders were dodging each other. A piece of military comedy which might easily have been converted into a tragedy.

While we were out on Tuesday a composite company of infantry, about 130 strong, with a Maxim gun, marched towards Graspan, and took up a position on a kopje, whence Boers retiring our way might have been ambushed. No Boers came, and the company, which was forced to lie down behind (and upon) hot stones, dozed the day away, the utmost vigilance of the look-out men failing to find an enemy. Major (then Captain) Cameron, of Tasmania, was in command, and impressed everybody by his fine soldierly qualities, which include coolness, firmness, and a repose of manner which some of our colonial military celebrities haven't yet had time to cultivate. The principal officers with him were Captains Legge (N.S.W.) and M'Inerney (Victoria).

During the day, too, the camp had an alarm and turn out. A report had come from Modder River that the Boers had emerged from Jacobsdal in considerable force, and were moving towards Enslin with a view of cutting off the cavalry brigade. The statement was inaccurate, but it livened things up immensely at Enslin camp. Everybody turned out and stood to arms in chosen positions for three hours. All who could ride got on to the horses available, and Captain Salmon, the Mounted Rifles officer in camp, had a marvellous mixed command, which even included a few Lancers and Army Service Corps men who happened to be there. He had also a Maxim gun on a galloping carriage, and the mules were inspanned to a number of buck waggons, so that a new sort of mounted infantry might be provided if it became necessary to convey companies smartly to a strategic point. Colonel Hoad's dispositions were made to protect the cavalry's possible retirement, and also hold our camp. For the first time in history Australian Infantry and Gordon Highlanders alternated at different points as fighting lines and supports. It turned out that the Boer force which left Jacobsdal had moved rather towards the front than towards the rear of the cavalry; therefore, at Enslin, it was the same old story—no foe.

The Mounted Rifles were ordered to rejoin General Babbington at Randam on Wednesday morning. They started

before six o'clock. *En route* the country was carefully patrolled, so that when we touched the cavalry outposts—for again I rode with the Mounted Rifles—we were able to report that the district between Randam and the railway line at Enslin was clear. Our company was ordered, in the first instance, to follow the brigade, but ultimately acted as part of the escort to the guns, and the whole force fell back on Enslin. This we reached early in the afternoon, and went to our lines. The cavalry brigade crossed the railway line, and bivouacked for the night opposite to our camp.

Prior to the brigade marching in, a couple of deserted houses *en route* were fired. For what reason, and with what purpose in view, I do not know. As the walls were of stone, the fire could only gut the buildings, and hardly affect their strategic value. One of the places set on fire is known as Karre Laagte, a first-class residence, comprising four separate buildings, one, apparently, a schoolroom. Standing at the northern point of a long, rocky kopje, Karre Laagte is a splendid artillery position, and the buildings make complete a natural fortress, commanding miles of plain all round. The Boers had evidently used the place earlier in the war, for medical supplies and articles of military gear were found in it. There was an organ in the principal apartment, and the *débris* of good furniture and appointments throughout. All were condemned to the flames, but the walls stand, and Karre Laagte as a strategic position is as good as ever. By the way, the place is said to belong to a son of the Boer commandant, Lubbe, but whether that fact is to be taken as an explanation of the burning I am not prepared to say. No, I do not pretend to understand this fire-stick business, and, so far, it has not been satisfactorily explained.

A simultaneous demonstration, I have since learned, was made by a force under the command of Major Byrne, and got within four miles of Jacobsdal, but it did not do any fighting. Presumably it obtained some of the much-needed information as to what was actually the situation at the border town. There was no subject upon which there were so many and varied rumours as to the number of Boers available, and the character of the arrangements made for the defence of Jacobsdal—up to this time carefully avoided by British troops.

What did the rest of the reconnaissance amount to? Little or nothing that I could discover more than what our Mounted Rifles might have done alone and unaided. It is true that officers with the cavalry brigade made maps of the country, but the purpose achieved by demonstrating, in such large numbers, a very modest distance eastward, I have not fathomed. From the time it left Honeynest Kloof till it arrived at Enslin the cavalry brigade traversed about twenty-

two miles. Two days' work that; and the brigade rested. The Victorian Mounted Rifles covered quite sixty miles within the same period. In General Tulloch's time there was issued in Victoria a military pamphlet, entitled "How to Beat the Boers." Some day, if I am spared to do the work, I shall have a book of my own which ought to flourish under the title, "How to Avoid the Boers;" but I must leave the rest of the prospectus of that monumental work for some other occasion. Let me here quote the words of General Babbington, in a memo. to Colonel Hoad, duly put in orders:—"I would like to tell you," writes the General, "how pleased I was with the men of the Victorian Mounted Rifles that were out with me. I hope you will convey this to their immediate commanding officer and men, and I wish you were all up at Modder River."

What war means to a people one is brought acutely to realise after a couple of days' experience amongst the deserted homes on the border of the Free State. At each of the farms there is a garden. The vines were bearing plentifully, and in some cases the crops were ripe. As I saw parties of soldiers regaling themselves during a fearfully hot afternoon, I wondered whether those who planted the vines ever remotely thought how the fruit of their labour would be gathered and applied. Then the orders were to drive in all the horses and cattle. This our men did, the stock being placed in a kraal at Randam. Kaffir herdsmen protested most vociferously, and even claimed to be the owners, but these claims had to be made good in a higher quarter. Captain M'Leish had a hard task at the only occupied farm in the district, the owner being a Dutch farmer who came from Cape Colony so late as July, 1899. Our men had rounded up the horses and mules, and the stalwart house-father made sturdy protest against the annexation of his property. Well up in years, and unable to speak a word of English, he stated his case and his rights without so much as a whimper either in tone or manner—stated them as one who knew what he was entitled to, and expected, not favours, but justice. But there in front of their home, watching it all, and filled with profound dread of our soldiers, were the women of the household—mother and daughters. Their tears fell fast, and they wrung their hands in pitiful anguish. I was more deeply glad than I can express in words when M'Leish decided, as the result of his inquiries, that he could leave the stock in the old farmer's possession, pending the decision of the General commanding. Then the captain turned his horse, and rode quickly away, murmuring at the only class of duty which ruffles the temper of an exceptionally fine man.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SUGGESTION OF MOUNTED WORK—AN IMAGINATIVE GUIDE—GRIM DISCOVERY ON THE VELDT—MISUSED HORSES—RUINED HOMES.

So marked had been the impression on the minds of the military authorities that mounted rifles were the troops specially wanted, that a suggestion, understood to come from General Babbington, was made to put the whole of our regiment on horseback. A parade was held, and volunteers called for. That is to say, men were asked to intimate if they were prepared to serve mounted in the event of horses being procured. The response was highly satisfactory, no fewer than 450 out of the 580 infantry in camp intimating willingness to change their condition.

Colonel Hoad and Captain M'Leish then visited Modder River, there to consult with General Lord Methuen on the subject, and, as before they got away the 450 willing ones had recruited a good many more, Hoad considered that he was justified in offering the whole regiment. This he told the men on the first parade held after his return. Few of our men were without equestrian experience of some sort. Yet it is true that some had never been on horses in their lives, but they were quite willing to tackle the new work when it was intimated that they could thus give better service.

Disintegration was foreseen if the mounting took place, as companies would be sent hither and thither, and the regiment's representative federal character affected. That, of course, was not necessarily a prime consideration. Colonel Hoad had been assured that the regiment would be preserved, even if the parts were scattered, and that he would continue to hold his command. He had declined an offer to become second in command of a mounted infantry regiment, and looked forward to some brigade post should the Australian Regiment become part of a brigade, for, as a full Colonel, he was rather too senior a man for his regimental billet.

From time to time I have spoken of the Rimington Guides, and praised their prowess and their work. The men of this corps are supposed to possess a special knowledge of the country, and many speak, besides English, Cape Dutch, and several varieties of Kaffir. The Guides are invaluable as interpreters, but experience of them has shown me that they are not all acquainted with this part of South Africa, nor necessarily experts in the art of getting back to the base after a day's, not to speak of a night's, excursion through country which they traverse for the first time.

Then their caution, which I for the first few weeks admired, tends to be a bit overdone. They have helped to teach our

mounted riflemen to be careful in approaching positions where an enemy may be posted, and I don't think that this will make Australians timorous. But unquestionably there are timorous Rimington Guides.

One of them got into the guard tent at Enslin. With two comrades he had been sent out for a sick horse which a cavalryman had to abandon on the veldt during the reconnaissance of the 9th and 10th. He got separated from his comrades at a point where they entered a deserted house, and something scared him. He turned back, and rode full tear into camp, where he reported, or, it may be, only suggested, that his companions had been surrounded and captured by a party of Boers. The supposed captors had quite eight miles start for Jacobsdal, but two patrols of mounted rifles were sent out in different directions, in the hope of getting in contact with them. One patrol met the two thought-to-be-captive Guides coming in. They had seen no Boers. The other patrol rode about thirty miles before getting back to camp about ten o'clock at night. At a time when special care was being taken to conserve the powers of the horses, the supreme importance of doing so being now realised, an incident of that kind was easily provocative of a commanding officer's anger. That very imaginative Guide did not do duty with us any more.

While Lieutenant Thorn was out in search of the mythical Boers he visited Badenhorst, the house where the capture was said to have taken place, and found, he avers, traces of comparatively recent occupation. This being his justification, he removed some bales of wool and furniture from the building, and, following the example of General Babbington, set fire to it. A proceeding this which the camp commandant (Colonel M'Bean) approved.

While Thorn was returning he made a ghastly discovery. Lying on his back, and stretched at full length on the veldt, was the corpse of a British soldier. The place was part of the field upon which, in November last, had been fought the battle of Graspan. Here, it at first seemed, was one of those who had been classed as "missing"—that is to say, here, garbed as a soldier, lay the sun-shrivelled remains of one who had been. And the hot air was poisoned for yards around by the nauseating smell of a decaying human body.

A hasty investigation failed to disclose any identification card on the body, but an unfinished letter, dated from Orange River, and beginning, "My Dear Sister," gave the clue to the poor fellow's identity. It was Private R. Kane, of the Yorkshire Light Infantry, whose dead body lay exposed on the veldt. "I am going to the relief of Kimberley," he wrote, in a letter full of affection and domestic pathos, sacred ground upon which you and I, dear reader, have no right to enter.

In the fight at Graspan he had been shot through the body, and met a soldier's death.

It was dusk when our patrol happened upon the corpse, and, as it lay over four miles from camp, just on the border of the Free State, the burial had to be deferred till next morning. I accompanied the burial party, all mounted rifles, two sections mounted as a covering patrol, half a dozen others in a waggon. The Rev. Mr. Jeffries, Presbyterian chaplain of the Gordons, and Surgeon-Captain Hopkins were also in attendance.

The doctor was able to tell us that poor Kane had been attended to by the ambulance men, for he had been divested of his accoutrements and carefully bandaged. Moreover, as the jaws were tied up with a strip of calico, it was evident that he had died in the ambulance men's hands, a bullet having lodged in his spine. The removal of the identification card showed, too, that the case was not the dreadful one of a wounded man overlooked and left to die, but rather that of a dead man missed by the burial parties.

Stalwart Victorian arms, working picks and shovels, sunk a grave by the side of the poor relic of humanity, and, with the delicate care of a gentle woman tending her child, the fast-decaying corpse was lifted into it. The good padre said a prayer or two, and the kindly earth closed over all that was mortal of the loving brother who went to the relief of Kimberley, who died on the way fighting for Queen and country, and for whom, in her far-off English home, the scalding tears of a bereaved sister go to swell the volume of the tribute paid by the nation's women to the god of war.

The late Private Kane lies decently buried near the foot of Deadman's Kopje, so named by our men because of the number of dead Britons and Boers who sleep on and around it, amidst the spent cartridges, litter of shrapnel, and broken shells. The killed of the battle of Graspan they are, and some of the Boers have been accorded but hurried and imperfect interment. Indeed, as at Belmont, hands and feet protrude through the stones laid loosely on the bodies to save them from the carrion birds. Our mounted rifles performed their first melancholy task of the kind with a characteristic thoroughness, and amidst the stones piled up on the mound over his body an evergreen bush now marks a soldier's lonely sepulchre.

News reached us at this stage of a fight at Rensburg, in which the New South Wales Lancers lost their first man killed, and the greater part of a patrol was captured. The Lancers had previously been wonderfully lucky in all their doings. I cannot pretend to describe at first hand the Rensburg incident, for I was hundreds of miles away when it happened, but I have learned that Lieutenant Dowling behaved with great

gallantry, and made a fine, although unsuccessful, attempt to rescue Private Bartlett by carrying him off on his horse. The animal was killed, and Dowling, badly wounded, fell into the hands of the foe. Bartlett hid in a kopje and got back to camp. The Boer ambush is what patrols had to look out for. The New Zealanders, too, did some fighting at Rensburg the same week, their casualties being one man killed and one wounded. It was pleasing to know that, wherever Australians had become engaged with the enemy, their conduct had been such as to win encomiums from the highest authorities.

Colonel Ricardo, of Queensland, with whom I had a chat, told me that the horses from his colony, then at Belmont, had had a great "doing" since their arrival in the country. Soft and unfit after a voyage of forty-four days, they were at once put into railway trucks, and they had been "going like blazes" ever since. Out of two hundred and eighty, Ricardo lost fifty, and most of the others were badly tucked up. The poor brutes were in such a state that the men were virtually dismounted infantry. The horses were ordered to Witteputs, in the hope that some grass and a few weeks' rest would once more put them into working form. That is what comes of men who do not understand horses having it in their power to order them about.

Why, I hear, on the best authority, of an officer who, in a recent bit of work, went ten miles at a canter without drawing rein. His own charger was fresh and fit, and he had two spare mounts, both of which he rode out before the day was over. Weary and more heavily-laden horses of the rank and file followed that man on his ten mile jaunt, and three fell dead at the finish. There was not the faintest necessity for hurry. Sometimes military exigencies require that horsemen shall go for all they are worth. Then no account must be taken of sacrifice. What I complain of is the somewhat frequent failures of commanding officers to, at ordinary times, use their equine power with judgment. I should like to see some of these men fall in for instruction by our Captain M'Leish in the art of managing horses.

Some experiments which were being made with a view to the establishment of wireless telegraphic communication between Enslin and Modder River were rudely interrupted. A high mast, pole upon pole, had been erected, and guyed to the ground in a very clever way. It made you quite dizzy to look up to the masthead, and at it, I am told, it was intended to place the receiver. But the engineers had reckoned without the dust "devil."

Quite in the course of things it happened along one afternoon, its favourite time for paying calls. When it had finished with the engineers' work, broken pieces, of what on

board ship would be called the top-gallant mast, were hanging dismally in the guys half-way down the lower mast.

In that most gusty of gusty countries you've got to take heed how you build, and see that your tent is always well anchored if you want to keep it out of the clouds. Engineers are always persons of great serenity, and when their mast carried away they set about amusing and instructing themselves by flying kites—in this case literally, for I am not here dealing in political figuratives. I believe that the object in flying the kites was to ascertain something on the subject of air pressure, but the wind at Enslin is as wayward as a woman, and as easily agitated. It blows anything from a sigh to a hurricane at the shortest notice. What the kite-flying actually established, beyond what the pressure was at the time, I do not know. That is the worst of being unscientific.

We got up one fine morning and found that the engineers had a lovely balloon flying right over our camp. It was a captive balloon—that is to say, at first it was a captive. Before 10 o'clock a small willy-willy, just a baby, looked in on its way to Bloemfontein, and it took the balloon with it, or, rather, it would have done so had not the bag of gas burst after it had ascended about four miles, and made a bit of easting. It is a pity that the balloon didn't make the whole journey to the sea coast. The Boers might have taken it for a sign in the heavens adverse to the war.

Some hitch appears to have occurred in the signalling arrangements between beleaguered Kimberley and Modder River. Kimberley notified that it could make out the high kopjes at Enslin, therefore endeavours were made to establish communication. It is noteworthy that the signalling officer sent to conduct the operations at Enslin was Lieutenant Loch, son of a former Governor, and one who, as a lad, was a bugler in the Victorian Mounted Rifles. As he whom we knew best as Sir Henry has joined the great majority, the young Lieutenant is now Lord Loch.

We were all delighted at the receipt of a cable message from Dr. M'Inerney intimating that his brother, commanding the Victorian unit, had been promoted. Captain M'Inerney is an officer whose efficiency is yoked to his popularity, and runs evenly with it. The one makes no sacrifice to the other, and both are conspicuous. The learned doctor's cable message was closely followed by an official notification, and this disclosed that Lieutenant Salmon (another long overlooked man), of the Mounted Rifles, had also obtained the captaincy to which he was so well entitled. The mounted men lined up to hear the announcement, and gave the new captain three hearty cheers and a tiger. Both promotions were in the highest degree popular.

It may be interesting to some to know how well, comparatively, the men of the several colonies represented stood the climate at Enslin. The experience of four weeks (three in the case of the New South Wales Infantry) showed that the best general health had been enjoyed by the Victorian Mounted Rifles, few of whom were on the sick list, perhaps because they were kept too busy to get there. Next in order were the Victorian Infantry and the Westralians, about equal; then, successively, the South Australian, New South Wales, and Tasmanian Infantry, in that order. The Tasmanians suffered more than any others. In fact, there were days upon which quite half the total number of men returned as sick were Tasmanians. They come from the coolest of the colonies represented, so perhaps it is natural that they should feel most acutely the intense African sun.

The disposition to pick up articles left by the owners at deserted farms was becoming unpleasantly marked. I wrote a letter home one evening to the accompaniment of music from a harmonium brought in by a party which was supposed to be gathering firewood. A variety of household goods came in with that harmonium, and I have yet to learn by what manner of right the Australians or others thus acquired private property. Nor does it much concern me whether that property belonged to loyal people, who left their homes in fear of the Boers, or to Boers themselves.

I am glad to say that Colonel Hoad holds precisely similar views. He took the necessary action, and subsequently no goods were admitted to the camp save those which there was every reason to believe had been honestly purchased.

Every day's experience helped the more to impress an observer with the pathetic effects of war upon what may be called the domesticity of that district. Abandoned homes on all sides, the rooms left neat and tidy, the beds made, the table equipage on the sideboard, pictures on the walls, family portraits flanking the clock on the mantelpiece, the family Bible on the best room table, the letters and business documents of the house-father in his writing-desk. All evidence of rudely and suddenly broken ties, of a hurried departure from the peaceful and old-established home, where children were born and reared, and where, maybe, blushing brides were given to the life-long care of newly-made husbands. Oh, those ruined and broken homes! The grave of many a household was the great South African war.

Colonel Hoad, and Captains M'Leish, Lascelles and Bruche spent an afternoon trying the effect of rifle shots on the ant-hills which are so common all over the veldt. Built in the winter time by a small black ant, these hills rise to the height of from two to three feet, and have a mean diameter almost as great. They are masses of small cells compacted together

in a marvellous way, and when dried by the winter sun furnish inviting bits of cover for troops under fire in the open. The tests showed that a rifle bullet fired at from fifty to sixty yards did not penetrate much more than half through an ant-hill of the size I have mentioned. While these hills are not officially recommended as safe cover, I know what I should do, *faute de mieux*, if I happened to get under fire in the vicinity of one of them.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A Day at Modder River—Lord Methuen—The Correspondents' Island.

We had an exciting day at Modder River on the 16th. For long past the only gunnery had consisted of morning and evening salutations—a few rounds at generously long range. If the Boer happened to be in the humour, he replied with a shell or two, which rarely did any harm; but there were days and days together during which the enemy made no sign. I came up from Enslin on the 15th, rode around the outposts of the British positions during the afternoon, and towards sunset got on to the northern front, in order to see what might happen. "Joe Chamberlain," as one 4.7 naval gun is called, and "Josephine," as the sailors have dubbed the other, were both in action, and a few rounds of shell were also fired from the 12-pounders. We all looked eagerly over the stretch of veldt which separated us from the line of kopjes forming the Magersfontein position, but our reward was small—only two rounds from the Boer guns. The smoke only, not the missile, was seen. It was war, but it was not magnificent. Not a further sign of life was shown on the kopjes, and it was difficult to believe that there lay, right in front of us, an enemy powerful enough to say "Check" to a British General. "Suppose," I suggested to a Reuter's representative with me, "we ride forward and ask Cronje what he really intends." My companion objected on the, to him, sufficient ground that he would like to see England again, and as there was nothing else to do, we rode back to quarters and dined.

Next morning my friend and I are astir shortly after four. An hour later we are on the line of the British guns. There is really something to see this time, although our visit is a chance one. It is a fine, calm morning, and perfectly clear. From the kopje right before us a long line of tiny smoke wreaths, plain when examined through field glasses, shows where the Boers are starting the fires for their morning coffee, and everything is peaceful. But, behold, there is a

party of the 12th Lancers out this morning, and evidently business is intended. The character of it does not long remain in doubt, for the Lancers are ordered to the front, their pleasant duty being to "draw the enemy's fire." And they draw it. At a nice brisk trot these gallant men approached the death-charged kopjes, cheerfully, even merrily, nobody hanging back by as much as half a head. "Boldly they ride, and well," their handsome and well-conditioned horses all full of the sportive vigour which springs from mere joy of life in the beautiful cool hours of the early morning.

About 1500 yards from the Boer trenches the Lancers coolly dismount, and, holding their horses' bridles, quietly seat themselves on the veldt. So much human bait. Will the Boer bite? The answer comes quickly and trenchantly. The enemy has been wondering, probably, what on earth the handful of audacious men mean. For they carry no flag of truce, and possibly the Dutch officer on duty may suspect a species of joint suicide. When the Lancers sit down, however, he hesitates no longer. "Crack, crack, crack" come the first reports audible to us, and we realise that the famous "Pom Pom," as the Vickers-Nordenfeldt is called, has been turned on to the bold Britishers. Then "Boom, boom, boom" comes the louder voices of the Boer artillery as the Lancers quietly ride back. Three well-aimed shells fall, one just in front of the retiring horsemen, the second a little to the left, and the third close to their rear. No damage is done to either horse or man, for none of the shells burst, and the closest of them—that which falls in front—is the signal for a sharp rein-back and change of direction as the cavalry ride to cover.

Then it is our turn. Curiously enough, on that morning, while I, a Victorian, look on and try vainly to get agitated by the consciousness of being under fire, a Victorian officer opens the ball. A 12-pounder, of which Lieutenant Colquhoun is in charge, sends a message of inquiry towards the Boer trenches, and Colquhoun says that it went the whole journey. Then other 12-pounders start in. "Joe Chamberlain" speaks —"pushfully" as ever—and "Josephine" spits out spitefully a projectile filled with lyddite which hits the ground on the side of the kopje, and turns an area of the brown soil into a dirty yellow. Half-an-hour of this, with five minutes' intervals between the shells, then a spell of half-an-hour, four rounds of shrapnel, and the firing ceases. The Boer, who, we learn from the Lancers, had opened with rifles before getting his "Pom Pom" and heavier ordnance to work, apparently hasn't any more ammunition to spare, for he can't be persuaded into a rejoinder, and the reign of peace is temporarily re-established.

In the afternoon more serious business was undertaken. A strong reconnaissance was sent out by Lord Methuen in a north-easterly direction, along the north bank of the river, and towards a point in the stream known as Brown's drift. All arms were represented—artillery, cavalry, and infantry, the greater part of the latter now at Modder River being employed. While the men marched, the guns in position at the front, now numbering over forty, opened upon the Boer stronghold, and the cannonading was the most powerful undertaken at that point. Some idea was obtained of what our artillery can do when the order is "Go ahead." For about two hours, closing at sundown, the storm raged, and if the British shells, which were plainly to be seen bursting on the side of the kopjes and over the Boer trenches, didn't kill a lot of people, I can only assume that the bomb-proof chambers which the enemy is credited with building are particularly effective. The cannon fire on the Sunday evening before the check of Magersfontein was slight in comparison with the pelting hurricane of metal by which the Boer position was assailed on the afternoon of the 16th February. The enemy, for long, remained quiet, vouchsafing no answer, but when the infantry changed front to their left and deployed in the face of the position, it was apparently recognised that something ought to be done. The Boer would have regarded it as doing violence to the "slimness" on which he prides himself had he started his rifles on the infantry at unprofitably long range. He just let the soldiers come on and deliver their long-distance volleys without incurring any more trouble than was involved in reinforcing his fighting line. This he did smartly and successfully. Meanwhile, just to show that he wasn't sulky, he let fly some shells—five in all—at our field artillery, without, however, so much as knocking a speck of the blinding red dust off a battery horse's tail. Our balloon had a narrow escape. It was on the ground, and quite out of action, but still filled, and ready for use if required. A Boer shell passed over the ridge behind which the great gas-bag was tugging at its cords, and fell close alongside of it. If it hadn't been that Boer shells rarely burst, and that this was not one of the rare occasions, we should have been minus a balloon. As it was, after a tremendous lot of sound and fury, it is not known whether we killed anybody. On our side the pleasant record was "No casualties."

Fully can I confirm Lady Methuen's denials of London rumours that her husband was in bad health. I called upon, and had a chat with, the General, thus renewing an acquaintance made in London in '97. Lord Methuen looked remarkably fit and well, and appears to have wholly recovered from

the wound in the thigh he received at the battle of Modder River. I saw no mark of abatement in the vigour of the man who, while in charge of the Home District, made the business of soldiering in peace time include a liberal amount of hard work for officers and men. I have seen him take an inspection of the Grenadier Guards before six o'clock in the morning, a proceeding involving much earlier rising than the average British officer likes—unless, that is, there is a fight on. In a tiny room at the hotel, Lord Methuen, sitting in his shirt sleeves, plugged away at the daily routine of his division, while his aides-de-camp and orderlies awaited his orders on the verandah outside. As brisk, genial, and pleasant as ever, he was at the same time a picture of energy. A small party who rode with him to Klockfontein (about seven miles down the line), a few evenings ago, would tell you that the reputedly sick man was still the hard goer who commanded the famous Methuen's Horse. He started off at a smart canter, and never drew rein till the journey had been accomplished. Whatever opinions my readers have formed of Lord Methuen's ability as a General may be held quite unaffected by a consideration that the man was not, at the beginning of the year, perfectly fit and well. Indeed, if we had not all become acquainted with that ubiquitous and mischievous creature, the camp liar, it would be hard to understand how the reports denied by Lady Methuen ever got into circulation.

When I was at Modder River before, at the close of the disastrous fight at Magersfontein, the place was dreary in the extreme. At the approaches to the railway station, and all round the hotel, lay wounded men. Everybody was down in the dumps, supplies were short, the stores were empty, and if you could not get bite or sup for love, you certanly couldn't get either for money. It was very different on my later visit. A considerable number of troops were collected in a large and well-appointed camp ; the bar had been reopened at the hotel, although all other parts of the house were in the occupation of the military ; the stores were doing a great trade, at prices which meant fortunes to somebody ; and all were in high spirits. The camp of the Naval Brigade was adorned with white stones, with which an outer and inner circle was described around each tent, the little space between being skilfully made to resemble a bit of flower garden. Such merry souls are these Naval men, in their khaki suits and khaki-covered straw hats, wherever you find them—whether in their camp or at the outposts. The men on duty at the latter were living day and night in and around trenches beside their guns. So very young and tender-looking were some of the middies, whose absence from the attentions of the Naval instructors on board the warships their seniors

chaffingly deplored. "What do you think of him for a Naval cadet?" an officer asks me as he pointed across the mess-room table to a slight youngster who was just getting over an attack of sun-fever. "A credit to the British Navy, sir," exclaimed the lad himself, before I had time to express an opinion. I bowed my complete acquiescence, and openly stated a conviction that the Navy was saved. And, after seeing these adaptable amphibians, our blue jackets, in the front at Modder River, I venture to think that the Navy has as good stuff in it to-day as ever it had.

During the forenoon the examination of a Dutch colonist, charged with treason, took place in the office of the provost-marshal. The accused, a farmer named Muller, well up in years, had been similarly charged, and acquitted, on a previous occasion. It was said that he had given information to the enemy, and witnesses deposed to a number of suspicious circumstances. A civil magistrate heard the complaint, although Muller was in military custody, and military officers conducted the proceedings. It was to me an interesting illustration of the civil-cum-military judicial procedure in a district governed by martial law. Particularly was I impressed by the superabundant fair play given to the accused. An officer, who appeared to discharge duties similar to those of judge-advocate in a military court, adroitly prompted the accused's questioning of witnesses, and restrained the man himself when he seemed on the point of making incriminating admissions. And, amidst a good deal of murmuring outside, the prisoner was once more acquitted.

Modder River is a Saturday-till-Monday place for residents of Kimberley. On my former visit, however, I had scant opportunity of ascertaining what the diamond fields "best people" found attractive. Even now, not having seen Kimberley, a comparison is out of the question. Personally, I should not like to permanently reside at the settlement on Modder River, whether in the winter or the summer time; but the place has its advantages. In time of peace, they tell me, Glover's Hotel, near the railway station, is very comfortable, and I have had some experience of the second hotel, also owned by Glover, which stands on what is described as the "island"—really a curiously-shaped peninsula, just at the junction of the Modder and Reit Rivers. The island would be a delightful retreat were it not that the dust "devil"—we say "fiend" in Melbourne, but "devil" was the word there—takes small account of the breadth of either river, and you can get almost as filthy on the verandah of the Island Hotel as you can anywhere else in that dust-plagued land. The place was in a very porous condition. It was the Boer head-quarters during the

Battle of Modder River, and was riddled with shells and rifle bullets. It had been virtually deserted, but a number of war correspondents in search of quarters took possession, and soon restored life to the establishment. After the journalists came some of the military officers, and the "island" was the centre of a good deal of activity. Never before in its history had so many busy brains been brought together in the shade of the magnificently umbrageous trees ensconced amongst which the hotel stands, and which—if trees have ears—must have heard many loving whispers, for the "island" has a fame as a place for honeymoons. And, even amidst the tribulations of war, life on the "island" was not half bad.

After living for a goodly long period in a tent, sleeping on the ground, and all but eating off it, too, I enjoyed the sensation of sleeping in a bed, and sitting at a table, as a guest of the press mess on the "island." Quite as much did I enjoy the companionship of those good fellows of the Fourth Estate who composed the mess, which included representatives of leading London and American papers, and of the ubiquitous Reuter. We exchanged confidences and opinions about things in general, including, of course, the conduct of military campaigns, the press censorship, and much else that concerned us, and at the proper time will be made also the concern of the public, whose servants pressmen are. Each of these men represented a great interest, and his presence there involved a large weekly outlay. Each had to do his work, and thus justify his existence, quite independently of the others, but the relationship between them all was most friendly, forbearing, and mutually helpful. As for the Australian unit and their guest—my unworthy self—well, they could not be kind enough. Just one illustration. When, on returning from the outposts that morning, Mr. Stephens, of Reuter's, and I tried a short cut through a drift, and got our horses into deep water, he was out of the saddle like a shot, and, with the river rippling under his armpits, gauging the position. Under no circumstances was I to wet my precious feet. Nor did I, for I managed to steer towards a great willow and made a Blondin-like passage ashore along an overhanging branch, which bore me right enough, but was as jumpy and uneasy as a Minister of the Crown playing the fool with a deputation of the unemployed. Editors may slang-whang each other to their heart's content, but there is nothing so perfect as the camaraderie of war correspondents.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The 12th Lancers Reinforce—The Earl of Airlie—How Officers Dressed.

One of the Roman Catholic chaplains, Father Cullinan, was in attendance at Enslin on Sunday, the 14th, and the faithful of the Australian Regiment and of the Gordons were able to attend early mass, the first heard by our Catholic citizen soldiers since they left Melbourne. Protestant Church services were held regularly on Sundays, the Rev. Mr. Jeffries, of the Gordons, officiating.

While in London in 1897 I had an opportunity of learning something about the Salvation Army schemes in the British army and navy. On a Saturday night at Enslin we had an exemplification of how these schemes work on service. A party of Gordon Salvationists came into the Australian lines, equipped with an accordion and other musical instruments, and held a rallying service—hymn-singing, oratory, knee drill, the whole *répertoire*. Despite the fact that a cricket match was proceeding close by, the Salvationists drew a large crowd. The men accepted the hymn-books handed round and joined in the singing. I watched it all, and saw not the faintest breach of decorum on the part of any spectator. Indeed, an earnest, not to say reverent, attention was given while, in language vigorous, simple, and rich in military metaphor, the orators of the occasion exhorted their comrades to walk with their faces towards the living God.

The 12th Lancers, under the command of Colonel the Earl of Airlie, arrived at Enslin on the evening of the 17th inst. They were sent down to Modder River ostensibly so that their horses might get some rest, and a share of such bits of grass as were to be found on the surrounding veldt.

An addition of over 400 men, 300 horses, and 50 mules to our water consumers was rather a serious matter, and the value of a well dug by the Australians was demonstrated. Without it, we could hardly have taken the Lancers in. As it was, the strain upon the wells was excessive, and a party of engineers, under Lieutenant Woolf, had a busy time. So did the men we found for the necessary fatigue work.

"Water in the Kaffir Well soapy, sir," was the startling report made one morning to the worried Adjutant. "Quite unfit for drinking purposes," added the man who made the report. Here was, indeed, a calamity, and the report proved to be true. Somebody had dropped a bar of soap into the tank dug beside the spring! No record has been preserved of the words used by the Adjutant, but, from motives of delicacy, nobody afterwards mentioned soapy water in his hearing.

At each military position somebody holds the post of camp commandant. He is not necessarily the senior officer, and usually in the South African campaign the post was filled by a Major. The office is one involving much attention to detail, and the way in which the officers fought shy of it was alike interesting and instructive. When the Australians came to Enslin Colonel Hoad had to act as camp commandant. He waited until the Gordons arrived, and then—in pure courtesy, of course—asked Lieutenant-Colonel M'Bean to take it. The simple Scot did so, but, two days later, wanted to give his honours back. The gallant Gordon realised what it was to be peppered with telegrams at all hours of the day and night on a multitude of trumpery matters. Why, it was worse than Magersfontein. So he laid low on the weather bow and waited for the next victim.

Behold him in the Earl of Airlie, the Lieutenant-Colonel in command of the 12th Lancers, who—in strict courtesy again—was offered the commandantship almost before he had time to get off his horse. What is more, he took it, and at once became liable to be awakened from his beauty sleep to read the telegraphed intimation that three telegraph poles were being sent from Orange River, and a request to meet the train. No wonder the billet of camp commandant always went a-begging. It may be well to mention that the camp commandant, while generally responsible for order, etc., is not necessarily the commander of the troops on the station. The senior officer holds charge, and at Enslin Colonel Hoad was still senior officer.

When our officers at Cape Town substituted useful rifles for said to be useless swords, removed shining badges, etc., and generally shed their glitter of attire, they still preserved little things which here and there indicated that they were not wholly as common Tommy Atkins is. But a little later on the officers saw what they believed to be the necessity for "going the whole hog." Colonel Hoad turned out in precisely the same kit as his orderly. It was understood that in any fighting there was to do officers would stand in the same line as the men, and there direct their companies. By these means we subsequently avoided making a present of our officers to the Boer marksmen. The Australian Regiment in this particular only followed the example of more experienced ones, and few officers, outside the staff, were in any way distinguished from their men, it being urged that the advantage in the field is more than a set-off to the possibility of confusion, and that we could not afford to make a single concession to the Boer.

This last is true, but there is a phase of the matter clearly kept in view in some quarters, and of a good deal more importance than casual observers imagine. At a critical

moment on the battlefield it is essential that men should see and recognise their officers, especially when in fact, as well as in theory, these officers are their trusted leaders. The moral effect of an officer, sword in hand, in front of a charging line counts for a good deal. British soldiers are accustomed to, and look for, such leadership. It is often fatal to officers, but *noblesse oblige!* There were some old schoolers in the campaign who said that officers were taking too much care of themselves.

Which is the lesser of the two evils—to lose many officers or to lose fewer and forego the moral effect of a real tangible and even picturesque leadership? The reader may form his own opinion. He need not be a military man to warrant his coming to a conclusion on the subject. He need only be one who knows something of human nature, human motives. And he must recollect that, whatever be the dress or the theories, our officers have done their part faithfully, and, so far as personal valour is concerned, well maintained the glorious traditions of the British Army.

Apropos of the abolition of dress distinctions, about this time, at a place I would not for worlds name, a Captain, the sun of whose life has not yet reached the meridian, apparently forgetting the absence of his usual shoulder decorations, testily addressing a passer-by, asked: "Why don't you salute an officer, sir?" "Probably because I'm the officer's senior," was the crushing reply of the also undecorated one, who turned out to be a Lieutenant-colonel. These sad things happened, but they were far less injurious than Boer bullets, and rarely interfered with the appearance of the principals at their several messes.

Talking of messes, our friends the Gordon officers had a marquee, and sat down pleasantly together. So far, the Australian officers ate in the tents where they lodged, three or four together, and no attempt to establish a mess was made. Whatever may be said in the future about this campaign, it cannot be asserted that the Australian officers were over solicitous about themselves. Indeed, the only luxurious persons in the camp were the representatives of the Press, for they constructed a table out of a beer box, and each luxuriated on a whisky case for a seat when the bully beef and biscuit coldly furnished forth the midday banquet. Stylish persons these pressmen.

The great recent event in the middle of the month was the arrival of Lord Roberts and the Sirdar. Noteworthy that, while Cape Town generally broke out into a blaze of bunting, the Government offices remained sombre and unadorned. Symptomatic of the state of affairs in the colony. Schreiner was still "neutral." The general hope was that the master minds now brought to bear upon the management of the war

would devise some effective action before the winter set in, and the prosecution of the campaign be rendered impracticable.

CHAPTER XXX.

SENTIMENTS OF THE ENEMY—A DUTCH LAWYER—RELIGIOUS, BUT "SLIM."

Once more we heard rumours that the Free Staters were very sick of the whole business, and wanted to get to their homes. It was said that the way in which the Transvaal Boer yielded the post of honour (and peril) to the Free Stater had excited the shrewd suspicion that this kind of "kindness" might be overdone. At Magersfontein a wounded Britisher, with whom I have some acquaintance, was for about thirty hours without water. A Free Stater came upon him, relieved his needs, wrapped him up, and said, "I'll do what I can for you, but if one of the Transvaal men comes along, the chances are that he'll take all you've got; perhaps shoot you into the bargain." The Britisher lives to tell the tale, perhaps because he did not fall into the hands of a Transvaaler.

What was passing in the Boer mind at this stage is well illustrated by a story. After Magersfontein, while the burial parties were at work, a Mr. Robinson, Presbyterian chaplain, met three Boers, who perceived that a couple of bottles were slung on the padre's saddle.

"Will you give us a drink?" asked the enemy; "we've had nothing for hours."

"Certainly," was the reply; "one bottle contains water, the other whisky. Which do you prefer?"

Alas that I should record it, those three men expressed an unanimous preference for whisky!

"Well," said the parson, "you shall have it on one condition. It is that before you drink you each say, 'The Queen, God bless her.'"

"Certainly," was the prompt reply, and the first two, prior to quenching—or, should I say, aggravating!—their thirst, toasted the Queen without comment. Nor did the third hesitate.

"The Queen, God bless her," he said, "and damn Rhodes." Before the padre could interfere—if he had a mind to—and save Rhodes, the liquor had disappeared.

"If the Boers get Rhodes," said a Dutch lady refugee from Hopetoun, in whose company I made a train journey, "they will certainly shoot him."

"Would you approve of that?" I asked.

"Unquestionably," replied the lady, "I would. Thus would be justly punished the man who brought about this calamitous war."

Some idea of the class of work then going on in the very midst of Cape Colony North may be gathered from the doings of a small party of the Mounted Infantry stationed at Fincham's Farm, Witteputs. A sub-inspector complained that he had been menaced by rebel colonists, and the party made an all-night excursion under his guidance. The man was absent from the first house visited, and his wife, an English girl, admitted that he had gone into laager. Two other citizens were taken in their beds, in each case arms, ammunition, and bandoliers being found in the house. They confessed that they had been fighting against us, had grown tired of it, and returned to their homes. "I didn't know what to do," explained one of them; "the Boers came and said, 'Come on, you must fight against the damned British,' and I went. I didn't want to go." The men were sent to Cape Town to be dealt with. It may be doubted whether a number of the ignorant Dutchman in these parts really knew under which flag they were living.

"What business is it of yours?" demanded a Boer prisoner on learning that a British officer who had addressed him was an Australian. "I'll tell you what we'll do with you fellows. We'll shoot every one of you who falls into our hands."

The speaker was a Boer lawyer, a man of light and leading amongst the burghers; he voiced the feeling provoked in the Transvaal by the part Australia has played in this business.

"Ah," said the officer addressed, "you intend to shoot us all, do you? Now, that's very amusing. Perhaps you will contrive to let your friends know that for every Australian shot in the way you indicate we shall want fifty Boer scalps. We'll send a hundred thousand men to get them if need be."

"Why," rejoined the astonished lawyer, "you haven't got so many men in the country;" whereupon he was supplied with some statistical information, also with some statements anent the ferocity of the average Australian, which, in a cynical sense, were also statistical. It is certain that the Boers deeply resented what they called the "interference" of Australia and Canada in their quarrel with Great Britain.

Travelling by rail the other day I happened upon a refugee Dutch family, who were making their way down country. They were Cape Colonists, and, whatever their sympathies might be, they did not want to get entangled in the war, neither father nor son being in the least inclined to join a Boer commando, nor disposed to incur the risk of being shot for refusing. The eldest daughter, a handsome blonde, in the early twenties, spoke English well, and confided to me that her great solicitude in those sad times was for the "precious souls" of the men, on both sides, engaged in a death struggle.

"Do they ever think of their precious souls, these men?' demanded the lady.

"I—er—suppose they do sometimes," was my admittedly lame reply.

"Ah! sometimes," she exclaimed, enthusiastically; "that's just it—sometimes! Should they ever forget their precious souls? I am continually saying to our people at the meetings we hold at our houses, 'You should always, and at all times, think of your precious souls, for you must answer for them on the great day.'"

Apparently they were a religious family. Anyhow, the young woman was religious, and when all expressed surprise because, in answer to a question, I intimated a preference for war or politics, anything rather than religion as a subject of conversation, I realised that they constituted a truly pious household. Just then the conductor came round. Would you believe it, those godly people were all found to be travelling first-class on second-class tickets! A mere inadvertence, probably. The conductor's way of rectifying it was alike prompt and decisive. It indicated that despite the pious passengers' protests, he was unwilling to risk his "precious soul" by failure in his duty to the department he served.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FREQUENT ALARMS—REGIMENT TO BE MOUNTED—A CHAT WITH HECTOR MACDONALD—SHODDY BOOTS FOR THE ARMY.

To "dwell in the midst of alarms" was for long the fortune of the Australian Regiment. About eleven o'clock on the night of the 22nd a message from Modder River intimated that a Boer movement against Enslin was suspected. Information had been received that a force of about 3000 had left Magersfontein, and its objective was supposed to be a point on the line of communication at, or near, our camp. The men were smartly under arms, and, as the moon rose, they moved out, the Australians in the first and second lines (fighting and support), the Gordons in reserve, the 12th Lancers patrolling. Our dispositions were as they had previously been under like conditions, and an all-night watch was kept. But the enemy did not come, and the first great affair of the Australians was once more postponed *sine die*. The Boer repugnance to us appeared to be ineradicable. He would not even suffer himself to come and slay us. Australia and Scotland were once more pleasantly associated in the preparations and wait for those 3000 Boers, the two Colonels, each armed with a rifle, spending the night together lying in their

cloaks on the veldt, and maintaining an anxious vigil until after daybreak.

That Colonel M'Bean fully shares the high opinions formed of our mounted men is evident from a remark he made, under rather curious conditions, on the night of the alarm. Colonel the Earl of Airlie, being camp commandant, got the first news of the expected attack, and, on communicating it to M'Bean, the gallant Scot involuntarily exclaimed, "What a pity it is we haven't the Victorian Mounted Rifles here to-night!" for the alarm came during an absence of the Australian horsemen. The commander of the 12th Lancers stared at his brother Colonel, but said nothing. Possibly he thought all the more. Possibly, too, when the outspoken Scot had time to think, he regretted being betrayed into an utterance which seemed to imply that three squadrons of Lancers weren't so much to his liking as Captain M'Leish's single company.

There were no end of minor alarms. Just at sundown one evening some of our native mule drivers were fired upon while watering their animals at a deserted farm dam about four miles east of this station—that is to say, on the Free State border. The Mounted Rifles patrolling having been discontinued for the last few days, owing to the company being engaged in a "demonstration" within the colony, the Free Staters became enterprising, and got a little nearer to us than usual. None of the mule drivers were hit, and, as they were riding, they made a rapid journey into camp. They say that the Boers followed them for some distance. As the night fell darkly, investigation was deferred until next morning, when a squadron of Lancers had a ride around the district, but found no sign of the enemy. In all probability the Boers encountered by our Kaffirs consisted of a patrol from Jacobsdal.

When Australians were offered for service in South Africa, the Australian notion was that mounted men would be more useful than foot soldiers. But the Colonial Office knew better, and Mr. Chamberlain's cabled despatch, accepting our troops, indicated that infantry were preferred. It would seem, however, that the Australian notion was the correct one after all, for, in the middle of January, it was definitely decided that the whole of the Australian Regiment should be mounted.

Colonel Hoad had been able to reply to an inquiry as to how many were willing to do mounted duty by offering the entire regiment. That offer was promptly accepted, and the necessary requisitions for horses and equipment at once sent in. The decision to put the whole of the men on horseback is unquestionably a high compliment to Australians, and as such it was accepted, the project being regarded with enthusi-

astic favour all round. Daily tests in horsemanship were at once entered upon, and were generally well sustained. The Westralian infantry company included an exceptionally large number of good riders, and the Victorian infantry unit was not far behind when called upon to obey the (to them) unfamiliar order, "Stand to your horses." But it had soon to be admitted that the regiment included rather more than Colonel Hoad had suspected of men who, like the Rabbi Amos, had never trusted themselves before on "so uncertain an animal as the horse," and these took a fair amount of what was pleasantly called "shaking down" before they got a reasonably firm seat in the saddle. As horses were not available, the transport mules were used for practice purposes, and only the man who has tried to ride a transport mule can quite appreciate what these budding equestrians suffered. When, in their hours of liberty, they took their pleasures standing, we quite understood that it was because, for reasons wholly their own, they preferred that posture to sitting down. Colonel Hoad was riding master, with Captain Salmon as first assistant; they explained and illustrated while their fellow-men listened—and suffered. The object was to get the men ready for the horses by the time the horses were ready for them, and I think it may be claimed that this object was fully attained.

Towards the end of the month it was my privilege to travel from Cape Town to Enslin with General Hector Macdonald, the heroic soldier who has won his way to well-merited distinction in the British Army. He was bound for Modder River, there to assume the command of the Highland Brigade, rendered vacant by the death of General Wauchope, who fell at Magersfontein. Not many knew he was leaving Cape Town so early after his arrival; but General Macdonald was quickly recognised on the railway station, and had a great send-off from the enthusiastic people who crowded the platform. At few places *en route* did he miss similar compliments. At Graspan, where three companies of the Gordons were stationed, the men in kilts almost mobbed their darling General, for is he not a Gordon Highlander? Three cheers were not nearly enough. Why, indeed, are such arbitrary limits set upon enthusiasm? and by whom? The gallant officer got a series of trios, each with a "tiger," and narrowly escaped losing his train, from which he had temporarily alighted. "Get up to the front quickly" was all he said, after many hand-to-cap acknowledgments, and the Gordons cheered louder than ever.

It was much the same at Enslin, where Lieutenant-Colonel M'Bean greeted, in the now famous General, a man who was Colour-sergeant of the old 92nd when M'Bean joined. For,

as everybody knows, Hector Macdonald rose from the ranks. Indeed, his rise is evidence of what is possible occasionally—just occasionally—to one who, in the British Army, starts soldiering at the foot of the ladder. One needs only to gaze upon the fine, intelligent face, where determination sits with good humour, and the splendidly-set figure of this singularly young-looking man, in order to realise that Macdonald is an exceptional person. It is not given to many to rise from the post of a shop assistant to that of a British General. At Belmont I pointed out to the General some of the colonials—Canadians and Queenslanders—about the railway station.

"What a motley lot we are!" he exclaimed, laughingly.

"Ours is a motley Empire, sir," I replied.

"Perfectly true," said the General. "We are of all sorts, and I see they've got some mere boys amongst the colonials."

"You'll find them all men, sir, when you want them," I ventured.

"I haven't the least doubt of it," he rejoined; "they're a fine-looking lot of fellows."

For the rest, we talked about the army rations, the quantity of it and the quality of it. The General agreed with me that a trifle more meat, especially for the meat-eating Australians, would not necessarily do any harm. General Hector Macdonald's appointment to the command of the Highland Brigade was one of the most popular, as, indeed, it has turned out to be one of the wisest, things done during the campaign.

I know a few Melbourne people—the number is steadily diminishing—who still declare, with more or less fervour, that if you want to get a really good pair of boots they must be made in England. I have no doubt that there are good boots made in that country, as there are in Melbourne; but it is certain that the English maker also turns out some precious bad ones. Our men had been close upon three months away, and they wanted boots. Supplies had been sent, and it was found that in some instances, after a few days' wear, the new boots, which were very easy wearing, and presented an exterior of quite laudable strength, had gone to pieces. Captain Bruche, as Quartermaster, was constrained to inquire into this, and went the length of dividing the sole of a most healthy-looking new blucher. The result was remarkable indeed. What seemed to be a fine, stout sole, sound and reliable, was really a bag filled up with worthless chips of leather-cuttings, such as you would see lying about the floor of a cobbler's shop. As I believe that some English makers of "boots for export" fill the sole cavities with brown paper, it would be unfair to say that the boot examined in the Quartermaster's tent was the shoddiest in the world. But it is well up in the list, and I was glad to learn that the accept-

ance of such foot-wear was not regarded as an inevitable and necessary evil—that somebody would make a fuss about it in the proper quarter. British soldiers on active service have been only too often made victims to the cupidity and dishonesty of those who are paid to provide them with honest boots. Yet we never hear of the contractors being hanged!

CHAPTER XXXII.

Demonstration in the Rebel Country—First Man Wounded—Work of the Mounted Rifles.

"First blood" from the Australian Regiment during the campaign flowed from the veins of Private Peter Falla, No. 108, of the Victorian Mounted Rifles. Falla is a young fellow of twenty-one, and a resident of Donald. There he belonged to the B Company of Rangers, and was transferred to the Mounted Rifles when Rangers were required to make up the strength of Captain M'Leish's company.

At the time Falla was hit he was doing patrol duty with his company at a place known as Dover Farm, rather over thirty miles north-west of Belmont, not far from where the Sunnysides action was fought, and in the centre of a disturbed district of Cape Colony. The company was on what is called "demonstration" duty (of which more below), and had halted on the evening of Monday, 21st January, with the column of which it formed part. Corporal Ross and young Falla were together on patrol to the front, when they suddenly came upon a party of armed rebels—I do not think the bulk of them were either Transvaalers or Free Staters—and the Donald man got a couple of bullets. But let Falla, who knows best what actually happened, tell the story in his own words:—"When the column halted on Monday night," he says, "Corporal Ross and I were sent on patrol duty to the front. Just about six o'clock we saw two men approaching the outpost line. We rode out towards them, and when we were within about eighty yards of them, they sung out something, which we did not understand. We called out in reply, but as, apparently, they were not satisfied, they suddenly turned their horses and cantered away. Off we went after them, through rather thick, scrubby country, but after we had gone a short distance we suddenly found ourselves in the presence of from forty to fifty armed men—apparently Boers—who were lying in ambush. They did not ask any questions, but opened fire upon us at once. Instantly I felt myself hit in the upper part of the right arm, and a few seconds later I felt that I was struck again—it appeared to me almost at the same place. I looked towards the corporal, and saw him turning his horse.

That was enough for me, and, following him, I galloped back. It is strange that Ross and both the horses escaped so well, for the whole fire appears to have been concentrated on us. At first I felt little pain or inconvenience, but in a few minutes my arm stiffened, and I had to drop my rifle. The firing had alarmed the picket, which turned out quickly, and we were soon inside the lines. There my mates attended to me, and bound up the wounds in the arm, which were bleeding a good deal. Later on I was attended to by the doctors."

It may be stated here that (Surgeon) Major M'Williams (Western Australia), who accompanied the column, was quickly to the front, and took charge of the stricken man. The wounds were dressed, a bearer party summoned, and Falla was carried to Dover Town, where he was made comfortable for the night. Next morning Major M'Williams and (Surgeon) Captain Roth (N.S.W.), re-dressed the wounds, and a Cape cart having been procured, Falla was driven to Belmont. There he was seen by Surgeon Wilson, and was sent on by train to the base hospital at Orange River. Colonel Williams, P.M.O., of New South Wales, was in general charge, and Falla was attended to by Major Fiaschi, the gallant Italian surgeon, who, at the time of the Italian-Abyssinia war, left his fine practice in Sydney for the purpose of giving service to his native land. All that the best science, skill, and attention could do for the young fellow was done.

Concerning the "demonstration," in which "first blood" was drawn from the Australian Regiment, something must be said, for two reasons. First, because it meant a hard week's work—in the open all the time—for our Mounted Riflemen; and, secondly, because it for the first time brought them into the undoubted presence of bodies of the enemy, and under fire. Of the enemy it may be generally said that he consisted of the rebel farmers in the district lying immediately south of the town of Douglas, and west of Belmont—that is to say, in Cape Colony itself. After the fight at Sunnysides, where the Queenslanders got their baptism of fire, Colonel Pilcher temporarily occupied Douglas, but he did not garrison it. When Pilcher marched away, rumour marched after him. It was known from stories told at Belmont and Orange River that Boer emissaries were quickly back amongst the, for the time, cowed Dutch settlers, and, as part of the stock-in-trade and sustenance of the Boer is lies, these were plentiful. The one great central lie with which they conjured was that the British had been all driven out of the country. The loyalists had a bad time, and, what with blandishments and threats, new commandoes were got together, to the terror and peril of the quiet-minded settlers.

General Elliott-Wood, who commanded at Orange River, recognised the desirability of making another demonstration, of showing the loyalists that the British troops were still in occupation, and, at the same time, getting information. A small column, whose purpose it was to see, and more particularly to be seen, was formed at Belmont, and about 100 of our Mounted Rifles, under Captain M'Leish, were part of it. Other constituents were the Queensland Mounted Infantry (acting as infantry while their horses were recuperating), Canadians, a few Imperial Mounted Infantry (Suffolks), a section (2 guns) of Horse Artillery, and a few Lancers and Guides. The whole force numbered about 400, and was under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Rochefort Boyd, R.E.

Our Mounted Riflemen left Enslin on Saturday, and rode to Belmont. They carried, as ordered, two days' rations, and it was assumed that the "job," as these military projects are called, would only last two or three days. A few took blankets, but the bulk went without, and made a mistake. The discomfort of sleeping in the open on several distinctly cold nights they are not likely to again voluntarily seek, and the stay-out exceeded all expectations. On Saturday night the company bivouacked, comfortably enough, at Belmont, the officers and many others being the recipients of such kindly hospitality as the Canadians and Queenslanders camped there were able to bestow. Early on Monday a start was made, and it was found that buck-waggons (drawn by mules) were to be used for the conveyance of the infantry—a good, common-sense arrangement, which made alike for speed and for the saving of human strength for the hour of real need. As was usual, Captain M'Leish furnished the advance guard, and the rest of the force marched with a screen of our Mounted Rifles, the rear being brought up by the Imperial mounted men. For the first five miles the country was open veldt, but after that the column passed through a labyrinth of kopjes, between which the ground was undulating and unusually scrubby, all the way to Thornhill, the name of a prettily situated farm nestling amongst the kopjes, about 22 miles north-west of Belmont. That was the day's march—a very good one, considering that the country had to be carefully examined by patrols in the way I have described in recording similar demonstrations and reconnaissances. Thornhill is the residence of Mr. Cook, an English farmer, who gave the troops a welcome, and whose house was made head-quarters by Colonel Boyd and his staff. The men bivouacked in the open, and made themselves as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. The early part of the South African night at that time of the year is exceedingly mild and pleasant. You may sleep on the ground without

even a great-coat for a covering, and enjoy your rest. But from about one in the morning until daylight the air is always keen, and sometimes bitterly cold. It is then you realise the value of a blanket and the meagreness of a single great-coat. Our fellows are fortunately made of stuff that stands exposure to the night air, and, though they would have enjoyed extra wraps during the cold hours, daylight saw them well rested, bright, and fit as ever.

On Monday the column moved on, about nine miles further, to the place selected as a general centre of operations. Roipan it is called on the map, but it is better known as Dover Farm, the property of a Dutch farmer, named Faber, who was absent from home owing to a "misunderstanding" with the British Government. His family remained at the farm, and there new head-quarters were established by Colonel Boyd. It was not intended to take the main body any further, and, indeed, to make a long story short, all the rest of the demonstrating consisted of patrolling from and round about Roipan. Between Thornhill and Dover Farm the country is nearly all open veldt, but at the further point another belt of scrubby and sharply undulating country is met with. Dover Farm was reached before noon, such strategic measures taken as were deemed necessary, and, until evening, nothing noteworthy occurred. Just before sundown, however, the first intimation that this was a country in rebellion was given in a sharp and decisive way. A Mounted Rifles patrol, on the right of the position, was fired upon by a party of men, some of whom showed suddenly from behind a hill. Ours was a small patrol, but the men, none of whom were hit, dismounted promptly and returned the fire—they were inclined to think effectively. About a score of the enemy were at this stage seen, but only for a few moments, for they quickly disappeared from view, and they haven't been heard of since. Only a little later it was that an alarm was given to the front, and Private Falla was shot through the arm, as already described. No attempt was made to follow the forty or fifty Boers who had opened on Ross and Falla, and who had evidently planned an ambush. Darkness was falling, and there was reason to suspect, of course, that this might not be the only ambush. A bright look-out was kept all Monday night, but our troops suffered no further molestation. Supply waggons brought rations from Belmont, with which the column remained connected by field telegraph, and some local stock were killed in order to get a supply of fresh meat; therefore the discomforts of the outing did not include starvation.

On Tuesday morning a report was received that the rebels had occupied a farm six miles in rear of Roipan, and arrangements were made for testing the situation. Fifty Victorian

Mounted Rifles and the few Lancers and Rimington Guides with the column were sent in the direction of the supposed enemy ; but, apparently, the report (understood to be brought by Kaffirs) had been contradicted. The rearward movement was stopped, and the men engaged in it went into ambush, where a pleasant enough afternoon was spent watching for possible developments—and not seeing any. The next day was a fatiguing one to all patrols, who made a thorough examination of the country, and saw parties of supposed rebels in the distance, but there was no engagement. A heavy thunderstorm occurred during the day, the rain fell heavily, and, as there was absolutely no available shelter, the men had a decidedly moist time. It was fine again in the evening, and, after sundown, a retirement on Thornhill was commenced, and safely carried out. Again that farm became head-quarters, and succeeding days' work consisted of patrolling from this centre.

With the exception of Captain Salmon, whose work required his stay at Enslin, all the subalterns of the Mounted Rifles Company (Lieutenants Thorn, Staughton, Chomley, and Roberts) were on duty with the company, and all did their work to the complete satisfaction of Captain M'Leish and his superiors. Sergeant-Major Healey and the non-coms. and the Nos. I. of Groups were smart and brainy in the discharge of duties which, more than any other military ones I know of, demand the exercise of individual intelligence and resource. We have, indeed, every reason to be proud of the way in which his work was done by every man of the company.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Ordered to Naauwpoort — General Kelly-Kenny—Mounting the Infantry—M'Leish's Company Rejoins.

On the evening of the 29th of January the Australian Regiment got marching orders. For rather over a week the bulk of the Mounted Rifles Company, broken into patrolling fragments, had been demonstrating west of Belmont, stiffening the loyalty of doubting farmers. I was at the time with the main body of the regiment, for there had been rumours of an important move, and we had been in hourly expectation of an order. At last it had come. Not quite of the sort we expected was it. We had anticipated either joining the relief-of-Kimberley column or taking part in a general invasion of the Free State from the west. But we were to move backward, yet towards the fighting so vigorously carried on by General French's column.

The Australians marched forth from Enslin on the 30th. For the first time the regiment fell-in in rank entire (single rank) as mounted infantry on a foot parade, for horses had not yet been provided. The Gordons and the 12th Lancers turned out to see us start. The hearty, reciprocal cheering was no mere formal demonstration. It was an honest manifestation of the warm friendship which had been developed between the Australians and their Imperial comrades. We had been many weeks with the Gordons, and the respective commanding officers (Colonel Hoad and Lieut-Col. M'Bean) had dwelt together like brothers in amity. The Gordons' band played us out, and our men marched jauntily to the strains of pipes and drums for over a mile of the way. It was fine weather, and the regiment did the fourteen miles' tramp without any distress. We halted for a midday snack at Graspan, and were joined by Sergeant Geary and ten mounted riflemen who had been stationed there for several weeks. Captain Towse (Gordons), afterwards distinguished at Thaba 'Nchu, where he led fifty Highlanders in a gallant bayonet charge, had command of the station. He took the opportunity of expressing to Colonel Hoad his entire satisfaction with the way in which Geary and his men had done their work. Pipers and drummers played us out of Graspan, for there were still three companies of the Gordon Highlanders there, and they delighted to honour the Australians.

That night we bivouacked on the veldt at Belmont, for the order on arrival was to hold ourselves in readiness to entrain for Naauwpoort at any moment. It was quite 10 p.m. when it was notified that the train would start at 7.20 next morning. After a cold night, in which the men shivered in light coverings, perfect circulation of the blood was restored by the loading-up operations, for the trucks stood at the railway station, and Colonel Hoad saw that his men were up to time. The railway people were not, for it was 10.20 before the train which was to carry us to Naauwpoort actually left. These things happen even in time of peace, and in other countries beside South Africa. It was not luxurious travelling—for the men. They were in open trucks, packed so uncomfortably full that individual movement was well-nigh impossible. There was only one carriage on the train, and in that the officers were accommodated, with very little room to spare.

It was late in the evening before we got to De Aar, and, after a detention at that junction, the train was sent on. The journey was not completed until two o'clock on Thursday morning (1st February), and the men remained in the train until daylight. They had had a miserable time, for in the tightly-packed open trucks in which they travelled few were

lucky enough to get into positions admitting of sleep, even if sleep had been possible in the exceptionally cold hours of the night and morning. While the train was standing at the Naauwpoort railway siding the open air was, of course, far more endurable to the exposed men than it was while the trucks were in rapid motion, and they welcomed the comparative comfort of the wait till daylight. Then all were ready and eager to alight, to stretch their cramped limbs and restore blood circulation by rapid movement. Colonel Colville (Rifle Brigade), commandant at the Naauwpoort station, is plainly a man who does a lot of work. Therefore he merits mention as a regimental brother officer of the energetic Colonel Brownrigg, formerly A.A.G. and for a year commandant of Victoria, and the real reorganiser of the colony's military forces. Colonel Colville was early astir, and a quantity of boiling water having been provided, the men were able to brew their ration tea or coffee in their mess-tins, and have a fairly comfortable breakfast. There was abundance of water, and not the least of our joys in those early hours at Naauwpoort was the long-deferred wash that at least face and hands got under the taps on the railway platform.

General Kelly-Kenny, the senior officer at Naauwpoort when we arrived, made a casual inspection of the regiment as the men stood on the square at the rear of the railway station. He seems to have been well pleased with their appearance, and, on the officers being called up, he said :—

"Colonel Hoad, I am delighted to have seen these Australians, and to notice the excellent physique of the men, and the fit condition in which you have brought them to this station. I congratulate you on having such a command, and I would impress upon you all the importance of the duties which you are called upon to discharge here. There are large quantities of stores at this station, and it is, of course, one of great strategic value. It is your duty to help in guarding it just now, but very soon you will be sent where you will get plenty of work of the kind which I know you want."

I know that our officers would have been glad to cheer the last observation, but there is no provision in the Queen's Regulations for cheering the remarks of a General, and the customs of the Army forbid it. Therefore the Australians merely saluted and rejoined their companies, which were at once marched to a camping ground about three-quarters of a mile away on the eastern side of the railway depôt. An ideal camping ground, on part of a high basin, completely encircled by steep kopjes. But, as the sequel shows, the Australian Regiment was not destined to occupy it long. A couple of buck (mule) waggons—the slowest I have yet met—constituted all the available transport, and it was after one o'clock before

the last of the baggage was carted down. Tents were pitched, and everything put in order for a few weeks' stay. Hardly, however, had this work been done, when it was notified that part of the company was to go on next day to Rensburg, and the others were to follow with the least delay. The Australians were wanted for livelier work than that involved in guarding those precious stores at Naauwpoort!

The shift from Enslin to Naauwpoort was fraught with personal difficulties, losses, and fatigue, with which my readers need not be troubled; but I must say it was a very tired man, one who found it hard to resist an inclination to drop down anywhere and have a sleep, who got into the saddle on the afternoon of our arrival, and rode with Colonel Hoad to the Naauwpoort remount depôt. Here all doubts as to the class of horses with which our infantry were to be provided were settled. Ready in the lines were 260 trained cavalry horses which had just arrived from India.

Sleepy as I was, I did not fall into the error of supposing that, in shipping these off to the war, the Indian military authorities had parted with their best. It would be a poor lookout for the Indian Army if they had. Apparently Indian native regiments had been required to relinquish some of their mounts in order that African demands might be supplied. A proportion were "Walers," but the majority of the 260 were country-bred Indian nags, small, and generally light. Some of them were legged like antelopes, but there were a few nuggety fellows, well suited for the work they were intended to do, to carry a mounted infantryman and all his kit—an average weight of from 18 stone to 20 stone. A good many of the legs were puffy, and, if backs were not actually sore, the wince which followed a little pressure of the hand showed that they were decidedly tender, and probably had a "history" in the books of the regimental vet. About one-fifth of the mounts were grey, a colour tabooed in the Victorian Mounted Rifles, and certainly an unsuitable colour for horses which would be used largely on outpost and patrols. But it was not "ours to reason why" these horses had been included. We simply took them over, in groups of five tied together, and got away to the depôt, where the saddlery and equipment were awaiting the new riders.

Each horse had its own saddle and cavalry gear, neatly wrapped up in a blanket, and it was amusing to watch the efforts of our men to handle the unaccustomed furniture. A dozen syces (Hindoo grooms), who had accompanied the horses from India, gave great help that afternoon, and also on succeeding days. The Australians were taught how, deftly and neatly, to roll and adjust the blanket, and to overcome the complications of a cavalry bit and handful of reins. Our

men learnt very quickly, and Colonel Hoad gave no breathing time.

"Stand to your horses!" was the order as soon as the last saddle had been taken over.

"Prepare to mount!"

"Mount!"

Up they went, and the ways were various, but they sat in the saddle like men who had come to stay. A creditable march to camp was followed by all the new joys of picketing, watering, feeding, grooming, etc., and about half our infantry had blossomed into mounted soldiers.

Up to the 31st January the Mounted Rifles company was on patrol duty in connection with the reconnaissance westward from Belmont. For twelve days the men had been sleeping out, their tents being with the regiment. The weather was, fortunately, generally mild—that is to say, there had been the usual dust storms and heat during the day, and the usual cold snap in the early hours of the morning. All the men were standing it well, and that the patrolling was heavy may be gathered from the fact that three horses succumbed to it. "Died of sheer fatigue" was the verdict of Veterinary-Captain Kendall. The patrolling work was full of small incidents, but the rebels were shy, and there had been no further fighting.

The head-quarters of our men was for a time at Richmond, only twelve miles from Belmont. The soldiers' diet was beef and biscuit, with tea and coffee. The beef was purchased alive in the district, and Corporal Bidstrup and Private Jones did the killing and dressing in a most satisfactory manner, though I understand that neither claims to be a professional at the work. Roast joints and rump steak figured in the daily menu, and fingers made up for deficiencies in table equipage. The forty-niners being very hard on the teeth, those who could purchased soft bread from the farmers, and these loyal people charged from 1s. 6d. to 3s. for a 2lb. loaf. It was their opportunity. Fruit was abundant, but the growers did not forget those mighty factors in human affairs, the much-vaunted "commercial principles." War prices ruled, and 3s. was paid for a modest-sized water-melon. At most points, not all, water was good and abundant, but every man ate his "peck of dirt" daily. The district is famed for its ants, lizards, centipedes, spiders, and creeping things generally, so that creatures besides Queen Mab galloped o'er the soldiers' necks in those days of bivouac, and the night vied with the day in lively incident. There had been little rain, but quite enough for the desires of those principally concerned. It is not nice to lie out in wet weather, as I can testify.

On the 31st the company entrained at Belmont, and late the same evening rejoined the main body of the regiment at the Naauwpoort camp.

At Naauwpoort who should I find as press censor but my friend Colonel Sam Hughes, M.P. for North Victoria in the Canadian House of Commons. Him I first met at the Jubilee celebrations in London, and he visited Melbourne towards the end of the same year (1897). The soldier-legislator is a man of many parts, and his services were being largely availed of by the war authorities, principally in works of organisation. Not only was he press censor at Naauwpoort, but also railway staff officer, and a variety of other things. A busy man, who never forgets that he is a colonial, but whose pride in the Canadians' skill still leaves him a warm admirer of soldiers from Australia. To this officer I am indebted for many courtesies, as, indeed, is any Australian for whom he had an opportunity of doing a friendly turn.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

On to Rensburg—General French Inspects—The Regiment Divided—Outpost Positions.

On Thursday, 1st February, Colonel Hoad was ordered to be in readiness to next day proceed to Rensburg, and there, with all the troops he had mounted, join General French's column. The "all" was somewhat modified later on, and the first draft for Rensburg consisted of 182 officers and men. This included the whole of the Mounted Rifles, the balance being made up of such of the Victorian infantry who had so far obtained horses, under Captain M'Inerney. Remarkably well, indeed, did the new men shape in trucking their horses, and at every stage in their unfamiliar doings. Their Captain, known for his thoroughness, had made himself well acquainted with mounted infantry detail, and the company was in first-rate hands. As Captain M'Inerney was short of officers, Lieutenant Roberts was transferred from the Mounted Rifles, and now acted as one of the division leaders in the infantry company. It was late in the afternoon before the troops entrained, and after dark when Rensburg was reached, therefore the disentrainment was carried out under easily imaginable difficulties. To lay down horse lines and pitch tents in the dark was quite out of the question, and fortunately the night was mild. Horses were linked and sentries appointed to watch them, after which the men lay down in their great-coats alongside their baggage, and were soon fast asleep. Colonel Hoad had accompanied the first

draft, and as we were actually bound for the front this time, I had the privilege of going with him.

At this I rejoiced, for I should have been disappointed at missing the inspection by General French at 7 o'clock next morning. It was not the mere formal "look" to which, in over twenty years' soldiering, I had become accustomed. General French wants more than a glance at men, horses and equipment. He seeks to know what the men can do. He first tested the Victorian Mounted Rifles, and got an exemplification of their work, both mounted and dismounted, watching all with the keen eye of a practical soldier. There were faults, of course, and he saw them, but that he was generally satisfied one may assume from the fact that the company was at once ordered to an outpost at Maeder's Farm, and the start fixed for daylight next morning. It will be observed that the Mounted Rifles were not allowed to "rust with ease," like the sword of the Shakespearean hero. Nor did they want to do so.

The General turned from the company of the one Mac (M'Leish) to that of the other (M'Inerney), and was quick to recognise good infantry drill side by side with golden promises of good horsemanship. Then he and his staff rode off, and our men turned to their routine work, watered horses, breakfasted, and pitched camp. During the forenoon 150 of our regiment arrived, made up of New South Wales men and Western Australians, the whole under the command of Captain Legge. They looked well, and managed their horses capitally. Shortly after lunch time they had their tents pitched, and their horses in lines which would do credit to a cavalry regiment of Her Majesty's Army. The Australian Mounted Regiment was an established fact.

Rensburg is the name of a railway station on the main line from Port Elizabeth to Bloemfontein, and between it and Colesberg Junction, east of the town of Colesberg, where the Boers are still in possession, there is only one station, or siding. At Rensburg we were just in the rear of a sea of kopjes—big enough to be called bergs or mountains some of them—and we divided their occupancy with "our friend the enemy." By dint of hard fighting, General French had won several of the more important positions, but the Boers held others almost as good, and were not yet driven back upon the still stronger ones which they were said to have beyond Norval's Pont, the closing of which was one of their first movements in the campaign. Rensburg furnished a good camping ground, and there was good water, enough to avert actual discomfort, although it had to be used economically.

The country is much more undulating than that to which we had become accustomed on the west frontier of the Free

State, and, while the heat was still very trying, we were by no means so much plagued by dust or flies. The creeping things of the earth include snakes—I saw an ugly one on the day after our arrival—and the customary beetles, scorpions, centipedes, and a long, black, many-legged creature of the same species, but said to be harmless. Grasshoppers are numerous in that district, and, when not engaged trekking in a great series of regular columns, four or six of the creatures abreast, and moving with almost military precision, they collect in dense masses on small patches of the dry-looking and scanty herbage, and present, in the distance, the appearance of a patch of dark vegetation. When these creatures jump into your *café noir*, they are apt to be overlooked until they make their presence actually felt. Then I have known quite pious men to make loose remarks—that is, after they had finished being ill.

The mounting of the Australian Regiment was quickly followed by its disintegration. The first of a series of movements to different parts of the outpost line took place on Sunday, when, just at dawn, the Mounted Rifles started for Maeder's Farm, a position about eight miles north-west of Rensburg. We had been told that there was a prospect of meeting Boers *en route;* therefore I rode with the company. But, as a fact, the way was well in rear of the outpost line, and the sanctity of the Sabbath was disturbed only by the shouts of the mule drivers who managed the transport. The men had moved without their morning coffee, and, as the whole journey was at a walking pace, and the sun came out hot and strong, the desire for breakfast was no mere conventional pretence, but a real potent thing. It was late in the forenoon before it could be even partially satisfied. Experiments in the German army have shown that, as a mere matter of utility—and utility is king in war time—men should be permitted to break their fast before starting on a morning march, however early the hour fixed for departure. It would be well if this were always kept in mind.

It was to a point nearly four miles beyond Maeder's that the Mounted Rifles were sent, and there they pitched their camp. The enemy was right in front, and on the left was a long kopje, where he was laagered in considerable strength. Into this kopje the big guns carried, by a wonderful feat of engineering, to the top of the now famous Cole's Kop, sent a daily tribute of shells, and from it the British patrols were daily fired upon. Captain M'Leish's men were now helping to furnish these patrols, therefore complaints that their work was wanting in excitement were no longer heard from them. Having seen our lads into their outpost camp, I returned to the

base at Rensburg, and found other companies preparing for their respective treks next day.

Early in the morning General French had inspected the New South Wales and Westralian companies, and they are understood to have found much favour in his eyes. Their horsemanship was already good, but it was when the order was "For Dismounted Duty" that the trained infantrymen showed to the best advantage, and in this part of their work they eclipsed the Mounted Rifles. Captains Legge and Moor are entitled to the greatest credit for the way in which their companies turned out, and showed the General what they could do, and the untiring general instructor, Colonel Hoad, might well be proud of his apt pupils. Indeed, the way in which Hoad, within a few days, transformed foot soldiers into first-rate mounted men is, in many respects, remarkable. It stands as not the least meritorious piece of work done by a commanding officer in the present campaign, and it could only have been accomplished by a man who, like Colonel Hoad, was a thoroughly-trained mounted rifleman before he relinquished regimental for staff duty. It was lucky that the Australian Regiment fell into such good hands, and passed under the review of so observant and appreciative a commander as General French. "I am well pleased," he said to Colonel Hoad, when he had finished his inspection, and the men were delighted to know that they had won this compliment.

During Sunday the balance of the regiment—not yet horsed—was ordered up from Naauwpoort, arrived by train in the evening, and came into camp. And on Monday morning they went off to their respective stations. To Maeder's, the same direction in which Captain M'Leish was operating, the New South Wales company marched at 6 a.m., and, later on, the Victorian Rifles and the South Australians went out in the same direction. Captain M'Inerney relinquished his horses to the Westralians, and, with the South Australians, his company was ordered to work as infantry until the next batch of horses arrived, and the General was hurrying these up by insistent telegrams. The Westralians also marched at 6 a.m., the post being Slingersfontein, on the north-east, and 40 Tasmanians formed a detached post at Jasfontein, a little south of the Slingersfontein position. Colonel Hoad, with about 100 men of various companies—for the time known as the "Federal Company"—remained at the base (Rensburg), and our Maxim guns were allotted changing positions along a front which extended from the extreme left to the extreme right post, a distance of over twenty miles.

About half the men at the base held one of the inner posts. Major M'Williams (surgeon) joined the Westralians

at Slingersfontein; Captain Kendall (veterinary), and Sergeant-Farrier Punshon remained at the base, as the best point for the discharge of their duties, and Captain Hopkins (surgeon) went to Maeder's Farm. It was part of the duty of Colonel Hoad to inspect the various parts of his regiment at their respective outpost stations. Captain Salmon commanded a small mounted escort, which was retained to accompany the Colonel, and a busy era in the history of the regiment was inaugurated; not the less busy for a press correspondent, who cannot well divide himself, and who might happen to be somewhere else when one or other of the companies was engaging the enemy at a particular point.

Before sending the companies forth on their respective duties, Colonel Hoad gave instructions and advice to all ranks, and told them precisely what was expected of them. "Just go one better than the Boers every time," he said to the men. "Don't get into any messes, or fall into ambush. Do your work cautiously, but thoroughly. Your business is to get information—reliable information—and send it in in a comprehensible way. You are just as good as the Boers in everything they can do best. You can shoot, and you can ride. Now go, and beat them at their own game." That is the sort of talk that suits our boys well, and they did not forget the Colonel's advice.

Meanwhile Rensburg was quiet, save for the booming of our guns on the frontal positions. We had to leave a few men sick at Naauwpoort, but, generally, the health of the regiment was excellent, and everybody was in good heart. Our men were on the same line as their Australasian comrades, the New South Wales Lancers and the New Zealand Mounted Rifles had held, and all of these had done well. Unluckily, we thought at the time, General French was called to duty in another part of the country. We know now what magnificent service he gave in the invasion of the Free State; but his successor, General Clements, bore the reputation of a man who knew how to keep the ball a-rolling in a fashion worthy of the man who started it.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Under Shell Fire—Westralians in Action—Heroic Acts—Maxim Gun Positions.

The New South Wales company had its baptism of fire on the 4th February. On arrival at Maeder's Farm it was ordered to proceed to a post beyond, and east of, Cole's Kop. On the column emerging into the open country beyond the big

kop it came under the enemy's gun fire. The men were in extended order, and presented, therefore, an indifferent mark for the Boer gunners, so the latter had their labour for their pains, nobody being hit. The first of seven shells fired at the company whizzed close past the two leading men of the advance party, a guide, and the intrepid Private Burnie, of the Victorian Mounted Rifles, who had been sent out in order to learn the way to the post, and act as guides in the future. The men instinctively ducked their heads, but the shell, which did not burst, went well over and past them. The Boer gunners corrected their range, and a few minutes later a couple of shells fell and exploded about eighty yards short of the column. Our men went rapidly forward, and the remaining four shells, all of which burst, also fell short. Then the gunners had a go at the ox waggons, carrying the company's transport. Here they had a first-rate mark, but did not score a point. About half a dozen shells were fired, to the infinite disgust of the drivers, but none reached the waggons. "Fire low" may be a sound order, but if you fire too low you won't hurt your enemy. Private Burnie returned with a company of Imperial Mounted Infantry, whom the Australians had relieved, and the Boers had another try, but with equal non-success. Surely these Boer gunners are not all our fancy has painted them.

The same evening we shifted the regimental head-quarters' camp to a point at the base said to be reachable by the shell fire of the enemy in front. When we "lay us down to sleep," this consciousness created in some, stimulated in others, a devotional mood. There are a few who, like myself, are sceptical about the potency of the Boer guns at the generous distance they stood from our sleeping place, but I found that expressions of this scepticism were not popular. The majority preferred to harrow their own feelings by the reflection that they were in deadly peril.

Within a few hours of their being sent to their post at Slingersfontein, on the right of this position, our Westralian comrades made the acquaintance of the enemy They had a sharp, exciting time, and were described by experienced officers as the "luckiest people in the world," because, out of a rain of Boer bullets, they came off with no worse casualties than one man wounded and two horses shot dead. The company was under fire for the first time, and, on the score of courage and intrepidity, left nothing to be desired. It is open to anyone to take the view that more caution was possible ; but, on the other hand, the task given to the company was one that demanded the exercise of enterprise, and the deliberate acceptance of risks incurred by those whose business it is to draw an enemy's fire. It was Westralia's first affair, and

all ranks sustained the test of actual battle in the way that Australia expected. Two acts of conspicuous gallantry on the part of officers further illumined a bright day's record of citizen soldiers' coolness and valour.

Slingersfontein was a position on the right, which we held with a mixed force, including artillery. The kopjes along the front, and on the flanks, were occupied by Boers, who appeared to have only one gun, which they shifted from point to point. Lately there had been a movement on the part of the enemy to come round our right, with a view, apparently, of enveloping our rear and cutting off the post from Rensburg. The character of the country favoured the movement, and rendered it possible of accomplishment, without bringing the encircling troops into view from our posts. It was necessary, therefore, to have a reconnaissance to ascertain as nearly as possible what the enemy was doing. The force detailed for this purpose was composed of a section (2 guns) of the Royal Horse Artillery, 50 Inniskilling Dragoons, 25 Lancers, and 80 of the Westralian company of (then) mounted infantry. The troops were under the command of Major Ethoran, and about 11 o'clock on Tuesday (6th February) moved out from the centre towards the right front. The work of examining the kopjes was proceeded with, and the men were split up into small parties, who rode along the front, and into the valleys lying between the irregular semicircle of hills which constitute the enemy's stronghold. Perhaps the splitting-up was a trifle overdone, but, necessarily, at such work, a very open formation, presenting the least target, is proper and necessary.

Apparently the Boers watched the operations without, in the first instance, discovering their object, but the closer approach of our men provoked the enemy to action. Suddenly he opened a furious rifle fire, some of the Westralians at that period being within 60 yards of the Boer line, while the furthest off were not more than a quarter of a mile away. A portion of our company had already been dismounted for dismounted duty, and these returned the enemy's fire. But the order was to feign a retreat, in order to draw the Boers from shelter, and the whole of the mounted troops fell back. Pell-mell came the Boers after them, showing themselves in considerable numbers, and firing wildly. Then our artillery had the chance they had waited for all day, and it did not take many rounds of shrapnel to persuade the foe that he was safer in the kopjes than in the open.

Under a heavy fire our men kept perfectly—some say recklessly—cool. They gave no evidence of being flurried in their movements, and there is every reason to think that their fire was effective during the short period that it was thought proper to maintain it. On the other hand, the Boer marks-

manship was so appallingly bad that the commando is believed to be a "scratch" one, and by no means up to even the ordinary standard. "Had it been otherwise," said one observer, "the Western Australians would have been wiped out." Their escape, with only one man wounded by rifle fire, was phenomenal. The Royal Horse Artillery was not so fortunate, for one of its number (Sergeant Watson) was shot through the body, and died a few hours afterwards. Another artilleryman was wounded. Six of the Lancers were placed on the list of "missing."

The Westralian wounded was Private James Cunningham, of Perth. While riding in during the retirement he was hit in the right leg. The bullet drilled a clean hole through the fleshy part of the thigh, and no ill effects were expected. Cunningham was able to ride almost to the cover of the guns before his strength gave way, for the wound bled a great deal. He fell from his horse, and was carried in by his comrades. After the wound had been dressed he was sent to the base hospital. Curiously enough, a bullet grazed the same man's cheek, and left its mark, but that is all. He had a narrow escape from being shot through the head. It is noteworthy that Cunningham's brother, also a private, had the queer experience of feeling a bullet pass between his leg and his saddle, tearing his riding pants on its transit, but doing no further mischief.

Corporal Campbell had an adventure all his own. He found himself very close up to the enemy's fighting line when the Boers opened fire, and a stalwart foeman, attired in a red shirt, and who fired from horseback, made a target of the Australian. But though he fired several times he did not even score an outer. Campbell missed his first shot in reply, but, with two others from his full-charged magazine, he bowled over both horse and man. Then he ran towards his horse, which was in cover a short distance in the rear, and, *en route*, got so badly mixed up in a wire entanglement that he narrowly escaped capture. His right hand was severely cut by the barbed wire, and it was some time before the gallant corporal had the full use of it again. It was while galloping to the assistance of the wounded Cunningham that Private Albert Maley had his horse shot under him, and one other Westralian horse was killed during the action.

As the men were galloping back, Captain Moor, who commanded the Westralians, saw the horse of a Lancer fall dead, a bullet having struck the animal in the body. Although under a heavy fire, Moor quietly rode up to the Lancer, and dismounting, said, "Here, take my horse, and get in." The generous offer was promptly accepted, and the captain made an attempt to procure another horse which happened

to be in the vicinity. The animal evaded him, and bolted, and, as the Boers were at this period in full pursuit, Moor, who is very light and active, ran towards a kopje, where, a little earlier, a party of Lancers had formed a post. But the Lancers had withdrawn, and Moor was running into the arms of a number of Boers who were coming round the far end of the kopje, when Lieutenant Parker (W.A.) saw his peril, and galloped to his chief's assistance. He was just in time. Moor clambered up behind his subaltern, and both officers, although under a hail of bullets, made their way to cover without receiving any injury. Parker is a mere youth, but a cooler or a pluckier it would be hard to find anywhere. The gallantry of both officers was the theme of general comment and as general admiration. Captain Moor was an Imperial soldier in the service of the Westralian Government. Alas! he was killed in July during some fighting in the Transvaal, and the service lost a fine man. Young Parker is an Australian native.

A curious adventure had Sergeant Hensman and six men under his command. In the earlier stages of the day's doings they reached and examined a farm-house. They found no Boers, but there were some turkeys, and they decided to dine well for once in a way. But just as the selected turkey was reaching a hue of lovely brown, and the hungry Australians had resolved that it was "done enough," a smart volley was fired upon the house. "Scatter" was the word, and once more the bad marksmanship of the Boers was the Australians' salvation. Not one of the party was hit. But the Boers would enjoy that turkey.

On the following day the British tried once more to draw the enemy from their cover, but without avail. There was firing on both sides, and a Lancer was shot through the leg. But the object of the reconnaissance had been well served, for it was known that the enemy was in numbers on our right, and that he was endeavouring to extend his occupation of the numerous kopjes, so as to encircle the position.

The enemy was watchful, and his shells were continually dropping around the outposts and the vicinity of patrols. It was quite wonderful how little damage they did. Captain Haig, of the Inniskillings, who travelled from Albany with us in the *Medic*, I was glad to meet again here on duty with his regiment. He was for weeks in and around Maeder's, where the bulk of Colonel Hoad's Victorians were, and he said—"The Boer shells never hit anybody." One could almost accept the statement literally. Of course, there were exceptional cases, and the soldier on duty knows that he might happen to furnish one of these exceptions. Honestly, however, the Boer shell fire was held in general contempt, and

Tuesday's doings at Slingersfontein showed that their rifle fire was not always what our fancy in Victoria had painted it.

The second draft of horses for the Australian Regiment had arrived at Rensburg. It consisted of 256 from India, and the animals were, altogether, a much better lot than the first. There was a larger proportion of "Walers" in the draft, and even the country-breds were of a good stamp. The horses came in charge of an officer of the Indian Army, who was accompanied by 36 syces, including a havildar, and two farrier sergeants. The syces were to be attached to the regiment for a month at least, and did capital work. Not only did they "show the ropes" to infantrymen who were being horsed for the first time, and were ignorant of equine affairs, but they bore much of the heavy fatigue work which had previously fallen upon the handful of men remaining at the base.

The farriers were a godsend. Sergeant Punshon and his assistants were wrought nearly to death, and even with two additional men, in rough country like this, he always had plenty to do. The forge fire was continually going. We had still about 100 more horses to get; but, generally speaking, the regiment might now be described as mounted, and its patrol work was in full swing.

The whole of the available men in camp had been required at times to occupy the inner positions. Tuesday and Wednesday nights saw all the orderlies and cooks on duty under arms, and the regimental staff had to do the best it could without attendants of any kind. It was while the commanding officer was helping to prepare his own tea on Tuesday evening that General Clements rode down to look at the newly-arrived horses, and he was received *sans* ceremony. But I don't think he minded that. Rather, it is understood, was the General pleased to know that the Australian Regiment was working so hard, and that personal convenience on everybody's part was cheerfully sacrificed to the exigencies of service in the presence of a foe who occasionally became active, and needed watching all the time.

General Clements honoured the regiment by requiring from it a company of 50 mounted men to act under his directions. This company was made up from several units, placed under the command of Captain Salmon, V.M.R., who had with him Lieutenant Reid, of Tasmania. A position of much distinction was that occupied by the newly-formed company. Men who repined at being left at the base when their comrades marched off were now satisfied that fortune had not been unkind, since she reserved them for inclusion in what was called the "General's Company," although, as a matter of fact, as such it was very little used.

It was fortunate that two of the units from Australia brought Maxim guns, though they were not asked for by the Imperial authorities. Western Australia had two, and New South Wales one, and there was use for them here at Rensburg. They were in position at one of the inner posts, and were manned by just such men as were available at the base after the companies went to the further outposts. Lieutenant Logan had charge of the New South Wales gun, and Lieutenant Campbell had one of the Westralian. Who was to take the third gun was, for a time, a question, and Colonel Hoad seriously contemplated standing by it himself until he could recall a suitable officer. But at that moment the regimental Quartermaster-sergeant (Sergeant-Major Paul) was suggested. The instructor of the garrison artillery at Geelong, and a gunner every inch of him, you can imagine the flash in his eye when the Colonel inquired—"Would you like to take a gun, Paul?" "My word, sir, I would," was the prompt answer as the Sergeant-Major saluted. The regiment lent—it did not lose—a first-rate Quartermaster-sergeant, and no gun in the campaign was in better hands than that committed to the care of Sergeant-Major Paul. A really fine man, who perfectly knows his work, and does it with a conscientious thoroughness which is ever a bright example to all ranks. Victoria may well be proud of Sergeant-Major Paul. At the time I wrote what may be repeated here—"He has well earned a commission, and those undemocratic regulations under which he is barred have not, in the past, proved absolutely immutable."

Colonel Hoad has a fine, breezy, off-hand fashion of meeting small difficulties, and in this connection, poor man though he is, he never stops to count the personal cost. A few days after our arrival here the regiment was required to furnish two mounted orderlies for the General commanding. Colonel Hoad picked out a couple of fine young Westralians from those who had remained at the base, saw that they were well mounted, and told them to smarten up their attire all they could. The men looked ruefully at their camp-stained jackets, the worse for wear, and decidedly "off-colour." In answer to questions, they confessed that they were in their best, and there was no new clothing either in hand or in sight. "Here you are," exclaimed the commanding officer, diving into his tent, whence he emerged a minute later with two of his own tunics. The shoulder badges were removed, and the new orderlies found themselves admirably fitted. That was a piece of luck, for Hoad is not a big man, though "he's got it round the chest." No better turned-out orderlies were there than those two Westralians when they reported to headquarters.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Hot Day at Jasfontein—Tasmanians Get Their First Fight—Some Wonderful Escapes.

Oppressed by the sadness of bereavements, owing to the death on the battlefield of an esteemed press colleague and several good comrades, I entered upon the task of recording the exciting events of the record week in February. On the morning of the 9th Mr. W. J. Lambie, correspondent of the Melbourne *Age*, fell while doing his duty to his paper. Later on the same day the second fatality occurred, in this instance a combatant, Private Conway, of Perth (W.A.), meeting a soldier's death. Close following this, on the second day, Sergeant Grant and Private Willson, of the Victorian Mounted Rifles, were killed in action on the extreme left flank of the position. Four men silenced for ever within two days. The regiment had been so exceptionally lucky that these losses came to us as a shock. Yet they were quite incidental to the campaign—events of the kind which we had learned to expect, but the sensation of shock was ours whether we liked it or not. In the case of Mr. Lambie I lost an esteemed friend as well as a press colleague, and in that of Sergeant Grant a good comrade of long standing in the work of a citizen soldier.

It is a circumstance surely as remarkable as I think it is unique that the first man connected with the regiment to fall in action should be a journalist. The combatant knows that it is his business to kill, and to take the risks of being killed. The correspondent, in civilised warfare, goes into action unarmed. His main purpose is to see and describe the battle, but to that end he may feel it to be his duty to venture into positions of great danger, to accept as fully as anyone in the fighting line the chances of a combat, to come under the heaviest of the enemy's fire, and to summon the nerve and courage necessary to a man who is without the stimulating excitement of men who are serving their guns, firing their rifles, or charging with bayonet fixed those whom it is their mission to defeat. I have met few men in whom a consciousness of duty operated so powerfully as it did in the late Mr. Lambie. He was one of the few wounded when the Australian Contingent served in the Soudan—simply because he could not brook delay in, nor allow danger to impede, the discharge of duty. "I want to see, and let the readers whom I represent know, how the Australians carry themselves in action," he said to me in one of our conversations while travelling together to South Africa. It was with this object in view that he arose, full of life and health,

in the dark hours of a fatal Friday morning. It was while seeking to attain that object that he fell.

Let me now take the events of those stirring February days in something like chronological order. On Thursday evening, the 8th, Colonel Hoad was ordered to make available from those at the Rensburg base 30 non-commissioned officers and men with a couple of officers. This party was to be ready to start for Jasfontein (or Klienjasfontein, to be more accurate) at half-past four in the morning. It was to be accompanied by half a dozen of French's Guides (*i.e.*, men of the stamp of the Rimington "tigers," but specially picked by General French), and its duty was not disclosed. As, however, an orderly had reported some shooting on the previous day, and it was bruited abroad that the little company was certain to get some fighting—that, in fact, its mission was to "catch Boers"—I altered a programme, which included a visit to Maeder's next day, and resolved to go with it. Captain Salmon was in command of the party, the other officer detailed being Lieutenant Reid, of Tasmania. The company was federal in a very large sense, being composed of men of every colony represented in the regiment who happened to be on duty at the base, and including Quartermaster-Sergeant Paul, the officers' orderlies, and even some of the cooks. For it had been difficult to furnish all the details demanded of the Australian regiment without resorting to unusual expedients, and working men double, even treble, tides. Horses were fed at 3 a.m., before which hour the men were all astir, and they had their coffee and biscuit half an hour later. It was an early time for breakfast, but it is far better to have a meal then than none at all, as I have proved by personal experience.

Punctually at 4.30 the little column moved off. With it went no fewer than three war correspondents, Mr. W. J. Lambie, of the *Age*, Mr. Hales, of the London *Daily News*, and myself. Our way lay through a sort of jungle of kopjes south-east of Rensburg, and the rising sun found us, in cautiously extended order, moving along a well-defined path, made by the supply waggons in their journeys to and from our right flank post. It was a lovely morning, and a proportion of the men were in full enjoyment of still new experience on horseback. Eager as they were to meet the foe, perhaps it would hardly have occurred to any of them that, before the sun had reached its meridian, upon the speed of these horses and their ability to sit them would their very lives depend. Yet that is precisely what happened on that very eventful morning.

At Jasfontein we learned what had occurred on the previous day. A patrol of five Tasmanians, under Sergeant Lee, and accompanied by Guide Stent, seven in all, had visited, during

the afternoon, the farm of one Kotze, a man who was supposed to be, and I believe it, a loyal citizen, but two of whose sons were fighting against us in the Free State commandoes. Such distracting effects on family relationships had the war produced. Our patrols had repeatedly visited the farm in question, and up to Thursday had no reason to regard the place with apprehension, although I have since been told it had long been held in suspicion. Sergeant Lee was under an officer (Captain Cameron) who insists upon instructions being carried out, and a general order prescribed that care was to be taken in approaching all farm-houses in the war districts. Guide Stent and Private Gilham were sent to the farm for the purpose of obtaining certain information which it was the duty of the patrol to seek, and the other members of the party halted, and stood extended and on guard, some distance away. When Stent and Gilham had got within about ten paces of the house, three volleys were fired—one from the house at the men in advance, the others from kopjes flanking the rear—at the extended line of watchers. Stent alone was hit, and the others, after firing a few return shots, galloped away under a sharp fusilade of bullets, which, however, did no further injury. The Guide was, it was feared, mortally wounded. He rode about half a mile, cried out to Gilham, "I am quite blind; I cannot see!" and at once fell from the saddle. He was a fine young fellow of twenty-two, and it was supposed at the time that he had died on the veldt. I learned, months afterwards, that he fell wounded into the hands of the Boers, was well treated, and recovered. The escape of the others was remarkable, for the trap was well laid, and not fewer than thirty rifles played upon the patrol. Happily, all got back to the post, and there the tale was told. Efforts made later in the day by Captain Cameron in person, and the small patrol he could spare, showed that the Boers were in some force, but it was hardly imagined that they numbered more than 40. It was believed that a Kaffir, who tried to creep in at night and ascertain the fate of the Guide, had also been shot. Captain Hamilton (Inniskillings), who had charge of the post, reported to head-quarters at Rensburg, and the order to Colonel Hoad was the outcome. Captain Salmon's company had come, then, to strengthen the little force at Jasfontein, and help to discover and bring to book an enemy who had advanced dangerously close to our line, and had become a menace to the right flank of the Rensburg position.

We had hardly learned what work had been cut out for us when the order was, "Stand to your horses." At daylight Captain Hamilton and six men had gone on an inspection ride towards Kotze's farm; and as I talked to Captain Cameron

in his tent, a messenger arrived from the commanding officer, requesting that eighteen more men should at once be sent to him. Without waiting to eat the breakfast which had just been prepared, Captain Cameron ordered out the men, placed himself at their head, and, directing Captain Salmon's company to follow as a support, started at a smart trot for the front. Six Guides and Captain Cameron's eighteen men formed the advance party, and with it I rode, my two *confrères* remaining with the support. Less than an hour's ride brought us to a large, deserted farm, beyond which runs a low, rocky ridge on the right, while on the left is a kopje (large enough to be called a berg), and forming a barrier, quite a mile long, at right angles to our road, which ran between the ridge and the kopje. Cameron led in person, and, when within a few hundred yards of the farm, a smart volley from the ridge showed that the enemy were about. They had crept up upon two men who had been posted as sentries by Captain Hamilton, and fired upon them at a range of not more than 30 yards. The men were ready—their natural alertness having been quickened by the suspicious sniffing and uneasiness of one of their horses. They came smartly to the rear, and—into our arms. We were just in time.

A careful examination of the ridge showed, however, that the Boers had retired. Our men halted in rear of good cover at the farm-house, while Captain Cameron and one of the Guides rode round the kopje on the left, and made sure that it was not occupied. Meanwhile Captain Hamilton returned to where the support was halted, a mile behind us, and marched it towards the right front. That was all we saw of the support for several hours. But before Cameron had concluded his round of the big kopje the dull thundering of the artillery at Slingersfontein and along the front, which had been going on all the morning, was interspersed by the sharp crackling of rifles. Beyond the series of kopjes which restricted our views to the right we suspected that the support had engaged the enemy.

As soon as it was clear that our road was open, we hastened to get on the Boer flank, and very soon succeeded. A smart ride of about two miles, over sharply undulating and very rocky country, and we were in full view of the enemy moving between the kopjes in our front and towards our left. In order to reach a suitable position they had to pass through a defile, and for the few moments that the chance lasted it was a good one. But, owing to this and that detail during the morning, Cameron's force was now only sixteen all told, including the horseholders. One of these posts I had the honour to fill, and gathered together the reins of six horses. All our available rifles were brought to bear, but the Boers,

who numbered not less than 100 at this point, turned smartly, and the air was at once charged with bullets. They whizzed and whirred amongst us in such fashion that we had to at once seek better cover. This, happily, was close at hand—was reached, in fact, by moving about a hundred yards into the rear of a tall, irregular kopje further on our right. The riflemen were soon in position on its heights, and the horses, while less protected than the men, were in comparative safety, although bullets rang and whistled about the heads of the holders during the course of about an hour and a half that we held the position. It was rarely that our men saw an enemy during this period. The Boers were well in cover, and the vigilant Tasmanians had only to fire at the faintest flutter or movement, which seemed to indicate amongst the rocks opposite the presence of those from whom proceeded an incessant fire, which made us glad of our own natural fortress.

But there were Boers enough, and to spare, that morning. They soon got the measure of our strength—or, should I say, weakness ? While a few kept us engaged in the front, the majority moved quietly, swiftly, and almost unobserved, in rear of the line of kopjes on our left. Captain Cameron had fully expected a turning movement of the kind, and saw that a retirement was the only means of preventing our being cut off. But the Boers had completed a large arc of their circle before we made ready to fall back, and the bullets came thick and fast amongst the horses while the men were mounting. Then it was a case of running the gauntlet to the next available shelter on our right rear, and we had a decidedly hot time.

We had to cross an area of open country under the fire of fully a hundred rifles, at a range of about 500 yards. First a Guide and one man, the former equipped with wire fence cutters, made their bolt. Then, in groups of threes and fours, the others followed. I had read much of "hail of bullets." I now know from personal experience precisely what it is. Take my word, it is not nice. Yet, perhaps, from the very excitement afforded, it is better to gallop under direct fire than to stand as a horse-holder while the enemy pot-shots at you.

Across that terrible zone of fire, with the leaden messengers of death pelting around and about us, and over a stone wall which barred our way, we all rode, scathless. Not a man, not a horse hit. Looking back upon it now, it seems to have been a miracle that we all got through. Even such indifferent shots as the Boers have sometimes shown themselves to be, while pouring in a concentrated fire upon little parties of men could provide a pelting of lead through which I would have

thought it impossible for horsemen to pass without some casualties. But the Boers, after the passing of the first two, must have got the range of particular points, and that they fully appreciated, and sought to defeat, our tactics, was shown by the way in which they waited for each group in turn to emerge from cover, and then, for perhaps three minutes, were able to keep it under a concentrated fire. "It is phenomenal," I remarked to a press friend with whom I was talking on the evening after the fight. "No, sir," he said; "it means that God watches over our troops." It was not a goody-goody person who made this remark, but just an ordinary work-a-day journalist.

Our next cover was even better than the first, but the Boers did not approach near enough to it to get any effective fire from us, although Captain Cameron managed to send a few long-range volleys into a gun, which we now ascertained they had with them, and which, I afterwards learned, had been kept well engaged during the morning by a section of our field artillery from Slingersfontein. The enemy did not trouble us much while we remained in the position, for his few desultory shots hardly counted after the red-hot recent experience. No, he did not mind our being there, rather devoting his energies to seeing that we did not get out. To this end a strong force moved once more on to our left flank, and the Boers bided their time. Half an hour later, Captain Cameron, disassociated from the support, and having no idea where it was, saw that there was nothing for it but a retirement, and once more we ran the gauntlet. Between us and the Jasfontein post was a stretch of veldt quite four miles across as the crow flies. When we left cover the Boers were posted on our then right, in a kopje close to, and almost on, the same line as that from which we came. That should give my readers a fairly good idea of what the ride meant.

"Spread out, men, and off you go!" ordered Cameron, and away we went. The Boers were quite ready, and didn't we get it! Indeed, there was a repetition of the previous gauntlet-running. "I never saw such a pelting as you got," afterwards remarked Sergeant-Major Paul, who had a splendid view of the retirement from a position he occupied about half-way to the post. We simply let the horses go, and no spur was needed. The hail of bullets was a sufficient incentive to speed, and the excited animals went for all they were worth. Result: Precisely what it had been in the previous gauntlet-running. Not a man nor horse hit. A special providence seems to have watched the Tasmanians that morning.

Once I judged that I was out of range of the kopjes, for the bullets ceased to fall around and about me. I therefore took a pull at my horse, and turned to see how things were

going with men who were not as well mounted, and, in any case, rode heavier than I did. But, behold, the Boers were actually out of the kopjes and pursuing us at full gallop. Here was enterprise for you! Here, too, were bullets! Firing from horseback, as these men do, with the reins abandoned on the necks of their fleet little mounts, what an advantage they have over the very best mounted infantry, who can only fight on foot! Half a dozen of us, who thought we had ridden out of range, had to start again, and, by all that is emphatic, we had to keep going, too. The chase was a hot one, and not until we had reached within about two miles of the Jasfontein post was it discontinued, and the bullets ceased to fly about our ears.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Work of the Support—The General Retirement—A Post Cut Off—Two Men Killed.

Now, what was the support doing all the morning? That it was engaged we knew, because we had heard rifle firing on our right early in the day. What really occurred was this: Captain Hamilton, on joining the support, brought it up on the right of the deserted farm where the advanced party had its first halt. It skirted the kopjes on the left, and for about half an hour remained halted under good cover. Fearing that the Boers would be devoting too large a share of attention to Cameron's party, Captain Hamilton ordered an advance, and Captain Salmon moved his men into the open towards a paddock the entrance to which was a large double gate. Just about a dozen men had passed through, and the others were pressing on, when out of the kopjes on the left front came first a few single shots, then a stream of Boer lead. Concentrated on the gateway as it was, that opening may be appropriately described as the "jaws of death."

Captain Salmon, who found himself for the first time in his life under an enemy's fire, never for a moment lost his nerve.

"Files about—gallop!" was his order, loud and distinct enough for all to hear.

"Where are we to gallop to, sir?" asked Lieutenant Reid.

"Scatter to blazes, men; scatter!" shouted Salmon. And they scattered.

Getting through the gateway was the test, and Private Peers's horse fell, shot in the shoulder, the rider making off on foot. The range, when the Boers opened fire, could not have been more than 300 yards. As Salmon's loud voice had

proclaimed the officer, and he was the last man out of the paddock, he came in for special attention, and his escape, absolutely untouched, was marvellous.

Once out of range on the plain, Salmon led his men back to a group of kopjes further in the rear, established several posts, and for a while stood by. It was considerably later when he got his first glimpse of Cameron's party, from whom the Boers had separated him, and a message which he then sent to Captain Cameron does not appear to have reached its intended destination. As a fact, had Cameron received that message, and known that his vanished support was so close, the advanced party would not have retired from its last position before entering the plain on its perilous ride towards Jasfontein. Perhaps, on the whole, remembering the numbers and the mobility of the enemy, it was just as well as it was.

As Captain Cameron rode in rear of his retiring men, he got touch with the support. "Come out of the kopjes," was his order, and the support shared in our rapid retirement, pursued by the enemy. Again the bullets rained upon it, and several horses were hit. Most of Salmon's men were infantry, but recently mounted. "The Man from Snowy River" learned to ride while droving on the plains. That composite company's equine education was completed in the race for life across the bullet-splashed veldt. They sat their horses splendidly, and as, at this stage, I was an eye-witness, as well as a participant in the movement, I am able to testify to their first-rate behaviour. All the Australian colonies, except Queensland, were represented, and not one was discredited. There was no crowding together, no confusion, and, fast as the retirement was, it was in good order. No wonder that General Clements expressed his warm approval of the conduct of the Australians that morning—and at all times.

Here let me specially mention the cool gallantry which, throughout the whole day, marked Captain Cameron as "every inch a soldier." When it was an advance on the enemy, he was always in front, always conspicuous, and always under the hottest fire. When it was a retirement, his orders were, "Get along in front of me; I want to see all of you out," and he accepted the full perils of the situation. I do not ever expect to see a braver and truer man than the officer selected by a Government which knew its business to command the unit from Tasmania. A stern disciplinarian, and one who stands no nonsense from anybody, yet kind and considerate. Sergeant-Major Paul, the last to come out of his post, has seen hard fighting in Abu Klea and in the Egyptian campaigns of 1882 and 1885. "I have never," he says, "been

under such fire before, and am not anxious to be again." It was under the most trying conditions, then, that the nerve and resource of Captain Cameron were tested. He bore the test in a fashion worthy of a man who took part in Roberts's march to Candahar. He is an officer of whom federated Australia may well be proud.

A very plucky piece of work was done during the retirement by Corporal Whitelaw (Tasmania). He observed a dismounted man of his company struggling with his horse, and at once turning, rode back under fire to the man's assistance. It is to the everlasting credit of the Boers that, when they observed Whitelaw bending over his comrade, they stopped firing at him, evidently under the impression that he was aiding a wounded soldier, and thus showing their appreciation of his behaviour. But when the supposed wounded man mounted, and rode in with the corporal, their fire recommenced, and the pair had a hot passage home, both arriving safely.

Private Peers (Tasmania), who, early in the morning, had his horse shot under him, is a cool, daring fellow, and when he found that he had to do his best on foot, he settled down to the task with much deliberation. From rock to rock, on the stony kopjes, he dodged the Boer horsemen, and two, who at different periods tried to take him, he shot dead. A third faced him later on, and several shots were exchanged. The Boer had evidently exhausted his magazine (that attached to the Mauser rifle only holds five cartridges), while Peers, who had kept his magazine fully charged with ten rounds, was at an advantage.

"For God's sake don't fire!" cried out the Boer. "I'd rather be taken than shot."

"Throw away your rifle," commanded the Tasmanian, and the man did so.

Peers moved towards him, but at the moment the treacherous fellow, seeing some of his comrades, jumped behind a small bush, and waved his hat.

"You wretch!" exclaimed Peers, and shot the man dead. Then he turned to fly, and a Boer bullet hit him in the neck as he dived once more amongst the friendly rocks. Ultimately he got to the rearward point of the kopjes, and made his way into the post, a distance of about four miles. He had omitted to carry his field-dressing, and the wound in the neck bled a good deal. I am glad to say that it proved to be only a flesh wound, and Peers was able to ride into Rensburg with me a little later.

"I have killed three men," he said, "but I have no regret for the last. He was an infernal scoundrel, and nearly had me!"

r men escaped death and wounds in a most
y, many of them carried the enemy's marks.
s were perforated by bullets; in some cases
rn by the same agents, and saddlery, including
ed abrasions. One officer had a metal spirit
carried in his haversack, smashed into pieces,
left stirrup received such a clout that it was
m his foot, and sent flying on to the pommel
Stories of hair-breadth escapes are simply so
I cannot attempt to reproduce them in detail.
's work ended in a retirement to some rising
front of our post. The enemy was prying
, but did not venture within our range, and
urther fighting. The Boer casualties have not
d, but are believed to have been fairly numer-
of their most enterprising men were made
e was taken in an amusing way. A French
p to him and said, "Give me your rifle," which
diately did. "Good God!" he exclaimed, as
l in at the point of a bayonet, "I thought you
own fellows." For the Guides still wore the
which were considered dangerous for Aus-

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE FALL OF MR. LAMBIE—VISIT TO THE BOER LAAGER—GENERAL DE LA REY—TALKS WITH THE BOERS—LAST HONOURS TO A COMRADE.

It was on my return to the post at Jasfontein that I learned for the first time that Mr. Lambie had been hit, and that Mr. Hales was a prisoner. One of our two prisoners, an intelligent man named Mostert, told me the story. "I saw the gentleman lying on the veldt," he said, "and heard that he was a correspondent, a Mr. Lambie. I am afraid, sir, that your friend was dying." This really was all I could learn, and, from the character of the operations in progress and prospective, it was soon made quite plain that nothing more definite could be ascertained that night. In any case, no one at Jasfontein was able to authorise negotiations with the Boers, none of whose dead lay in our lines, and Mr. Lambie had fallen miles within the position then commanded by the enemy.

On my return to Rensburg, immediately after delivering a wounded Tasmanian into the hands of Surgeon Toll, I went to Colonel Hoad, and, subsequently, to head-quarters, and reported what I knew. I begged that some steps might be taken by the General's orders to get definite information, and was assured by one of the staff that this would be done at the earliest opportunity. It was known that, if my colleague still lived, the Boers would care for him to the best of their ability, and, with that cold comfort, we had to be content until the condition was favourable to inquiry. It was well into the following (Saturday) afternoon that Lieutenant Heritage (Tasmania) was sent from Jasfontein (to where I had returned), carrying a flag of truce to the Boer lines, and charged with inquiries in regard to Mr. Lambie. It was long after dark when he returned, and our worst fears were realised. Mr. Lambie was dead, and, by the General's orders, had been buried that morning.

Lieutenant Heritage was good enough to convey the intimation that a colleague of the deceased was at Jasfontein, anxious to learn all the particulars, and, in the event of the worst, to bring in the body. In reply to this, I received a courteous message from General De la Rey to the effect that, if I would come out under a flag of truce on the following day, I should be allowed to see the grave where my colleague had been laid, and to obtain all the information that was within his power to afford. Mr. Heritage brought back with him my friend's watch and a few other articles. These were courteously handed to me by Captain Hamilton, and it was my mournful duty to forward them to Mr. Lambie's widow.

"You see, there have been so many hanky-panky things done with the white flag." In these commonplace terms an experienced and observant officer, albeit one charged with a very considerable amount of prejudice, seemed to suggest that it was unwise for me to seek an entry into the Boer laager.

"Do you not think," I asked, "that they would respect a white flag carried by a non-combatant?"

The officer glanced at my khaki clothing, and inquired, in his turn, "How, in that rig out, do you suppose that the Boers will know you to be a non-combatant? I don't trust the beggars, and would advise you not to go."

Far from accepting my friend's opinion, I did not myself, at the time, have any serious doubts of Boer good faith, but I took his hint with regard to clothes. Fortunately, I had a dark tweed jacket in my kit bag, and I was able to borrow a pair of civilian leggings wherewith to replace putties. Moreover, I took the wallets from my saddle, and exchanged my military bridle for something less profusely buckled and ringed. When these things were accomplished, it was hardly in the power of any Boer to say, with truth, that my clothing resembled that of the usual combatant. And I am not usually regarded as a person of ferocious aspect.

At the post on Saturday night the garrison suffered from the jumps rather badly. An attack was considered certain, and, had it been made, the handful of Tasmanians who held the place would have fared badly. I relied much on the known indisposition of the Boer to attack on a Sunday, and reasoned that, if an attack were projected, the General would hardly have expressed his willingness to see me next day.

"I considered that I had your life on my hands that night," Captain Hamilton, the post commandant, has since told me, "for I certainly did not share your pleasant view."

Apparently, however, it was a strong one in my mind, for I rested without uneasiness on the floor of the deserted farm-house, which was Captain Hamilton's head-quarters. There are, it is said, persons of such temperament that they can sleep quietly in the midst of a battle. I make no claim to the possession of this heroic quality. Had I thought the Boers were coming I should have got into a much safer place than that farm-house, and have kept a bright look-out. Something made me sure that there was really no danger, and the only awakenings were caused by the movements of the vigilant commander, who was in and out the whole night. As a matter of fact, the enemy did not bother us. By the way, when he did come, at daylight on Monday morning, the Tasmanians were well on their way to Tweedale, and the General did not even find a p.p.c. card.

To say that Sunday morning was hot is to say that it was much as usual—only, perhaps, a trifle worse. Mr. J. A. Cameron, of the Western Australian press, had offered to accompany me into the Boer laager, and we decided to start about half-past eight. No one at the post had a white handkerchief, but I happened to have a white calico bag, which, on being opened out, made a flag quite three feet square. This I securely fastened to a stout sapling, about seven feet long, and went forth in the consciousness that my white flag was no mere microscopic fragment, but a real tangible thing, visible afar off to any man with eyes.

White flag rules require that only one man, and he unarmed, shall approach the enemy's lines. It was necessary, therefore, to ask my companion to keep well in rear until communication with the Boers had been established, and this he accordingly did. Our way lay across a wide stretch of veldt flanked by kopjes, on both sides held by the enemy. So that there might be no room for mistake, I rode well into the centre, in order to ensure as far as possible (1) that there would be the largest prospects of my flag being seen by the Boer outposts ; (2) that there would be the smallest chance of an enemy's bullet reaching me should there be any "mistake." Minor tactics these, but necessary. Recollect that both Cameron and I were prepared to trust the Boers, but these "mistakes" do occur. Mad pursuit of adventure does not in my case mean a desire to achieve apologies for being inadvertently shot.

Nothing, however, occurred to create complications. I seemed to have gone a long way into the position before the foe manifested himself, although in reality it could not have been more than four miles from our own post. Presently, from the kopjes on the left, a horseman started out with such suddenness that he seemed to emerge from the earth. He was probably 1000 yards away, and riding swiftly toward me. I at once turned in his direction, quickened the pace of my horse, and, advancing to meet him, observed that the horseman bore a short staff, at the end of which a white handkerchief fluttered in the gentle morning breeze. In contrast with the immensity of my white flag it looked ludicrous —or, perhaps, it was mine which presented that appearance. Anyhow, I could not help laughing as I greeted brother Boer, a pleasant-looking young fellow, in civilian attire.

"Good-morning, sir," I said, with careful politeness.

"Good-morning."

"Not much of a white flag yours ?"

The enemy grinned. "Yours is big enough," he remarked.

"Yes ; thought you gentlemen mightn't see it, and didn't want to cause any mistake. I've got a friend with me—another correspondent—may he come up ?"

"Yes, certainly."

I signalled my companion, and, after he and the enemy had exchanged salutations, we all dismounted.

"The General expected me!" I remarked, inquiringly.

"Yes; he sent me out to meet you. We wait here for a few minutes."

As we chatted I learned that our newly-made acquaintance, although in civilian garb, was one of the Zarps, as the Johannesburg Mounted Police are called. He was magnificently mounted on an upstanding horse of quite sixteen hands, very different from the ponies which people have been taught to believe the Boer invariably rides. He spoke English perfectly, was armed with a Mauser rifle, and carried a bandolier. every pocket of which held a cartridge.

"Why do you not wear your police uniform?" I asked.

"Because it's much too hot," was the reply, "and we are allowed to wear what we like."

"What sort of a time are you having in the campaign?"

"Oh, not so bad; but I'd like to see it over."

"How do they feed you?"

"We have fresh meat every day, but I don't like the bread. I get my bread sent to me from Johannesburg."

"A long way. How do you manage it?"

Before he could answer a party of horsemen appeared on the face of the kopje from which our custodian or conductor—whichever he was—had come, and we were soon exchanging salutations with half a dozen new-comers, none of whom, apparently, could speak a word of English. The party was fully armed and equipped, and the leader, a swarthy person, wore a curious-looking green felt hat, fantastically ornamented with large, bright feathers. He seemed to explain, when I was rude enough to refer to his head-dress, that it had belonged to his father, who had fought in Bohemia, or thereabouts. It was plain that the man was very proud of that hat. Under the circumstances I thought it politic to admire it, for the odds were seven to two, and neither of the two was armed with so much as a toothpick.

"It is necessary," said the first comer, after much conversation in Dutch, "that we should blindfold you."

We produced our handkerchiefs, and I must say that the Boers did their work with a degree of thoroughness which I hardly appreciated. Not only was my vision completely obstructed, but, by some devilish ingenuity, the handkerchief passed over my ears in such a way that I could hardly hear anything not positively bawled at me.

"All right, Cameron?" I shouted, inquiringly, several times, without getting an audible answer, and I suspected that liberties had also been taken with my friend's sense of hear-

ing. Clearly, the enemy was taking us seriously, and in no mood for pleasantries.

We were assisted to mount, and then I realised that at least one man had placed himself on each side of me; also, that I had been relieved of the reins, my horse being guided by one of the conductors.

The circumstances did not favour the exercise of conversational powers, although I occasionally made observations, and replies of some sort were shouted. In rear I could just hear the hum of the enemy's animated chatter; but it was all in Dutch, and incomprehensible. Probably they were discussing Cameron and myself, and wondering at our lack of dignity. For a blindfolded and ear-stopped man, sitting on a led horse, and, in the absence of reins to hold, with more hands than he can conveniently dispose of, is a person seen at a decided disadvantage.

In April, when I re-visited the farm at which the laager had been, I asked a sweet daughter of the household if she had seen us on that Sunday morning. "Oh! yes," replied the winsome young person; "and you did look so funny!" I've no doubt she was right.

Up hill and down dale we went, in the charge of the enemy, and the road was singularly rocky. Indeed, I had not previously believed that there were so many jolting places in South Africa. "Not much further," was the cheering reply to every question as to distance; but we must have gone three miles before realising that there was an appreciable increase in the number of voices around us, and that our destination was reached.

"Dismount, please," commanded a voice at my ear, and I promptly obeyed.

"Kindly follow me."

"You forget. I can't see you."

"Oh! I'll take your arm."

We walked a few paces, then my conductor said—

"There's a stone wall just in front of you. Turn round, and you can sit on it."

As I seated myself, I could not help wondering whether the stone wall might not be the place of execution; but just then my bandage slipped a little, and I heard a number of strong male voices singing what, from the tune and measure, I judged to be a hymn.

"We must wait a while," said my conductor; "the General is still at church. I'm sorry to keep you blindfolded so long, but we dare not remove the bandage until we get the General's orders."

"Ah!" I said; "does the service last long?"

"No; it's nearly over now."

"May I smoke ?"

"Certainly."

I filled my pipe, but found it difficult, without the aid of eyes, to steer a match to the bowl.

"I'll light it for you," said a polite Boer, and he did so.

"Tell me when the General approaches, and I'll put my pipe out."

The burst of laughter from those standing around showed I had said something which tickled their fancy. When the merriment had subsided, one of the Boers remarked—

"Our General isn't a man of that sort !"

"What do you mean ?"

"He wouldn't be offended because you smoked."

"Ah, indeed ! I have known some Generals who would."

"Yes ? They weren't Boer Generals."

"No ; I haven't met many Boer Generals."

"Have you met any ?"

"Well, now I come to think of it, no ; at least, not at close quarters ?"

"Oh, our General's all right."

"Glad to hear you say so. Is he——"

"Here he is. Come with me, please."

I was led about a hundred yards, amidst a confused hum of voices. Then the bandage was removed, and I stood in the presence of General De la Rey. My friend Cameron stood beside me.

It is proper to say that my idea of a Boer General was hardly realised. I had expected to see a man attired in some sort of uniform, albeit that the rank and file go about in variegated slops. Behold the General before me. Probably about forty-five years of age, a tall, fine-looking man, with traces of grey showing here and there in his full, flowing, dark beard. Keen, clear, dark-grey eyes, and rather heavy eyebrows. A lithe, active, well-made figure, clad in an ordinary suit of civilian clothes, a bit the worse for wear. Coat of the shape known, I believe, as the paget, ill-fitting bags, of the "reach-me-down" kind, a flannel shirt, open at the neck, no collar or tie ; a narrow-brimmed, soft felt hat. This, embellished only with a useful-looking, newly-charged pipe, which he puffed in the calm enjoyment of a man happily conscious that church was over—this was General De la Rey, ready alike for the reception of pressman or prince.

We were in the open air, in what, at a glance, I perceived to be a home station paddock, as we would call it in Australia. Around the General, in a semicircle, stood probably about 200 Boers. Almost without exception the men were smoking, and throughout our interview from time to time the rank and file put in its "spoke," not only without let or hindrance,

but apparently with the full approbation of the General, who always answered, and whose dignity did not appear to be in the least hurt because a person who wasn't a General ventured to have a voice.

But it was no disorderly mob. On two or three occasions the men came in a little too closely, and the visitors—Cameron and myself—were a bit crowded. With a wave of his hand, and a word on such occasions, the General enlarged the semicircle, the men falling back with a swiftness which showed that, however free and easy the relations between officer and men might appear to be, discipline, for all practical purposes, was a reality. I had over twenty years' soldiering of a sort, yet I appeared to be learning something new that morning.

Beside General De la Rey stood his aide-de-camp, private secretary, or whatever he may be called. A short, fair man, with diminutive, auburn moustache and beard, and displaying his scrupulously clean linen all the more effectively because he wore neither coat nor vest. A bespectacled man, sharp as a razor, and, I was told, in private life, an attorney practising at Pretoria. This gentleman, whose courtesy rivalled that of the General himself, acted as interpreter, for De la Rey could not, or would not, talk to us in English, and my Cape Dutch, temporarily out of repair, was hardly good enough for the company.

General De la Rey acknowledged my studiously accurate military salute by a pleasant inclination of his head, accompanied by just the suspicion of a smile, expressive—well, perhaps, of gratification, perhaps of amusement, perhaps of contempt. You cannot be quite sure what, under any given set of circumstances, a Dutchman's smile means.

"You will please tell Mr. Lambie's wife," he said, "and all his relatives, that I am deeply sorry he was killed. He was with your men, dressed much the same as the soldiers, and we could not, of course, distinguish him. I am very sorry." I learned from the General that he had ordered the burial on the previous day, and received assurances that it had been decently performed. There were differences of statement amongst the Boers present as to the circumstances under which Mr. Lambie fell. One or two declared that he and Mr. Hales were ordered to throw up their hands, and refused to do so. The General negatived that story by simply putting it that, during our support's retirement, Lambie was shot in the head, fell off his horse, and died a quarter of an hour later. At the same point Hales's horse came down, and the rider was partially stunned. He soon recovered, and was with Mr. Lambie at the end. Mr. Hales was made a

prisoner, and sent to Bloemfontein. (He was released after a few weeks' detention).

An escort, the General said, would be sent to show me the grave I sought. I expressed my thanks, on behalf of Mrs. Lambie and my deceased *confrère's* friends, and for a few minutes we talked on another matter—one touching the credit of our arms. I had said—

"It will be my business, General, to, so far as lies in my power, let the reading public know of your great kindness and courtesy."

The aide-de-camp, having interpreted, he conversed with his chief for a minute, and then, turning to me, said—

"The General is obliged, and says he hopes you will also make known what occurred in the fight on Friday last to one of our officers. Field-cornet Bezuidenhout was shot through the thigh at 10 o'clock in the morning. We had to retire from that part of the field, and you took possession. At one o'clock the same afternoon we had regained the position. Our Field-cornet then had a bullet wound in his head, and five lance or bayonet wounds. What do you think of that ?"

"Is the General sure of the facts ?" I asked.

"Quite sure ; we are all sure of them. He saw Bezuidenhout himself, and he has made particular inquiry into the case. You know you people are always blaming us for doing something you say we do."

"When your Field-cornet was left behind he was still able to use his rifle ?" I remarked, interrogatively.

"No ; he was not. He was shot through the thigh, and quite incapacitated."

"Was his rifle removed ?"

"That I cannot say."

"If you will permit me, I will take a note of the General's words," I said, and thereupon did so, to an accompaniment of angry comments on the part of the bystanders, who were evidently discussing the incident.

"I hope," I said, "the General realises that such conduct as he condemns is equally condemned by the British authorities, that if a human brute who massacred a wounded man were discovered he would be severely punished. I am inclined to think that the wounded Field-cornet may have used his rifle after you left him, and suffered in consequence. In any case, our officers cannot always control the doings of individual men, and, amongst many thousands of soldiers, here and there a heartless fellow may be found. The General would hardly, I suppose, answer for every one of his own men."

The speech, being interpreted, did not altogether please the Boer listeners. Least of all did the rather foolish last

sentence of it, and they looked somewhat angrily in my direction, but the General appeared to think that the observation was not wholly unfair, and one of his magic words brought instant silence.

"I should be sorry to think," he said, through the interpreter, "that any burgher would do such a thing. The orders given to our men are that, if a British soldier be wounded and incapacitated, he is not to be further injured, but to be made prisoner, and, as soon as possible, receive surgical treatment. (Later, one of the men told me that the penalty prescribed for violation of this order was death). We expect your side to do the same."

"That, I venture to say, is what our side is doing," I answered; "and I can only repeat that it would go hard with any of our men who was found to have injured a helpless foe. I again ask, might not the Field-cornet have been still able to use his rifle after he received his first wound?"

"No," was the reply; "the man was quite helpless, we knew, and, therefore, he was most unfairly used."

At this stage a messenger came to the General, who, apparently, having other affairs to attend to, warmly shook hands with us, wished us good-bye, and walked towards one of the farm buildings. Simultaneously, our horses were led forward, we mounted, and, escorted by about a dozen men, left the laager.

Our escort showed us where the grave of my fallen *confrère* had been made, at the spot where he was hit by a bullet and breathed his last. It was well out on the veldt, and, as there was no stone within a considerable distance, I could only note the bearings of the nearest hills to ensure my finding the place again. We had not been blindfolded on leaving the laager, and, in the ride out, both Cameron and I had some interesting conversation with the men who composed the escort.

"What's the news from home?" asked one man, as he ranged alongside me.

"What do you mean by home?" I inquired, a little surprised at the interrogator's tone and provincial English accent.

"England," he said, quickly. "I come from Liverpool."

"The devil you do!" I involuntarily exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

"Well," he answered, gently knocking out the ashes of his pipe on the pommel of his saddle, "it is sufficient to say that I am a burgher of the Transvaal, and am here to do my duty."

I could see that he was disinclined to be further autobiographical. We talked Imperial politics, about what Chamberlain had done, and failed to do, and so on. Then this remarkable Englishman said—

"It was hard luck that you should lose Kitchener so quickly."

"What do you mean ?"

"I mean that he's killed."

"Oh ! Where did that happen ?"

"Somewhere near Ladysmith. He went up there on the 25th (January), and was killed on the 26th."

"Well, I have been cut off from the papers, and didn't hear about it. How did you hear it ?"

"Oh, we got a telegram from Pretoria. It was read out in the laager this morning."

A good sample, this, of the "news" served up for the delectation and comfort of the Boer fighting men.

With one of the Johannesburg police I also had a little talk. He assured me that the Republics could muster 100,000 men if they were required, and produced a memorandum showing the mines being worked in Johannesburg. "There are plenty of white men in those mines, and we can get them if we want them," he declared.

I was feeling thirsty, and had not replaced my water bottle, shot away during the fighting on the previous Friday.

"Anything in your bottle ?" I enquired.

"Yes," he said, handing it to me. "That is Lieutenant Dowling's bottle."

Spoils to the victor ! Our New South Wales officer was then lying wounded, a prisoner, in the Boer hands. His water bottle was on service with the enemy.

This Johannesburg policeman was very merry in regard to a distinguished unit in the British service

"What do you call those men of yours ?" he asked. "Ah ! I think you call them Lancers," he continued, answering his own question. "We captured one of them the other day. Why, he was a perfect arsenal. He had a carbine, and a bandolier full of cartridges. He had a revolver, and about sixty rounds of ammunition for it. Then he had a sword and a lance, and I'm blessed if he didn't carry horseshoes. I wonder at the way you load your horses. Look at us. We carry nothing but a rifle and ammunition, with a water bag on the saddle, or a water bottle, if we can get one. That's how we get over the ground."

I had to confess that they did get over the ground, too ; but did not consider the time suitable for discussing the armament question.

After being courteously conducted about a mile beyond the enemy's outposts, Cameron and I rode back to our own lines. There I had, earlier in the morning, identified and claimed Mr. Lambie's horse, a fine chestnut, which he brought from *Australia, and* which, on being recovered by one of our own

side, was regarded as a capture from the Boers. The animal had a bullet wound through the fleshy part of the off hind thigh, just above the hock. The leg was covered with blood, but the injury was slight, and, when last I saw the horse, at Bloemfontein, he was none the worse for that sad day at Jasfontein.

On the 24th April I drove from Colesberg in a Cape cart to the farm of Mr. H. W. Kotze, at which had been established the Boer laager visited in February under the circumstances described in this chapter. With me was Chaplain Wray, of the Victorian military forces, and a Kaffir driver, who seemed distressed when I refused to bring a revolver. I carried a marble slab, prepared at Bloemfontein, to mark the last resting place of the late Mr. W. J. Lambie.

Nothing could be more hospitable than the reception given to us by the Kotze family. Two sons of the house were away fighting against us, one was still at home, and a fourth was married and lived hard by. The home-living son came with us to the grave, which was easily found. There we quickly got to work, made up the ground, constructed a mound, and erected the head-stone. By this time the whole family had driven over from the farm, distant about a mile and a half. Four young ladies were of the party, and they laid wreaths of beautiful white flowers on the lonely grave. Then we gathered round, and the burial service of the Church of England was impressively recited by Major Wray. Down the aged face of the Dutch farmer great tears ran as the chaplain read those well-known words of consolation and promise.

"He is thinking of my poor brothers, for we don't know where they are," explained one of the young ladies in a voice choked with sobs.

A solemn and a memorable gathering. I was promised that, far as it was from the bereaved ones, the grave of the Melbourne journalist who had fallen at his post would never lack attention; that, surely as the Sabbath came round, would the tender duty of caring for and placing flowers upon the tomb be remembered. Nor have I the least doubt on the subject. I am satisfied that the promise will be faithfully fulfilled.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Westralians Again—A Fine Piece of Work—Kruger Distinguishes Himself—The Brave Conway Killed.

While Captain Cameron and his coadjutors were making a hard fight against long odds in front of Jasfontein, there was opened at Slingersfontein a combat which an experienced officer has described as one of the most heroic incidents of the

war. In it Captain Moor and a score of Westralians conspicuously distinguished themselves. At daylight 100 of the Inniskilling Dragoons, under Captain Haig, and 25 Westralians, under Captain Moor, moved out from the post to reconnoitre the country south of the Rensburg road. They were quickly in touch with the enemy, who were particularly strong, although the official estimate of their numbers was given at only 300 or 400. The dragoons fell back towards the post, but to the Westralians a very pretty task was set. The kopjes on the flank stand in a formation not unlike a horseshoe, and just within the opening was an isolated hill, into which Moor's party was ordered. By this time, owing to various details, it had been reduced to 20, therefore the total number of rifles in the hill, allowing nothing for horse-holders, was 21. The Boers saw the movement, and at once distributed themselves over the closely surrounding kopjes of the horseshoe, and on all sides, save the front, where the cover was not the best, swept the hill with their fire. A hotter shop to stay in it would be hard to imagine. For the Boers were reinforced during the day, and they literally swarmed in that semicircle of kopjes. But the Westralians had been ordered to hold the hill—and they held it.

From 6 in the morning until 7 in the evening the gallant little band defied an enemy who vastly outnumbered them, and the Boers are not in the least likely to forget the execution done by Westralian rifles. It was a day full of instances of individual gallantry, and, though men went down, none faltered. Late in the day, when Moor had one man dead and several wounded, the Boers got particularly close, and called on the Australians to surrender. The answer was a smart display of bayonets over the rocks where our men had taken cover, and some quite unprintable language of defiance. So the fight raged on, no Boer venturing so close as to make bayonet work practicable.

One of the first hit was Sergeant Hensman, tall, powerfully built, and a splendid specimen of manhood. "They're coming round our flanks," remarked somebody about 10 o'clock in the forenoon, and Hensman raised his tall form in order to get a clear look-out. The bullets rattled on the stones beside him like hail, and he fell with his right thigh shattered. The position in which he lay was much exposed, but the wounded sergeant did not long lack assistance. Private Kruger, the Ballarat man, with whom I had that interesting chat on board the *Medic*, was smartly out, and, under a heavy fire, bound up the wound, and made the sufferer more comfortable. In order to guard him from the sun, Kruger erected some light branches over him, and then coolly proceeded to make a parapet of stones to protect Hensman from the enemy's fire. *While he was thus* engaged a bullet passed through Kruger's

helmet, another tore his bandolier, and a third literally rapped him over the knuckles, and took the skin off. For quite a quarter of an hour Kruger stood all this, and gallantly completed his task. His right to wear the Victoria Cross was established beyond doubt.

While Kruger was busy at his work of mercy, he called to a comrade for assistance, and Private Conway, of Perth, was promptly at his side. But, alas! it was a call to death for the brave young man. As he bent over the wounded sergeant, a bullet struck Conway in the head, and he fell dead on the spot. This was the one then fatal casualty on our side in that splendid fight. But there was worse in store than a shattered left thigh for the wounded Hensman.

Apparently the Boers regarded the parapet erected in front of him as cover for a marksman, for the faintest movement from the sergeant drew their fire directly upon him. No fewer than three bullets hit him in the right leg, but without breaking any bones; a fourth grazed his temple, a fifth passed across his body, and tore the skin in a broad, ugly strip across his stomach. In all, therefore, he was hit six times. But his brave heart never faltered. After the day's fighting was over our ambulance brought him in. The Boers had been left in possession. A sergeant of the Johannesburg police approached and stripped him of his accoutrements, gently and humanely enough, it is true, but he did not omit to also "commandeer" the wounded man's watch! Hensman was naturally indignant at this, but made no other complaint. Poor fellow! Badly wounded as he was, during the first weeks of patient suffering in the hospital he made good progress. Alas! in the end it became necessary to amputate his shattered leg. The shock of the operation proved too much, and his brave spirit passed away. Long will he live in the memory of his comrades as a prince of good comrades, and "every inch a soldier."

During the day it was necessary to send messengers to the post at Slingersfontein, and in this connection I am able to record further acts of individual courage and devotion to duty. There was no lack of volunteers when men were wanted for the perilous work of crossing the bullet-swept veldt. Sergeant Edwards, Corporal Tratham, and Privates W. Murray, White, and J. Messer were the messengers, and ran the blockade in splendid style. Messer offered to go back and carry the order to retire, but the brave fellow was not allowed to do so.

Ultimately, when Moor and the balance of his party came in, it was in twos and threes that they made the deadly passage, and the gauntlet-running was almost as successful as that performed by the Tasmanians at Jasfontein earlier in the

day. The total casualties were :—Private Conway, killed ; Sergeant Hensman, seriously wounded ; and Sergeant Unkles, and Privates L. France, J. Bird, J. Ansell, and G. Gifford, slightly. To once more refer to Kruger. His injury was not bad enough to place so sturdy a fellow amongst the wounded, and his magnificent marskmanship was employed with deadly effect that day. At the close of it he was still so fit and fresh that he went out with the ambulance waggon to indicate where Hensman was, and help to bring him in. That is the sort of man Kruger is.

General Clements was so much impressed by the courage and fortitude of Moor's little party that he next day caused the men to be paraded, and formally congratulated them on their fine day's work. The following was subsequently put in orders :—"Operations at Slingersfontein, 9th February, 1900.—The General Officer Commanding wishes to place on record his high appreciation of the courage and determination shown by a party of 20 men of the Western Australians, under Captain Moor, in the above operations. By their determined stand against 300 or 400 men they entirely frustrated the enemy's attempt to turn the flank of the position." The position so magnificently defended has since been named West Australian Hill.

CHAPTER XL.

Hot Work on the Left—Outposts Rushed—The Victorians Engaged—Grant, Suttie, and Willson Killed.

On Saturday, the 10th—that is to say, on the day following the affairs at Jasfontein and Slingersfontein—the Victorian Mounted Rifles had a hot morning on the extreme right. It was another "affair of outposts," but none the less noteworthy on that account, and once more the record is one of cool and perfect courage on the part of Australian citizen soldiers.

Just beyond the position at Windmill Camp, which was the head-quarters of our Mounted Rifles, two observation posts were maintained. On Saturday morning that on the right, known as Bastard's Nek, was composed of a party under Lieutenant Chomley ; that on the left was under Lieutenant Thorn, at a point near the farm of a man named Hobkirk.

At daylight a group (four men), under Private Gamble, was patrolling to the front from the left post, when it was fired upon by a Boer patrol. Our men returned the fire, and the Boers, who did not appear to number more than four or six, retired. That was the opening incident in a morning which was destined to be marked by tragedy.

Hardly an hour later the group went to a more forward position, Privates Williamson and Gamble going to the front

on foot to examine the ground, Burrows holding their horses. Presently, on both the front and the flanks of the groups, the Boers appeared so suddenly that they seemed to have sprung from the ground. Gamble at once sent back Private Carruthers, the fourth man of the group, to report to Captain M'Leish. "Surrender!" cried the Boers. "Not a bit of it!" replied the plucky group-leader as he encouraged the men in front to run in, ultimately helped them on to their horses, handed one of them a rifle he had dropped, and saw them off before he started himself. Meanwhile the Boer bullets came thick and fast, and, as the range was close, all three horses were hit. Burrows was the first down. He was wounded, and the Boers made him a prisoner. Williamson rode hard for the picket, but soon got a bullet in his left arm, while his horse got one in the shoulder. A hundred yards further on the horse was again hit, and fell dead. Williamson continued his journey on foot, and was for two miles under fire, but escaped without further injury than a bullet graze on the lobe of the ear. Private Willson had come out with a horse from the post. Williamson was quickly in the saddle, and reached safety. Gamble got a bullet in the shoulder, and his horse was killed under him, but he also reached the picket.

The Boers had not, however, come out that morning to chase four men. They smartly attacked both our pickets, and a short but sharp battle took place. Unhappily, it was marked by two fatal casualties. Sergeant Grant, of Ballarat, was going forward with a party, when he was slightly wounded, and called to his men, "Go on; I'm done for." "Oh, you're all right," cheerily remarked a dragoon who stopped to help him, and just then another bullet struck Grant, this time in the breast, and he fell back dead. Thus was killed the first Victorian citizen soldier to fall in the campaign. The second fell a few minutes later, Private Willson being killed by a bullet which struck him in the eye and penetrated the brain.

The Boers, who ultimately seized the observation posts, seem to have lost a good many killed and wounded, and their ambulances were very active for some time after the action. Our men behaved splendidly throughout, and the young officers in charge of the pickets were highly and deservedly praised for the coolness and gallantry they displayed at the time of crisis. Both of these young gentlemen have well justified their selection for the posts they occupy.

It seems that the deaths of Sergeant Grant and Private Willson were owing to a singular piece of misfortune. When Thorn's picket retired from Hobkirk's, a number of great-coats, etc., were left behind. Grant and four men were sent back for them at a time when it was quite safe to go, and

on their return they fell in with a troop of Inniskillings, under Lieutenant Johnstone. The troop was moving on to the left of Hobkirk's, and, as Johnstone considered his force too weak, he ordered Grant and his men to join him. It was just after doing so that Grant and Willson, also a corporal of the Inniskillings, were shot. Subsequently a couple of the same section, with several dragoons, evaded the Boers by hiding in a sort of cave. They heard the enemy talking all around them, and were almost giving themselves up when the Boers retired, and all the party in hiding managed to get back without misadventure.

In Sergeant Grant the Victorian Mounted Rifles lost a first-rate non-com., a man who was liked and respected throughout the regiment, and to whom I had, for a good many years, held the relationship of comrade. He fell at his post while worthily discharging a duty he was well competent to perform, and encouraging his men forward to the last. We shall long mourn his loss, and always honour his memory. Poor Willson I did not know so well. A bright, active young fellow, full of go, he, too, was steadfast and brave to the end, and he died the death of a soldier. The remains of Sergeant Grant and Private Willson were interred by a party directed by Lieutenant Thorn, Sergeant Wallace assisting, on Sunday afternoon. The battle of the next day raged around their graves.

Privates Burrows, Gifford, and F. Suttie, who had been engaged patrolling, were put on the list of "Missing" that day. We have since heard that poor Suttie was shot. He was so badly wounded that Dr. Daley, the Boer surgeon, thought amputation necessary, and performed the operation at a hospital to which the wounded prisoner had been carried. Suttie did not long survive the operation; he died on the 12th—that is to say, two days after receiving what proved to be his death wound. Suttie came from Byaduk, in the Hamilton district, where the loss of a fine young fellow is deeply mourned. Gifford, like Burrows, was wounded, and made a prisoner. Nine Victorian horses were killed in the fighting of that Saturday morning, which may be best described as a series of small engagements. Private M'Lean (son of the Victorian Premier) distinguished himself by carrying a message from Lieutenant Chomley's picket to Captain M'Leish under a fire which would appal most men. M'Lean had to cross a stretch of open plain, and as he and his horse were the only moving objects on it at that time, the Boers simply pelted them with lead. The gallant young fellow lay over on the neck of his horse, and let the animal go. That race against Boer bullets he is not likely to forget, and he came off unharmed. He was quite prepared to take a return message, but this was not considered necessary.

CHAPTER XLI.

The Pink Hill Fight—Major Eddy Killed—Other Brave Men Fall—A Glorious but Terrible Day.

Exciting and tragic as the occurrences of the previous few days were, they are all eclipsed by those of Monday, the 12th, a glorious but a fatal day in the history of the Victorian contingent. The Victorian troops, Mounted Rifles, and the mounted half of the Victorian Infantry, were in action together at the outposts in front of Maeder's, on the left flank of the extended Rensburg position. The Boers attacked in large numbers, and, after hard fighting, the outposts were driven in, with considerable loss to our side. It was a great fight, and in every incident of it a glory to our arms. Major Eddy, who went out from Victoria in charge of the infantry unit, and was made second in command when the Australian Regiment was formed, and Lieutenant Powell, of South Australia, were killed on the field; Lieutenant Roberts, of the V.M.R., was mortally wounded, and died next day. Captain M'Inerney was wounded, and made a prisoner. Lieutenant Tremearne was wounded and captured, but the Boers surrendered him to us. Corporal Ross, of the Victorian Infantry; Privates Williams and Thomas Stock, of the Victorian Mounted Rifles, were amongst the killed. Others were wounded, and against the names of a number we had to place the unpleasant word, "missing," one which always gives rise to gloomy speculations. For the Australian troops it was a bad day, and for the British cause at Rensburg a calamitous one. For the Boers came down upon both flanks in such numbers that they rolled up our outposts, and forced us to abandon a number of dearly-won positions, and to fall back on the centre preparatory to a general retreat.

The fight of the 12th will, I suppose, be classed amongst "affairs of outposts"—affairs which should, in these days, and especially in South Africa, be recognised as the most deadly incidents of warfare. The main post on our left was Maeder's Farm, distant about seven miles from Rensburg, and beyond it we had sub-posts at Windmill Camp, four miles beyond Maeder's, and at Kloof, in front of the famous Cole's Kop. In addition there were the advanced observation posts, where we established pickets, two of which (that at Bastard's Nek and Hobkirk's Farm) had to retire after the Boer onslaught of Saturday morning. Later on Saturday, owing to the appearance of the Boers in much strength, the Windmill Camp was struck, and the *impedimenta* sent to the rear. The Mounted Rifles, and others at the post, took to the trenches, and the horses were kept in groups some distance in the rear

of the trenches, ready for instant use. The camp at Windmill itself was on a flat, and was commanded from the heights in front of it. There was positively no cover except that provided by the trenches. Our guns, to some extent, covered these trenches, and we held on the left front what is known as Pink Hill, a long, low kopje, with a rocky front face, almost opposite the point of a hill about a mile in front, on the far side of which stands Hobkirk's Farm.

During Sunday the Boers remained quiet. They made no attempt to follow up their advantage of the previous day, nor did they give any answer to the fire of our four field guns, which shelled the Boer positions in the hills in front during a part of the day. But on Monday morning the enemy was astir very early, and a 40-pounder spoke on his behalf at daylight. For an hour there was a fire of shrapnel into our trenches at Windmill, but little or no harm was done, and our own guns were occupied for a considerable time firing at a dummy gun enclosure, cunningly erected by the Boers, while the gun itself was working from a ridge much higher up. Captain M'Leish having discovered and pointed this out, new aim was taken, and our first shell seemed to burst right over the Boer gun, which for nearly an hour was silent.

But we were to hear from the gun again, and during the lull the final disposition of the troops available for the day's fight was made by Colonel Carter, of the Wiltshire Regiment, who was in general command of what may be called the Maeder's position. At Pink Hill, the chief post, there were stationed Major Eddy (who had relieved Major Dauncey, Inniskillings, in the command that morning), Captain M'Inerney, with 50 Victorian Mounted Infantry ; Lieutenants Roberts and Tremearne, with 25 Victorian Mounted Rifles ; 20 South Australians, under Lieutenant Powell ; 50 Inniskillings, and about 50 of the Wiltshire Regiment, under Captain Brown. Eddy made very careful dispositions, preparing especially for an expected attack on his left flank, as a large party of Boers had been observed manœuvring to menace it. Two of our guns took up a position on the right at a dam in front of Windmill Camp. They were supported by 75 of the Mounted Rifles, under Captain M'Leish, and there were also at hand, in the trenches, 80 of the Bedford Regiment, under Captain Findley. Close up, as a support, and under shell fire for some time, were Captain Legge and 40 of the New South Wales company. It was in something like this order our men were (although there were rapid changes of small parties from point to point all through) when the Boers came on.

Apparently the enemy had massed during Saturday and Sunday in the rear of the kopjes overlooking the stretch of plain on which Windmill Camp was. Out of these kopjes,

...en o'clock on Monday morning, they sprang upon us ... swarms. The hills, indeed, appeared to open ... forth armed men. On our left—that is to say, ...inst Pink Hill, the main attack was, but a feint ... well round on the right, where, indeed, the enemy ...ted. His purpose was anticipated by the with- ... our men from isolated advanced positions there. I ...g chiefly with the part that Australians took in the ... those actually engaged were for the most part on ...

...neously with the outpouring of armed men from the ... the air was filled with their leaden messengers. ...imated that not fewer than two (some say three) ... Boers took part in that attack, and their rifles ... all along the line of kopjes in front of us. But on ... sharp and incessant as the crackling was, it had ...ect on the nerves than the whizzing and screaming of ...llets as the torrent of lead fell upon and around Pink ... All the while the deadly Vickers-Maxim (the "Pom ...") was at work, but although the whirr and growl of ...hots and their explosion were very trying, nobody appears ...ve been injured by this remarkable weapon. I do not ... to use unnecessary superlatives, but the fire was just as ...y as could well be imagined, and, hot as was the pelting ...he Westralians at Slingersfontein, a few days before, that ...ich the Victorians, South Australians, and their Imperial ...mrades got in and around Pink Hill was, while it lasted, ...most if not fully as hot.

It soon became quite evident that the position was untenable, and preparations were made to evacuate it. First the ...lts fell back, and it was chiefly because of the obligation which devolved upon the Australians, as mounted men, to cover the retirement of their infantry comrades, that our men suffered so severely. For it was no mere perfunctory covering movement; the work was done whole-heartedly, thoroughly, to the death.

Need I say that our men turned their faces to it like the heroes they are. Encouraging and directing them throughout the action, which lasted for about two hours, Major Eddy moved amongst his men coolly and bravely. It was his first experience under rifle fire, but he was quite equal to the test. From point to point he fought his men with skill and judgment, and the busy movements of the Boer ambulances showed that the rifles he directed had spoken with effect. But the ...tion was quite untenable under the circumstances, and ... Eddy had just given the order for the final retirement, ... the bullet which fate had reserved for him found its ... He fell, shot through the head, and died instantly.

It was a little earlier in the day that Lieutenant Powell was killed. Somebody had called out, "They're showing a white flag," and Powell rose from the very good bit of cover behind which he was using his rifle to the better observe what was going on. At that moment he was shot through the heart, and fell backward a corpse, death being instantaneous. Lieutenant Roberts was directing the fire on the right when he was hit—the first man on that fatal day reached by the enemy's missiles. A bullet struck him in the back and passed through his body. Captain Hopkins (surgeon) told me shortly afterwards that there was no hope of the young officer's recovery, and his diagnosis was true, for Roberts died in the hospital at Rensburg next morning. Later on, Captain M'Inerney was hit in the thigh and rendered incapable of movement. The Boers came with a rush as our men fell back, and M'Inerney was taken prisoner. M'Inerney's serene courage was well tested throughout the fight, and he stood the ordeal precisely as those who know him confidently expected. He vied, indeed, with his less fortunate chief, Major Eddy, in showing an example of coolness, nerve, and pluck. Lieutenant Tremearne, while trying to get away in the final retirement, got a bullet through the left foot. He, too, fell into the Boer hands, but Captain Hopkins secured his release on the ground that the injury was serious. Hopkins was not so successful in setting up a similar claim on behalf of Captain M'Inerney.

Corporal Ross (Castlemaine) was shot through the breast, and died near where he fell. The Mounted Rifles lost a fine young fellow in Private Thomas Stock, of Sandford, a member of a long-settled and well-known family there. Stock was shot through the head while nobly doing his duty. While similarly engaged, Private C. E. Williams, of Violet Town, got a bullet through the body, and died a few minutes afterwards.

Private S. W. Edwards (Ararat) was shot through the chest, and dangerously wounded, and Private H. J. Colley, with a bullet wound in his head, was left for dead on the field during the night following the battle. He was ultimately carried to the hospital, and made a wonderful recovery. Private Inglis, of Koonawarra, was hit in the right leg, and the bone was fractured. Corporal M'Cawley was slightly wounded in the leg. Private Lawdorn sustained a contusion of the right eye, having probably been struck by the splinter of a shell, and the injury proved so serious that he lost the eye. Private Maxwell got a bullet through the upper arm, and another through the left knee, the second wound being the more serious one. Private Byers was wounded in the back, and both legs were injured. Private Elms got a bullet in the left thigh, but the injury was not serious. Private Wallace

had bullet wounds in both legs, and Private Hamilton a slight wound in left leg. Private Bush was hit in the left knee, and got a particularly nasty injury. Private Meagher was struck with three or four bullets. The other known wounded were Privates Michel, Hagan, Peters, and Maxwell. Probably others who fell into the Boer hands, but concerning whose condition it was impossible to get definite information, were also hit.

The redoubtable Corporal Mawley, of Sale, had passed his left arm through his horse's bridle, and was keeping his rifle rapidly going, when he was surprised by a party of Boers and made a prisoner. I do not think he was wounded. Others of our men fell into the hands of the enemy, who, after the fight, lent cheerful assistance, and even sent a party of their own men to bring our wounded to Hobkirk's Farm.

Under cover afforded by the guns and the other companies, the force at Pink Hill ultimately fell back on Maeder's, and Captain M'Leish and his men skilfully did their duty as part of the rear guard, as also, although less exposed, did the New South Wales company, under Captain Legge. Captain Hopkins freely and bravely accepted the perils of the day's work, was at Pink Hill under fire during the whole action, and magnificently did his part. In tending the wounded he had the cool and capable assistance of Sergeant Ahearn (Victoria). Everybody, indeed, behaved splendidly, and Australia has good reason to be proud of the men who fought for the Empire at Pink Hill.

The Australian casualties at Pink Hill were :—

Killed	6
Wounded, left in our hands	13
Wounded, taken by the Boers	10
Prisoners unwounded	2
Total casualties	31

In the number of killed I put Lieutenant Roberts, who died from wounds next day. It is remarkable that, although the injuries were in some cases very serious, all our other wounded on that day have survived. Perhaps more than two of our men fell unwounded into the Boer hands, but I do not think so.

CHAPTER XLII.

After the Battle — Captain Hopkins's Narrative—Tremearne's Experiences—Sergeant Patterson.

The extreme quietude of the Boers on Sunday seems to have suggested, in some minds, that they were not bent on serious business the next day. Such an idea would, however, only occur to men who do not realise how strong is the antagonism of these people to Sunday fighting—to which, it must be said, the British sometimes force them. Captain M'Leish's own command on Monday, being on the right of the guns, did not come in for the heavy rifle fire at Pink Hill on the left, therefore the casualties round about him were slight, although the men were under shell fire all the morning. This firing was commenced at daybreak, and at a distance of quite three miles to begin with. The aim was singularly good, shells falling close to our trenches. The horses, too, were much frightened, and a few were hit with splinters, as also was one man. The trick of the Boers in erecting a dummy parapet, to make believe that their 40-pounder was behind, led to about an hour's useless firing on the part of the British gunners. It was fortunate that Captain M'Leish discovered the real state of affairs. When he did so, Major Dauncey personally led our guns to a new position, with good result. The "Pom Pom" was early in action, and the Boers calculate much (and wisely) upon its demoralising effects. The gun was shifted about from point to point all through the action, and it created a greater amount of concern than even the flights through the air of whizzing rifle bullets.

A gallant fight the 50 Wilts on Pink Hill made of it all day, and they won our admiration, as well as the most complete assistance that the Australians could afford them. Several of the Wilts were brought to the rear on the horses of our men, a few riding behind the riflemen, others on spare horses. In this connection Sergeant Patterson did fine service, and, indeed, brought the Australians back, all senior to him having been hit. Others gave heroic assistance to the Wilts, Private Veal being conspicuous.

To the names of those who have already been mentioned as having shown individual heroism on the fatal day I must add that of Private Brooks, of Mansfield. This man saw Lieutenant Roberts fall, and, under a terrific cross-fire, went to his aid. He gave the doomed officer a drink, and helped to dress his wounds. He was sent back across the fire zone, crossed it safely, and actually returned—three trips in all, with the bullets cutting the ground all around him. Brooks helped to carry Roberts off, and gave similar assistance when Lawdorn fell wounded.

It is difficult to get the rights of the white flag incident associated with the fall of Lieutenant Powell. Privates Tatchell and Jewell say that suddenly a large, white flag was shown by the Boers. Powell sprang up to see what it meant, and, as stated, was instantly hit. Our men, who had for the moment ceased firing, got their rifles to work once more, and the white flag was not afterwards seen.

When our men fell back they were partially under the protection of the guns on Cole's Kop, as well as the field guns in use on our side that morning. To this is attributed the fact that the enemy did not follow up his advantage and carry on the pursuit to Rensburg, as, in my opinion, he might have done. But I fancy that our fire had done a good deal of damage, and there were dead to bury and wounded to care for. The Boers had had enough for one day. As I have said, we retired on Maeder's Farm, but the same night that position was abandoned, and the whole of the western outposts were withdrawn to Rensburg.

To the Boer kindness to our wounded everybody concerned testifies. Private Sindal (Victorian Rifles) went out with the ambulance waggon, and he emphasises all that others have said on the subject of the Boer kindness. But the Boer is not above helping himself to trifles he may find on a wounded man, even though he gives him water and binds up his wounds. It is remarkable to find such a combination of thief and Good Samaritan as the Boer affords.

Captain Hopkins, the medical officer with the Victorians, had a hard day's work after the fight. His personal experiences may well be reproduced in his own language :—

"I watched the action at Pink Hill," he said to me during a lull in his work the same night, "and saw pretty fully what happened, except, of course, when in the actual discharge of my own particular duties—aiding the wounded. Lieutenant Roberts, with about twenty men, had been sent to a post on the left, and had a very hot time. Roberts was the first man to go down while directing his men's fire. I at once realised that his wound was mortal. After a hasty dressing, we tried to get him to the rear, but had to put him down after carrying him 50 yards ; but, ultimately, we got him over a ridge in fairly good cover.

"I went back to attend to Corporal Ross, on a ridge towards the front, and crawled to the place under the hail of bullets. The Boers were then only from 50 to 100 yards away, and the crack of their rifles seemed almost beside my ear. I hastily dressed Ross's wounds, but the poor fellow died soon afterwards. I crawled back and managed to get three more of our wounded men away.

"After making two or three journeys in this crawling fashion between the firing line and the rear, I met Major Eddy, and asked him how things stood—if we were knocked back for the day. 'No,' was his reply. 'The Wilts are in a hole, and we have to get them out.'

"A few minutes later I was called to inspect four of the Wilts. Three were fatally wounded, and, while getting one poor fellow carried back to his mates, the fire again became so hot that we had to drop him after we had gone about 20 yards. At this moment the order, 'Retire,' was given by Major Eddy, and, picking up an unwounded Wiltshire man behind me, I rode, with about fifteen others, about 1000 yards to the rear. The dragoons had gone out to try to get at the enemy, but do not appear to have had a chance.

"I did not see anything of the fight at the point where Captain M'Inerney and Lieutenant Tremearne were, but saw those officers later in a farm-house which General Grobelar, the Boer commander, had made his head-quarters. I met an ambulance waggon on my way back, put three of our wounded into it, and then went again to the front with a red cross flag. We once more picked up Lieutenant Roberts, who had been helped on to a horse, but had to get down.

"Major Fallon, of the Royal Army Medical Corps, then came up, and he and I, with some four ambulance men, went on to the front and removed others of our wounded. Major Fallon left, and I had to arrange with Dr. Daley, the Boer medical officer, for the removal of the wounded prisoners. Both the General and he were courteous and obliging throughout. Dr. Daley said that he had to keep the slightly wounded men, but would allow me to remove those who had received serious injuries. After some persuasion I was able to get the surrender of Lieutenant Tremearne, but could not get Captain M'Inerney.

"Corporal Mawley and Private Roberts, of the V.M.R., are unwounded prisoners. They were cornered, and had to give in. Dr. Daley could tell me nothing of Major Eddy, but I found him at a point indicated by Corporal Ordish. A bullet had passed through the Major's brain, and death was instantaneous. Our gallant friend has played the grim war game well, and met his death only through trying too hard, and, possibly, a little too long, to cover the retreat of the dismounted men (Wilts). These Wilts could not speak too highly of our men's behaviour.

"Sergeant Ahearn, our ambulance man, rendered great help in getting the wounded away. He remained on the field all night with two or three wounded whom we could not get away. Privates Sindal and Ditchburn (Victoria) gave me great help in taking wounded and riderless men off the field,

as also did Private Wilkie, of South Australia. I was glad to get back, I can assure you, and have had enough of bullet-whizzing and 'pom-poming' for some little time."

Sergeant-Compounder Ahearn's experiences on that fateful Monday were not the least interesting. The night before the fight he spent in the bivouac at Pink Hill, and the spot he selected to sleep in was near where the horses had stood the greater part of the night.

"Major Eddy," he told me, "came just before dawn, and turned me over, saying, 'You'd better shift, for their shells are sure to come about here, where they will think the horses are.' This turned out to be quite true, for the first shell fell just near where I had been sleeping."

Ahearn testified to the cool courage of Eddy when leading a party of his men to a better position, and said he felt sure that the Major would be shot, so fearlessly did he expose himself. In a reference to poor Mr. Roberts he remarked :—

"With the assistance of Private Wilkie, of South Australia, I managed to get Mr. Roberts on to Wilkie's horse. The wounded officer was suffering a great deal and bleeding. 'I don't think I can last much longer,' he remarked to me as we went along, a distance of about four miles, when the ambulance, which was very slow, relieved us.

"Captain Hopkins was there, and said he was going into the Boer lines. 'I'll go with you, sir,' I said ; but just then a horse which had been led for me got away, and I had to walk back the four miles. The others had passed in, and the Boers presented their rifles at me. I displayed my box and badge, and they let me pass, taking me to where the doctor and others were at work. I was soon busy with the wounded, and the Boers helped all they could. We filled our own waggon. Dr. Hopkins got permission for other waggons to come. He went to Rensburg in order to get them, and I stood by seven of the wounded on the kopje where they had fallen. Throughout the night I gave them as much attention as was in my power, but by 10 o'clock my water supply had been exhausted, and the poor fellows were calling out for water all the time. The Boers had left me some—indeed, one man left his water bag full. He told me next day that he would have brought more out had he thought there would not be enough. It came on very cold about 12 o'clock, and I used my tunic to cover one man, but had no covering for the others.

"At daylight I went down again to the outposts, and was allowed by the commandant to visit the farm where some of our wounded men were. I found one of our ambulances there, but it had been shelled coming in. We started work and brought in all our wounded to the farm. This took till half-past two, and the

Boers allowed us to get eggs and chickens from the farm for the suffering men. While I was busy, one man, apparently in authority, came up and said, inquiringly, 'Australians?' 'Yes,' I replied. 'What the devil are you doing here?' 'We are soldiers of the Queen,' I answered, 'and are here to fight her battles.' 'Ah!' remarked the Boer, 'you'll be fighting against the Queen some day yourselves.' They seemed to have a good deal of satisfaction in knowing that they had been victorious over Australians, yet they showed a great deal of sympathy with the suffering men."

The stand made at Pink Hill by our men was one of the finest imaginable. It is true thay had the advantage of a position and some cover, but the Boers were in such numbers that they were easily able to outflank the position, and the Australian hold of the hill was tenacious to the point of obstinacy. It is easy to say that Eddy ought earlier to have retired. He was not, it is true, a man liable to err on the side of excessive caution, and he entertained a great contempt for the Boer; but it must always be remembered that he, with a mounted force, was covering the retirement of the gallant Wiltshire company, who fought a steady and solid fight all through, and lost heavily in killed and wounded. Tremearne, too, hung on rather long—under circumstances which I had better describe in his own words.

"I was on the extreme left of the position," he told me, in a talk about the action, "with poor Roberts, who was mortally wounded within the first few minutes of the fight. We thought we had beaten the enemy back—as, indeed, we had some of them—and did not know that a retirement was taking place, and we were laughing and chatting. One of my puttles had got loose, and I sat down to adjust it, making the remark, 'It is just as well to be tidy, even if I have to be shot.'

"Meanwhile a large number of Boers had left their horses and crept up about us, and I realised that we were surrounded. 'Go for your horses,' I shouted to the men, and our men scattered. I found myself with just twelve men, and yet no order to retire had reached me. As a fact, as all senior to me were either killed or wounded, I was in command, but did not then know it. Captain Brown, of the Wilts, had, I afterwards learned, sent me an order to fall back, but the man who carried it was shot through the head before he reached me. So little alarmed were we, and so proud of having kept the enemy in check, that, quite confidently, I called out to the men to mount and get away, but only one, who happened to be near his horse, succeeded. All the rest of us fell into the hands of the enemy, some killed, some wounded. Afterwards I asked the men whether they blamed

me for not surrendering in the first place, and the answer was, 'No; it would never do for Australians to surrender like that.'"

"How about your personal adventures?"

"Well, in getting to the rear, I first fell over a piece of wire fencing, and a bullet whistled right over my head. The fall, I reckon, saved my life. I ran to my horse, and, just as I approached, the animal was hit and fell dead. I turned to a pony standing near, and put my hand on it just as a bullet hit it in the back, and that horse was gone. Then I bolted on foot, and a bullet shot away my haversack. It had my home letters in it, by the way. Then I got a bullet through my coat on the left side, another knocked off the heel of my right boot, and, finally, one hit me above the ankle, and down I went."

"How did the Boers behave?"

"Well, they took away my field glasses, whistle, and knife, and also some ostrich feathers I had under my coat. Some wanted to take my watch and compass, but others prevented their doing so. I was well treated after that, taken to the farm, and there those of us who were wounded given honey, and bread and water. Dr. Hopkins arranged for my release, and we had a very bad time in the ambulance waggons coming over the stony ground. But I am thankful that I escaped so well."

I have already mentioned that Sergeant Patterson, of the V.M.R. (nephew of the late Sir James Patterson), being the senior unwounded man, brought in the Victorians and some of the Wilts after the abandonment of Pink Hill. The sergeant is quite satisfied that he had a sufficiently hot time, but I may as well reproduce here an interesting chat I had with him on the day after the fight.

"In the morning," said Patterson, "Major Eddy told me we should probably have a quiet day, be able to off saddle, and take things easy, instead of standing to horses all the time, as the horse-holders had been compelled to do so on Sunday night. The worst we expected was some sniping, and though our breakfast was meagre, we took our rations for a good dinner.

"Later on the Major told me that if two or three shells found the horses, I was to take them from the position in which they were near Pink Hill to a gully further back. After a fourth shell had burst near them—one nearly getting Dr. Hopkins—I sent the horses back. Later on the Australians, being relieved by the Wilts, came back to cover, in order to get something to eat, and we had some narrow escapes on the way. Every man showing himself became a mark for the enemy's bullets, and Private Hogan was hit. Sergeant

Ahearn, of the ambulance, carried the wounded man 150 yards under fire, when a horseman relieved him.

"Still later, the Australians, about 100 altogether, mounted, and went in parties to different points on the position we were defending, for the Boer fire had now become very heavy, and the direction of their main attack obvious. Our men vigorously returned the Boer fire. I had sent a message to Major Eddy that the parties on the left were retiring, and the Major rose to give the order to retire. At that moment he was shot dead.' Our men had to race back over a plain, pursued by the enemy's bullets.

"The Australians covered the retirement of the Wilts, who had been in front of us, and we assisted these brave fellows (who had fought stubbornly and well, while the action lasted) to get to the rear. Some of them our men took up on their horses. Others I was able to help to spare horses. Dr. Hopkins carried out one man who had remained in the rear bandaging his wounded comrades, and whose only regret was that he had to come away without his rifle. The doctor promised to give a satisfactory explanation to the Wilts man's Colonel. Private Veal carried off another Wilt, and all this was under a hail of bullets from the Boers, who had now gained the position we had vacated, and were in large numbers. Later on some of us double-backed our horses with Inniskillings who had become unhorsed. This was reciprocated, as other Inniskillings helped to carry off Australians whose horses had been shot."

CHAPTER XLIII.

The General's Commendation—How Horseholders Suffered—Wounded Men's Experiences.

The death of Major Eddy and Lieutenants Roberts and Powell, officers who had become well known throughout the Australian and other regiments on duty around Rensburg, caused a melancholy sensation in the regiment, and it was hard to realise that they and their brave comrades of minor rank had been taken from us for ever. The bodies of Eddy and Powell were left in the territory of which the Boers obtained possession when they rolled up our flank and forced us back on Rensburg. These, and the bodies of other Australians who fell that day, were, it was promised us, to be buried by the enemy. The exigencies of war were such that we were denied the melancholy satisfaction of discharging that last duty to our comrades. Poor Roberts was buried on Tuesday afternoon at Rensburg, close to the hospital in which he breathed his last. Colonel Hoad and other officers attended the funeral, and a Church of England chaplain read the ser-

vice. A melancholy ceremony, yet we were gratified to know that Australian hands were privileged to lay our comrade in his last resting-place.

General Clements fully acknowledges that the gallant stand made against tremendous odds by the Victorians at Pink Hill saved the Wilts from disaster. I am quite conscious of the danger I run of writing in a spirit of partiality when the subject is Victoria's troops and their doings, and am glad to know that it is General Clements's opinion that too much praise cannot be given to them for their work. Perhaps it will be also admitted—what I now myself realise—that the stand made by the Australians gave the rear time to do what was ultimately found necessary, to get down the guns from Cole's Kop and save them. That this was possible is owing to the stubborn gallantry with which the Victorian (Mounted) Infantry, the Victorian Mounted Rifles, and the Wilts fought on that memorable day.

The text of the official commendation of the Australians who fought at Pink Hill and other places is as follows:—"Operations, 9th to 14th February, 1900.—The General Officer commanding wishes to place on record his appreciation of the spirit and determination of the troops in the operations of the 9th to the 14th inst. The powers and endurance of the troops were fully taxed, and they well sustained the strain. The resistance which the Worcester Regiment offered to a large number of the attacking force at Slingersfontein was highly creditable, as was that offered by the Wiltshire Regiment at Hobkirk's Farm. The assistance rendered to their dismounted comrades of the Wiltshire Regiment by the Victorian Rifles is deserving of the highest praise. The General officer commanding wishes his thanks conveyed to all ranks of the forces." Victorian Rifles in the above order means the men of both units engaged at Pink Hill.

By this time it is probably well known that mounted infantry work in groups of four, one of which (No. 3) is the horse-holder when the group comes into action. Often enough the fighting men of the group get fairly good cover, and they are sustained throughout an engagement by excitement of combat. On the other hand, the horse-holders may have to do their duties in situations where there is little cover—indeed, none at all if an enemy is strong enough to turn a flank. Moreover, they are without the sustaining excitement of men using their rifles, and all the nerve and courage that a human being can command do they require. I think it quite worth while, in a volume which has no *raison d'etre* but to describe the doings of the Australians, to give the individual experiences of such of the non-commissioned officers and men who were wounded at Pink Hill as I was able to afterwards meet

and talk to, more especially as many of them were horse-holders on that fatal day.

Private Inglis, who belongs to the Melbourne detachment of the V.M.R., is a brother-in-law of Dr. Springthorpe, of Victoria, and was one of the men who represented the colony at the Jubilee celebration. He was in the front with Lieutenant Tremearne during the action on 12th February. On the order, "Stand to your horses," being given, the men looked in vain for their mounts, the holders of which were already being peppered by the Boers. Inglis and several others dodged to the rear amongst some stones, and then, observing Lieutenant Tremearne in difficulties, opened fire to cover his retreat. When the officer fell, they turned and made a running fight of it. Inglis was the last of his party left in front, and only gained about 100 yards to the rear of where his party stopped to cover Tremearne, when he was struck on the left leg, the bullet passing through from the rear and emerging just above the knee. The Boers were quick to arrive, and adroitly "went through" the wounded soldier, taking his watch and chain and other articles. In every other respect, however, their treatment of Inglis was quite satisfactory. They carried him to a shady spot, repeatedly brought him water and fruit, and helped him to light his pipe. Three hours afterwards, an ambulance took Inglis to Hobkirk's Farm, where he was most kindly treated by the Boer surgeon (Dr. Daley) and others. He was conveyed into Rensburg the same night, and handed over to our doctor.

Private Bush is a member of H Company, V.M.R., and his home is at Condah. He was one of the horse-holders on the day of the fight, and, during the retirement, was shot in two places. One bullet passed through his left wrist, fracturing the bone, but he was not stopped until a bullet struck him on the left leg, below the knee, and brought him to the earth. Bush was one of several who had to lie out on the night which followed the day of the battle, but he was fortunate in having the comfort of a rug left behind by Lieutenant Tremearne when that officer was removed, wounded and a prisoner. The Boers did not interfere with Bush, and in the morning the Royal Army Service Corps took charge of him. Save that the fingers are somewhat stiff, Bush has almost wholly recovered from the wound in the wrist, but that in the leg was much more serious. It was quite a week after the injury was received that the fractured bone was set, and twice has the wounded man undergone operations, necessitating the use of chloroform. After lying for a long while at Cape Town, he was invalided home, and, I hear, is making good progress.

Private Wallace was also a horse-holder. A bullet passed through both his thighs, but, happily, without breaking any bone. The Boers duly robbed him, taking his watch and a few shillings in cash. Wallace was one of those who lay out on the night after the battle, and did not reach Rensburg till next day.

Private Peters comes from St. Arnaud, Victoria. When the word came to retire, at the close of the Pink Hill fight, he was amongst the first to see the Boers swarm over the ridge in front of the position held by Tremearne's handful of men. He was quick to realise the situation, and gallantly sought to create a diversion in favour of the hard-pressed Victorians. Throwing himself down behind a rock, he opened on the enemy, and had the satisfaction of seeing four of them fall under his fire. Then, realising that there was nothing for it but a retreat, he deliberately smashed his rifle over a boulder. He helped to get Lieutenant Tremearne clear of the wire fence, over which that gentleman fell, thereby escaping a bullet which whizzed over his head. Peters was hit at this moment, and declares that the bullet was meant for Tremearne. It passed through the soldier's left thigh, inflicting only a flesh wound, and, continuing its course, went also through the right thigh, fracturing the bone. The wounded man spent a very uncomfortable night out, and as the morning sun rose, was greatly distressed by ants, which swarmed around him. The Boers had not forgotten him. They went through his pockets with scrupulous care, and got £2 3s. in hard cash. Peters did not, at the time, mind that much, being well content at the fact that the thieves brought him a supply of good, cold water, of which he stood greatly in need. Just after the fight he was visited by a stylish-looking Boer, attired in white collar and cuffs, and wearing patent leather boots.

"What's the matter with you, old chap ?" said the visitor, who then began to make an examination.

"It's no use mincing matters, old chap," he added a little later. "You are badly wounded. Now, if you want to write a letter, I have paper and pencil, and will undertake to see that the letter is posted."

Peters expressed his thanks, but declined the proffered kindness, saying he did not want anything, and his visitor, after a few words of encouragement and conversation—for he appears to have observed our man in the battle—went his way. Peters is back in Victoria, and also progressing well, although the injury to his left leg has given a lot of trouble.

Private Edwards, another of the horse-holders, had three mounts in his charge when he was brought down, a bullet passing through the right lung. Although bleeding a good

deal, he was not fully conscious of his injury, and, rising from the place where he had fallen, he ran about 40 yards further on. He threw away the breach gear of his rifle, and cast off his bandolier and waist belt, the bullets falling around him as he did so. Ultimately, faint and sick, he dropped heavily, and lay for a couple of hours quite unobserved by the Boers. When he was seen, three men rode up, and, as usual, helped themselves to his personal property. The little money he possessed he had taken from his pocket and held in his hand. "When I saw the Boers coming," said the young fellow, in a chat I had with him, "I thought it was all over—that I'd get a knock on the head." But he was mistaken. After diligently robbing him, the enemy was kind. Edwards was given some brandy and water, and a Boer stood by him until the ambulance was ready to carry him away. When saying "good-bye," the Boer remarked, "I sympathise with you, old man. I suppose that you're like us—you're driven to it." This shows that the Boers may fall into a misapprehension.

Private Colley, during the retirement from the frontal position at Pink Hill, was shot through the head, and really never knew what happened to him. He does not recollect feeling any pain, and it was nearly four weeks afterwards, when under treatment in the Rondebosch Hospital, that he regained consciousness. Not the faintest hope of his recovery was entertained by the surgeons who saw him on the battlefield, for the skull was badly fractured, and, as I have already stated, he was practically left for dead for many hours. He lay out during the night following the fight. He was ultimately taken to Hobkirk's Farm, and then conveyed to Rensburg by an ambulance. Colley, when I travelled home with him in May, looked none the worse for his remarkable adventure, and said that the only effect of the injury was that he could not recollect what he read. It is regarded as only a matter of time when he will be fully restored.

Private Lawdorn was one of a section, under Corporal Mawley, in close attendance on Major Eddy on Pink Hill. He had been scouting, and reported to the Major the presence of a large number of the enemy on one flank, simultaneously with a like report being delivered from Mawley in respect to the other flank. "Well," said the brave officer, "we must cover the retreat of the Wilts," and at that moment Lawdorn was struck on the right eye by the splinter of a shell. He suffered great pain, but pluckily hung on to his duty until ordered to the rear. The wound was bound up, and Lawdorn was riding in to Maeder's Farm, when he met a party of Inniskillings coming out. They asked where Major Eddy was, and Lawdorn piloted them out, arriving just in time to

see Eddy fall. "It is strange," Lawdorn told me, "that on the previous night, about 11 o'clock, Major Eddy said in my hearing, 'Wouldn't this make a glorious place for a last stand? I'd like to make a last stand here.' I remarked, 'Isn't it too open, sir?' and the Major said, 'Oh, no, it's all right.' He fell next day within about 15 paces of where he said this." Lawdorn has lost the left eye, and an artificial one fills its place. He suffered great agony before the broken parts of the eye were extracted.

When Private J. Elms (Toorak), of the Victorian Mounted Rifles, came back to our camp (then at Arundel) from the hospital at De Aar, I had a chat with him about the fight. He had been wounded, and we knew that his personal adventures were somewhat unusual. Here is the fine young fellow's story :—

"I was one of the last to leave the position. Mr. Tremearne was awaiting the order to retire, and for about five or ten minutes we had simply lain still and done nothing. Mawley had looked for the enemy, and failed to find him, and subsequently Mr. Tremearne looked out. 'They're right on top of us,' he called out, almost immediately. 'Stand to your horses.'

"Between us and our horses there was a wire fence, and in getting through it I was hung up, caught by the bandolier. I managed to get clear, but by this time the Boers had put a couple of volleys into our horses, destroying them. I had been slightly grazed by a bullet on the left arm, and was also wounded in the leg by splinters of lead and rock, but not badly. When I had got about 100 yards beyond the wire fence, and was quite out of wind, I stumbled and fell. The next thing I knew was that a Boer had his foot on my back, and I heard him say, 'Shall I blow your brains out?' 'Well,' I replied, as coolly as I could, 'there are not many points in that.' 'All right,' he said; 'then I'll let you alone.' With that he went on firing his rifle at our fellows, but still keeping his foot on my back and holding me down.

"Then he turned his attention to me, took my rifle, my bandolier, watch, and money. He and other Boers conducted me to the ambulance, and I was taken to the farm. I got out of the ambulance waggon and walked about, but was bleeding a good deal. The Boer doctor came up and said, 'Get into the ambulance.' In I got, and was taken off by our men. Of course, by rights, I should have been sent to Pretoria. It was a most remarkable get-off. And now, after being just a week off duty, I am as fit as ever."

Not only fit, but eager, I thought, as the young fellow (who is the son of a late Victorian medical practitioner) went cheerily about his work.

Since my return from South Africa, young Frank Meagher, of Hamilton, rescued from the Boers at Bloemfontein, has reached his home, and has given a press interviewer some of his experiences. The following shows how he fared on that day at Pink Hill :—"We made a rush for the horses, and endeavoured to leap into the saddles in the midst of a perfect rain of bullets. I mounted my horse, and was just turning to gallop for my life, when I got a bullet in the thigh. I rammed my spurs in my horse and commenced to gallop. Then my rifle was shot from my shoulder. I kept going, however. Then I got two bullets in my knee, and at the same moment, as it seemed to me, my mare went down. I afterwards found that one of her hind legs had been blown clean off. I had a heavy fall, but was not rendered unconscious. Only for my helmet my skull would have been fractured, as I fell on a stone. While I lay there the bullets were still flying around me. I lay quite still, keeping my head down as low as possible till it was all over. I was there about an hour before the Boers' doctors came up."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE RETREAT FROM RENSBURG—A MOVEMENT JUST IN TIME—FIGHTING IN THE MORNING—TWO COMPANIES CUT OFF.

When the Australian Regiment came to Rensburg I could not help wondering why, with so few troops available, it was sought to hold a front so extended. From Hobkirk's Farm, on the extreme left, to Jasfontein on the right, we had positions, and they stood on a circular line between twenty and twenty-five miles long. At Rensburg itself there was a comparatively small force, and, allowing for the almost daily changes, in the way of withdrawing and new arrivals, the average strength on the whole position would not, in our time, be more than about 3000 troops. A useful body of men to have as a compact fighting force, but, when broken into fragments, and distributed all over the country, what were they ? The Boers did in that district what has been done to British troops so often before—beat them in detail. Result : The abandonment of Rensburg, and precipitate retreat to Arundel.

I have already shown that our outposts had been rolled up, the final stage in that operation being on the disastrous Monday, the 12th February, when the Victorians suffered so much, and the whole of the western posts fell back. Almost simultaneously our men were driven out of the Slingersfontein post, on the right, and the Tasmanians had fled in the night from Jasfontein to Tweedale. The Boers were all round

in large numbers, and flushed with a series of victories. The accursed "rooinek" they had swept before them, and they were ready to do the same again. General Clements saw that there was nothing for it but to retreat, and measures were taken for the evacuation of Rensburg. The column, including, of course, the Australian Regiment, fell back on Arundel.

The story of the retreat from Rensburg may be told in few words. It was well managed at almost every stage. A disaster which befell two companies of the Wiltshire Regiment was not the fault of the General commanding, but, rather, the fortune of war. General Clements succeeded to a difficult task when he took over the Rensburg command from French, at a time when, on our side, large withdrawals of troops were being made in order to meet the exigencies of the campaign at other points, and, on the Boer side, large reinforcements were—as we now know—being hurried up from Johannesburg and other parts of the Transvaal. Clements had done well to have, so far, saved the column, not, indeed, from casualties, but from the disaster by which it was threatened.

On Tuesday, the 13th February, the troops lay in and around Rensburg, the Australian Regiment doing a very large part of the patrolling and other outpost work. The wearied men and horses were kept going day and night in a manner that speaks volumes for their fibre and tenacity. So intense was the strain that, at one stage, mounted men were allowed to take short turns for a sleep in their saddles. This may seem queer, and so it is, but, none the less, it is a solid fact. And the "note of preparation," dominant everywhere on Tuesday, was indicative of a backward movement. Tents were struck, stores and baggage got to the railway, or on to the busy mule and ox waggons. All these preliminaries to a movement rearward were hurried on through the hours of the day and those of the fine moonlight evening. Originally it had been ordered that the column should move at daylight on the 14th, but at 11 p.m. on the 13th came the order to be ready to march at midnight, and everybody stood by. The start was a punctual one, the outposts having noiselessly withdrawn, and the dispositions made, so that the enemy, who was believed to be hanging on our eastern flank, might not take us at a disadvantage.

Earlier in the day part of the New South Wales company had been sent as an escort to the ammunition train, and troops from the same colony and the Victorian infantry (mounted and dismounted) formed the advance guard. Captain Legge led the men of the mother colony, and Lieutenant Pendlebury, now the only officer left of our infantry unit, directed the troops from Victoria. On the right marched Captain McLeish

with his Mounted Rifles, and on the left Captain Moor with the Westralians. The Inniskilling Dragoons, with whom we had worked much in this part of the country, were also on the flanks, and the South Australian company, with Captain Howland, formed the rear guard. Within a screen, of which Australians furnished front and rear, and a large proportion of the flankers, the Imperial troops, guns, and waggons marched. General Clements personally superintended the move-off. Perfect order and perfect quiet were maintained, and, contrary to expectation, the retirement was effected without adventure. Just as the day was breaking the column reached Arundel, and, with the exception of those required for outpost, the troops went to their appointed company lines. Horses were watered, fed, and picketed. The men ate such breakfast as they could get without incurring the fatigue of cooking, and then lay down on the veldt to rest after their ten miles journey.

They were not, however, destined to have a long spell. Within an hour of their arrival an intimation came from headquarters that a body of the Wiltshires had not got in, were somewhere in rear, and at once Australian volunteers to go back were called for. Sleepiness and fatigue were forgotten, and there were scores of volunteers. Twenty men were taken, under Captain Lascelles (S.A.), who had with him Sergeant-Major Healey (Victoria). Off went this little band on a hand gallop towards Rensburg, but they had only gone about two miles when they heard the crack of rifles, and saw, on a kopje in front of them, a company of infantry retiring on Arundel under fire. Lascelles nipped round the flank, and, behold, there was an enterprising Boer patrol of about twenty-one mounted men amusing themselves by sniping the British foot.

The Boers left hurriedly on the arrival of the Australians, and the infantry turned out to be a portion of the Bedfords, who were heartily grateful for the assistance rendered, and pursued their way quietly to camp. Lascelles, supposing that he had accomplished his task, that the Bedfords were the missing men, turned to ride back, but the Boer had otherwise provided. Suddenly a 15-pounder opened fire on the right of the Arundel position, and Lascelles made for a kopje where he considered he would alike find cover and prove helpful. For three hours the Australians were under a fire of case shot, shrapnel, and shell, but the only casualty was a horse killed. Not until three in the afternoon was the little band of volunteers relieved, and they held their position without food or water for horse or man until the relief came. Before marching in they went to water their horses at what is known as *Sannah's Dam*, about three miles from Arundel. Here evi-

dence that the Boers had lost no time, that their guns were back into the position at Taaibosch Laagte, which they occupied last year, was forthcoming. As the last horse came up from the hole, four shells, in quick succession, fell into the water. The Boers have not forgotten the range of this water-hole, beside which, in December last, Captain Jackson, of the Inniskillings, was killed.

When the first guns were heard, the newly-arrived troops sprang at once to their posts, and, wearied as they were, vied with each other to get to the front. Colonel Hoad led out the Australian Regiment, and men who were watering horses when the alarm came hurried in and galloped after the main body. Out also went the guns and the cavalry, and the scent of battle in the air on that fine, fresh morning seemed to be a perfect antidote to fatigue. But there was little fighting. Our guns threw shells on to the hills on the right front of the position, and Colonel Hoad led his men round the kopjes to find the foe apparently aimed at, accepting the risks of our gun fire, although he sent a messenger to state what he was doing. The Australians made a complete examination of the country, but the enemy, who had, it is pretty certain, been waiting for the retreating column, had for once been anticipated, and had cleared out. His plans had been upset by General Clements's earlier march during the small hours of the morning.

Personally, I have little doubt that the Boers knew we had had orders to start at daybreak. How ? Well, there are several possible answers to that question. The enemy seemed to know our every move. About his movements we knew little or nothing. The Australians did a good morning's work, saved useless expenditure of much of our gun ammunition, and, although the shells were flying, came through without any casualties. Before noon all the troops, with the exception of outposts (of which Lascelles's command formed one), returned to camp.

There were various stories current as to what had befallen the two companies of the Wiltshire Regiment who failed to march in when the retreating columns reached Arundel. The most likely one, and that which is now generally believed to be true, was that these two companies returned from outpost late on Tuesday night, and did not get the order which altered the hour of departure from Rensburg from daylight on Wednesday to midnight on Tuesday. All were very tired, and these companies especially so, therefore the idea that the men should sleep on while the rest of the regiment moved is not untenable. Perhaps, as is suggested, the Major in command did not report himself on arrival at Rensburg. If that be the case, he has paid dearly for the omission. The companies started to catch the column, and were overtaken by the

Boers. They seem to have made a stout fight of it, but ultimately, with the Major and some fourteen men killed, they had to yield to numbers and surrender. These, I believe, are the facts of a decidedly disagreeable incident.

CHAPTER XLV.

A Ride to Naauwpoort—Horse-thieves Score—Second Victorians at Hanover Road.

On the afternoon of the 13th I was informed at Rensburg that, as the column was falling back on Arundel, and the local rolling stock was all required for military purposes, no train would go south beyond Arundel that day. Here was a nice state of affairs, with my despatches censored and posted, to catch an Australian mail on the 15th from Cape Town. I got an order or two, and forthwith attacked the postal people. They ultimately surrendered, not only my two letters posted that day, but one which had been posted the previous day, and which ought to have nearly reached Cape Town. I jumped upon my horse, and started to ride the twenty-six miles, in order to catch at Naauwpoort the mail for De Aar and Cape Town, closing at 9 o'clock, and thus catch a steamer going direct to Melbourne.

It was a fairly hard ride for my game little horse, and the passage of the British outposts at Arundel, Tweedale, and Naauwpoort was not accomplished without peril of being shot as a Boer ; but I got in at just ten minutes to 9 o'clock, having done the journey in about three hours and a half, and just caught the mail. That being accomplished, I got to the only hotel, saw my weary horse looked after and fed (although he could not be stabled), and was heartily glad of a bit of bread and cheese and a shakedown on the floor. Next morning, naturally, the first movement was to the kraal where my fine little horse had been placed. He was gone. "Nicked in the night," somebody put it, and the veldt was not spacious enough for the expression of my thoughts.

It was all, however, in the course of the campaign, and I could not afford to waste time. Some insolence from an officer in charge of the remount depôt, to whom I went for information, I had to resent in a way befitting the circumstances, and the police undertook to look out for my stolen steed. Then, having completed such new arrangements as ready money usually makes possible, I went about my business. Alas ! I saw that grand little horse no more.

The Victorian Second Contingent, Colonel Price in command, landed at Cape Town on Tuesday, the 6th February. They

went at once into camp at Maitland, near the city, and there prepared for their work in the front. They exchanged their single-loader rifles for magazines, and were re-equipped with helmets, those brought from Victoria with them having been condemned by Colonel Price. No other changes were made in the equipment, and the contingent was soon ready for its order to move. Nor had it to wait long. Colonel Price received intimation that he and his men would be employed in the invaded district south of the Free State, and on Monday, the 12th February, men and horses were entrained, and started for De Aar, *en route* to Naauwpoort. Influenza and glanders had been prevalent amongst the horses on the voyage, although 303, out of a total of 305, were landed, thanks largely to the skill and care of Veterinary-Captain Rudduck. And when Lord Roberts paid a special visit to the *Euryalus* before the troops landed, he was able to express himself in complimentary terms, alike in regard to the management and condition of both the men and the mounts. The stay at Maitland helped the recovery of the sick animals, but—as is usual—the journey up country gave the poor brutes more knocking about than anybody bargained for, and was a big set-back. That, however, was quite an ordinary experience, as I, from some months of observation, was able to tell Colonel Price when I got touch with him and his command at Hanover Road on the 17th February.

Although the Second Victorian Contingent had been ordered to Naauwpoort, it did not, as a fact, get that far. The enemy had become exceptionally active south of Colesberg, and while Colonel Price was *en route*, information was received that Hanover Road was menaced. This station, lying as it does on a plain not far south of the Seacow River, is almost on the same parallel of latitude as Arundel, and, as the crow flies, not much more than thirty miles west of it. Almost, then, it was on the same front as Arundel, and that it would possibly be attacked was quite realised by those who know how much the enemy would give if they could isolate Naauwpoort. The military authorities acted with commendable promptitude and intelligence. At Hanover Road a wire awaited Colonel Price, ordering him to disentrain there and at once "prepare for an attack." Sharp work this, and it seemed that the Second Contingent was going to get its baptism of fire early.

As those who know him will readily understand, Colonel Price lost no time. No sooner were men and horses disentrained, at about 11 o'clock in the morning, than he mounted a couple of divisions, rode out, and discovered positions for them as outposts, and was very soon in full defensive formation in front of what is not naturally a very strong position. He had no artillery, and the only men he found at the station were

a single company of the Cape Volunteers—those veterans on line of communication duty. The enemy was not in attacking mood apparently, and Colonel Price afterwards had time to improve his dispositions in the light of the fuller knowledge of the country he acquired, chiefly from his own personal observation, for he is a horseman as active and untiring as ever. He had a couple of outposts on some suitable ground on Hanover Road side of the river, and a cossack-post beyond it. As, in addition, the whole of the country—in the front and on the flanks—had to be constantly patrolled, it will be understood that for a small force the first few days were days of downright hard work for the Victorian Second Contingent. Even on the 17th I saw men taken off guard and straightway put on picket. The horses were spared as much as possible. The men had to work to the limit of endurance, not because it was the Colonel's caprice, but because the position had to be held, and the line of communication kept unbroken.

Up to this time, however, they had had no actual fighting, and there had been welcome reinforcements. On Thursday 68 of the Tasmanians (of the Australian Regiment) arrived from Tweedale, and Colonel Price bade welcome to the brave Captain Cameron. On the 17th I travelled with the South Lancashire militia, two battalions of whom had just arrived from the old country, and were soon getting their first lessons in the presence of an enemy under the direction of Colonel Price. Except that there was no artillery, the position was made fairly strong, and, although it was held by untried troops, they were quite ready to give a good account of themselves if called upon by the Boers.

On the night of the 16th a large force of Boers, estimated at 1500, was reported to have assembled near the railway line between Hanover and Naauwpoort. Lieutenant Norton was sent out with a patrol to try and get touch, draw the enemy's fire, and obtain some idea of his position and numbers. It would seem that he did get contact with a body of the enemy, but in the dark it was difficult to estimate the numbers; but he kept the touch, and at half-past four next morning Colonel Price, with No. 2 Company, under Captain Jenkins, accompanied by Captain Cameron and some Tasmanians, went out in the indicated direction. It was a force of only about 130 all told, and had it encountered 1500 Boers, we may imagine that it would have had an exciting time. But the most that could be found at daylight was the enemy's distant look-out men, and late in the afternoon the Victorians returned to camp. The day was hot, they had done nearly thirty miles' riding, and chiefly wanted—dinner! While the troops were out, Lieutenant Anderson, from an outpost on the left, sent a message to Captain Sergeant, who

was in charge of the camp, that he had seen a body of nearly 100 Boers moving rapidly towards Colesberg. These are probably the men the Colonel hoped to meet. But what about the other 1400? It is quite wonderful how numbers swell when bodies of the enemy are seen in menacing situations.

In order to accommodate sick men, and make provision for those who might be wounded, Major Honman, surgeon of the Second Victorians, "commandeered" the local school-room, much to the delight of the pupils, who were given holidays *sine die*. Desks placed together, with the lower edges touching, make fairly good beds, and the resourceful surgeon made everything very comfortable. In this work he was assisted by Corporal Oswood, an operating-room assistant at the Alfred Hospital, and an orderly or two. Major Honman does not hesitate when it is a question of aiding the sick or wounded. "I won't let them suffer because of a little expense," he said.

Naturally, all the Second Contingent were very much concerned at the bad news they had heard of the previous Monday's fighting. They knew little about it until Lieutenant Tremearne and others of the wounded passed through, *en route* for Cape Town, on Thursday. Then they learned the story of the gallant fight made by their plucky comrades at Pink Hill, of the signal service done by the Victorians there in defence of the Wilts, of the deaths of Major Eddy, Lieutenant Roberts and other brave men. A sad story for them in some of its aspects, yet, on the whole, an exhilarating story —one that will long live in the history of the colony, and will not be forgotten when it is the turn of other Victorians to stand with their faces to the foe.

So far the contingent had been free from serious misadventures. There had been a few slight accidents and some mistakes. Pickets and patrols in that country were almost as likely to fire on friend as on foe, and I was not in the least surprised to hear that a relieving patrol was one day reported as a body of the enemy moving east. These things are not so exceptional as the public may imagine. They occur amongst experienced troops, and a disaster to the Worcesters at Slingersfontein, a few days before the time of which I am writing, was largely owing to their mistaking a particularly dashing advance of the Boers for a return of our own cavalry.

Our citizen soldiers settled down steadily to their work. "I am perfectly satisfied with them," said Colonel Price to me, and that, coming from such a man, meant a great deal. The men were thriving on army rations, sand, and hard work, and they had already quite forgotten that they were ever on ship-board. Their sunburns were still so palpable as to mark the new chum, and the skin on the chaplain's face was

peeling off in great slabs. Most of the men had had a night or two in the open, for the patrols and pickets went out very light, and the soldier's only covering was his great-coat.

The night I spent at Hanover Road with the Victorian Second Contingent was one of those nights of "the jumps" to which the earlier arrivals had been accustomed at Enslin. During the whole evening Colonel Price was in receipt of official telegrams and local reports of a more or less alarming character. He was ordered to watch this point and that, to patrol and to defend, and, moreover, to entrench his position at once. A reconnaissance had been made from Arundel during the day, and the force employed in it had come under Boer gun fire. Extensive movements of the enemy westward (*i.e.*, in the direction of Hanover) were reported, and anything might happen. Colonel Price called the commanding officers together, and dispositions were made for the defence, having in view the possibility of a night attack or of an onslaught at daylight. The latter was not likely, if only for the known disinclination of the Boers to initiate fighting on a Sunday, which the next day was. Yet there was no certainty that their rule on this point was invariable, and it was not safe to wholly rely upon it. A company of the Mounted Rifles, and three of the South Lancashire Militia, were sent to occupy the small hills on the right front, and the remainder were allotted places, in which they were to be an hour before daylight. Then the wearied commander lay down for a few hours' much needed rest for brain and body, and by ten o'clock the camp was quiet.

Before daylight everyone was in his place, the Colonel himself in the front line; but the Sabbath morning broke, as the night had passed, without any disturbance of the peace. The Boers were not, for the time at least, ready for a dash at Hanover Road, and our men breathed freely once more. "Breathed freely" I write advisedly, for, if the foe had come with artillery, the situation allotted to our Second Contingent would have proved just about as uncomfortable as you could find in South Africa. We hadn't the smallest field piece wherewith to answer them, and their "pom pom" must have done a lot of damage, even if it had been possible, with such small help as those poor English militia could give the Australians to hold the position. Why these militia were ever sent I cannot imagine. They are little better fitted to fight the Boers than a crowd of schoolboys. Brave fellows they are, I do not doubt, and willing, but their Colonel confessed that they knew nothing about outposts, and the preliminary tests showed that he was perfectly right. They had to undergo such a drilling as not one of them had ever dreamt of, and it is a blessing they fell into such practical hands as those of the Australian

commander. In a week or two, it seemed to me, and I observed then, they might be made a really useful fighting force, and my earnest hope was that the Boer would not put them to the test any sooner.

Meanwhile there was other work for them to do, for a section of engineers arrived on Sunday morning, and, under their skilled direction, the militiamen were hard at it with pick and shovel digging shelter trenches, and making the best possible of an essentially weak position. Some artillery was expected during the day, and its arrival would make Hanover Road safe as against a fairly large force of the enemy. A church parade had been put in orders for the morning, and Colonel Price, moved thereto by some failure on the part of a division to secure its rations, had suggested to the padre a sermon on the five foolish virgins. I don't know whether Major Wray accepted the suggestion, but the circumstances were adverse to the church parade, which had to be cancelled, and the chaplain had a Sunday off.

The loyal farmers in the district were also busy. These unfortunate people had very bad times. They refused to comply with the impudent commandeering orders of the Boers a few months ago, and the price they had to pay for steadfastness to the allegiance they owe to the Queen was a serious one. Many had to fly precipitately from their homes, and some complain that the British officers gave them the scantest (or no) notice of retirements, which meant so much to them. It was pitiable to see men, women, and little children huddled together at the railway stations waiting their chance to get away, and all deeply distressed at leaving their erstwhile peaceful homes. Herds of cattle and great flocks of sheep had to be left behind, and numerous comfortable establishments broken up. There was, of course, some promise of compensation, but, rightly or wrongly, the refugee farmers put little faith in it. "You will have to prove your losses up to the hilt," said one indignant British colonist to me; "and there is so much loss that you can't prove in actual figures, and much of it is loss that might have been obviated if a sufficient notice had been given." There is another side to this story, it is proper to state, and some of the "Britishers" were reasonably suspect. Such chaos and confusion one found everywhere, that to get at the heart of things and the precise facts in particular cases was a task so huge that I was glad to think it was not my province to discharge.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Back at Arundel—A Reconnaissance—A Quiet Sunday.

"Things are quiet at Arundel, and you may get a fight if you stay here," was Colonel Price's winningly persuasive way of inviting me to remain over Saturday night at Hanover Road, and I readily yielded to a temptation so fraught with possibilities of "copy." But on Sunday forenoon I managed to get a passage, per goods train, back to Naauwpoort, then almost restored to its wonted equanimity, notwithstanding the nearness of the Boers. On Saturday night one of the Naauwpoort patrols was fired upon by the Boers about eight miles to the north-west of the town, but there appeared to be little public anxiety—such, for instance, as was everywhere displayed after our retirement from Arundel. The magnificent work which had already been done by General French in the north-west established the conviction in the public mind that the Boers would soon be so busy in the Republics that they would have little time to devote to their "annexations" in Cape Colony. This, at least, was comforting, and it turned out to be true.

A reconnaissance from Arundel on Friday, 16th July, was interesting, a trifle exciting, but, on our side, bloodless. Colonel Henderson, of the Inniskillings, was in command of it, and with his own regiment he had a battery of artillery and 200 mounted infantry, chiefly from the New South Wales and Westralian companies, but including 25 of the Victorian Mounted Rifles, under Lieutenant Staughton. The purpose was to discover the position of the Boers in our front, and to shell a laager known to be established at a place called Kuilfontein (H. Plewman's Farm), about eight or nine miles north-west of our position. The force moved off early in the morning, and passed through the hills on our left front (westward) to what is known as the "fat plain," beyond which Kuilfontein lies.

Our left flanking patrol was soon in touch with a Boer patrol, or outpost, which opened a brisk musketry fire from the hills flanking the plain. Our men simply rode to the nearest available cover, and were soon quite out of range. No further attention was given to the Boer party at this point, and the British advance on Kuilfontein was continued without interruption. Our scouts had shown that the right was clear, but on Vaalkop, a hill constituting a fine position immediately in front, a couple of the enemy's look-out men were observed. They fired the three shots which is the known Boer signal to their friends in the rear that the foe is approaching, and retired on Rensburg, which was now on our right.

and slightly to the rear. A position for the guns was found on a small ridge, and the artillerymen opened shell fire upon Kuilfontein. The effect was immediate, and the information that the place had been made one of the enemy's laagers at once verified. From 400 to 500 Boers left in a hurry, and, moving westward on their smart little horses, were soon out of range. What appears to have been a rough-made camp was seen at the farm, but the sun being strong, and everything lying in the hazy shimmer of its powerful rays, it was hard to make out the extent of the camp, or what damage the bursting shells were doing, and it was not practicable to advance into the open plain in front of our guns.

It was after the shelling had gone on intermittently for about twenty minutes that the Boers sprang their surprise of the day. Suddenly from a hill on the left they opened upon our men with a "pom pom," otherwise known by the British as "the ten-a-penny." In quick succession, "pom, pom, pom," came ten well-aimed shots, but our formation was a widely extended one, and there was room, and to spare, for the Boer burnt-offering. The pound shells fell and burst amongst our men, but nobody was hit. The British artillery reply was quick, and the hill was shelled, but that does not necessarily mean that our projectiles fell near the Boer gun. These Vickers-Maxims are rapidly moved from point to point, and, as smokeless powder is used, it is rarely possible to locate the weapon. The best proof that we did no injury to the gun was that it continued firing, and the curious duel went on for quite half an hour. The "ten-a-penny" sent its first shots close up to our first line, then they came a few yards closer, then they fell just over the line, then in the space between the rear line and its next in front, and, finally, they alighted close to where they had fallen when the fire was first opened. It is wonderful how the thing missed, and that the exploding missiles did no damage. The column fell back about half a mile, got slightly better cover, and the fight, if such it may be called, raged on.

A party of the New South Wales men had been sent to watch Rensburg, and presently one of them came galloping back to report that a party of about 100 men were moving out towards Vaalkop, and evidently had artillery. The expected duly happened. Ten minutes after the receipt of this message a second "ten-a-penny" opened, from a point between Rensburg and Vaalkop, and we got it from both flanks. "Pom, pom—pom, pom, pom," thick and fast they came. The dust was thrown up in spiral columns in so many places that the plain seemed to be dotted with trees of dust. Amongst and around the troops those shots fell, and it is calculated that not less than 300 were thrown then and dur-

ing retirement, which was shortly afterwards ordered. Wonderful to relate, there was not a single casualty. It is said that, as our men retired, the Boers, in addition to using the "pom pom," fired their 40-pounder, but I have doubts as to whether any other weapons beside the Vickers-Maxim and rifles were used by the enemy that morning. The reconnaissance had thus far accomplished its purpose—that it proved the Boers to be holding strongly the ground in front on the left. Our troops, having been a target for the "ten-a-penny" sufficiently long, marched in, and were back in camp by midday.

I am glad to record the promotion, to the rank of sergeant, of Corporal Victor Hennessy (Glenrowan), and his heroic behaviour during the reconnaissance. At one stage in the day he was in charge of a small party on a hill, and came under a very heavy and trying fire, during which his example and cool gallantry indicated a capacity for leadership that I, who have known and respected Hennessy for a long time, had not suspected. A shot passed through his helmet, and another through his bandolier, as he and his party lay in cover. Ultimately, when the Boers got tired of firing at the little band, Hennessy quietly got his men on to their horses, and made a dash for the rear. All got off safely, but, as the newly-made sergeant was retiring, he saw one of the Oxford Light Infantry in difficulty with his horse, and rode back. He and an officer most pluckily helped the Oxford man under a hot fire, and all escaped without a scratch.

Sunday (18th) was a quiet day in Arundel camp, and those not on outpost duty were enabled to get much needed rest after a busy week. While the Boers do not begin a fight on Sunday, it is known that they are often enterprising on Monday morning, and an attack at daylight was quite on the cards. Both the Victorian units, the Westralians, and part of the New South Wales company, were detailed to form exceptionally strong outposts, the whole under Colonel Hoad, and the Arundel camp rested secure in the knowledge that the front was committed to the charge of the gallant and watchful Australians. From early in the evening till 9 o'clock next morning the companies were out, but the night was quite without adventure. There was some heavy rain for a short period, accompanied by thunder and lightning. therefore stories of heavy gun fire in the front had to be received with caution, for even some in camp were misled by "heaven's artillery" into the belief that the foe was actually at hand. The Boer did nothing beyond a little harmless sniping at long range whenever an Australian ventured to show himself, and when it seemed clear that no attack was intended, the outposts were reduced to their ordinary strength. In this

outpost work, by the way, our men were assisted by two companies of British mounted infantry, who were amongst the latest arrivals. But, best of all, there had been sent up to the front two 5-inch guns, warranted to carry shot and shell 10,000 yards.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE ENEMY VERY ACTIVE—THE SIEGE OF ARUNDEL—HARD FIGHTING ALL AROUND.

On Tuesday, the 20th, the busy Boer was in a particularly energetic mood. What his plans and his object were I do not pretend to say, not being in the confidence of General De la Rey, but his operations suggested that he had conceived and sought to execute the idea of cutting us off from Naauwpoort. Instead of the two or three hours' business in the forenoon, to which we had become accustomed, we had a whole day's fighting, and I am fairly well justified in calling my record the Siege of Arundel.

The opening proceeding was smart, audacious, and surprising. Just after daylight, while shaving in my tent, I heard the report of what seemed to be a twelve or fifteen pounder directly on the right, and towards the rear of the camp. We knew that "our friend the enemy" had been working round our flank, but we hardly expected him at such close quarters as the sound of that gun suggested, and my razor stopped mechanically as I listened for the whistle of a shell. But the next sound was that of the shell explosion, still on the right, and I was only one of many who promptly dropped other concerns in order to go out and investigate. Behold, our enterprising foe was in position near the sinister-named Vulture Hill, and his morning salutation was not yet over. He was energetically pitching shells at the Arundel camp, his favours falling short by only a few hundred yards of our outer rows of tents. "Fine, brisk morning," remarked an officer, and I felt that the matter did not admit of argument. Master Boer was getting his range, and my tent stood right in the line he had been good enough to choose, apparently some hours before dawn. The thing was more than annoying, and we all felt that something had to be done. It was done—by a section of our artillery! The Boer gun fell back.

It did not, however, cease firing. The gun was moved a little to the right rear, and by and by its boom was accompanied by that of Boer ordnance on Taaibosch Hill (on our right front). It was quite plain that the enemy was disposed to take the offensive. Our outposts, and, indeed, our

camp, were being fired upon from several points in a semicircle passing from the front round the right flank, and partly enveloping the rear. General Clements was neither disconcerted nor flurried. He had not many troops to work with, and where the main Boer strength was had not been disclosed. He detailed a force to support the minor camp at Berkshire Hill, about two miles to the south, and engage the enemy on the right. He reinforced the outposts with some additional mounted infantry, and, holding a couple of batteries and the infantry in reserve, soon got his guns to work on the enemy's known positions. I had saddled up, and was riding out with the southern force, in which a proportion of the Victorians were, when it was suggested by a *confrère* that the best view of the operations would be obtained from the lofty Arundel Hill, that in rear of which our camp was pitched. A happy suggestion, the force of which was obvious. After a stiff climb, we correspondents chose our several vantage points on the rocky summit of this eminence, and had a good view—mostly of puffs of smoke and occasional flashes of fire. In a general way, however, we could see the main movements, and watch the artillery practice. As for the greater part of the day the series of actions were chiefly artillery duels, we saw more from a hill which commanded a view of the whole country side than we possibly could from any other point. And it was there that, as the day wore on, we realised how extensive was the Boer operation, and how almost completely his forces had invested us.

Two miles in front of our centre was a large dam, the range of which, from Taaibosch Hill, the gunners obtained with perfect accuracy when General French was fighting at Arundel months before. That they had not forgotten it we were reminded as the reinforcing mounted infantry moved out across an intervening plain to occupy a series of ridges on which our advanced posts were, and two of which are known respectively as Australia and Epsom Kopje. The men were widely extended, and the shells fell close, but nobody was hurt. Lieutenant Thorn and the night picket, just relieved from duty, had the narrowest escape. The men were in front of him, and Thorn himself was just passing a corner of the dam, when whizz, whizz! bang, bang! was what we heard on the hill, and a couple of shells plumped into the dam. No damage done. Then it was that the Boers got our sweet surprise. One of the newly-arrived 50-pounders was put into position on our left front, and very soon the shells were being dropped, with a wonderful accuracy, right into a dent in the hill just behind which the Boer gun was supposed to be. With what precise effect we did not know. But after the third shell the Boer gun spoke from that point no more.

Meanwhile, we were able to observe that our guns to the south (rear) were in full going order. The kopjes right in front of them, particularly that immediately behind a fine-looking farm-house known as Wolverfontein, the owner of which was fighting against us in the ranks of the Boers, held the foe. But the enemy's reply to the British fire was feeble and intermittent, and, as our guns worked round and east (to the right) of the Berkshire Hill, we saw that the area under shell fire was gradually extended, until the "searching" was made thorough over the whole position. We heard, too, the occasional crackling which showed that the riflemen had got into action. Simultaneously, a similar crackling to our right front indicated that the reinforced outposts were having a brisk time, and a little later, at the same point, the "pom pom" spoke for the first time. Most vicious he was, too, as many as fifteen shots being counted in that quick succession which marks the fire of this weapon. The gallant Westralians, who held an advanced post, were in for it again. Finally, away on the left of the camp, at about 11 o'clock, there was a sudden opening of both artillery and rifle fire, and we knew that the Royal Irish, who held the outposts there, were also engaged. In front, on both sides, and well round towards the rear, the Boer was busy over a circumference not less than twenty-five miles. We were all but wholly invested, and the siege of Arundel was in progress. And away at Rensburg we could see, through our glasses, parties of the enemy moving out on to both flanks. The Boer was evidently out for the day, and prepared to test to the utmost British resources and fighting power. We who sat on the hill in the centre of it all, and saw and heard, had a decidedly interesting morning.

Shortly after one o'clock, the fight still raging on all sides, and the Boers, although thrown back on the right rear, appearing to hold their positions at all other points, I descended the hill, and during the afternoon made closer investigation. Accompanying Colonel Hoad, I rode towards the right rear, at a period of suspicious lull in that quarter, and suddenly became conscious of a new factor in affairs. Our second 50-pounder was at work firing right from the camp, and the singing of its great projectile, as it passed through the air almost over our heads, was something to remember. The thump of the shell, when it landed, and the bursting of the lyddite, must have been even more memorable to the Boers at the Red Farm, close to which it fell. The great gun only fired a few shots, and for long there was quiet at this point. Not until the troops were about to march in did the Boer gun speak again. Back to camp once more, my next excursion was towards the west (left), whither, late in the afternoon, the self-

same big gun, a battery of field artillery, and the Wiltshire Regiment, had been sent. More artillery duelling, and more bursting lyddite on the ridges held by the Boers. A colleague and I tied up our horses, and climbed to the top of a kopje which the Boers had shelled during the earlier part of the afternoon. From it we were able to see the brave Wiltshires extend for attack on the left of the Royal Irish. The enemy opened a feeble fire as the fighting line crossed a ridge to come into action, and we heard no more of their rifles that day. The infantry waited for a couple of hours, and it was after dark when they came into camp. My colleague and I, a little earlier, descended from the kopje, and were quietly riding in, when plump upon the hill where we had chosen our dress circle seats fell a couple of Boer shells. Apparently we had cleared out just in time, and the man in charge of an ambulance waggon behind the hill would lose faith in my judgment, for, in answer to his question, I had said, "Yes, you're pretty safe here." Happily, none of the ambulance men were hurt.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Some Details of the Fighting—Work of the Respective Forces—Sensational Individual Experiences.

The southern force, which moved out about 9 a.m., was under the general command of Major M'Cracken (Berks). It was made up of four guns, under Major Endover, R.H.A., a squadron of Inniskillings, under Captain Haig, and 166 Australian mounted men, under Captain M'Leish. The composition of the Australian Contingent was as follows :—

New South Wales (Captain Legge)	70
Victorian Mounted Rifles (Captain M'Leish)	40
Victorian Rifles (Lieut. Pendlebury)	28
Westralians (Lieut. Darling)	28
Total	166

The other officers with the Australians were Captain Salmon and Lieutenants Staughton and Chomley. Captain Salmon was detached with 40 men to act as escort to the guns, and Lieutenant Pendlebury was, for some part of the day, with him, although he afterwards joined Captain M'Leish. The South Australians, under Captain Howland, had already moved from their camp at Berkshire Hill and occupied the kopjes relied upon for the southern defence. Lieutenants Stapleton and Blair, with a patrol, had been sent early in

the morning to the farm, for the purpose of bringing in a couple of "boys" whose loyalty was in question. They soon found it necessary to retire on to the outpost position, and returned a hot fire, which hit two of their horses, but did no further damage. After M'Cracken's force had rounded the western point of Berkshire Hill, touch with the enemy was quickly obtained, and in the early part of the day his shell fire tried the nerve of the gun escort, and kept everybody very much on the alert. One shell only was effective as against the southern force, and that fatally so. The missile struck the horse of Private S. C. Atchison, of New South Wales, as he was doing duty as horse-holder with the escort, and immediately burst. The horse was killed on the spot, and poor Atchison so terribly riddled with shrapnel that he died a few hours later. That was the one serious casualty on our side during the whole day. Private Southley (N.S.W.) was wounded while giving Atchison a drink, but the wound was slight, and he was never off duty.

The guns opened on the kopjes to the east and north from a point near Berkshire Hill, and, simultaneously, the mounted men got to active work. Captain Legge's men, preceded by an advanced party, consisting of Lieutenant Staughton and sixteen of the V.M.R., pushed forward to the enemy's left flank, and occupied a kopje. From it a little later on the mother colonists retired, owing, it is said, to some order the origin and purpose of which has not been fully explained. The Victorians remained, and their New South Wales comrades soon rejoined them. They all came under the enemy's rifle fire, and the Australians, although much fewer in numbers, were not only able to keep up a very brisk return, but ultimately to push the Boers back to a kopje further in the rear, or to the farm-house lying on their line of retreat. Meanwhile, M'Leish, still further on the right, occupied a long, rocky ridge, and turned the enemy's flank. About 3 o'clock in the afternoon a party of 30 Boers, who evidently did not know that this ridge was occupied, rode quietly down to a farm-house in front of it, and came under our men's rifles at short range. Several saddles were emptied, but the exact amount of damage done could not be ascertained, the Boers quickly getting into cover, and carrying their dead or wounded with them. Australians and Boers spent the whole day dodging each other amongst the kopjes, and the only regret is that we had such a small force to meet the 500 or 600 Boers against whom, at this point, we operated, and who were ultimately, although not until they had offered a stubborn resistance, compelled to fall back. M'Leish is confident that, with a couple of hundred more men, he could have cut off a good proportion of the enemy, and also have captured the Boer

gun—for there was only one engaged on the south during the whole day.

Lieutenant Staughton had a decidedly close call. This fine young officer was doing excellent work, and, so far as he is personally concerned, does not err on the side of caution. While leading his men into a position during the afternoon he became a target for the enemy's rifles. One bullet passed through his helmet, another touched him on the knuckles, and no fewer than four passed through his haversack. But it was reserved for his Mauser pistol to save his life. A Boer bullet struck the inner side of the wooden pistol case (carried on the left side) and passed clean through, breaking the weapon itself, and exploding a couple of cartridges in it. The bullet, or the disturbance it caused, abrased the skin above Staughton's hip, and although the young officer was but slightly inconvenienced, he will probably carry the mark of that Boer bullet for a long time. Later in the day Staughton gave good and gallant service to a man who had run into a wire fence, and was in difficulties with his horse during a retirement under sharp rifle fire.

Corporal Prowse (V.M.R.) had a very narrow escape that day. A bullet grazed his forehead just over the temple, and left a skin wound suggestive of what would have happened had the leaden messenger been ever so slightly diverted from the course it took. Sergeant-Major Johnston (S.A., formerly of Victoria), while following Captain M'Leish on an under-fire inspection visit, suddenly found that the contents of his water bottle were running out. Investigation showed that a bullet had perforated the bottle. Lieutenant Chomley had to find Captain M'Leish with a message ordering the retirement, and underwent some brisk sniping as he crossed the fire zone, but without mishap. Sergeants M'Gillvray (S.A.) and Hennessey (Vic.) had a narrow escape from being cut off when pursuing their investigations a trifle far, but they, too, succeeded in coming from under the Boer fire without sustaining injury. They had seen, just in time, a party of Boers in ambush.

Another class of adventure was that of Sergeant-Major Healey, V.M.R., and sixteen men, who had been put into a position on a kopje during the day's operations. When the troops marched in, Healey's party appears to have been overlooked, and its absence was not discovered until the camp was reached, long after dark. The position of our men was a decidedly critical one, and Healey was quick to realise that he had been left. As he said afterwards to Colonel Hoad: "It was a bit awkward, sir, but I thought we could hold the kopje, so I established Cossack posts and made ready for a fight." Happily, the Boers did not trouble the plucky little

band (all Victorians). On its being discovered that the detachment had been left behind, Privates Payne and Hicks (V.M.R.) at once volunteered to go out for them, did so, and safely carried the message which brought Healey and his men into camp at one o'clock in the morning. A good piece of work for the two plucky messengers, in whom courage and nerve are combined with a fine capacity to find their way about in the kopjes at night-time.

That we had required the Boers to get back a little faster than they had intended may be understood when it is said that the evacuated southern kopjes were strewn with their kit. Rugs, bandoliers, cloaks (several of them blood-stained), food, etc., were lying about, and amongst them the *débris* of our shells showed that the British gunners had made the places aimed at very uncomfortable. But there were no killed or wounded. The Boer has a strong dislike to anyone knowing his losses. Pious as he is, he will lie freely on this score, and rarely is it left for us to bury the Boer dead. The bodies, and the wounded men, are generally removed with a greater skill and speed than the enemy is usually given credit for. Shortly after dark the northern force returned to camp, but the southern outposts were extended and strengthened, and the attempt to isolate Arundel completely failed. Had it succeeded, no doubt the railway would have been destroyed as a preliminary, and we should have been separated from the outer world.

The main position on the right front was held by Captain Moor and the bulk of the Westralian Company. The men had been on picket the whole night, and, owing to the Boers' importunities, could not be relieved. They had no rations for Tuesday, and had to carry on all day on the remembrance of those they had eaten, and the hope of those which were yet to be drawn. Decidedly unsubstantial fare, but the Westralians know how to meet incidental trials and hardships without murmur or complaint, and once more they made a great fight against big odds. Their post was called Epsom Hill, because from it a British regiment earlier in the campaign are said to have made a somewhat too precipitate retreat. The place should now be re-named. It was an important position, right opposite to one occupied by the Boers, and the greater portion of each was under easy rifle fire of the other. The special value of the position on that Tuesday was that, while it protected our right front, it also stood in the way of a comfortable retirement of the Boers, who had worked round to the south with a field gun. Therefore the ridge came in for special attention. It was pounded furiously with rifle bullets, also occasionally with the "ten-a-penny," varied with shells. Strange, indeed, it is that all this did such little damage.

On the right of the position is a kopje, a little separated from the main post. There Corporal Vernon and a party of seven, amongst them being the redoubtable Private Kruger, were in possession. They had a particularly hot time, for they had disclosed their presence by opening fire upon the head of what proved to be a column of about 300 Boers, led by a gold-braided person, recognised as one who had been seen in the fight at Slingersfontein. The Australian magazine fire was so effective that seven Boers went down in quick succession. The column, which had evidently been surprised—for the Australians were fighting the Boers in recognised Boer fashion—turned about, and got into cover, whence the enemy pelted the kopje containing the handful of Australians, evidently in the belief that it was held in force. Later on the "pom pom" was turned on to the kopje, but our men simply laid low behind their improvised stone breastworks, and not one was scratched. A shell struck and destroyed a horse, and another of our horses got away, and went towards the enemy's lines. Three Boers essayed to catch it, but one fell under a Westralian rifle, and the other two made haste to be gone. Later in the day, when the Westralians were concentrating on the main post, they saw that they must abandon the horse, and, to prevent the Boers from getting it, the poor animal was doomed. A volley was fired, and the horse killed on the spot. The loss of these two mounts, and a graze of a "pom pom" bullet received by one of a party of Imperial mounted infantry, who came out to reinforce the post, represented the total casualties of the northern force.

As my general account of the field operations has indicated, the South Australian Company was encamped at Berkshire Hill, about two miles south of Arundel, and in an important rear position. The Tasmanians were still under Colonel Price at Hanover Road.

The mounted men got the lion's share of the work at this place, and when the enemy was active it was found impossible to relieve pickets in the morning, the men having to remain, and sometimes to fast as well as fight all day. So far, however, the general health was wonderfully good. One fatality, in addition to those which have occurred in action, I have to record. Quartermaster-Sergeant D. N. Bishop (W.A.), got a touch of the sun while helping in the gallant fight at Western Australian Hill, Slingersfontein. He was sent to De Aar Hospital, and there died from inflammation of the brain. He escaped the rain of Boer bullets, but the sun killed him. Private M'Kenzie (S.A.) was injured through his horse falling upon him, and Private Jewell, of Victoria (infantry unit), suffered from a simple fracture of the leg, owing also to a horse accident.

CHAPTER XLIX.

MUCH DESULTORY FIGHTING—A SOUTH AUSTRALIAN KILLED—VISIT FROM LORD KITCHENER—A WET TIME.

The nights and early mornings that week were bitterly cold, and a local store, established at the camp, did considerable business in blankets. Our men were getting good supplies of clothing, boots, and equipment of all kinds from the army stores, and Colonel Hoad's insistent telegrams when he wanted supplies for the regiment were known to the ordnance and other people, who are apt to loiter and delay.

There was an interesting ceremony on Sunday, when our respected enemy, Pretorious, a descendant of the great Pretorious, was surrendered to the Boers. He had fallen into our hands in Natal, and had been exchanged for Colonel Eager (since dead of his wounds). Pretorious was wounded before his capture, and one of his legs had been amputated, therefore his capacity as a fighting man is not what it was. He is a fair-bearded man, about 45 years of age, of highly intellectual appearance, and good physique. It is a pity to see him maimed for life. He was brought to Arundel, and accommodated on Saturday night in the deserted house of a farmer named Albertyn, which stood right within the camp. Pretorious and two other Boers, who had been badly hurt in the campaign, and were also being surrendered, received every comfort and attention at Albertyn's, and General Clements paid our distinguished foe a visit on Sunday morning. The meeting is said to have been very cordial. A flag of truce having been sent to the Boer lines, arrangements were made for sending the prisoners in one of our ambulances to meet a Boer ambulance half way to Rensburg. This was done, and, depend upon it, Pretorious had a cordial reception from his admiring compatriots. While at Naauwpoort, Pretorious, in the course of an interview with a British officer whom he had known in the 1881 war, was asked whether we should not all be friends again when the war was over. "Yes," said the Boer leader; "when we have gained our independence, as I believe we must, we shall be friends with everybody."

Wednesday, the 21st, following as it did the failure of the Boers on the previous day to invest Arundel, was comparatively quiet for the main portion of the force. During the whole day, however, the artillery on both sides was active, principally at long range, and there were numerous exchanges of shots between patrols and outposts. Unhappily, the day was marked by a fatal casualty. Private W. E. Smith, of Brucefield, South Australia, met a soldier's death. He was a fine, strapping young fellow, under thirty years of age, and was one of a patrol which, under Lieutenant

Blair, was searching the country on our right rear in front of Berkshire Hill. A like patrol had been sent out daily, and visited the farm of a man named Joster, about three miles beyond the outpost. Joster's loyalty had for some time been in doubt, and on Monday Blair was ordered to bring him in for safe keeping under the eye of the General. On the following day the farm lands were part of those over which the enemy fought, and on Wednesday the building was approached with due caution. The South Australian patrol was twenty strong, and halted well clear of the building, while a half-group (two men) were sent forward to investigate. While the men were so engaged, the Boers were observed in a kopje close by, and a messenger galloped with an order withdrawing the half-group. The three came safely back, and thereupon, as it was plain that the enemy was strong in numbers and position, Blair retired his picket. He had hardly moved when the Boers opened fire, and the South Australians were caught in a bit of open country. It was a sharp ride to get out of range, and all made it in safety except poor Smith. A Boer bullet passed through his head, and he fell from his saddle dead on the spot. As usual, the Boers stripped the corpse of every article of value.

Later in the day an ambulance waggon went out, and no interference was offered while the body was being brought to our lines. It was carried on to the main camp at Arundel, and there, on the following afternoon, the remains of the deceased soldier were laid in their narrow bed, close beside where we had buried poor Atchison, of New South Wales, the previous afternoon. In each case, readers may be interested to know, the usual war custom was observed. The corpse was sewn up in the blanket of the dead man, and he was laid, uncoffined, in a grave about four feet deep. Such comrades as were off duty—and these were few—attended the funerals, and assisted at the last sad offices. The chaplains' prayers did not omit a petition that the God of Battles might give a speedy and complete victory to British arms, and bring this cruel war to an end.

Every day parties of varying strength, and usually composed of field artillery and mounted infantry, were sent out, and each had its own series of adventures. On Thursday the would-be siege-makers of Tuesday were driven back from our left, and one of their bivouacs we afterwards occupied. New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia were represented in the clearing movements. Our New South Wales comrades did good service in Thursday's operations. An enterprising party of thirty, under Lieutenant Dove, searched the kopjes in advance of the western outposts, and were able to keep the gunners well informed as to the move-

ments of the enemy. The effect was that first small parties of Boers had to yield possession of their ground to the Australians, and our artillery had a good go at the enemy's "Gibraltar," a long, flat-topped kopje, where he had established a post, and proved himself a menace to our left. Such first-rate practice was made—the mounted men meanwhile doing good co-operative work—that the position was rendered untenable, our shells bursting over and around it during several hours' vigorous shooting. The enemy hardly attempted any reply, and during the afternoon he formed column of route, and marched out through a break in a line of kopjes further to the north and west, taking his guns and his baggage with him. Major Butcher, with whom were Captain Legge and Lieutenants Dove and Holmes, was already so far in front of the outpost which it was his primary duty to hold that he could not yield to the strong temptation to follow, but a small flying column, under Colonel Henderson, with whom, beside artillery and the Inniskillings, were South and West Australians, made very uncomfortable the march of the retiring Boers, who numbered about 500. Nightfall favoured the enemy, who probably made good his trek westward and northward, and would have the support of his comrades at Plewman's Farm, about eight miles north-west of Arundel, where a strong laager had been formed.

I have mentioned that sometimes the Australians on outposts had to fast as well as fight. This does not mean that they were overlooked, but that the enemy had a knack of chipping in at about relief times, and also when supply carts were sent out. During the week under review one of these carts was subjected to a lively "pom-pomming," and the Kaffir boys who drove didn't like it any more than white men would. No damage was done, for the mules stepped out in lively fashion until cover was reached—unfortunately, some distance away from where the foodless and tantalised observers were engaged with the foe. For he kept the outposts, especially those on Australian Hill and Epsom Hill, fully employed. Lieutenant Pendlebury's picket had a particularly lively turn of duty at Epsom. The "Pom Pom" went hard and strong, and four horses were hit, two being killed. The young Victorian officer is a man of brains as well as courage, and while holding the post he kept his men in such good cover that none of them were even scratched. It was weeks after the Australian Regiment was formed before any, except the Mounted Rifles, knew what it was to come under fire. How different now! Day after day all portions of it—scattered over the outposts, patrolling, reconnoitring, and escorting artillery—took chances with shrapnel, "Pom Pom," and rifle fire, and the sniping with

the latter was so incessant that our men had almost ceased to regard it. From the stage at which they became excited at a shot or two from a Boer or two to that at which with perfect coolness they sat their horses, as a gun escort or patrol, and took the fire of a powerful enemy there was an interesting and remarkable development. Veterans at the game of war our gallant lads were becoming, and while experience had taught caution, it only helped to strengthen both nerve and valour.

Recent small reinforcements included some from the locally-raised horse, and it would appear that they did not all yet understand either (1) how to fight the Boers; (2) how to recognise even helmeted Australians. A picket composed of the Cape men prolonged a line held by Australians, and it was interesting to hear a youngster like our Lieutenant Chomley complaining of the noise they made, and the difficulty he had in disposing his men while these new-comers were so lacking in the application of an important outpost rule—utmost quietness of movement. Chomley happens to have been instructed in a better school, and what he did not know of his work when he came to South Africa he learned under the stress of service conditions, which include whizzing of bullets and whistling of shells. One of the officers of the local corps, by the way, had a little interview with our Corporal Righetti, V.M.R. The officer did not seem to recognise the Heywood man as a friend, and held him off at the length of his arm, plus that of a Mauser pistol, while they talked. Not very sociable, was it? But Righetti was only amused. It takes a man in whom the sense of humour is decidedly keen to see the joke of standing at the business end of a Mauser pistol held by a person in the jumps. Personally, I have doubts as to whether some of the warriors I have met in this war ought to be allowed out with firearms.

An important event to the regiment at this juncture was its inspection by Lord Kitchener, the chief of Lord Roberts's staff, who paid Arundel a couple of visits. It was in the nature of an inspection of the lines, and the hero of Khartoum was escorted through them by Colonel Hoad, who afterwards presented to the distinguished soldier those of his officers who were at the time in camp. Lord Kitchener expressed himself as well pleased with what he saw, and the supposed-to-be stern man chatted pleasantly with the officers on the situation in the Free State, for we were deeply interested in the still only expected surrender of Cronje. All about the gallant fight of the Western Australians at Slingersfontein, and of the Victorians in defence of the retiring Wilts at Pink Hill, Lord Kitchener knew, and he congratulated Colonel Hoad upon these doings, saying that they had been fully

brought under his notice. He was well pleased with the work done by the Australian Regiment. The Chief of the Staff had previously visited Arundel on Saturday, and witnessed some of the field operations. He returned to Naauwpoort next morning, and was back again on Monday, but only for a brief stay. It is understood that he was somewhat surprised to find how difficult the country in this part really is, how much it lends itself to defensive and how little to offensive operations.

It is with deep regret that I record the death of Private A. E. Coulson (Clifton Hill), of the Victorian Mounted Rifles. This fine young man was a victim of typhoid fever, and died in the hospital at De Aar, whither he had been sent from camp on the disease declaring itself. He was several weeks ill, and his was the first death from disease in the regiment. He was a valued member of Captain M'Leish's company, and his death was much deplored.

The wet season had now fairly set in, for we had another partially flooded camp on Saturday night. A storm came on just at dark, and the loud crashing of the thunder and dazzling flashes of forked lightning came as a sort of comment upon the comparatively puny noise and pyrotechnics of human artillery during the day. It was not a sudden deluge of rain, such as we had a few nights previously, but a steady and persistent downpour all through the night, and accompanied throughout by a high wind, which lasted till daylight. From the thoroughly saturated ground tent-pegs easily disengaged themselves, and it needed much watchfulness to keep the camp standing. Nearly all the tents of the Second Victorian Contingent, which had been pitched in expectancy of its arrival, came down, and, had the Victorians marched in, they would have been little more comfortable than they were in the kopjes. On Sunday General Clements came in person to see the position where we were camped, on a nasty flat, which hardly admitted of drainage. He at once ordered a removal, and our situation subsequently was well under the lee of a great hill which forms part of the frontal defence of Arundel. "A nice, quiet place," to use the term made current amongst us by a topical song we heard from a Gordon Highlander at Enslin, but I am not at all sure that the enemy's 40-pounder could not have dropped shells upon us if those who managed it were so inclined.

CHAPTER L.

Fighting All Along the Front—The Boers Hold Their Own—An Intrepid Messenger—Cameron Taken Prisoner.

The full complement of horses for the now completely mounted Australian Regiment had been made up. On Saturday, 24th February, the last batch of 148 arrived by train from Naauwpoort, so that we had now enough, and a few to spare, as a provision against sickness and casualties. The horses were being most exceptionally hard-worked, and I may reiterate my remark at the time that some men in military authority had only the faintest idea of what are the limits of a horse's endurance. They seemed to think that a horse is a kind of machine, that occasionally wants lubricating, but can do without rest. Under the circumstances, although there were at this time a few horses over and above actual requirements, if we had counted all our wearied horses not in sick lines as serviceable, an additional 30 then to be sent from Victoria, and of which Colonel Hoad had been advised, would have been very welcome. The last drafts were from the Bengal Lancers, and were mostly Arabs. Nuggety little animals most of them, although a proportion were a trifle light, they fairly well answered requirements. With the horses 50 syces were sent, therefore our much-tired men were spared a good deal of fatigue work, at least for the week or two that the Indian grooms remained with us. Captain Kendall, the vet., had a busy time in the apportionment of the horses and care of the sick and wounded, of whom we had now an unusually large number.

The Second Victorian Contingent was at this stage holding a post known as Elandsfontein, a farm about ten miles west of Arundel. To this place they moved, *via* Mooifontein, from Hanover Road. Their tents had been sent to Arundel by rail with an advanced party, but new orders had been issued to forward them to Elandsfontein, an important outpost, bearing much the same relation to Arundel as Maeder's did to Rensburg when our front included Cole's Kop. Lieutenant Lilley was temporarily off duty sick, but all the other officers, including the Colonel, were well, and there was little sickness amongst the rank and file. Plunged into the midst of hard and exacting duty immediately they arrived, the Second Victorians had nobly responded to the calls made upon them, and had shown, besides pluck in the face of the soon-met foe, the qualities of patience and grit under no end of personal discomfort and hard living. Major Houman, the medical officer, who was at Arundel on Monday, gave a good report all round.

A very perplexing series of movements to the left of Arundel was now entered upon, and they extended over several days

and nights. They were marked by some very sturdy hill fighting on both sides. As the irregular front was about ten miles in extent, and the British troops acted, not as one body, but in a number of detached parties, none of considerable strength, and the whole business was an in-and-out game of hide-and-seek, advance and retire, engage and disengage, pursue and skedaddle, it is very hard, indeed, for any single observer or inquirer to present a connected narrative of what took place. The general idea, and a little about how it was sought to give it effect, may be first stated ; and with the proceedings of those of the parties with whom I was either associated, or have since seen, I shall deal more particularly afterwards.

My readers have been told of the audacious and almost successful attempt by the enemy to cut the Arundel force off from Naauwpoort. Following this, General Clements, whose especial business at this stage was not to advance, but to hold Arundel, and protect Naauwpoort, by keeping the Boers in check, decided upon some offensive-defensive movements on our left, where the Boers were known to be in force in the sea of kopjes which lay between us and Colesberg. The nearest and strongest position on the flank named is an almost round hill, or kopje, flat on the top, and with a natural terrace of stone work all round it about half way between the summit and the base. This formidable position, to which I have already had occasion to refer, is known as Vaalkop, and close to the foot of it lies Vaalkop Farm. A couple of miles further to the left is the second main position of the enemy, Kuilfontein, the name alike of a comfortable farm-house and a long, irregular range of hills lying almost directly across our front. Still further to the left the Boers held kopjes completely covering the front of Colesberg, and blocking the British advance. With artillery, mounted troops, and a small force of infantry it was sought to drive the enemy out of his main strongholds, and, at least, push him further back, across the kopjes constituting a minor position, on his right. But if the fortune of war were favourable, the ulterior purpose to be accomplished was to roll up the enemy's right, penetrate at some weak point, and get him in the rear, in the event of his being required to relinquish Vaalkop and Kuilfontein. As a matter of fact, none of these objects was attained.

Acting immediately on the flank of our western outpost we had field artillery, mounted infantry, and a regiment of infantry (the Bedfords), and, in addition, one of the 5-inch guns was got into a position in front of the Arundel hills, from which it was able to drop lyddite shells on to and around Vaalkop and the Kuilfontein Hill. The line of assault was prolonged to the left by two sections (4 guns) of field artillery,

the Inniskilling Dragoons, the West Riding Mounted Infantry, and the Eastern Province Horse. With these were the Second Contingent of the Victorian Mounted Rifles and the Tasmanians, who had been marched from Hanover Road across the veldt, and were entrusted with the duty of watching and keeping back the enemy on the left. In little of the three days' fighting did the Victorians of the First Contingent figure, their business being to hold the outposts in the front and on the right. New South Wales men, Western Australians, and South Australians were engaged in front of the main position attacked. Colonel Price's men got their baptism of fire, and did full credit to themselves during this fighting, and the gallant Tasmanians once again proved "the mettle of their pasture" in conjunction with Victorians—unhappily sustaining the loss of Captain Cameron, who was taken prisoner by the enemy. Officers and men of our Second Contingent did their work with a dash, properly seasoned with judgment, and while it is pretty certain that they were effective in their fire, they emerged from the three days' conflict without a single casualty. Their comrades of the Eastern Province Horse and West Ridings were not so fortunate. The former had several killed, and some were reported missing, while the West Ridings had three killed (including Captain Wallace) and seven wounded. The Inniskillings, who worked more on the right, also lost several men wounded, and the Prince Alfred's Guards—a local corps—had two men mortally wounded and eight taken prisoners.

The operations of the first two days (Thursday and Friday) were chiefly in the nature of artillery actions, with occasional sharp skirmishing, and numerous little fights. On Saturday the great effort was made, and the battle raged all along the long line indicated—chiefly artillery work, still there were tussles at close quarters at various posts and stages. But on the main positions the Boers held their own. All the efforts of our guns were insufficient to dislodge them from either Vaalkop or Kuilfontein, and attempts to approach these positions were met by sharp rifle fire and the inevitable "Pom Pom." At one period Vaalkop had been silent so long that the idea of the Boers having trekked was apparently accepted by the British. The enemy adroitly aided its adoption by the withdrawal, with much affectation of haste, of about 50 men, who ostentatiously galloped off to the rear. But immediately our side attempted to take liberties, the Boer fortress spoke again with field gun and "Pom Pom."

It was made sufficiently plain that the playful Boer was still in possession, and intended to stay. For the second time that day our 50-pounder played upon Vaalkop, and the great lyddite shells were dropped with wonderful precision, appar-

ently just wherever the gunners desired. First came the deep boom of the great gun, then the shrill whistle of the projectile—heard best if you happen to ride under or closely parallel to the line of fire—and finally the boom and crash as the shell burst in a cloud of smoke, surrounding a lurid tongue of fire. It seemed incredible that anybody could live in the neighbourhood of these shells, yet after each discharge, and as though in scorn of the big gun, came "Pom," "Pom," "Pom" from the Vickers-Maxim, and its pound shells burst on the plain across which our gun escort and other horsemen were extended. And so on till the evening came, and it was clear that, on the right of the position, we had accomplished nothing. All that the infantry was able to do was to march out in the morning, lie under cover all day, and march back at night. What damage the guns did we do not know, and our mounted men, while occasionally getting in their rifle fire, probably received quite as much punishment as they inflicted.

Further on the left the most noteworthy fight of the day was made by a small force of the West Ridings, who held on to an advanced kopje, into which they had managed to wedge themselves, the Boers having fallen back from the first series of ridges on which they were encountered. The enemy was, however, in overwhelming force, and made an attempt in the afternoon to rush the positions. But the West Ridings stood to it with their bayonets, and the enemy, who has not overcome his dislike to cold steel, shrank back. At a later stage, when the Boers were mustering for a second rush, the ambulance was engaged with our wounded, and the gallant Yorkshiremen still held on. They knew that retreat was ultimately imperative. Lieutenant Umferville saw every man clear before he left himself, at a period when the now charging Boers were within thirty yards of him. How futile the day's effort had been was indicated next morning when it was perceived that the Boers were back in possession of the southernmost line of kopjes commanding the plain in front, and held possession of the neck through which the West Ridings had entered. A day's work for nothing.

The enemy did not escape punishment, as a curious incident of the day goes to prove. Early in the afternoon a single horseman suddenly appeared in the front of the Boer lines, and rode full tilt towards the British. He carried no white flag, and was under a sharp fire of British bullets. Steadily he held his course, came right up to the foot of our kopje, called for an officer, and, in a voice betraying a strong French accent, inquired, "Can you spare us an ambulance? We are very short." It was explained that we hadn't one, and surprise expressed at his intrepidity. "Oh," he said, "I knew I could trust to British honour." Then the brave man

rode back to his lines as he had come, quite unscathed, for his trust was not in vain, and no British rifle was fired at him.

It was not very clear at this time under what precise circumstances Captain Cameron was captured. The story at the time was that he had a small patrol with him, and had ventured to a point even beyond, and a little to the left, of that where the West Ridings made their plucky stand. The Boers appear to have fallen upon the little party suddenly, yet all got away except Cameron and one of his men, whose horse had been shot. "Take my horse," said Cameron. "Not at all, sir," ventured the man; "you go." "Do as I tell you, sir," commanded Cameron in his fiercest parade tone, and the man had to obey. When the gallant captain was last seen he was energetically using his rifle as he fell back amongst the stones of the kopje. I learned the full details later on, and will refer to the subject again.

CHAPTER LI.

Work of Westralians—A Voice in the Night—New South Wales Company's Operations.

A company of a hundred strong, about equally composed of Westralians and South Australians, paraded before daylight on Thursday, the 22nd. Captain Moor (Westralia), whose good and gallant work at Slingersfontein I have already recorded, was in command, and the officers with him were Lieutenants Darling and Campbell (Westralia), and Stapleton (S.A.). This company reported to Colonel Page-Henderson (Inniskillings), and formed part of the small flying column with which it was sought to force the Boers back from their dangerous proximity to the Naauwpoort-Arundel and Naauwpoort-De Aar lines on the left, and towards the rear of our position. It having been arranged that the Victorians and Tasmanians, under Colonel Price, starting from Hanover Road, would co-operate, Colonel Henderson naturally used Price's force, on the west, at their nearest point of contact with the enemy, and Captain Moor's company was employed in the strip of country which lay just beyond the operation of New South Welshmen, acting in front of our left outposts, and the territory which was under the special care of Colonel Price. The Boers were fairly numerous and enterprising on Moor's front during his whole tour of duty, and the company had no lack of variety in the excitement which the enemy so plentifully afforded. Our wily foe had a knack of installing himself, not only in certain main positions, but in quite a number of minor ones, particularly favouring kopjes

hard by the comfortable-looking farm-houses with which this prolific part of the country is fairly well sprinkled. Captain Moor's business was to act in conjunction with the field artillery under Colonel Henderson's command, to make good any advantage, drive the enemy along, and promptly assume the *rôle* of "man in possession" after the ejectment of the invader. To do this he had to work his company in small detachments, which he did with great skill and caution, yet not without that dash which the Boers will now tell you is characteristic of their antagonists from all parts of Australasia.

During Thursday the clearance of the minor positions proceeded apace. No sooner was one kopje evacuated than Moor rode in and immediately made his dispositions for going on to the next. The most important position thus secured was cleared and occupied before nightfall by a detachment under Lieutenant Campbell, who was left in charge while the captain pressed on a quarter of a mile, and had a walk-over on another hill which might have proved a menace. Finding it unoccupied, he continued his progress along a line of ridges, on the left of which was just such a snug farm as the tentless Boers love to strike at nightfall. A known strong position of the enemy lay a little further north, and, before evening fell, the riflemen had built defence sangers by piling up the loose stones, and made themselves secure for the night. Patrols were sent to the flanks, and Lieutenant Darling became master of the farm. There he arrested, and sent into camp, a couple of Dutchmen, sufficient justification for this proceeding being the presence in the house of more arms and ammunition than peaceable citizens usually require. Nor did their frantic waving of a great white sheet on the approach of the Australians, nor their pathetic observation that "Ze bombs fill ze air," save them from the well-grounded suspicion that, if not actual participants in the fighting against us, they were all too active sympathisers with our foes. Just about dark Darling got touch with Colonel Price's men (Victorians and Tasmanians) on his left front, and the now far advanced isolated company knew that friends were not so far off as they had imagined. Realising this, Captain Moor had fires lit on his kopje, and these proved a boon, indeed, to several parties of benighted Britishers (home and colonial) who, in the course of the day's operations, had got away from their comrades, and were just as likely to stumble, in the darkness, upon a Boer laager as upon the bivouac of friends.

It was late in the evening, and was very dark, when Captain Moor had his first interview with the Austral-famous Colonel Price. But he did not see the Colonel. Out of the impenetrable gloom, away down at the foot of the kopje,

came the powerful voice of the officer commanding the Victorian Mounted Rifles.

"Who's here?" demanded the voice.

"Who are you?" was the sharp response from the heights.

"I'm commanding the Hanover Road field force," replied the voice.

"I command this kopje," rejoined Moor.

"Come along and show yourself. Let us have a look at you," at this stage put in the corporal of Moor's guard, and there was a general laugh.

No one joined more heartily than Colonel Price, who quite recognised how necessary it was for men in possession to be suspicious, and who was soon afforded the information he sought—the position of Colonel Henderson's head-quarters.

The enemy was not active in the night, nor did the dawn provoke him to dispute with Moor the possession of the kopje. Lieutenant Campbell was sent to examine a farm reasonably held in suspicion, because from it a few days before a patrol had been fired at, and a horse shot. The arrest of five more Dutchmen followed, and a supply of arms and ammunition seized. The company's second day's work was co-operative with a general advance upon the Boer main position, but the efforts of the artillery were not sufficient to displace the enemy, and nothing was gained. "I shall probably retire at dusk. Cover our retirement," was Colonel Henderson's order as he left Moor late in the afternoon, but the darkness fell quickly, and the guns slipped away before the Australians knew it. The company was caught in the gloom in a very unpleasant place, and at a time when it was broken into detachments on reconnoitring duty. The day's travelling had been marked by innumerable changes of direction, and the task of getting back to Arundel camp made a special demand on the powers of each of the officers in charge of parties. Each detachment had its own set of adventures, its doubt as to whether it was friend or foe who challenged, its collisions with wire fences, its full share of all that is disagreeable in riding on an inky dark night over unknown and broken country, full of holes and pitfalls, and largely occupied by an enterprising enemy. It says much for the skill of all concerned, and particularly for the fine qualities as bushmen possessed by the Westralians, that all except one party of eight men got into camp. Moor himself, and those with him, did not arrive till one o'clock in the morning. Men and horses were knocked to pieces. Indeed, one horse died on the road. The missing eight had pluckily stuck to a post committed to them, and came in on the following evening, very wearied and hungry, but safe and sound.

It is remarkable that the work of this company, which I have thought interesting enough—and it is really quite good enough—to be told in detail, was accomplished without a serious casualty. Shell fire, the "Pom Pom" and the rifle played upon those men during their long outing, but not a horse nor a man was killed, although two horses were slightly wounded by the same bullet. Young Darling had a fall from his horse, which plunged into a wire fence and turned over, but he got off with a shaking. On the other hand, that the Boers suffered from our artillery and other fire was very evident. Seven dead horses were counted, and, on the kopje occupied by Lieutenant Campbell on Thursday night, there were gruesome relics. Here the leg of a man who had been rent by a shell, there a blood-stained cloak, splashes of blood on the rocks, and abandoned equipment, so large in quantity as to well set off the loss of a few great-coats, etc., which Lieutenant Blair had to leave to the enemy on the previous day, when Private Smith was shot dead. Moor's company also found the body of a dead Lancer, said to have been the victim of white flag treachery.

Two good days' work must be put to the credit of Lieutenant Holmes and 50 men of the New South Wales Company, who were engaged in the operations on the right of our position. On the first day (Friday) Holmes also commanded 30 of the Oxford Light (mounted) Infantry, and his whole force acted as escort to the guns commanded by Major Butcher. It was necessary, in the first place, to find, on the kopjes to the north-west of Arundel, a position from which our guns could play upon the Boer strongholds at Kuilfontein and Vaalkop. In this Holmes was completely successful, as, after the exchange of a few shots with the enemy, he cleared them out of a kopje forming one of an irregular line running through the middle of the western plain, almost at right angles to the Boer stronghold, Kuilfontein. The guns were soon in action from this point, but they needed all day the support that Holmes's men were able to give in watching the movements of the enemy, and keeping him from taking advantage of their comparative isolation. In the evening, when the guns were withdrawn, he covered their retirement, and got into camp without a single casualty.

Late in and early out was the order, and daylight on Saturday saw the New South Wales officer once more in attendance on the guns, this time with the fifty of his own men only. The former position was examined, but the Boer had not thought proper to re-occupy it, and our guns were early at work once more. During the greater part of a pretty hot day the New South Wales men sat their horses in extended order on the open plain, flanking the gun position, and there

accepted all the attention that the Boer field pieces and "Pom Pom" at Vaalkop could spare for them. One horse was hit and lamed quite late in the day, and that, strangely enough, is the total of the casualties. The man whose horse had been lamed was ordered to camp, and started in, leading his injured steed. But before he reached camp darkness fell, and he was out all night. I met him coming in next morning. He was drenched to the skin with the heavy rain, and completely worn out, but perfectly cheerful, and only too glad to think that his night wanderings had not taken him into the Boer lines.

Lieutenant Holmes and his main body had no better fortune. After the artillery had retired, the Australians had to cover the march home of the infantry (Bedfords), and before it was notified that they had got well beyond the reach of possible Boer enterprise, night came on. Holmes then moved in the direction of camp, but, after going a few miles, realised the futility of trying to strike Arundel in the dark and stormy weather. Fearing that, by some mistake, he might march into one or other of the several Boer laagers, he ultimately decided to wait for daylight, and the little company had a cold, wet time on the veldt. With the dawn, Holmes speedily got his bearings, and marched in, picking up *en route* a surgeon of the Royal Army Medical Corps, who was amongst the stragglers of a disagreeable night, and who also decided to bear the ills he knew on the partially-flooded plains, rather than possibly flounder into others he knew not of, but might easily suspect.

CHAPTER LII.

Hot Corner for the P.A.G.'s — The Brave Surgeon Hopkins—Ambulance Out All Night—The Art of Drawing Fire.

One of the nastiest tasks for the troops engaged on Saturday was that set for the Prince Alfred's Guards, a colonial corps of mounted infantry, whose head-quarters are at Port Elizabeth. Two hundred of these men arrived at Arundel only on Friday evening. A fine-looking lot of mostly young fellows, eager for the fray, they welcomed the order that they were wanted for the next day's operations, and before daylight 140 of them had paraded under the command of Captain Lascelles, R.F., Adjutant of the Australian Regiment. Lascelles's orders were very definite. He was to go to Kuilfontein farm, and ascertain in what strength it was held by the enemy. He was to hold on as long as possible, and, in the event of the Boers retreating, to be ready to threaten their

rear. That was all. A most admirable little programme, which quite ignored—

1. The presence of the Boers in strength at Vaalkop on the (our) right of Kuilfontein ;

2. The presence of the Boers in strength in the kopjes to the (our) left of Kuilfontein ; and

3. The certainty that any force investigating Kuilfontein from our front would come within range of both rifle and artillery fire from the front and both flanks.

A most admirable little programme, I repeat, was that set for Lascelles, if the Boers had only been consenting parties—which they were not.

Captain Lascelles had sent forward a patrol, and ascertained that the enemy was still in possession at Kuilfontein. He advanced with a due caution, and soon found himself within about 800 yards of a stone fence which runs from Kuilfontein right across the front to the farm at the foot of Vaalkop, and, getting cover for both men and horses in a ravine which runs at right angles to the wall, he plunged into it amidst a torrent of rifle fire from the three Boer positions, emphasised with a "Pom Pom" fusilade from Vaalkop. It was unfortunate that the ravine happened to be there. It would be remarkable that the Boers did not occupy it in anticipation of our advance were it not that it served their purpose equally well to let the British into it, and give them a gruelling from the better cover of the stone wall and the terraced sides of the kopjes. Lascelles pounded away in return. He might almost as well have fired at the moon. The enemy may have suffered from our artillery fire, but from the men in the ravine he was quite safe.

For three solid hours the Cape Colonists Corps maintained their position, and it didn't occur to the Boers, notwithstanding their vast superiority in numbers, to emerge from cover and seek to drive them out. They did a much safer thing than that when, about nine o'clock, they got one of the Vickers-Maxims in position to fire right through the gully, as we should call it in Australia, where our men lay. The movement was observed, and, although no orders had been sent to recall him, Lascelles saw that his game was up. The men stood quietly to their horses, and then, smartly emerging in small parties from the furthest extremity of the ravine, scattered over the veldt, and galloped to cover, and there re-formed. Up to the emergence from cover the only casualties were a couple of horses shot, but ten more went down in the retirement, and two men were mortally wounded, one dying the next morning. In most plucky fashion the colonials helped along comrades deprived of their horses, and the two wounded men were brought in. But the Boers

fell upon the little column before the rear got clear of the ravine, and eight of the unhorsed men were made prisoners. From the fact that the Boer ambulance waggon shortly afterwards entered the ravine, it is assumed that some of the eight were wounded. "My dear fellow, I'm very glad to see you back," said Major Butcher, to whom Lascelles reported; and the General's remark was, "I'm afraid I sent you into a rather hot corner." For my part I do not wish to see anything hotter in war, and the Prince Alfred's Guards were decidedly fortunate to get off as well as they did.

General Clements subsequently thanked Captain Lascelles for his services, and the following was put in orders:—"The G.O.C. noticed with much satisfaction yesterday the courageous manner in which the Cape Colony Mounted Volunteers held the enemy in front of Kuilfontein Farm, and retired under a very heavy fire in good order, covering the retreat of their comrades who were without horses." A well-deserved tribute to the work of brave men.

Quite a series of adventures had Captain Hopkins, surgeon to the Victorian unit, and one of the hardest-working medical men who served in South Africa. My readers already know how active was Captain Hopkins on the day of the fight at Pink Hill. They will be prepared to learn that he was most energetic, untiring, and at all times intrepid and useful in the fighting on the left of Arundel. He came into camp on Sunday afternoon after three or four very active and exciting days, during which, I am glad to record, he ever took the broadest view of the scope of his duties, and was available as a surgeon to the wounded of any corps in any place throughout a most exacting time.

Captain Hopkins went out with the 100 men under Captain Moor (W.A.), who left at daylight on Thursday, 22nd, in order to form part of the small flying column under the command of Colonel Henderson. He was with Moor's men all day, and spent the night with them on the kopje where they bivouacked. There were no casualties that day, and, therefore, surgical skill was not in demand. On Friday Captain Hopkins took part in the general advance of the flying column, and divided his time between the Australians and the Imperial troops. A few cases came under his hands, and late in the day he got in contact with some of the Victorian Second Contingent, and went to the head-quarters which Colonel Price had established at the farm known as Mooifontein. On Saturday morning he rode to the front with a patrol of the Second Contingent, and the business of a long, heavy day was entered upon. First, Captain Hopkins was called upon to attend a wounded corporal of the Inniskillings who had been shot through both hips, and was in a bad way. This

poor fellow Captain Hopkins, assisted by one of the wounded man's comrades, got some little distance to the rear, there to await an ambulance expected from Arundel, and which was making a slow passage to the scene of operations. Soon afterwards an officer of the Inniskillings, shot through the wrist, was attended to by the Victorian surgeon. That there were more casualties in front was known, for three of the Eastern Province Horse lay dead on the kopje from which the wounded corporal had been carried.

It was half-past four before the ambulance at last arrived, and shortly afterwards Hopkins was accosted by the commanding officer, Colonel Henderson, who said, "I want you to go to the kopje held by the West Ridings, who have suffered a good deal. You'll probably be fired upon, but do the best you can. If you do not succeed in getting our wounded now, we shall have to leave them, as we are retiring." It was a particularly hot corner into which the ambulance, preceded by Captain Hopkins, now went. And, to make matters worse, the ambulance waggon was distinguished as such only by one of those ridiculously small red crosses on the tilt which fade out of sight a hundred yards off. It bore no flag, and the Boers were quite open to take it for an ammunition or other supply waggon. Indeed, in a similar vehicle the Boers carry their Vickers-Maxim. Our surgeon improvised a white flag with his water-proof sheet, and the Boers respected the sign of peace and humanity.

Seven of the West Riding wounded were rescued, some from the front of the kopje, right under the enemy's fire, and the post was occupied by Lieutenant Umpherville only so long as the ambulance men were at work, for it had by this time ceased to be tenable. Indeed, at one stage it was a question of whether the combatants should not retire first, but Captain Hopkins pointed out that our "white flag morality" might thus be compromised, as the enemy would say that we used an ambulance to cover a retirement. The force of this view was promptly recognised, and the ambulance got well clear before the post was vacated. On the way back Hopkins was told of a man whose horse had been shot under him, and who was believed to be lying wounded some little distance to the left and rear of the kopje round which the fight had raged. The brave surgeon went, under fire, in search of the man, and called to him several times, but, although the soldier was uninjured and lay close by, he did not give any reply, and afterwards made his own way to the base. On returning, Captain Hopkins picked up the wounded corporal of Inniskillings, who had been left lying by the side of the track; but, as darkness had now fallen, the man's position was only discoverable because he had the *nous* to strike matches from

time to time to make known his whereabouts. Rain had begun to fall heavily, and the poor fellow was drenched to the skin.

The waggon being fully laden with the known wounded—eight in all—there began a miserable journey, in the inky darkness and under torrents of rain, towards the British head-quarters. The Portuguese drivers of the ambulance mules were very intelligent, and did good work, but it was now obvious that the whole party would have to spend the night out. Hopkins got as far south as he could, in order to be free at daylight from Boer investigations, and the possible impounding of the less seriously wounded. The drivers then took turns to hold the mules, and an anxious and miserable night was passed in the rain and darkness. Some of the wounded suffered a great deal from wet, cold, and lack of nourishment. Daylight saw the waggon once more on the road, and a few hours later the wearied party reached Elandsfontein, a farm where the western division, including the Victorian Second Contingent, had concentrated. There they found safety, refreshment, and comfort.

It had been a very trying experience to all concerned, but throughout it all the sunny good nature and cheerfulness of Captain Hopkins was not the least of the sustaining factors, and all are grateful to him for his efforts. The wounded went on to Arundel later in the day. Hopkins complained of nobody, made excuses for all, but he did deplore the lack of bush lore—the failure of common sense he might call it—in consequence of which our "coo-ee" provoked no response from wayfarers who were getting to the rear in the dark, and who were so suspicious of the Boers that they elected to disregard the bush call of Australia. The surgeon was not a whit the worse for his long outing and trying experience. Apparently on that Sunday morning the ambulance got away just in time, for the combatants in rear had to give way before a final rush of the enemy, and when daylight broke they were in full occupancy of the southernmost kopje commanding the stretch of plain on which the ambulance had remained at the halt during the long and dreary night.

A curious incident is reported in connection with the wounding of the Inniskilling corporal who was brought in by Captain Hopkins's ambulance. As he lay helpless on the ground he was "interviewed" by the triumphant Boer who had brought him down, and the corporal observed that his foeman was armed with one of our Lee-Metford magazine rifles—evidently plunder of the battlefield. It is understood that the Boer explained to the wounded man that the bullet which wrought the mischief was a British one, and that he seemed to find a grim satisfaction in that knowledge. But I do not

know the whole of this story, and a simple, trustful correspondent had to be always on his guard against the camp liar, whose name is legion.

Particularly skilful were our men becoming in the art of "drawing fire." Even the non-military mind will, I suppose, understand what this means, yet an explanation may not be wholly redundant. At times it is necessary that a commanding officer should know whether a particular position, or part of a position, is occupied by the enemy. In order to resolve doubts, parties of men, varying in strength from a couple to a hundred, may be sent forward to "draw the enemy's fire." Sometimes the wily foe, lying ensconced in a kopje, does not think proper to be drawn easily. He will allow a few men to almost ride over him, and still lie low. His business is to lure a larger body on, and then, from his own vantage point, riddle it with lead. We had learned all these things, and the Australians had lately used some clever countermoves. By one of these the Boer had been "drawn" so often that he began to recognise it. The credit of the idea belongs to Westralia. Two men would ride quietly, and seemingly with the utmost confidence in their movements, towards the position to be examined. Then suddenly they would look up, affect to see the enemy, and, sharply wheeling their horses, gallop off like men completely surprised and terribly frightened. If there were Boers in that position the chances were ten to one they would regard themselves as seen, and that their bullets would come whistling after the galloping horsemen. "Drawing fire" is ticklish work at best. The men sent to do it—and Australians got a very large share of it—know precisely what it may mean for them, and it is a wonder that so few got hit. Talking of stratagems reminds me that in front of Arundel the Boers had twice successfully worked the dodge of sending fifty or sixty men away at full gallop from the rear of a kopje they held, in order to induce the belief that the place was abandoned. When the British came on—as they are apt to do with undue precipitation—the 400 or 500 Boers still remaining gave them a hot reception.

CHAPTER LIII.

The Boers Fall Back—Advance of Clements's Column—Relief of Colesberg—A Great Day for an Emancipated Town.

The Australian Regiment arrived at Colesberg Junction on the 28th February. It enjoys the distinction of being the first British force to enter the place, to get that far north in the advance towards the southern frontier of the Free State, since

war broke out in South Africa. It was my good fortune to accompany the three companies of the regiment selected for the advance, and to divide with a *confrère* the honour of being the first correspondent at what had long been a stronghold of the Boers. On my arrival I promptly investigated a deserted house close to the railway station, and "commandeered" a room. Over the door, and covering the numerous epistolary efforts made by the departed enemy, I put up a placard bearing the words, "Melbourne Press Room." Having thus pegged out my claim, I appropriated a quire of note-paper, thoughtfully left by the Boers, who evidently expected me, and who had left absolutely nothing else of the least value. With a window-sill as a table, and box carried from the back yard as a chair, I at once put the Boer paper to its most suitable purpose—that of carrying to Melbourne readers the record of the important movements of the previous two days, movements which ultimately resulted in our occupancy of the junction.

What our guns in the fighting at the end of the previous week failed to accomplish, the moral effect of Cronje's overthrow and surrender has apparently done for us. On Saturday evening we had not gained one of the main positions for which we strove in three days' effort over a long stretch of country. On Sunday morning, however, the Boers were observed to be very busy. We did not know at the time what this activity meant, inclining rather to the view that it promised offensive operations against Arundel and Naauwpoort. When on Monday morning the positions were marked by a strange quiet, and later on our patrols reported that the Boers were not to be seen, we realised that the previous day's preparations were with a view to a trek to the rear, and that the enemy had quietly fallen back.

General Clements had received information which led him to the conclusion that the retirement was general, and a good day's patrolling done by the New South Wales Company, under Captain Legge, demonstrated that the conclusion was correct. Vaalkop and Kuilfontein, the two chief Boer strongholds, had been abandoned, and it was not until a party under Lieutenant Dove penetrated close up to Maeder's Farm (one of the western outposts before our retreat from Rensburg) was the enemy discovered. Not only was he then seen, but also felt. Dove had the nails shot from two fingers on his right hand, and got a bullet abrasion on the thigh; and, as his horse was shot, he had a narrow escape. Corporal M'Donald got him up into his saddle, and carried him off. Strange to say, another man escaped on Dove's horse, which was not seriously hurt, although it fell to the ground when a bullet struck it in the ear. Unfortunately, five of

Dove's men were cut off. Two were mortally wounded, and all made prisoners. It was late in the evening when the work of the New South Wales men was done, and the report presented. Valuable collateral evidence that the Boers had fallen back was obtained also by our Intelligence Department, and at once plans were made to take the fullest advantage of the changed conditions.

On Tuesday a reconnaissance in some force was ordered. Major Butcher, in charge of a full battery (six guns) of field artillery, and Captain M'Leish, in charge of the Victorian Mounted Rifles, and the (mounted) infantry unit, under Lieutenant Pendlebury, together with a squadron of the Inniskillings, were sent towards Rensburg. They had a lively and interesting morning, for the Boers had not all gone. From Taaibosch Hill, right across our right front, and the Boer favourite gun position, the enemy opened fire on us as the troops advanced. He threw a few shells, worked his Maxim with a savage vehemence for about ten minutes. and made things hot with his rifles. Our artillery happened, however, to be in a particularly serious mood that morning, and the whole six guns pounded Taaibosch Hill as probably it was never pounded before. I had never seen such a shelling. Fast and furious the guns worked, and apparently with effect. Taaisbosch has not been heard from since.

On the left, the enemy, who appeared to have changed his mind about the propriety of vacating Vaalkop, made a dash for it from the kopjes in rear. The Inniskillings saw the movement, and it was a race between them and the Boers as to who should get the position, the result being a win for the Inniskillings by about three lance lengths. The Boers didn't like the idea of being caught by cavalry in the open, and they scudded back across the plain over which they had come, leaving Vaalkop in our hands. After that it was comparatively plain sailing. Our men advanced with due caution, and the artillery subjected every suspicious kopje to a thorough searching of shrapnel. There was occasionally a little rifle fire in reply, but seemingly the enemy had shot his bolt, and we were soon before the last kopje in front of Rensburg. After the artillery had prepared the way. Captain M'Leish and his men charged the position at full gallop. But on surmounting the rising ground which had hidden Rensburg from view, they saw nothing more formidable than the backs of the flying foe, who were making off in a north-easterly direction, pursued by the Inniskillings, for the latter had fallen upon their left flank. Captain M'Leish and Lieutenant Pendlebury have the honour of being the first to ride in on the return to Rensburg.

The little reconnoitring force was regarded as sufficient to hold the position for the night, but orders were at once given for a general advance from Arundel at four o'clock next morning. At the uncanny hour of three, tents were struck, baggage packed in the dark, and the column got on the move. The Boers had destroyed part of the railway, and, although the railway corps had already repaired it, the line was not available for transports that morning. Happily, however, the way was clear, and the long line of mule and ox waggons made the journey without any noteworthy incident. The distance is only about eight miles, and by half-past nine the rear guard, composed of the South Australian Company, under Captain Howland, had seen the last waggon in, and closed up. It had been expected that the foe would at least attempt a little sniping on the right, but not a single shot was fired, and without the least trouble the reoccupancy of Rensburg was completed.

General Clements was not satisfied to rest upon the recapture of Rensburg. Further to the front our patrols had pushed that morning, and they had reached Plewman, a station rather more than half way to Colesberg Junction, before they came upon a Boer picket. The General decided to at once test the whole situation. Major Butcher's battery, both companies of the First Victorians, the New South Wales Company, a few Guides, a company of the Prince Alfred's Guards, and a squadron of Inniskillings, under our good friend and brave comrade, Captain Haig, formed the reconnoitring force, and marched out at ten o'clock. The journey to Plewman was over an open plain, and the work of the New South Wales Company, which acted as an advance guard, was then comparatively easy.

Very different was the progress beyond Plewman. The road runs close to the railway, through a series of defiles flanked by high and rocky kopjes, and it took the greater part of the mounted force to do what scouting was reasonably possible. Had the enemy chosen he could have given us a bad time as we marched through these defiles. His "Pom Pom" might have been used with terrible effect upon the Australian citizen soldiers, whom he is said to so much dislike. Seemingly he wasn't in the mood for it. At any rate, the column marched right through without encountering the least opposition, without firing or receiving a single shot.

In the reconnaissance on the 27th we had not a single casualty, and the advance of the column and the reconnaissance next day were both bloodless. The Boers may have lost a few men, and I am inclined to believe that at Taaibosch Hill more than a few. We knew from the examination of the kopjes near Kuilfontein and other of their now vacated posts

that in last week's fighting their loss was heavy. Immense graves appeared on these kopjes, and many a hard fighter had been laid to rest in them. The kopjes themselves were overlaid with shrapnel, and the great rocks, torn and shattered, bore witness to the fearful effects of our lyddite.

The Boer did so little damage to the Arundel-Rensburg railway that, as I have said, the necessary repairs were soon made, and the trains recommenced running. The station buildings and the telegraph line were left intact. The stores we abandoned were, no doubt, welcome to the enemy, and what he could not use he burned. In return, he left us a few tents—rather fancy things in colours, some of them—a few broken-down horses, a waggon he couldn't get on, and much dirt. There are cleaner people than the Boers. When they go campaigning their habits are almost as bad as those popularly attributed to the Esquimaux. Rensburg wanted a lot of cleaning up before it was a nice place to camp in. Beyond Rensburg, although the telegraph line suffered little damage, miles of railway had been wrecked, and half a dozen culverts blown up. It took some time to make the line good. The *débris* of a provision train which bolted from Rensburg some months previously, and ran down the incline to Plewman, was at this time still on and around the line, at the spot where the New Zealanders wrecked it to prevent the enemy from getting any advantage. There were the fragments of some sixteen trucks piled on the permanent way, and they took some shifting. Beyond this point we could see that the enemy had wrecked a large bridge on the line to Norval's Pont.

Both at Rensburg and at Colesberg Junction the Boers had left a number of messages for Tommy Atkins. They were written on walls and doorways, and inscribed on rough sheets of paper put into prominent places. Tommy was chided for his folly in fighting against the "belittled Boer;" he was told that "darkness was falling" for him, and that England, once great land of justice, was doomed. Occasionally the Boer put these little things in verse, and Tommy was told not to suppose that the enemy had been driven away. Late copies of the "Standard and Diggers' News," giving Boer accounts of the fighting, and reviling the Australians, also fell into our men's hands, and created a good deal of amusement.

The 28th February was a great day in the history of the pretty little town of Colesberg, nestling at the foot of the famous Cole's Kop. At about two o'clock General Clements and his staff rode into the town, and were received with acclamation by the loyal British population, who for weary months had lived under the domination of the invading and triumphant Boers. A red letter day, indeed, was it in

the history of Colesberg—a day when their prison doors were opened to captive Britishers who stuck to their posts and refused to accept the Boer rule; a day also when most of those who aided the invaders made a very hurried exit, while others who did not move fast enough fell into the hands of the soldiers of the Queen, to await the punishment which the law provides for the crime of sedition.

On Sunday night hundreds of Boer waggons passed through the town, and on Monday and Tuesday the final clearing off of the enemy took place. The joyful people of the town knew that the British were at hand, and the Union Jack and loyal insignia of all kinds were displayed everywhere in honour of the glad deliverance. Old and young of both sexes turned out into the tree-planted streets of the quaint hamlet, all in holiday attire, and General Clements and his escort had a right royal welcome. Not very long after their arrival a portion of Colonel Price's men (Second Contingent of Victorians) marched in from Maeder's Farm, and just a shade later the gallant Colonel himself. Victorians and Tasmanians were very much to the fore in what I may call the re-acquisition of Colesberg. Indeed, by them the town was held while I was there, and, believe me, it was in safe custody.

As I rode through the main street with a *confrère*, an aged lady, who sat on the stoep (verandah) in front of her house, feebly waving the Union Jack, called, in a trembling voice, strongly marked by the accent of bonnie Scotland, "Ah, how pleased I am to see you gentlemen the day; how pleased I am!" And, as the tears rolled down the dear old lady's cheeks, I am afraid the gracefulness of my response was marred by an emotion which it was hard for any man to conceal.

Colesberg had been for months the home of wives and families separated from refugee husbands, who were unable to learn anything about them, and what that day's deliverance meant to these people, kind-hearted readers can easily imagine. "Never," said an old resident to me that evening—"never was there such a day in Colesberg as this. We shall regard it as the most glorious in our history. God bless our Queen and her brave soldiers!" Colesberg had, indeed, suffered for its loyalty to the Empire. All honour to every man, woman, and child who thus helped to bear the burden of the Empire. Honour particularly to those who, by accidental shells and rifle discharges, fell innocent victims to our own bullets, for while throughout recent operations the town of Colesberg was not fired upon by the British, there were engagements of a sort which brought it under fire, and I was shown the place where a little child had been killed while playing in the street.

Amongst the refugees had been the Rev. Mr. Wilson, the rector here. It was his privilege to come back with the troops in the capacity of an acting military chaplain. And soon after the entry the people assembled in the Market Square, and there the good rector, restored once more to his charge, conducted a thanksgiving service. Into no religious service did a body of people ever enter more heartily. They were truly thankful, and they expressed the feelings of their hearts when they joined in the prayers and praise on that great occasion. A Te Deum was sung, and a memorable service closed with the singing of our national hymn, "God Save the Queen." On Sunday thanksgiving services were held in the churches, and loyal congregations once more expressed the gratitude they felt that the rule of the Boer had come to an end. By the way, some of the Dutch here were saying, prior to the re-establishment of British rule, that if their arms did not prevail, they would burn their Bibles!

The military authorities naturally had a busy time. The burden of the work fell upon Captain M'Ewan, the intelligence officer, and for hours, day after day, the work of examining the prisoners arrested went on. In the arrest of these prisoners the Victorians (Second Contingent) had some unusual experiences. They discharged their quasi-police duties with much skill and judgment, and, while they permitted no liberties, and dealt sternly with those who would only surrender to force, in no case was there any undue harshness or misuse of a new and strange authority. Our men know not only how to fight, but how, in the presence of the vanquished, to forbear. That is not invariably a characteristic of Tommy Atkins, as I have found in this campaign.

Our soldiers were the heroes of the day, and the good citizens could not do too much for them. After a great deal of roughing it on the kopjes, it may well be believed that the kind and homely hospitality extended to them was very much appreciated. Colesberg was a little short of supplies, but the best it had was at the disposal of our soldiers. The townspeople kept open house for them. You could, I believe, dispose of coin of the realm while the whisky lasted in the hotel bars, but meat and bread, tea and coffee, fruit and cigarettes—these things were had without the asking. The Boers had departed, and the overjoyed people felt that they could not be generous enough to celebrate the occasion. It is a pity that when the invaders left they did not carry off the flies. "We had no flies before the Boers came—the dirty creatures," said one boardinghouse-keeper to me as she made a valiant, but vain, fight against several millions of them who had supper with us one evening. She is a lady whom I have learned to respect and believe, and if proof of her state-

ment were needed she had only to point to the flies—point to them anywhere and everywhere, but more particularly in sugar basin, milk jug, and butter dish. It is a big thing to say, but, really, the flies at Colesberg were worse than those at Enslin.

CHAPTER LIV.

COLESBERG UNDER BOER RULE—HOW THE BRITISH FARED—MR. ROBERTSON'S "SHOW" ROOM—PARTIALITY OF BRITISH BULLETS.

At Colesberg we obtained definite information in regard to Captain Cameron, the Tasmanian commander, who had been taken prisoner by the Boers. It was learned that he had been wounded in the leg, and sent towards Bloemfontein. Thither also were sent three of the New South Wales men captured—Corporal J. E. Fraser, and Privates Goodsall and F. C. Brack. I regret to say that Private D. Fraser (brother of the prisoner) died of wounds received in Tuesday's action. His funeral took place at Colesberg on the 28th, and a pathetic sight it was, for all the young women in the town marched in procession behind the corpse and witnessed the interment. The burial service was conducted by the Rev. Mr. Craigg (Wesleyan), who had just regained his liberty after being held for a month a close prisoner by the invaders. To the losses of New South Wales I have to add Private S. M'Lellan, the fifth of the cut-off men, who died in the hospital with a bullet wound in his head. Major M'Williams (Westralian surgeon) came over from Rensburg to assist the local practitioner to operate, but the surgical treatment was too late, and the case ended fatally.

There were some remarkable meetings at Colesberg on the 28th. Colonel Price, for the first time during the campaign, met Captain M'Leish, one of his own officers at home, who commanded the Mounted Rifles company of the First Contingent. Here also some of the officers of the first and the second Victorian contingents met for the first time in South Africa. I saw Captains Jenkins and Sergeant and a number of the men. They were all looking well, and none the worse for the really gruelling work they had been doing. Colonel Price himself, who narrowly escaped being blown to pieces by a Boer shell during the fight on Saturday, was as vigorous as ever, and only anxious to get at the enemy once more. I fancy he had hoped to take part in a projected advance on Norval's Pont, but his duties required his return to Maeder's Farm, where the greater part of his command was. Under him, besides the Victorian Second Contingent, were the Uitenhage

(Port Elizabeth district) Volunteers, the Tasmanians, Grahamstown Volunteers, and some of Rimington's Guides. A good command, about 550 strong.

On the day after the entry of the British General Colesberg made a brave attempt to put on its ordinary business appearance once more. Stores, which had been for three months closed, were opened, and a brisk business was done, chiefly with the soldiers, in such goods as the Boers had left. One or two of the business people had got in supplies, which they managed to keep out of the way of the invaders, and those were quickly produced. Still, there is a general scarcity of food materials, and would be for some time. The two flour mills were now grinding whole meal, and a bakery was re-started on the 2nd March, when also the butchers resumed operations.

The only forage then was that hurried in during the few days prior to the Boer exodus by farmers who had reasons of their own for clearing out, and wanted a little hard cash. So a leading merchant, Mr. Weddell, explained as I got from him some unground mealies for my horse. His wife happened along, and I learned from this worthy couple that they had just re-opened for the first time for three months. I noticed that the lady, who spoke to me in a good Scotch dialect, addressed some of her servants in the most fluent Cape Dutch.

"You know the language, then ?" I observed.

"Not as well as our young people," was the reply.

"But you have not lost your native Scotch, madam," I said.

"Nor shall I while I live," was the answer, "Dutch as this place is."

It is astonishing how partial the Landdrost's officials were in their commandeering. Some people had wonderful escapes, and the municipal officials were specially exempted, so that the town work might go on without interruption. At first the Boers paid in cash for all the commandeered goods, but, after British proclamations became known, loyal men refused payment, and are expecting compensation in due course from the British authorities. One of the chief sufferers is a Mr. Macfarlane, who carries on business in hardware, coachbuilding, blacksmithing, etc. He point blank refused to obey Boer orders, and was 73 days in custody. His store was virtually looted by the invaders, and his compensation will amount to a good round sum. Some citizens preserve their written orders to produce horse, saddle, and bridle at particular times, but these documents are much too common in that part of the colony to be of special value.

Those who had made themselves prominent in their advocacy of the British cause were, of course, marked by the Landdrost, and promptly locked up, while amongst the Kaffirs

the Boer reign of terror was cruel in the extreme. One of the citizens, Mr. Wilson, a law clerk, had committed the indiscretion of writing to his brother in another part of the colony, and he expressed his opinion rather freely about the invaders. He entrusted the letter to one who turned out to be a Boer spy, and next morning Wilson found himself added to the detainees in the hands of the enemy.

I learned from Mr. Macfarlane, Mr. Wilson, and others, that, beyond detention at the court-house, the British who were made prisoners suffered no indignity, although they were occasionally told that if they murmured they would be put in irons. Their friends were allowed to send food to them, and they were sometimes allowed to see a newspaper—of right views! How easy it was to get into prison people soon learnt.

"I understand that you said you didn't believe that telegram posted at the court-house?" a Boer official would say to some sceptical person; "if you don't mind, in you'll go."

It was no unusual thing to put a man in gaol for a week or a fortnight, *pour encourager les autres*. Now that this was all over, the sufferers foregathered in the streets and compared experiences.

During the Boer occupancy two out of the three hotels were compulsorily closed, and the third did business only while supplies lasted. The citizens had experienced a lengthened period of compulsory teetotalism, and I was surprised to hear men say that they didn't like it. There was now a partial resumption of business, and certain of the compulsory abstainers were very merry for a couple of days. But, as martial law had been proclaimed, and men in uniform could not be served, the business in grog was not extensive. People rubbed along in a wonderfully happy way on tea and coffee, and on grapes which had not been subjected to either pressure or fermentation before reaching the lips of man.

Everything was getting into its usual place again, and the people appreciated what is meant by freedom. While the Boers were there they were not allowed to go outside the town. As soon as they could, a bevy of fine-looking girls, mounted on bicycles, gaily decorated with the red, white, and blue, celebrated their restoration to liberty by a run along the railway track to Colesberg Junction. I could quite understand that their enjoyment was real. The Church of England choir practice was resumed after an interval of over three months, and there was a great merry-making afterwards in honour of the great deliverance.

After the Boers had left Colesberg there was a general desire that the British commander should be informed. Who was willing to carry the message? The mission was not

without peril, because Master Boer might have thought proper to return, in which case the messenger would fare badly. If the Boers caught him, the result would have been decidedly disagreeable ; and, on the other hand, if he were in the hands of the British when the Boers returned, he might be shot for giving false information. Mr. Main, a hardy old Scotchman, undertook to carry the message, and did so. His chief peril was from the British lances, which were advanced so closely to his body that he had hardly "room enough" to explain his errand. A curious reception for a good, loyal man to get, no doubt the messenger thought ; but such is the fortune of war. All honour to Mr. Main for the gallant discharge of a delicate and dangerous duty.

It is beyond doubt that many of the Dutch who took up arms against us are exceedingly sorry for themselves to-day. But I am afraid that they get scant sympathy from the South African Britishers, for in the hour of their triumph they showed little forbearance, not to speak of generosity. And they were fully warned of the consequences of their acts.

"I had reasoned with one man, a neighbour," said a leading citizen to me, "and had persuaded myself that he would not join the rebels. But one morning I saw him kissing his wife at the door of his house, and, as he had a rifle slung over his back, I knew what was happening. Even then I made one last appeal to his reason. It was quite futile, and he went off to join the Boers in the kopjes. On Monday I saw that man again, and he said to me, in a tone I am not likely to forget, 'Oh, I wish I had taken your advice ; I wish I had taken your advice ! What am I to do ?' He cleared off with the retreating Boer column."

No doubt there are many such cases. Some of the rebels decided to remain behind. A whole family was arrested on the 2nd. The father and two sons, people in most comfortable circumstances, freely admitted that they had fought against us. They would go no further, and, when the invaders retired, returned to their farms, and there quietly awaited the arresting British patrol.

The "show" room at Colesberg in those days, as probably it is now, is at the residence of Mr. Robert Robertson, a stalwart son of Scotland, robust alike in body and mind, although a man in advanced life, and a citizen of Colesberg for over thirty years. Mr. Robertson's comfortable house, where I drank early morning coffee with him, is situated in the south-west portion of the town, and during the state of siege he realised that it was unpleasantly close to Cole's Kop. All kinds of experiences did the family have. No fewer than three shells fell within the premises, and rifle bullets have marked the back walls in a hundred places. The most note-

worthy shell is that which made—by which I mean smashed—the "show" room.

The apartment is situated in a wing at right angles to the main building, and is occupied by one of Mr. Robertson's sons. At about 11 o'clock in the forenoon, fortunately at a period when the room was vacant, a shell from Cole's Kop passed through the outer wall a little above the ceiling, and right over the bed. The missile crashed through the ceiling, and seems to have burst between it and the floor. A great slab of lath and plaster was torn away, and distributed itself over the bed and floor, and there was a rain of shrapnel which must have made a room about 10 feet by 12 feet a very hot place to stand in.

The dressing-table was partially wrecked, but, as the mirror escaped, Mr. Robertson is saved the "seven years' bad luck" which everybody knows befalls a family in whose abode a looking-glass is broken. A young lady who accompanied me in my visit to the "show" room assured me that this ancient superstition was quite as much believed in at Colesberg as it is in other places. The washstand was smashed by the shrapnel, and the ware broken into a thousand fragments. Other articles of furniture were demolished, and the shrapnel lay everywhere, for Mr. Robertson had made it a point to leave the room absolutely undisturbed. I examined the bed, and found that the counterpane had not been perforated. Had a person been sleeping in the bed at the time he might have escaped without injury. Just might. There is not enough gold in Australia to induce me to take his chance.

One shell came into the Kindergarten, a building at that time employed as a hospital, and fell harmlessly on the floor. Had it exploded there would have been a sorry tale to tell. As it was, the sick, and the ladies attending them, were badly startled, but that was the worst of it. Another shell burst in a recess near the house of the Field Cornet who commandeered the people of Colesberg, and made a bit of a mess. A flying Boer got a fragment of shrapnel in his leg on that occasion, and I have not heard that the loyalists went into mourning for him. Many of the buildings standing on the east side of the main street—that is to say, facing Cole's Kop—bear the mark of British bullets, and the southerly portions occasionally came under the fire of our Maxims from a hill near Cole's Kop.

Just outside the public school I picked up a fragment of a lyddite shell, and realised that a very handsome building had had a very narrow escape. Remembering that our men tried to avoid firing into Colesberg, it is remarkable how many missiles got in; but, on the other hand, the Boers swarmed in the rocky kopjes right on the western edge of the

place, and firing upon them meant, incidentally, that bullets would come into Colesberg. It is astonishing that they did not cause a great deal more damage than they did.

Two non-combatants were killed and one wounded. A man who was standing inside the door of the local doctor's residence, there awaiting a certificate that he was medically unfit to give service to the Boers, was hit by a bullet and killed. So curiously are the decrees of fate worked out. The second victim was a little coloured girl, killed by a bullet in the market square, just in front of the town hall. A coloured man was shot in the arm, and that completes the tale of the citizens' casualties.

Two of the Boer fighting men, while in the town, were hit under noteworthy circumstances. A party of them were walking together, singing a hymn, when a British bullet killed one man and wounded a second. Had this happened to a party of revellers singing a lewd song it would possibly have been called a judgment.

While chatting to my courteous Boer escort when returning from the Boer laager at Jasfontein, they affected to despise lyddite. But they are not likely to forget the damage done by a lyddite shell to their chief gun position at Schietberg, south-east of Colesberg. The enemy had prepared quite an extensive fort, and disposed sand-bags about it, so that every emergency appeared to be provided for. Then came the lyddite shell. The gun itself had a remarkable escape, but I am told it took the Boers weary weeks to get their fort into something like its old condition. I have no doubt that the Boers there had a great dread of lyddite.

"They used to scud away off the kopjes," a resident said to me; "and if your Lancers had but followed up then, they would have routed them. Somehow, while the firing was going on, hardly a Boer remained in the kopjes. They were fearfully afraid of the guns."

While the lyddite was being fired the fumes made life in Colesberg unpleasant for everybody, but this may be passed over as a mere temporary inconvenience. The town ranger and sanitary officer, Mr. Kenper, tells me that a much more serious nuisance was caused by the dirty habits of the men in laager all round the town.

Besides being afraid of the lyddite, there were periods when the Boers were terribly afraid of each other. They were distributed over the kopjes, and on more than one occasion they received each other's fire. On the night of our retreat from Rensburg the Boers had the jumps very badly. One party of them got on to our advanced position in order to watch the British, and assure themselves that we were actually going. A party in rear thought that their comrades in front were the

British, opened fire, and killed several. The like mistakes were occurring so frequently that an officer was sent round over the kopjes to warn the Boers against such mistakes. Before he could complete the round he was killed by a rifle discharge from his own men, a victim of the very mistake he was seeking to rectify.

One of the rougher class of Boers thought he had done rather a clever thing when he brought in an inscribed wooden slab which he had taken from the hillside grave of a British soldier. With ghoulish glee he showed this trophy to quite a number of people, and evidently he was bent on keeping it as a curio. The circumstance became known to Mrs. Porter, a loyal Englishwoman, who conducts a boarding-house in the town.

"Tell him," she said to a friend of the Boer, "that when our people come I'll make him walk all the way out, at the point of a bayonet, to put that board back."

Evidently the hunter after relics thought that prudence would best serve his turn, for next day the board mysteriously reappeared in its old position.

Talking of these grave inscriptions, I saw a curious one near Colesberg. Kindly hands had buried one of the unknown, and I read over the grave only the pathetically simple words, "One of the Wilts." Which one? somebody might ask. To the heart of a fond mother, sister, or wife, perhaps, the answer may be fraught with sad importance; but to the kind hearts who gave hurried interment to a perhaps long overlooked body, the most possible in identity was, apparently, "One of the Wilts."

CHAPTER LV.

How the Troops were Distributed—A Story of Treachery—More About Colesberg.

The Australian Regiment and the Second Victorian Contingent were now closer together than they had ever before been during the campaign. The two Victorian and the New South Wales company of the first comers were now at Colesberg Junction, three miles from the town; while just outside Colesberg the two companies committed to the care of Colonel Price were in bivouac. It was quite a fortnight since these two companies had seen their tents; they were understood to be at Rensburg, where also were the tents of the Victorians who were helping to hold the Junction; therefore all the men from our colony were having an extended experience of the open air. In such weather, too! Night after night we had heavy rain, and a water-proof sheet of the best is, at most, a

mere amelioration. Fortunately, the nights were fairly warm, but lying on the open veldt in the rain is distinctly disagreeable, be the temperature what you like.

Up to the 3rd March the main column, under General Clements, had not moved up from Rensburg, but was expected next day. The three companies at Colesberg Junction were then, under Captain M'Leish, furnishing night pickets for the kopje on the front and flanks of the position, and were also patrolling the country lying between the new base and Norval's Pont. Through some bad arrangements, our men were left for a considerable time without rations or forage. Captain M'Leish managed to get hold of some sheep, and succeeded in feeding his men. But it was a difficult thing, indeed, to feed the horses. A few bags of bran had been overlooked by the Boers. For long this was all available, and the veldt grass was hardly yet perceptible. Small quantities of hay and corn were obtained after much anxious searching, and the lean period was tided over. While it lasted the men accepted the situation with great good humour and forbearance.

New South Wales and Victoria, in some of their relations, did not agree as fully as federalists would wish. But in the field, and especially when there are hardships and short commons, the citizen soldiers of the two colonies are comrades in that true and best sense which men get to understand when they share their scanty rations, and vie with each other in mutual acts of kindness and consideration. The men of the two senior colonies worked splendidly together at Colesberg Junction.

The South Australian Company was still at Rensburg with the baggage and a few details of the other companies. The Western Australians had been sent to occupy our old post at Jasfontein. The *locale* of the Tasmanians, who were on a special mission, under Captain Hamilton (Inniskillings), was a point beyond Reitfontein, and about three miles from Orange River. Like the Second Victorians, the "Tassies," as they are familiarly called, had been long separated from their tents, and were having plenty of hard work. The latest we heard then about their captured commander, Captain Cameron, was that, when the Boers descended on him, he fought to the last. He used all his ammunition, then the butt of his rifle, and finally his fists. The Boers are credited with the observation that Cameron is the bravest man they ever met. If they really said that, it atones for much of their lying, for, as I have had occasion to say before, a braver man than Cameron does not walk the earth.

Major C. D. W. Rankin, of Queensland, was at this stage attached to the Australian Regiment, and, as next in seniority to Colonel Hoad, became second in command. The new-

comer had but lately arrived in South Africa, and is on the permanent staff of the Queensland force. He is a fine-looking Scotchman, and his appointment helped to emphasise the federal character of the regiment. New Zealand is the only Australasian colony which was not represented in it. In reply to a cable message from Mr. M'Lean, the Victorian Premier, Colonel Hoad intimated that he would be glad of three more subalterns; other vacancies were, it was announced, to be filled by attaching, "for instruction in mounted infantry," several British officers. Note who were to be the instructors and who the instructed. Really this campaign has helped to turn quite a number of old notions topsy-turvy. As a matter of fact the British officers expected did not come.

The Second Contingent was decidedly tired. Its hard gruelling time after the departure from Hanover Road it is not likely to forget, and it had plenty of work still in hand. After seeing the "details" for the night furnished by the Victorians at the Junction, I rode one afternoon to Colesberg in time to see Lieutenant Norton start with a strong patrol on a night's work in front of the kopjes. The gallant lads of the Second Contingent looked very soldier-like, and fit for any fortune that the war might bring. Officers and men not actually on duty at the outposts took advantage of the warm afternoon sun to dry their wet clothes and bedding, and no body of men could be capable of a better effort to make the best of circumstances.

At this time Colonel Price was away from the contingent. On Thursday morning I rode across country from Colesberg to Rensburg in order to get a letter censored and posted. What was my surprise to find Colonel Price at head-quarters. He had been ordered in from Maeder's Farm the same morning, and, so far, had been kept at Rensburg.

Meanwhile Captain Jenkins was the senior Victorian with the comparative new-comers, who were included in the command of Major M'Cracken, R.A. Some of the officers had already become fairly well known at Colesberg, where the work of obtaining supplies tried even the business acumen of Captain Sergeant.

In connection with the cutting off of a party of five New South Wales men on the 26th February serious statements were being made in and around Colesberg. Poor Fraser, who died from his wounds, was said to have told Mrs. Wilson, the honorary head of the hospital staff in the town, that the Boers had fired upon them after they had surrendered. This statement went to the New South Wales Company, then at Colesberg Junction, and made them very angry.

"My men," remarked Captain Legge, "are saying that they'll take no more Boer prisoners."

This was significant enough, and apparently the men meant it. Under the circumstances, I spent some time in investigating the matter, and ascertained from Mrs. Wilson that neither to her nor to any of the hospital staff—and she questioned them all—did Fraser make the statement attributed to him. Later on I found that the charge of treachery was apparently traceable to a statement alleged to have been made by Private Goodsall, one of the prisoners. Goodsall is said to have told Mr. Highfield, of Colesberg, that the Boers fired upon them after the Australians had thrown down their arms, seeing that they were surrounded, and that resistance was hopeless. Goodsall himself was, of course, unavailable to me, and the whole evidence of the charge of treachery rested upon what Mr. Highfield tells me.

Explanations and misapprehensions are possible. What is certain is that the Boers failed to give reasonably early aid to the two wounded men. They tore Corporal Fraser away from his almost dying brother, and, although the encounter took place on Monday afternoon, it was nearly noon on Tuesday before the sufferers were brought into Colesberg. Public opinion in the town was decidedly adverse to the Boers in this matter. While I think it may be right, I am conscious that the Boer is not popular there, and it is said by some that a Russian doctor had the wounded men under his treatment before they were brought to Colesberg. I am not prepared to assume the *rôle* of apologist for the Boers, but, having in view the great difficulty of getting facts impartially stated, I often found it necessary, when declarations of bad conduct were made, to hold my judgment in reserve. Up to the present I have not learned what the facts of the episode really are.

I met at Colesberg a curious specimen of the now all but extinct Bushman. A being about 4 feet high, as black as black can be, and, although "older than Colesberg," so fresh-looking, hearty, and well that he might easily be taken for a man of thirty. The town was founded in 1830, therefore my Bushman goes back a long way. He is supposed to be nearly ninety years of age, and he promised to be at hand to meet me if I should revisit the place ten years hence. A merry old chap is the Bushman, and the fact that he is locally regarded as the last of the race gives him not the least concern or uneasiness. This "last man" ought to be melancholy, but he is not. He has forgotten his mother tongue, and has not met anybody for over fifty years who can speak it. He has not acquired English, but speaks good Cape Dutch—so I am told, for I hardly pretend to be an authority, deep and painful as my studies have been. For the rest, my Bushman eats tobacco with a wonderful relish, and pockets shillings with an avidity which shows that, whatever his

views on the subject of the gold standard may be, he is not, in private life, a bigoted monometallist.

On Thursday, after a good deal of hard going and many hours in the saddle, I was grateful indeed to a citizen who conducted me to a great swimming-bath, one of Colesberg's memorials of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. A magnificent bath it is (originally intended for a reservoir), and bountifully fed by continuous running from a spring of the clearest water I have ever seen. I had the place all to myself on that afternoon, and I enjoyed a swim in the 14 feet of water. A rare bath indeed! While the Boers were in possession of the town they made the bath-house a sort of laager, and had our shells been directed towards the Diamond Jubilee Memorial, a good many of the enemy would have suffered. As it was, they used the bath with comparative impunity, chiefly as a place to wash their clothes, and ordinary citizens gave it the go-by. The other Jubilee Memorial, by the way, consists of a handsome lamp pedestal in the Market Square. Strange to say, although bullets struck all round, not one of the four lamps was hit, and the pedestal, like the public baths, is absolutely uninjured.

An interesting place in Colesberg is at the rear of the handsome octagonal building owned by the Dutch Reformed Church, and said to have cost £30,000. It is a small schoolroom, used for the accommodation of poor children, and in it the rebel colonists had the secret meetings which led to an invitation being sent to the Free State Government. Remarkable enough people these rebels are. Some appear to have staked their all upon the issue, to have freely risked lives and property in whole-hearted espousal of what was called the Federalists' cause—*i.e.*, that of the two Dutch Republics. One may be opposed to these people and yet entertain a great deal of respect for them. But there are canny rebels who sought to make their property sure while sending sons and brothers to fight against the British, relying upon lip-loyalty to escape trouble. Some of these our intelligence officer placed on his little list; others were put under lock and key.

The Free Staters would not have come to Colesberg at all were it not for some of these people. About 800 names were appended to the invitation sent, and the signatories promised their active support in the event of troops being sent along. When the Free Staters arrived they were joined by about 120 men! All sorts of excuses were made by the others, but some of them came in later on, when the Boers were apparently making progress, and the British not doing so well. There are time-servers in South Africa, as there are in other parts of the world, and the conditions have been especially favourable for the growth and expansion of the genus.

CHAPTER LVI.

Our Dead on Pink Hill—They Had Not Been Buried—Funeral Sunday—Last Honours to Brave Comrades.

"I am told that the bodies of your men killed at Pink Hill are still unburied." This was the surprising and unpleasant announcement made by an officer of the Wilts who met Surgeon-Captain Hopkins and myself when, about noon on Saturday, the 3rd March, we rode into Colesberg. I had made that morning a round of the widely separated posts at which portions of the Australian Regiment and the Second Victorian Contingent had been placed. At Colesberg Junction I had met Hopkins, and we came into the town together, intending to enjoy for a few hours a rest to which we both considered ourselves entitled. Need I say that the programme of bathing and refreshment which we had promised ourselves was peremptorily altered.

The Wilts officer had been "told;" he did not actually know, and he further informed us that his regiment had been refused permission to make an investigation. The reason for the refusal was a sound military one, for although we were in occupation of Colesberg, and it was generally believed that the kopjes round about Hobkirk's Farm, standing at the western extremity of Pink Hill, had been abandoned by the enemy, there was no absolute certainty on the point. Pink Hill, moreover, lay quite four miles beyond our outposts.

Hopkins and I talked the matter over, and decided that it was our duty to test the rumour, and examine the hill upon which five of our gallant comrades had met a soldier's death. We waited long enough only to feed and rest our already weary horses, and early in the afternoon we rode round the foot of Cole's Kop, and made a direct course for Pink Hill.

When we started neither of us knew of an outpost on the road, and four miles out we were challenged by a group (four men) of the Victorian Second Contingent. Where were our passes? We had none. The orders were to allow nobody to proceed who was not supplied with a pass. We explained our purpose, and Captain Hopkins pointed to the red cross on his sleeve. I also alluded to the circumstance that we were unarmed. The outpost men were not satisfied. Did they not know Captain Hopkins? They had heard of him, and it seems that they had also heard of me. This hearsay knowledge was, however, sufficient. We were warned to be back before the outpost was changed for the night, and allowed to go on. I felt that the men were conscious of some abatement of the rigour of duty, and freely expressed what I felt.

But my companion and I undertook to accept the full responsibility, and we proceeded.

It was to both of us a strange ride, for we came from what had been the enemy's stronghold into the country where had been established, and held chiefly by Australians, the camps at the Windmill and at the Kloof. We passed over the plain where the New South Wales Company and the Victorians, under Captain M'Leish, had stood under the Boer artillery fire, while acting as supports to our guns, on the fateful 12th of February. We saw in the distance Bastard's Nek, and other observation posts gallantly held by our men, until the Boers, by sheer force of numbers, drove them back, killing Sergeant Grant and Private Willson. And there, right before us, on the other side of the wide stretch of veldt upon which we had entered, lay Pink Hill. Proud as we were of the splendid work done there by Victorians, to whose gallantry it is a monument which will last till the end of the world, it is natural that we recognised in Pink Hill a place of sad memories, and neither of us was in the mood for conversation.

Moreover, it was necessary to be continually on the *qui vive*, for this was still perilous ground, and just what might happen we did not know. We determined that, if the Boers cut us off, it would be because neither tactics nor horse speed could save us. But in the event of our getting into a tight place we counted upon the nature of our errand, the fact that Captain Hopkins wore the red cross, and the possibility of my successfully assuming the *rôle* of his orderly, to get us through. I may just as well say at this stage, once and for all, we saw no Boers, and were not in any way molested.

Fortunately, we knew on what part of the long and expansive hill upon which we finally entered that Major Eddy fell. We rode up the northern slope at a point where we could keep the suspected Hobkirk's Farm and its surroundings under occasional observation. Then we worked through the hill in a south-westerly direction, and examining the ground as we went, looked in vain for the mounds of earth or piles of stone which have become such a frequent and melancholy feature in the landscape of Cape Colony, the graves of soldiers who have fallen in action. The fears that the rumour we had heard were well grounded strengthened as we proceeded, yet we did not forget what a Boer officer had said to Sergeant Ahearn, when our ambulance was hurried away on the morning after the fight, "We are Christians as well as you, and we bury the dead."

Alas! we had not much further to look. There, on the spot where he had fallen, but partially covered by a few branches of foliage, lay the corpse of a soldier. We dismounted and approached. A single glance was sufficient to

convince both of us that it was the body of Major Eddy. Save for the scanty bit of foliage to which I have alluded the body was uncovered. The faithless creatures, who so impudently claimed credit for their Christianity, had signally failed to carry out a duty which they owed to common humanity. The remains of our gallant friend, deprived of boots, and with pockets turned out, lay there to testify that the Boer is capable of being, not only a treacherous liar, but also a mean thief. Beside the remains a pile of empty cartridge cases gave proof that the Major's rifle had done service against the foe.

Astonished as we were at a discovery which personally I had not expected to make, I am not sure that either Captain Hopkins or I, even in our moment of indignation, was afflicted by an unqualified sorrow. After all, we reasoned, there was some satisfaction in knowing that good British hands would perform the last offices to the remains of our gallant comrade, and that the solemn service of the Church to which he belonged would be recited before kind mother earth took him to her embrace. We determined that these things should be done, and that within twenty-four hours, even if we had to ask a clergyman to forego his church service for it. But there was neither time to talk nor to search for other bodies, for the sun was fast sinking, and we were four miles beyond the outposts. Sadly we turned our faces once more towards Colesberg. Reluctantly, too, for it seemed unkind that we should still leave the body of our poor friend out on that lonely hill. Cruel, indeed, are the exigencies of war. A smart gallop across the veldt brought us once more to the outpost. We were passed in, and, just as darkness fell, we re-entered Colesberg.

Call it a special providence, call it what you will, it is surely remarkable that, following our speculations *en route* as to whom we could get to conduct the burial service, the very first man we met on our return to the town was Chaplain Wray, of the Victorian Second Contingent. There he stood at the door of a boarding-house where we alighted from our horses, just as though he knew we wanted him and awaited our request. The sad story was told, and Wray did not hesitate a moment.

"I had fixed a service for to-morrow," he said, "but I'll go whenever you like."

The first thing next morning, we preferred, but it was necessary to organise a burial party, with which should be associated a search party, for we had determined to thoroughly search the hill and ascertain whether any other of our comrades lay unburied. Unfortunately, the Victorians of the Australian Regiment were moving on from the Junction at

daylight in the morning, and their services were out of the question. The men of the Second Contingent were nearer, but they also were moving at daylight.

Ultimately, however, Chaplain Wray was able to arrange with Captain Jenkins to make a sergeant and four men available at nine o'clock on the following (Sunday) morning. Captain Hopkins had to return to a far-off post, where the Western Australians were supporting a battery of artillery. It was doubtful whether he could come in, and, as a matter of fact, he was quite unable to. Other necessary arrangements were made during the evening, and proper authority obtained for the sad work of the following day.

The party which started from Colesberg, about ten o'clock on Sunday morning, consisted of nine all told. There were Chaplain Wray, who had already conducted a communion service at the Anglican Church, Captain Rudduck (veterinary surgeon), Sergeant Warden, and Privates Bristow, Davies, Makin, and Carter, all of the Victorian Second Contingent. The other two were press correspondents, one of these myself.

The combatants carried arms, for we did not feel much confidence in the good faith of the Boers that morning, and we took with us picks and spades, kindly provided by Mr. Robert Robertson, of Colesberg. Throughout the proceedings of that sad day we were ever on the alert for the enemy, and our first duty, on nearing Pink Hill, was to establish a sentry in such a position that he could command a good view of the country over which the Boers must approach should they seek to disturb us at our work.

Chaplain Wray had brought with him his full clerical vestments, and these he wore while reading the burial service over the body of Major Eddy. That he was deeply affected may be well understood when I say that he and our dead officer were schoolmates. But of that party no one was not deeply moved. We placed a winding sheet over the body, and the mound which those Victorian soldiers raised over it is one which will long be a prominent landmark on Pink Hill. Great stones bind the base of that mound, and, with smaller stones, a cross is described on the face of it, where also some lovely bulbous plants, found close by, were arranged in symmetrical order. A head-board, suitably inscribed, now marks the spot. In his full regimentals, on the spot where, facing the foe, he died a soldier's death, lies Major George Eddy. Honour to his memory, peace to his ashes.

While the citizen soldiers were working at the grave of Major Eddy, the four non-combatants proceeded to search Pink Hill for other bodies. Within a few minutes, and not more than 100 yards from the now rapidly rising mound, it was my fortune to discover, and to at once recognise, the

body of Lieutenant Powell, of South Australia, another of those who fell on that fateful 12th of February. Like his senior, the brave son of the sister colony—held by some to have been made the victim of white flag treachery—lay where he had fallen. As usual, our "Christian" foes had deprived the corpse of its boots, and turned out the dead officer's pockets.

Poor Powell! One of the quietest, most useful, and most popular men in the Australian Regiment. A few branches had been placed upon him, but that was the only attempt at sepulture. Near him lay an envelope addressed to himself—a trifle which the Boers had discarded when they robbed the dead. And just at his head was the little bulwark of stone which he had erected, and behind which he had found cover, until that fatal moment, when, a white flag being reported, he rose to ascertain what it meant, and was immediately killed by a Boer bullet. Five yards away I picked up his helmet, and with it covered the well-remembered face, which, even in death, bore traces of that smile which in life marked the countenance of one of the most good-humoured men it was ever my fortune to meet. Lieutenant Powell, during a trying period, had been our transport officer. A better there could not have been, and South Australia must place his name upon the scroll of its honoured dead.

It was necessary to seek further, and the burial party was not yet ready for its second task. Chaplain Wray and I continued our examination, working from the stone sconces made by our men when they took up their position on Pink Hill along the line of their retirement. We had not searched long before we each found a body. Under a little bush, to which he had been carried when mortally wounded, the chaplain came upon the remains of Corporal A. Ross, of the Victorian Infantry unit. The dead man's name in his helmet established his identity beyond doubt. The conditions were as usual—boots removed, pockets turned out. Close beside him lay part of the Melbourne *Weekly Times* of recent date, and over the body a few branches had been thrown.

It was not so easy to identify the next body, which I found, almost in the same line, a few hundred yards further towards the southern slope of the hill. It was that of a Victorian Mounted Rifleman, and the braces were stamped "V.M.R. 55." Subsequent inquiry has satisfied me that this was the corpse of Private C. E. Williams, who fell during the retirement. In this case the corpse had been completely wrapped in a bright-coloured blanket, as though prepared for burial. As usual, the boots had been removed. It is alike unnecessary and undesirable to dwell further on the sad details. On that melancholy Sunday we found also the body of one other

Victorian, and although no identification card was discovered, a silver watch in the pocket—strangely missed by the Boers—passed into the possession of the chaplain. A few days afterwards my suspicion was confirmed, and we knew that the body was that of my good and respected friend and comrade, Private T. Stock, of Sandford. I had a conversation with his brother, Private D. Stock, and he readily identified the watch found in the dead soldier's pocket. His relatives and many friends in the Casterton, Coleraine, and Sandford districts will have a melancholy satisfaction in the knowledge that the corpse of this brave young man, who fell when fighting for the Empire, was decently interred and accorded Christian burial.

In addition, on that memorable Sunday, we came upon the body of Corporal Coleman, 6th (Inniskilling) Dragoons, whose identification card proclaimed who he was, and also upon the corpse of "one of the Wilts," to apply once more the pathetic phrase used in an earlier chapter, for there was nothing to show, except the number, 2501, which may be sufficient to indicate who he was to the regimental Sergeant-Major. Six bodies in addition to that of Major Eddy, seven in all, which the Boers had left unburied.

Plainly the task of the burial party was a much heavier one than had been anticipated. Yet it was one to which they addressed themselves readily. Chaplain Wray reassumed his robes, and a general service was recited over the six yet unburied. A little later the chaplain had his tunic off, like the rest of us, and the day's work was not completed until nearly five o'clock. For, of course, we buried them all, the Imperial soldiers as tenderly as those who went from our own fair land and gave their lives to the cause of the Empire.

On Pink Hill we found other graves, some made by British hands, we could see, others possibly made by Boers. But the seven mounds raised by Australians there on that Sunday bear witness to the thoroughness with which they did their sad, sad work. It may be that there were other bodies lying on the hill and on the veldt around us, and I suggested to a leading townsman that a Colesberg party should be organised to have completed such work of humanity as it was not given to us to do.

A wearied party it was that reached Colesberg on Sunday evening, and broke their long fast on the frugal fare obtainable. But every man was satisfied that no day of his life had been better spent than that which he devoted to the interment of brave comrades who had died at the post of duty. And to apply the poetic figure of a well-known verse, little they'll reck if they let them sleep on in the graves where Britons have laid them!

CHAPTER LVII.

Refugees Come Back—British Rule Again in Colesberg—Only the Rebels Downcast.

While I was away on other duty, on Saturday afternoon, the funeral took place of the late Private M'Clennan, of New South Wales, the fine young fellow who was shot during a reconnaissance from Rensburg several days before, and who fell into the hands of the Boers. M'Clennan was a son of the gymnastic instructor at the Victoria Barracks, Sydney, and Mrs. Wilson, the honorary matron of the hospital, who, assisted by Miss Reardon, nursed him to the end, sent a letter to the bereaved mother. "I would dearly have loved to see the boy recover," said Mrs. Wilson, whose motherly interest in her charge was alike striking and admirable. The brave lad had the very smallest chance of recovery, as Surgeon M'Williams stated at the outset, and his death was no surprise. There was a large attendance at the funeral, the New South Wales Company being represented by nearly its full strength, and a great many of the townspeople following the remains to the grave. The body was interred close beside that of poor Fraser, whose funeral took place on the afternoon of the British reoccupation, and who was mortally wounded side by side with M'Clennan.

"Ah, it's a pleasant thing indeed to sit on your own stoep again," remarked a Colesberg resident, with whom I smoked a pipe on Sunday evening. He was one of the returned refugees, and had just got back to the wife and family he had left three months before. And as he stretched his legs on the fine, roomy verandah—even the English call it a stoep—he looked the enjoyment he felt at having once more got back to his own.

His case was typical of many. Each day, since the British occupation, had seen the return of refugee heads of households, most of whom, on going away, had left their families in the Boer-invaded and partially rebellious town. "Ah, here is the postmaster." "Have you seen Mr. So and So? He has just come back." These were the remarks one heard in the newly-emancipated Colesberg. It was a season of handshaking, and of more affectionate greetings, of general rejoicings and satisfaction.

"General," I say, but perhaps that is hardly the word. Over at the court-house, not far from my temporary lodging, a score of gloomy-looking men were suffering the first pains of the penalty which follows unsuccessful rebellion. British soldiers, with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets, formed a cordon round the building, and the open door of the spacious

room, in which the prisoners smoked and complained, *pour passer le temps*, was carefully guarded.

"What will the Government do with us?" That was the question they asked themselves. Apparently they experienced a difficulty in answering it satisfactorily for themselves. Meanwhile the preliminary examinations were proceeding, and very soon the military would be rid of their unpleasant charges.

"If a 'ad ma wye, a'd tak 'em owt an' shoot 'em," one British Tommy remarked to me. Then, after some reflection, he added, "Time enough for 'vestigation afterwoods." The idea was not quite new. It was surprisingly popular in and around Colesberg. Mr. Harmsworth, the district magistrate, told me that where *prima facie* cases were made out the accused would be committed for trial, and handed over to the civil authority. In the other cases would there be an immediate discharge? Well, that was not so certain. Martial law prevailed here, and the detention of suspected persons, against whom there is little direct evidence, is sometimes justified as a measure of military expediency. *Habeas corpus* doesn't get an outside—by which I mean an inside—chance when a district is placed under martial law.

The intelligence officer at Colesberg (Captain M'Ewan) was a man with *nous* enough to see that, after a town had undergone Boer martial rule for three months, it was entitled to the right to breathe. Therefore our martial law was applied lightly, and the townspeople moved about very much as they liked. The challenging and pass-showing, which were the rule at De Aar, Orange River, and Naauwpoort, were not such marked features at Colesberg. The folks hardly felt the British restrictions, and Union Jack spelt liberty. So felt the young ladies who decorated their bicycle wheels with the red, white, and blue; so also the good matron, whose table-covers, serviettes, and, it is whispered, even her pillow-cases, declared her affection for the Union Jack.

Everybody is supposed to believe that President Kruger was born in Colesberg. One person, a visitor like myself, even went the length of showing me the house where the auspicious event occurred—one of those tiny, stone cottages which form "town houses" for the Boer farmers, and to which they come with their families on Saturday evenings, in readiness for Sunday's services. But I had soon to become horribly incredulous in that country. The newspaper correspondent who doesn't will easily acquire a lot of fairy lore. As a matter of fact, Oom Paul was not born in the town. His birthplace is a locality known as Bulhoek, quite twenty miles from it, but still part of what, in the old days especially, was called the Colesberg district. I am sorry I

had not time to visit Bulhoek, as General Clements insisted upon pushing on, quite irrespective of my views on the subject; but this paragraph should sufficiently explain why I, being in Colesberg, failed to describe the room where the great man "first saw the light," as I think the proper phrase is, or to state how overcome by emotion I was as I stood in it and contemplated the wall-paper.

Amongst the Colesberg people who particularly rejoiced at the entry of the British troops were the Kaffirs. These people had a fearful time under Boer rule. The men were flogged and ridden down by the Dutch warriors, whose religion does not appear to include recognition of black folks in the human family. Every Kaffir you met in Colesberg after the emancipation was ornamented with a rosette of red, white, and blue, and the young Kaffir dandies—those who stylishly raise their hats when the Kaffir belles pass them in the street—sported loyal ribbons, and prided themselves upon the exactness of their military salute. *Apropos* of saluting, one morning a short-sighted officer, wearing glasses, rode down the street, and, with a great air of condescension, elaborately returned a salute—which wasn't given!

One heard a good many stories at Colesberg of how the Boers had treated some of the wounded British who fell into their tender hands. I was informed, on the best authority, that there was a pronounced difference between the way in which our wounded and theirs were dealt with in the hospital. Little luxuries would from time to time come for the Dutchmen; the tantalised British were permitted only to watch their foes enjoying them. Corporal Hennessy, of the V.M.R., who spent some time in a Dutch hospital at Kroonstadt, told me it was different there, that British and Dutch fared precisely alike, and there was nothing but kindness.

In reference to the unfortunate two companies of Wilts captured on the night of our retreat from Rensburg, it is said that wounded men were forced to march through the main street, and that the blood ran from them as they moved. Another story, however, is that wounded Wilts positively refused to accept the aid of the ambulance, declaring that they were all right, although the blood ran down from their wounds. In view of these conflicting explanations of the same fact, my readers are in as good a position to form an opinion as I am. Ordinarily our wounded are supposed to have been treated well by the enemy. I had reason, while in Colesberg, to at least doubt it, but after experience showed that the supposition was, on the whole, correct.

A telegram from my Cape Town agent, handed to me on Saturday night, demonstrated that the through wire was again at work. The postmaster had come back, but was

not yet quite ready for business, for he had no stamps nor any of his necessary equipment. More important still, the bank manager, Mr. M'Lear (whose acquaintance I made at Naauwpoort), had returned, and folks who had got to the end of their resources were particularly glad to see him. Extensive orders were now going from the loyal storekeepers to Port Elizabeth, and the general scarcity would soon be forgotten in the enjoyment of abundance.

Curiously enough, I met here Captain Massey, formerly an officer of the 2nd Battalion Victorian Infantry. He lived for several years in Malvern, he told me, and owns property in several of the Melbourne suburbs. He was serving as Captain in the First City Volunteers, a useful colonial corps, which had been a good deal associated with the Victorian Second Contingent. In Private Goodluck, of the Uitenhage Volunteers, another colonial corps, I found a former resident of Launceston, Tasmania. The fortune of war had brought him into close relations with the Tasmanian Company of the Australian Regiment, and he was able to talk "Tassie" in whatever leisure he could snatch from an always hard round of duty.

On Saturday there was a good deal of excitement caused by the sale, by public auction, of goods abandoned by those who doubted their own loyalty so much that they did not wait for the coming of the British. In all such cases the goods left behind were sold by order of the British authorities. A press correspondent, one who had seen service in both the army and the navy, undertook the duty of auctioneer, and won the plaudits of the multitude, although, for the most part, "things went cheap." Almost anything could be bought at that sale except grog and matches. Even some soap was made available, for the supply in the stores had become exhausted. My suggestion that the Boers used all the soap was repudiated as a gross libel upon the habits of a great people.

CHAPTER LVIII.

Adventures of Westralians—Movements of the Australians—A Sharp Engagement.

During a bit of scouting on Sunday morning a party of four Westralians made a mistake, and had an adventure. They observed a body of men, about fifteen, riding round the point of a kopje in front of them. Judging by the slouch hats—permitted to other corps, although withdrawn from the Australians—they mistook them for Prince Alfred's Guards. By and by the fifteen got on to a position on the kopje, and

opened such a smart fire that the Westralians quickly took in the situation. They were face to face with the Boers.

The patrol had the worst of the position, as well as being greatly outnumbered, so they at once galloped off. Private Baker, one of the party, was unfortunate enongh to get a bullet through his left thigh, but he rode on, and, with the help of two of his comrades, reached our camp, Private Ashmore was the fourth man, and he had his horse shot under him. Ashmore had not the slightest intention of being taken prisoner, and, dropping down behind a piece of cover, he fixed his bayonet, and got to work with his rifle. The glint of steel was too much for the gentle Boers, and they simply dared not come into the open and attempt to take the intrepid Australian. He bravely held his own until the enemy became tired of pot-shooting, and galloped off.

Three hours after his comrades, Ashmore, who had to tramp a considerable distance, came safely into camp, and was heartily congratulated upon his plucky conduct, which deserves rank amongst the heroic incidents of the war. With fifteen armed men against you, the temptation to surrender is considerable. That Ashmore did not yield to it shows that he is made of exceptionally gritty material.

A fine piece of work is placed to the credit of Private Birch, another Westralian. Birch, who is a quiet-looking young fellow, was on his way from Colesberg to the place where his company had been camped, when he met a couple of Kaffirs. "Where are your passes ?" he asked, and, as the travellers could not produce any, he ordered them along before him as his prisoners. But the trio had not proceeded far when they met a couple of stalwart men, who turned out to be Germans, and who were equally unable to produce passes.

Birch promptly took them also in charge, and, in answer to their objections, alighted from his horse, and ordered them forward at the point of his rifle. Bayonet he had none, for he had lost it in some rough work on the previous day. Two or three times the Germans showed signs of rebellion, but Birch kept them in hand, and, although darkness had fallen, drove them before him to a farm which had been the headquarters of his company—only to find that his comrades had moved on !

It was rather a tight place to be in, but the undaunted Birch did not falter. He got his prisoners into a sort of barn, tied up his horse, and mounted guard for the night. Wearily the hours passed, but the dawn came at last, and the tired Westralian, who had turned to give some attention to his horse, suddenly realised that the Germans had fled. They had found a hole in the wall opposite the door of the barn, and made their exit without stopping to say "Good-morning."

Birch was after them like a greyhound, and caught sight of the pair making across a kopje. It took seven shots from his rifle to convince the fugitives that the Australian meant business. Then they surrendered at discretion. Meanwhile, the Kaffirs kept quiet, were even helpful, and Birch marched the whole four safely into camp. Here he was warmly and deservedly complimented by Major King King, the officer commanding the post. After examination, the Kaffirs were released, but the Germans gave so poor an account of themselves that they were sent into Colesberg on suspicion of being Boer spies. For a trying piece of single-handed, plucky work it would be hard to beat that which brought into prominence that Westralian private. The regiment was proud of him.

On the 5th March the Second Victorians went on to Reitfontein, near where the Tasmanians were. There they bivouacked for several days at a point not far south of a traffic bridge across the Orange River. Meanwhile the Australians moved steadily along the line towards Norval's Pont, and head-quarters were established at Achtertang, two stations beyond Colesberg Junction. The Westralians were, on the same date, associated with some artillery on what is known as Blues's Hill, on the right of the position, the New South Wales Company and the Victorians (both units) were right in the front, just beyond Achtertang, and the South Australians were at Joubert's Siding, one (railway) station in front of Colesberg Junction.

On Saturday, the 3rd, Captain Jenkins's company took part in a reconnaissance towards Orange River, beyond Reitfontein, acting as an escort for a battery of artillery. The enemy was found on our side of the river, and the artillery got the range. They made no stand, but fled across Colesberg Bridge. Our men were not permitted to pursue, and it was surmised that the bridge was undermined. Some of the Victorians came under fire, but nobody was hit. It is thought that the Boers were less fortunate, and that they suffered severely from our shells as they crossed the bridge. The approach to the latter is over fairly even country, and the enemy abandoned their last good defensive position on the British side of the river.

On the 4th the First Victorians and Westralians were engaged in a reconnaissance towards Norval's Pont. They came rather suddenly upon about a hundred Boers, and there was a sharp but decisive engagement. Eight of the enemy were left dead on the field ; the remainder made good their escape. Our men buried the dead during the afternoon. The Australians did not come off scathless. Private Byers, one of Captain Moor's men, was shot through the left thigh ; and Private Walker, another Westralian, was cut off by the

enemy. The fight was quickly over, and, for once in a way, the British were in numerical superiority. The Boers had a fairly good position, and it says much for the success of our dispositions that our loss was not greater.

At this stage it was that Colonel Price, who had been separated from his command for a short period, had to take a few days' rest at Colesberg, in order to get over the effects of an injury to his ribs, caused by a nasty fall while crossing a donga (gully) in the dark. Colonel Hoad was for several days very much with the General, and accompanied the staff on several visitations to different parts of the position. His command, although distributed, was now, with the exception of the Tasmanians, all on the same front, and he kept in touch with each of the companies. I was glad, at Joubert's Siding, to again meet Lieutenant Lilley, who was convalescent, and almost as strong as ever.

Quartermaster-Sergeant Paul, with Private Barber and Mr. Tilley, an Adelaide photographer, had an adventure at night while riding from Blues's Hill into Colesberg Junction. They were fired upon, it is believed, by Boers, but it may have been by our own outposts, and did a smart gallop across the veldt before they got out of range. These little things are incidental to war, but as sometimes men are killed in them, they are decidedly disagreeable. Personally, I am not sure which I dreaded the most when travelling at night, as I occasionally had to—a Boer or a British outpost. If the latter happens to be composed of men suffering from the "jumps" they are apt to fire on sight, and challenge afterwards. Australians don't suffer very much from the "jumps," therefore the following outpost incident must not be misunderstood. Private Bristow, of the Second Contingent, was on duty, and just towards dawn he challenged a large, moving object close to his feet. There was no answer, and he repeated the challenge loudly. Still no answer, and Bristow, who is a crack shot, fired. Investigation showed that he had shot an ostrich. These birds can digest most things, but hot bullets do not agree with them any more than they do with human beings, and that ostrich was a dead bird.

CHAPTER LIX.

A General Advance—More Smart Work—On to Norval's Pont—Lieutenant Holmes Holds the Front—First on to the Broken Bridge.

The whole of the main body, except a small garrison, advanced from Rensburg on Sunday, and went on to Joubert's Crossing, moving on next day to Achtertang (the fork behind), a picturesque railway point nearly half way between Colesberg Junction and the Pont. There were still, in the direct front, the two Victorian first units and the New South Wales Company. The Westralians were on the right front, and far on the left were the Second Victorians and Tasmanians. This order was preserved throughout.

Achtertang is the most lovely spot I found in South Africa. A beautiful camping ground, free of dust, lies in rear of a pass between the hills through which the railway is carried on the side of huge hills, here forming the west bank of the Dorlogspoort River. That stream, well replenished by recent rains, furnished an abundance of water for man and beast, and its banks are marked by beautifully green, umbrageous trees, which were a delight, indeed, for the wearied and sun-tanned soldiers. Eager as we were to get on and be done with out task, we hoped that there would be a decent interval of rest at Achtertang. But we were only permitted two days' respite, and such opportunities as they afforded to busy men to bathe in the delicious river.

On Wednesday evening the order came that we were to move at daylight next morning, and on Thursday we came on to Van Zyk's Siding. The staff made their head-quarters at the magnificent farm of Mr. Van Zyk, said to be a wealthy man; a few regiments, fortunate enough to bring them in, pitched their tents; the remainder bivouacked. The Australian Regiment was here represented only by the South Australian Company, a few details of the other companies, and the regimental staff, for all the others were away on the front and flanks.

The advance on to the river was satisfactorily completed by the artillery, the Inniskillings, and the Australian troops, under Captain M'Leish. The operations of the few previous days had cleared the way, and the enemy made little or no stand on this side of the stream.

The *modus operandi* of the advanced guard was much as usual. First the artillery cleared the hills, and then the mounted men occupied the evacuated positions. There were some smart exchanges of rifle fire, but this did not do much damage on either side, and the work was accomplished without casualties.

A smart piece of work was done on Tuesday by Sergeant Hennessy, V.M.R., who had with him Privates Hicks, Robertson, and M'Donald, also of Captain M'Leish's company. The mission of these men was to work down to the river as far as they could and endeavour to ascertain to what extent the bridge had been damaged. For a couple of loud reports earlier in the day made it pretty clear that dynamitards had done their work, and that the bridge had been blown up.

Hennessy and his party went about their business with much tact and skill. They reached a point within half a mile of the bridge, and were then able to make useful observations before the Boers discovered their presence. Then they got it hot and strong from some hundreds of rifles, and the intrepid patrol had a hard gallop for their lives. Happily, all got back to the outpost camp, about three miles from the river, without a scratch.

Major Butcher warmly complimented the Victorians upon their really admirable work, and it is understood that he brought it under the notice of the General. Upon the information received from Hennessy a further forward movement was decided upon. The advance guard moved on, and the British bank of the Orange River at Norval's Pont passed once more into the keeping of British hands.

Major Butcher at once took steps to make good his position. His camp lay about three miles from the river, under shelter of, and close to, a defile between a range of hills, from the top of which the river and Norval's Pont village could be easily seen. Advance posts were established in the village and on the kopje to the right. The left is open country right back to the hills, behind which Butcher's camp was. Lieutenant Holmes, who had proved himself a very fine officer, was placed in charge of the picket on the hill, and part of his business was to see that the Boers did not, during the night, do further damage to the bridge than was already done, two 150 feet spans having been destroyed by dynamite.

It was a decidedly ticklish job, for the enemy was in force on the other side of the stream, where they had positions so good that they were regarded by some as practically invulnerable. Holmes waited until darkness had fallen, and then moved a portion of his force along the railway line towards the bridge. The Orange was in partial flood, and the noise caused by the waters rushing through the *débris* of the broken bridge fair into the centre of the river prevented his hearing with sufficient accuracy unless he went on to the bridge. This he did, with some of his men, the horses of the party being held in the rear, and all had an anxious night. Some of the patrol was so disposed that it was in a position to fire volleys at any who approached from

the other side, and the Boers would have fared badly had they attempted any further mischief.

As it happened, the night passed without any adventure, and daylight saw Holmes and his men back once more into the shelter of the kopje, which perfectly commanded the approach to the bridge from the enemy's side. Holmes, while expecting relief at sunset, wondered as many a picket commander has wondered before him—why his men and horses were left for an unconscionably long time without food. It is only too frequently the lot of those upon whom the most dangerous and trying work devolves to have to do it on empty stomachs. Not because the rations may not be sent, but because somebody has failed in the work of transport.

I had the satisfaction of being the first war correspondent to reach what had long been the objective of this column—Norval's Pont. But I cannot claim to be the first in. That honour belongs equally to Major Butcher, Captain M'Leish, Captain Legge, and officers and men who were with them on the 7th, when the advance party rode into the village, and took their sniping from the enemy posted on the north bank of the river. And Lieutenant Holmes (N.S.W.) enjoys the distinction of being the first man on the bridge which spans, or, rather, did span, the river.

It was fearfully hot on that hill, and there was no shade to be found anywhere in the vicinity. On my passage across to the kopje, I had to take my share of the sniping, therefore, preferring as I did the heat of the sun to the bullets of the Boer, I elected to write my press letter that day in the full glare of the former, but in good cover from the latter.

From the time we reached Colesberg Junction our advance had been steadily persistent and rapid. With a speed which is simply astonishing to the lay mind, the Engineers Railway Corps had made the necessary repairs to the line, and renewed the bridge broken by the Boer, right up to that situated a little to the rear of Van Zyk's Siding, about eight miles south of Norval's Pont. There a large, three-span bridge crossing Dorlogspoort River, a tributary of the Orange, had been almost completely destroyed, and it was several days before it could be replaced. After that the trains had a clear run to the river. Meanwhile, transport beyond the bridge was confined to what could be carried by road, and the column was living in the open, tents and other dispensable gear being left behind.

Apart from the military, there was just one resident at Norval's Pont village. He was an Englishman, named Jeffries, and was caretaker of a house owned by Mr. Henry Norval, who has establishments on both sides of the river, and was held a prisoner in the hands of the Boers. Jeffries,

an old man, had been twice made a prisoner by the enemy. Why they had left him was a puzzle to everybody. He told us that the rank and file of the Boers were quite unacquainted with the fact that Ladysmith and Kimberley had been relieved, and that Cronje had surrendered. They were exceedingly angry at being ordered to retire, for they could not understand the reason of it. The information they received from their favourite organ, the *Standard and Diggers' News*, was a continuous record of Boer successes and British disasters. For instance, I read in this valuable "news"-paper that, in the affair at Rensburg, when the Prince Alfred's Guards, under Captain Lascelles, lost ten men (killed, wounded, and prisoners), the British loss was "two hundred killed and wounded, and a number of prisoners." The "news" provided by the Boer official organ is always of the right official complexion. I have never been willing to admit that "all men are liars," but there are strong *prima facie* reasons for believing that all Boer officials prevaricate with the truth.

CHAPTER LX.

Value of Australian Work—The General's Idea of It—Disgraceful Looting.

It speaks volumes for the value placed upon the Victorian first units—the companies under Captain M'Leish and Lieutenant Pendlebury—that for the advance from Colesberg Junction northward they were particularly asked for by Major Butcher, the dashing artillery officer placed in charge of the movement. Butcher made a great name for himself by his work with this column. The bulk of the fighting while we were at Arundel, and during the re-advance, was under his direction. He almost invariably had the Victorians with him, frequently also the New South Wales men. Major Butcher knows when he is well and faithfully served, and I am sure that, if I could induce him to put in writing his opinion of the Australians, we should have a document which would make Victorians especially proud.

This is not a record of mere idle compliments, and there is no need to discount a single word I say on the subject of the Victorians' work. It has been marked at every stage by dash and a high intelligence. Officers, non-commissioned officers, and men have proved not only that they can be as gallant in the face of the enemy as the best British troops, but a good deal more useful than the bulk of them, and quite as useful as any. A higher intelligence than the average Tommy can pretend to, and the possession of which by our citizen

... Australians," said an experie
he did not then know he was talking
really the finest troops we've got for th
there were about thirty thousand of t
this sentiment to be common to all sav
the Imperial officers. In their case a
which we had occasional evidence, pre
the truth even to themselves.

What General Clements thought is pe
by his orders. What place did he give

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to the delight of the censor—the New S
the advanced guard, Victorians watch
flank, and Westralians an equally men.
South Australians were a rear guard, v
column, and did work on that precarious
of which even I, whose business it is to
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General Clements is common to all Generals under whom Australians have served in the South Africa campaign.

With a natural desire to make their columns as strong as possible, General officers commanding were eager to get hold of fresh troops arriving at Cape Town. Amongst these was a draft of 45 sent to make up the Tasmanian unit, the original strength of which was only 80. Captain Cameron having fallen into the hands of the Boers, Lieutenant Brown was now in command of the "Tassies," as they are affectionately called, and he especially asked Colonel Hoad to ensure that the new-comers joined his company. The Colonel was not a whit less desirous that they should, and the official wires having been pulled, it was expected that we would soon see the new-comers, but, alas! for the time, those wires were pulled in vain. It was not until after our arrival at Bloemfontein that the draft got to the front.

I regret to say that some disgraceful looting was done by British soldiers during our advance. The pretty cottage of an aged couple, named Joubert, was visited by the marauders, the furniture smashed, beds ripped up, the pictures broken, and little household nicknacks destroyed. The place was left a complete wreck. Captain Kendall, our veterinary surgeon, was sent with a small party to occupy the place and prevent further mischief. Another farm dwelling was similarly served, and it is said that both the householders are good, loyal British subjects.

General Clements was understood to have ordered the fullest inquiry, so that the perpetrators of these disgraceful outrages might be speedily brought to the punishment they so richly deserved. One Imperial soldier was the other day sentenced to ninety-four days' imprisonment and the loss of a stripe for an act of petty theft from a farm. At Enslin a poor devil got two years' penal servitude for being found asleep on his post. By the standard of these punishments, what would be a fair thing to do to the heartless creatures who —in one case in the presence of the owners—wantonly wrecked their homes? The Boers had respected the property of these people, and it was left for the British to heartlessly destroy it. The record of such atrocities will fill every decent man of our race with a just anger and indignation, tinged with shame at the reflection that our flag was so sullied by some of those who served under it.

It is an open secret which corps is to blame, but it is not so easy to fix the responsibility upon particular men. What steps the General actually took to find the perpetrators I do not know. Nor does anybody else appear to know. I am audacious enough to doubt, therefore, whether the disgrac

ful proceedings were viewed with a sufficient severity by the officer responsible for the doings of the column.

At a later stage, however, when residents of the district were, for military reasons, required to leave their homes, steps were taken to protect their property—that is to say, protect it against our men. Here is the text of a notice posted on the front door of a farm-house. "Notice.—This house and the effects, being the property of a loyal British subject, kindly leave the same unmolested. The owner, Mr. P. Venter, has been sent by the military authorities away from our fighting line. (Signed) J. S. HAMILTON, Captain VI. Dragoons, and commanding Rimington Guides." Some people may possibly read out of, or into, this the suggestion that property which is not that of a loyal British subject is at the mercy of the soldiers. That was not the official intention, but it was an idea by no means unpopular amongst all ranks during the campaign.

CHAPTER LXI.

SERGEANT HENNESSY SCORES AGAIN—ROYAL IRISH AND SOUTH AUSTRALIANS—HIS NAME IS NORVAL.

The night of the 8th was comparatively quiet at Norval's Pont, but was not without its adventures. Lieutenant Thorn, V.M.R., succeeded Lieutenant Holmes (N.S.W.) at sunset in the charge of the picket on the kopje to the right of Norval's Pont village. Following the programme of the previous night, he stationed a party on our end of the broken bridge. It consisted of Sergeant Hennessy and seven men, and had the effect of frustrating some scheme of the enemy.

When the party took up position the moon was shining with, under the circumstances, unpleasant brightness, and on the way to the bridge our men were subjected to a dropping fire, but nobody was hit. Towards midnight a number of Boers, who had crossed the river at some drift on the left, approached the bridge, but they were not smart enough for the vigilant and intrepid Hennessy. He reserved his fire until he knew it would be effective, and then let drive. One Boer was hit, and, it is supposed, killed. His companions, who turned and galloped off, managed to get him away. Our fire was not returned, but the crack of the rifles was the signal for a general pyrotechnic display all along the Boer position. Rockets were sent up, and blue lights burned, evidently as signals, and there appeared to be general commotion. No further attempt was made to approach the bridge, however, and Hennessy's party was withdrawn just before sunrise. Trains on the Free State side were numerous during the

night, and at dawn the Victorians perceived great activity in the Boer positions. It was surmised that the enemy had been reinforced.

Next morning the South Australian Company, under Captain Howland, advanced from the camp at Van Zyk's Siding to the extreme front at Norval's Pont. With them came the Royal Irish Regiment of infantry, and it was expected that their passage towards the river would be disputed. Less than two miles from the bridge is what is known as Droogespoort, a narrow pass between the hills into the open veldt, which stretches from their foot down to the water's edge.

On passing through the defile the company opened out into extended order, and the infantry extended as a support, for it was suspected that the Boers had placed artillery in position, and it was known that the ridges on the far side of the river were lined with riflemen within fairly easy range of whom our men would come when they had got about half way across the plain. No advance could have been more cautiously conducted, but the Boers lay low, and not a single shot was fired. Even the sniper was, for the time, at rest.

The South Australians re-formed, and dismounted in the partial cover of the outpost kopje, and the Royal Irish found a good position a little further on the right. Then came some hours of waiting, with horses saddled, and all in readiness for immediate action, in accordance with the way events should shape themselves. The troops had started at daylight, and reached their positions between 8 and 9 o'clock. But as the day advanced the sun became very trying, and all concerned had a very hot time. Meanwhile the General was not idle. On the previous night our four 5-inch guns had been brought up to the rear of Droogespoort, and Lieutenant Thorn's observations—most usefully and intelligently made—enabled us to ascertain pretty accurately the position of the Boer artillery. Although we sighted and prepared them, for some reason the guns did not open fire.

My personal experiences that morning were varied. We had had to sleep out at the Van Zyk camp, and rising at 3 a.m.—an operation I cordially detest—was a comparatively easy matter. Not so easy was it to pilot my horse on to the track running alongside the railway, and leading to the front. For I had known that a special river-crossing enterprise had been projected for the artillery and the mounted infantry under Captain M'Leish at daylight, and circumstances had compelled me to spend the night some miles in the rear. Well, before daylight I was at M'Leish's camp, and found—the horses in the lines, and all save the sentries asleep! The river-crossing order had been countermanded.

I am thankful to know that it was. Had the project been persisted in, Victorians and New South Wales men would have suffered terribly, and the sacrifice would have been quite useless. Time enough for our riflemen to make their dash when the artillery had finished the stiff piece of work before them. They had a lot to do, and it would take a few days to accomplish it. I got another hour's sleep on the veldt while waiting for the South Australians to come up, and, having watched them to their position, I accompanied Reuter's representative and that of the *Daily Mail*, both local men, on a visit to the farm of Mr. John Norval, a stout Britisher, who lives on the left bank of the Orange River.

A remarkable time, indeed, Mr. John Norval and his household have had. Norval is a member of a large family of the name, some of whom are Free State burghers. There are Scotch Norvals and Dutch Norvals, he told me, and he belongs to the former section. A hale, hearty man of sixty-six, Mr. John Norval is a thorough Britisher, and the owner of a fine property in the colony. His Lincoln sheep are a treat to see, and his pasture lands the finest I met with in South Africa.

When the Boers took possession, Norval and a son living at home were commandeered, and refused to obey. Later on the younger man took advantage of the opportunity afforded by the Boers to leave the district. The old man, his wife, and two daughters remained on the farm. There they were virtually prisoners, and were forbidden to go outside the limits of the property. Occasionally parties of the enemy made things unpleasant. But John Norval would stand no nonsense, and Boer rifles pointed at his head never caused him to even temporise with the enemy, whom he treated with scorn and defiance.

He and his wife both testify, however, to the application of Boer discipline. Norval formally complained to the commandant of a Boer who had stolen a pig from him, and the thief had to undergo six hours' pack-drill (carrying his saddle). Like punishment for two hours was imposed on another who used "a bad word" in the presence of a woman.

Mr. Norval is satisfied that the Boer officers always mean to deal fairly with people. He didn't like the foreigners in the laager established near him.

"These Germans—man, they can steal," he remarked.

"Are they worse than others?" I asked.

"Much worse than the Boers," was the answer.

It is remarkable that in no part of this district have I found any who have a good word to say for the German allies of the two Republics fighting against us.

"God has been good to us," exclaimed Mrs. Norval, fervently, *when told of* the house-wrecking and other vandalism so com-

mon throughout the northern districts of the colony, for with some small exceptions they escaped pillage, and the old gentleman was on the alert in order to secure payment for fodder summarily requisitioned by a British patrol. "Welcome to Our Heroes" is the inscription on a calico banner which hung in front of the house, and in the last resort I do not suppose that emancipated Norval made much fuss about his forage. My colleagues and I enjoyed a deliciously-served breakfast at Mrs. Norval's table, and, with keen appreciation, renewed our acquaintanceship with fresh milk and butter. Then we moved once more into the field of the Boer sniper.

CHAPTER LXII.

WITH SHOT AND SHELL—SEARCHING THE BOER POSITIONS—A REMARKABLE DAY—A BRAVE FOEMAN—SQUIRES SWIMS THE DARK STREAM.

The cannon search for any Boers who might chance to have gathered together on the north bank of the Orange River was opened at daylight on the 12th. Only those who rose at four o'clock, and made a rapid passage to the centre of operations, about four miles west of Norval's Pont Bridge, had the advantage of following them in detail, and seeing the work of our gunners. For although there were three regiments of infantry also engaged, and a proportion of the Victorian mounted troops, it was chiefly what is called a "gunner's job." At the opening we had in action two batteries of field and one of horse artillery. Later, on the same part of the position, two of the great 5-inch guns threw lyddite, and still later, from a position nearer Droogospoort Pass—that is to say, almost directly in front of Norval's Pont Bridge, the other two 5-inchers and a section of field artillery joined in the "search." Then we had three Maxims, and the infantry—Bedfords, Wilts, and Berkshires—had not come out without their rifles. They did some volley firing. I sat on the top of a kopje held by the infantry in the centre of the position, and watched the cannonade with the interest we all felt in its possibility of disclosure. If the Boers were in large numbers, surely, under such a heavy fire of lyddite and shrapnel as we brought to bear upon them, they would emerge from their fortresses, or, at least, do us the honour of bringing their guns into action. But they didn't.

I sat out that plugging for over four hours, and we never once heard from a piece of Boer artillery—not even a Pom Pom. The most they vouchsafed was some desultory rifle fire, which hurt nobody. Our effort to draw the Boer with-

out crossing the river was well conceived and smartly carried out, but it was none the less a flat failure.

Apparently the enemy had determined to keep back all his little surprises until we actually attempted to cross. That morning the infantry were down almost to the water's edge, but they could provoke nothing but snipers, and our men on the kopjes close by hardly made any pretence of lying in cover, although each had selected his head-stone—sinister word—in the event of the Boer opening fire in real earnest.

The Victorians were the only Australian representatives, and they only as escort to the guns. Captain M'Leish, with Lieutenant Pendlebury, took out thirty men of the original infantry unit, and supported Major Butcher's battery. Captain Jenkins, with whom were Captain Sergeant, and Lieutenants Bruce, Holdsworth, Anderson, Kirby, and Umphelby (jun.), had about 100 men supporting Major M'Cracken's guns. Their morning's work was interesting and mildly exciting, but quite without adventure.

They had come out to see the Boers scoot across the plains, harried by our artillery and rifle fire. They returned to camp for a combination of breakfast and lunch shortly after noon, doubting whether there were any Boers left in the Free State. Those who saw the shells falling on and around the hills, into farm-houses, and converting roads and plains into deposits for shrapnel and all manner of artillery abominations, might be pardoned for doubting that any human beings could live where such a damnable tornado raged.

There were a few noteworthy incidents. When the artillery fire was at its hottest, about nine o'clock, a Boer, laden with accoutrements of some kind, was observed quietly walking across our front from one kopje to another. The Maxims were turned on him, and many a Tommy emptied his magazine in his efforts to hit that adventurous man. But the brave fellow never even hurried his steps. If he were having an evening stroll in his garden he could not have proceeded more leisurely. He reached his destination, bowed to the astonished British riflemen, and disappeared—apparently without a scratch.

Two mounted men who tried to pass the front were not so fortunate. The fire was so hot that they sought refuge in a kopje half way across. But before they reached it both horses went down, and, I fancy, one man was killed or mortally wounded. The Maxims got the range of the points of the kopje at which the other might emerge, and riflemen lay in wait, while, from the way in which shells were dropped in rear of the kopje, I formed the opinion that they were persuaders to him to come out and get shot. But we did not see him again, and probably, if he escaped the shells, he snugly

lay low and waited for nightfall. Colonel Price, who rode with the General's staff during the morning, says that some shells were fired at the party by one of our own batteries. As the party were, of course, on our side of the river, the occurrence is certainly very remarkable. I am told that several cyclists were seen on the enemy's side, and that they showed temerity to their cost, but these I did not personally observe.

No doubt a great deal of damage was done by the shell fire. A farm-house on the left of the position was much battered and broken, and one on the right was ignited by the shell, and burned for a time. These places had, no doubt, been used by the Boers, and from them small parties emerged when they ceased to be tenable. For on the roads leading north clouds of dust denoted Boer activity, but just at what the enemy was employed was very much a matter of opinion—much varied opinion. For instance, a waggon moving north would not necessarily mean a trek that way. It might be—and that morning often was—an empty vehicle, probably returning to a base after delivering supplies. There was also activity on the railway line. That might mean running away, but there are other deductions possible. As an experienced officer remarked to me at the time, "We are going on very well. I only hope that won't mean our now doing some cursed, foolish thing, and sacrificing a lot of men."

The South Australian Company sent to our outpost, on the right of the broken bridge at Norval's Pont, were working in association with a half-battalion of the Royal Irish, under the command of Colonel Guinness (brother to the Crown Solicitor of Victoria), whose acquaintance I had great pleasure in making. The Royal Irish occupied the fixed posts, and the South Australians were kept busy patrolling.

On Friday night their patrol, under Sergeant Docherty, went along the river bank to the east, a distance of about eight miles—that is to say, they passed beyond Gideon's Drift, a little back from which Major King King's artillery and the Westralians were camped. Sergeant-Major Johnston, with a small party, watched a drift closer to the bridge, and Sergeant Swan patrolled the river bank westward, and kept touch with an outpost of the Bedfords, who guarded Droogospoort Pass. While the moonlight lasted the sniper was busy on the opposite bank of the river, but he did not hit anybody.

Howland's position was a much exposed one, but there was good cover not far off, behind which the mounted men could lie in peace, while our artillery was giving the Boer a due and sufficiently emphatic answer to any gun fire they might employ.

A number of pontoons were brought up by rail to within a few miles of the river, and the train was now able to run

right through to the Pont when required. I cannot sufficiently praise the work of the Royal Engineers Railway Corps. It is wonderful how quickly and well they worked. Quite an army of Kaffirs, most of them experienced in railway operations, were employed by the engineers between Rensburg and Norval's Pont, therefore dearth of labour did not affect the situation. The speedy repairing of the bridges and culverts was, however, a special triumph of brain, and we may all be proud of the skilled officers under whose directions the work was carried out. By the way, had the Boer been a little more fortunate at Arundel, he might have himself repaired the line. He was foolish enough, at the opening of the war, to break bridges and culverts in such numbers that he could not get his own supply trains much beyond Norval's Pont. Mr. John Norval told me that the Boer had projected renewal works. Likely enough he would have destroyed them again on retiring, to prevent our having the benefit.

The Boers crossed the Colesberg traffic bridge on the morning of the 11th, and had to be driven back by our artillery. They were not in considerable force, and their retirement was much more precipitate than their advance, a few rounds from the field guns doing all that was required. At eight o'clock in the evening a loud report was heard in the direction of the bridge, and it was suspected that the structure had been destroyed. Investigation proved that this was the case.

On the Thursday night a smart piece of work, likely to be specially mentioned, had been done by Lance-Corporal D. Squires, of the V.M.R. (First Contingent). It was desired to know something about the position in the vicinity of Stockerstrom's Drift, and a Kaffir boy volunteered to swim the river. Let the boy have every credit, but, at the time, he was not fully trusted by our people, and Squires undertook to go with him. They had to enter the stream, after the moon had set, at a point below the drift, and work their way up and across. They got close enough to the other bank to know that it was guarded, and even to hear the conversation of the Boers. The current was so strong that the men, both good swimmers, were nearly exhausted by this time, and they had to return.

Major Butcher warmly complimented Squires, who is a modest young fellow, and mercilessly discounts an achievement of which most men would feel very proud. The members of Captain M'Leish's company were all very keen on enterprises. Quartermaster-Sergeant Pierce, Corporal Malcolm, and others offered to cross the river, but there was no need for taking advantage of these offers. They are splendid evidence of the spirit of our men in the face of the most deadly peril—in my opinion, of almost certain death.

CHAPTER LXIII.

STARVING THE OUTPOSTS—INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES—"BRAVO, VICTORIANS!"

When I left the South Australian post on Saturday it was a little after one o'clock in the afternoon; and at that hour the men had not received their day's rations. As I did not meet the supply carts going out, it must have been well into the afternoon before the rations came. Nothing so surprised me, nor so much roused my anger, as the frequency with which men on the far posts were left without food. Theirs was the perilous work, the work making special demands on mind and body, and yet in only too many instances these men were partially starved. Why? Chiefly, I fancy, because the Army Service people are so much afraid that, by some chance, a man may get an extra ration. Therefore they create difficulties. In fact, they fiddle while the men starve.

Not only the men, but also the horses. These unfortunate animals were often worked quite beyond reason. I met a Westralian who was painfully leading in his horse, and with quite four miles between him and camp. He had had to keep up with the General's three mounts a day for over a week, and carry messages while the General was at head-quarters.

Horses, especially those on outposts, were sometimes worked with a quite unnecessary severity. And when, in addition, through somebody's bungling, there was no forage available when an opportunity came for feeding, the blunder expanded into a crime. Much is attributed to "the exigencies of the service" which properly belongs to bad management, as particularly these long fasts of men and horses within a few miles of ample stores of food. I talked much and with considerable loudness on this subject in those days, in the hope that somebody in sufficiently high authority might hear. It took a long time, but ultimately they heard.

Corporal M'Gillvray, one of the most capable men in the South Australian Company, has won a name for himself by his coolness under fire. M'Gillvray has a good pair of field glasses, and he does things with much deliberation. In the course of several "affairs of outposts" his procedure has been the same. He first carefully watches for a head or other part of the ordinarily well-hidden Boer. Then he takes leisurely aim, and after his fire is delivered, down goes the rifle and up the glasses to ascertain the effect. A careful, painstaking marksman, who never wastes a shot, is M'Gillvray, and a man absolutely fearless. His rifle has done a good deal of execution.

Private Warnes, a quiet-looking person, was orderly to Captain Howland. During the fighting at Berkshire Hill Warnes thought he would ascend the kopje held by the Souths, and ascertain if the men had anything to eat. Up he went, and as his head showed above the sky line the bullets rattled around him. Warnes kept steadily on, casually remarking, "It seems pretty hot up here." "Get down, you damned fool!" shouted a comrade, but it was not till an officer ordered him down that Warnes bowed his head to the Boer. He ascertained that the men were hungry, went back to the picket, and got leave to carry out food to them, carefully abstaining from any reference to the perils of doing so. Back through a rain of bullets he carried the men's rations, and escaped without a scratch. An unassuming man is Warnes, and he will, I hope, forgive me if I say that you wouldn't take him for a hero. Yet a better bit of human stuff it would be hard to find.

With the full concurrence and approval of Captain Howland, Colonel Hoad cabled to the Government of South Australia, asking that a Lieutenant's commission might be granted to Regimental Sergeant-Major Johnston. My readers may recollect that Johnston is the ex-officer of the Victorian forces who, when the first troops were sent from Australia, finding himself unable to go with the Victorians, volunteered to serve as a private with the South Australians. He was accepted, and proved his capacity so rapidly that he was made a Corporal before Howland's company embarked. On board the *Medic* he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant, and when the Australian Regiment was formed he became Regimental Sergeant-Major. He has done first-rate work throughout, and now holds the commission he honestly won.

In the original Victorian infantry unit a particular shortage of officers was felt. First Major Eddy was detached, owing to his becoming second in command of the regiment; then the fortune of war placed Captain M'Inerney and Lieutenant Tremearne *hors de combat*. Right on to Bloemfontein Lieutenant Pendlebury commanded and managed his company single-handed. It says much for the calibre of his non-commissioned officers, and for the way he worked them, that Pendlebury got on so remarkably well. Sergeant-Major Paul, who went out with the unit, was Regimental Quartermaster-Sergeant, with his hands quite full; therefore he was not giving service with the company. Lieutenant Pendlebury is, in many respects, an exceptional man. He uttered no complaints, but went about his work in his quiet, effective, business-like way, making the best of things as they were, and waiting for officers to turn up and give him a hand.

A word about his non-coms. In Sergeant-Major Coffey and Quartermaster-Sergeant Walker the once infantry unit has

two fine men, who know their work, and do it well. In the absence of officers, the four divisions of the company were commanded by Sergeants Buzzini, Lynch, Kech, and Miller, and they vied with each other in the successful management of their respective divisions. These men were doing officers' work, and it is just as well that the public should know it.

Miller was Farrier-sergeant as well as a division leader. A good non-com. of infantry, he is even more at home in mounted work. Sergeants Ordish and Everall—the latter being Saddler-sergeant as well as doing other duty—also helped materially to demonstrate how one officer with good non-coms. can manage a mounted unit, in which the proper complement of combatant officers is five, viz., a company leader and four division leaders.

As for Lieutenant Pendlebury himself, his chief trouble may be stated in his own words :—

"My difficulty was," he says, "in having to learn to ride. I had never been on a horse before it was decided that my company was to be mounted, and after my first attempt an officer remarked, 'You'll never ride.' But I stuck to the thing, and really there's not so much in it. I can ride all right now."

I happen to know that he can. Pendlebury is not the man to be disconcerted by trifles.

The farriers of the Australian Regiment, under the untiring Sergeant Punshon, were kept very busy in this district. Much of the country is hard and stony, and shoes wear out quickly —men's shoes as well as horseshoes. The supply was not always what it should have been, and horses suffered severely. There was an impression that Punshon never slept. Each morning saw some task begun in the case of the Village Blacksmith of lyrical fame, and each evening saw its close. Punshon went on day and night, and there was not a harder-worked man in the regiment. But that he does rest sometimes I can assert. I saw him taking a short spell one day, and he seemed quite ashamed of the fact that he wasn't working at that moment. A big, powerful man, whose brow was pretty well always "wet with honest sweat," Sergeant Punshon was the most obliging as well as one of the most useful individuals in the Australian Regiment.

One of our Inniskilling comrades had a curious adventure on the day of the advance to Colesberg Junction. He had, while scouting in advance, turned the point of a kopje, when he was suddenly confronted by three Boers, who covered him with their rifles. Visions of Pretoria rose before him, and the case seemed hopeless. "Look here," said one of the Boers after a decidedly awkward pause, "we don't want you. Perhaps you're as much sick of the game as we are. Go back

that way, or you'll meet another of our patrols. So long !" The grateful dragoon went back that "way," and at once, as in duty bound, reported what had occurred. But when a British patrol galloped forward, all they could see was the rear of the enemy, enveloped in a cloud of dust, a mile and a half away.

At this time we all regretted to hear of the death of Captain Grieve, of New South Wales, who was killed during General Roberts's advance into the Free State. Grieve had been placed in command of a company of the Black Watch after the fearful cutting up of its officers which occurred at Magersfontein. A man I never met, he was in a remarkable way a man "of good report." Nobody has a word to say about him save what is favourable. I am told that, in the fighting near Paardeberg, he showed conspicuous gallantry. He had been wounded, yet returned to the fighting line, and later on helped a wounded comrade under a hot fire. It was while so engaged that Grieve received his death wound. An exceptionally gallant man had been called to his account. We heard now of his many acts of intrepidity while the British force lay at Modder River, and it was necessary to know what the Boers were doing at Magersfontein. Grieve was a Lieutenant and Permanent Adjutant in New South Wales, and soon-to-be-federated Australia lost in him a fine officer.

The nomenclature of this country was puzzling when we came to it, and the puzzle has been made the greater by our doings. Suffolk Hill, Australia Kopje, Epsom Kopje, Inniskilling Hill, M'Cracken Hill, Anti-M'Cracken Hill, Gibraltar—these are amongst the new names to be remembered with the bergs, fonteins, laagtes, and poorts. But it was not safe to address letters to these soldier-named places. At Colesberg I met a wearied orderly who had been riding all round the place with a telegram for Major King King, "Blues's Hill." "Where's Blues's Hill ?" asked the man, and nobody could tell him. Later on, at Colesberg Junction, I met Major King King, and he hadn't then received his telegram. It appeared that somebody had named the post to which his battery and the Western Australians had been sent. Blues's Hill the somebody called it, and the assumption is that afterwards everybody must recognise and know it as such. Perhaps these new names furnish part of the explanation of why our letters so frequently went astray.

There were so few men employed, and the work so heavy, that the sorting was often a long way behind, and there was much grumbling and disappointment owing to delay as well as to actual miscarriage. There was also peculation. A decent-looking Kaffir mule-driver—getting £2 10s. a month—was one of the complaining.

"It's good pay," he said, "and I get it all right, baas. I send through the post to my father and mother. They no get it, baas, and they starve!"

Tobacco and the like sent through the post frequently disappeared in transit, and most of us had learned to regard the service with a lively distrust. Yet it must be confessed that it surmounted many difficulties and accomplished a great deal.

Some of the Cape Town papers, noticing the entry into Colesberg, made much of the fact that the Inniskilling Dragoons (a squadron of which formed General Clements's escort) were first into the town. "Bravo, Inniskillings!" they exclaimed. Now, no Australian grudges the gallant Inniskillings, true men and best of comrades, any praise, but facts are facts. Owing to a request received from the General, all war correspondents were required to await the entry of the troops before proceeding to the town. Otherwise, knowing myself as I do, I am intimately acquainted with a man who would have made an effort to be first into Colesberg. I think I reported at the time that the Victorians were amongst the leaders. As a matter of fact, Sergeant Patterson and four men of the V.M.R. were the first. I do not say that it amounted to much, for there was only one Boer left in Colesberg, and he, poor devil, had an unhappy time in getting away. Yet the true record, for what it may be worth, is that the Victorian Mounted Rifles were first in. So I may follow the style of the Cape papers and exclaim, "Bravo, Victorians!"

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE SECOND VICTORIANS—PESTS OF MODERN ARMIES—THE "BOY" MAKES AN ARREST—WHEN SNIPER MEETS SNIPER.

The lull before the expected crossing of the Orange River gave me a chance to learn more of the doings of the Second Victorian Contingent during their advance from Hanover Road, at a time when I was but incidentally in touch with them. It was on 21st February that Colonel Price's command left Hanover Road. Their baggage waggons broke down shortly after the start, and the companies camped on the open veldt. Next day Mooifontein Farm was approached, and the Victorians became associated with Colonel Page Henderson's dragoons (Inniskillings) and the Royal Horse Artillery. The latter shelled Mooifontein, and the enemy, to the number of about 200, evacuated it, the Victorians taking possession. Early next morning some of our lads got their baptism of fire

when searching kopjes in the front; but the Boers did not succeed in hitting them. The following day's engagement, and the Second Victorians' part in it, have already been referred to. The retirement in the rain, and the fearful darkness on that memorable Saturday night, are borne in mind by Colonel Price as constituting one of his most trying experiences.

The Colonel gives special credit to Private Gardiner for acting as guide to the force with him, and putting them all in the right way when they were going wrong, and when, indeed, a battery of artillery went so far astray that at daybreak it was right under a kopje which it had been shelling the previous day, and on which the enemy was still in force. How Gardiner himself was guided is remarkable enough. Questioned on the subject, he said—

"The sun had peeled a piece of skin off the left side of my face, and when we started back the rain was beating upon the sore place so much as to cause a sharp pain. When darkness fell so suddenly, and you couldn't see a hand before you, I knew that if I continued in such a way that the rain would still beat upon the sore place on my face I would be going in the right direction."

So, in fact, it proved, for in due course the light of a farm towards which our troops were steering came in sight. But only part of the force got in. Notwithstanding the whistling and shouting from the front, in order to indicate the position, parts of the rear failed to keep touch, and were out for varying periods—some until daylight. On that night quite a number of parties and individuals found it necessary to halt on the veldt and wait for the sun. No blacker night could be imagined.

For the rest, the advance of the Second Victorians was marked more by the personal discomforts endured than by anything else. The men were an exceptionally long time without tents, and they had the worst weather of the campaign during that period. Their living was decidedly plain. If sheep were available, they had fresh meat, but more often they lived on the "iron ration," as it came to be called—tinned beef and "forty-niners." Lieutenants Kirby and Norton had some rough experiences with isolated posts, when their men had long spells with no rations at all. So far as I can learn, the Second Victorians took all their hardships with perfect good humour, and if they entertained any regret it was that the Boers they had come out to fight happened to be on the run. They would have liked to have extended their experience of actual conflict. Their turn came, and they have had many a severe tussle north of Bloemfontein to compensate

for any disappointment they entertained south of the Orange River.

The Second Contingent of Victorians at Norval's Pont had a considerable number of sore-backed and sick horses. No fewer than 80 of the mounts were unfit for duty. Saddles are blamed, but also the practice of putting blankets for both horse and man under the saddle, thereby increasing the difficulty of girthing, and adding to the possibilities of friction. Not more than a third of the horses unfit for duty were sick, the remainder suffering only from sore backs. Rarely has anyone seen such awful backs as some of these animals displayed, and in a district where the flies were particularly troublesome our poor, dumb friends suffered a great deal, notwithstanding all that Veterinary Surgeon Rudduck could do in alleviative and curative measures. The affected horses were turned out on the veldt, and, therefore, fared much better than if they had been kept fastened up in the lines. On days when the work admitted of it, Captain M'Leish and Lieutenant Pendlebury sent out their horses to graze for a few hours on the fresh grass, then showing green and inviting on parts of the veldt. Of course, men were kept in attendance on the horses, and compliance with an unexpected order to fall in would not long be delayed. A couple of days' lull in active operations gave the farriers and saddlers opportunity for pushing on with necessary work, and easy times for the rest of the troops meant a particularly busy period for them.

What awful pests to the army are war correspondents! They are always in the way, always finding out the things carefully kept from them, always, when their despatches are submitted to the censor, informing the astonished staff of quite a number of facts that they had not previously known. My colleague at Norval's Pont, representing Reuter, had learned from me about the disappearance of the Tasmanian patrol. I told him of it, because I wanted it cabled for the benefit of the Associated Australasian Press, in whose cable service Reuter takes a large part. Although the patrol had been out for a week, the item was struck out of Reuter's report, not because the fact was disputed, but because it had not been officially reported to head-quarters. Ultimately, however, it was allowed to go.

Then correspondents are so audacious. Two of them—Reuter's man and I—wanted to camp near Norval's Pont Bridge, while the staff remained at Van Zyk's Siding. This preposterous idea was promptly vetoed. What, two correspondents in advance of the staff! The bare idea was enough to fill the official mind with horror. Why, had we been allowed to take up a riverside residence, and thus save

our horses a trifle, we might have slipped off to Bloemfontein secretly in the night and—arranged terms of peace. It is true, as Lord Wolseley once put it, that the war correspondent is "the curse of modern armies." Particularly if he happens to be a person who wants to report facts, and is not wholly employed either in recording the wonderful doings or in contemplating the unimpeachable wisdom of the staff.

Lieutenant Heritage, the smart young Tasmanian sub., is so youthful in appearance that he was regimentally known as "the boy." By the way, there are few better "men." He is quite worthy to hold a rank as an officer under so fine a man as Captain Cameron, then chafing in captivity. One day Heritage and a fairly strong patrol were sent to arrest some reputedly awful rebels, and the officer had been warned to expect trouble. His orders were to bring in all the occupants of a farm where the rebels resided. The party was armed to the teeth, took every precaution, and after carefully making disposition got as near as possible unobserved, then galloped up to the farm-house and surrounded it. The awful rebels were singularly quiet, and investigation showed that the occupants were—five girls!

The men had departed, but the, in a different sense, quite as disconcerting females had to be dealt with by the "boy." Heritage is marvellously polite, and never before did he so much realise the poverty of his Cape Dutch. He contrived, however, to make the young ladies understand that they were wanted, gallantly surrendered his own horse and those of four of his men, and brought his charges safely into Colesberg. The idea of these young ladies living alone on those farms was repugnant to military ideas of propriety. For the time being they were required to live in the town, where they were alike safe from the perils of the campaign and the adroit questionings of male persons who do not love the Union Jack, and who might come in the night to learn what the British were doing. Such queer things happen in time of war.

So persistent and annoying were the Boer snipers on the north bank of the Orange River that measures had to be taken to meet them at their own game. Seven picked marksmen of the South Australian Company were, for a few days, posted in cover, close to the river bank, just before daylight, and remained till after nightfall. They used their rifles with a freedom which, it is believed, was painful to the enemy. Be that as it may, our men claim to have made a few hits, while the enmey did not score, his nearest being a shot which passed through an artilleryman's water-bottle. By the way, it is grand to see these artillerymen stand up to an enemy's fire. Not a flinch, not a movement of evasion is there observ-

able in these brave men when bullets fly amongst them or shells are falling. The seven South Australians selected daily for sniping duty had an exciting and interesting time, and appeared to like it. When sniper meets sniper, then comes the tug of war.

CHAPTER LXV.

INTO THE FREE STATE—RIVER CROSSED AT DAYLIGHT—BUILDING THE PONTOON BRIDGE — EXCITING BUT BLOODLESS EXPERIENCES.

In the middle of March the Australian Regiment was in the Free State. For the second time in its history it assumed the *rôle* of invaders, and for the second time the invasion was led by the same company, the first of the Victorian Mounted Rifles, under Captain M'Leish. The first invasion, my readers may be reminded, took place while the regiment was camped at Enslin. When General Babbington made his reconnaissance, M'Leish's company was in front all day, and penetrated on that occasion far beyond any other portion of the force into the western portion of the Free State. That reconnaissance was the necessary prelude to the after operation so successfully conducted, first by General French, and subsequently by Lord Roberts in person.

Our first invasion was from the west, our second from the south, for on the evening of the 15th we crossed the Orange River and took up positions in the enemy's country. It happened this time to be a flying enemy. Without conceit, I think that the Australians have a right to claim that they did something—yes, that day they did a great deal—to establish this condition. It cannot be said that they did everything, for already Lord Roberts had prevailed, and late on the night before we crossed I was able, on my own reliable sources of information, to tell our astonished and sceptical regimental staff that the British flag had been that day hoisted at Bloemfontein.

Few of the troops who were turned out of bed at 3 o'clock on the morning of the 15th knew that this was the case, fewer still imagined that already the Boers were on the run, and that we were to have a bloodless procession. General Clements took no risks. It is presumed he knew of Lord Roberts's success, and judged that the Boers would not be much in the humour for fighting when they learned that the British were in their rear and that their line of retirement by rail was absolutely closed. Yet, I repeat, the General took no risks.

For several days previously the engineers had been hard at work in what in Australia would be called a gully. This

led to the river at a point less than three miles west of Norval's Pont, and close to Alleman's Drift. Using this gully as a start, the engineers had cut a road to the water side—a road so magnificently shrouded by the trees growing on both sides that only those who had been allowed access to it, through the Wilts' camp at the head of the gully, would have suspected its existence. An adroit, clever, and effective piece of work was this road. Down near the river end of it had been carried and carefully piled up out of sight the pontoons, casks, planks, and other materials for making a bridge across the Orange, at this point 260 feet wide, and showing a maximum depth of 8 feet.

Long before daylight on a bright, moonlit morning, a large body of troops gathered in rear of the kopjes near the head of the newly-made road. The artillery were posted so as to command the opposite banks and the kopjes closest to it, while the machine guns, a regiment of infantry, and the whole force of mounted infantry were in readiness to supplement the artillery fire if occasion arose. The dispositions were well conceived, and if the Boer had given us any trouble we should—well, we should still have crossed the Orange River.

Details of three regiments of infantry, the Worcesters, Bedfords, and Berks, were told off to pioneer the crossing, and for their transport a small fleet of pontoons was launched a little before daylight. Just at half-past five the first boat, loaded with soldiers, pushed off, and then there was a race across the swift-running stream. The Worcesters won, and, from my point of observation on the southern bank, I had the satisfaction of seeing them raise the British flag on the other side. It was not the time for cheering and demonstrating. The flag simply showed the watching General and his staff that the passage had been effected, and fast as the boats could ply the men were hurried across. As they reached the northern shore they at once advanced and occupied the nearest cover, and by the time that it was full daylight quite 500 men had been ferried over, and were in good positions, ready for any fortune of war. Meanwhile the watchers on our side carefully scanned the kopjes where the enemy might be, and waited in momentary expectation of the Boer fire. But they waited in vain. Nearly a thousand men crossed over, and presently advanced towards the kopje on the left which would have been the key to a present enemy's position. But there was no present enemy. While we were watching for his opening fire he was, as we afterwards learned, going for all he was worth in the direction of Philippolis.

Simultaneously with the crossing of the infantry, the engineers got to work, and at first made wonderful progress in building a pontoon bridge. It is understood that they had intended to have it ready by 10 o'clock. Had all gone well it would have been finished about 11. But, because of the spirit of parsimony in small things, which, throughout the campaign, I have so often seen operating side by side with lavish expenditure, old-fashioned pontoons, quite unfit for the work, had been furnished to them. Not only was the pattern obsolete, but the things themselves, so an engineer officer told me, had been in use for instruction purposes in England for as long as thirty years. Therefore the half-expected happened. At a critical moment a number of the pontoons sank, and it had to be realised that there were not enough sound ones to go across. The arrangements had to be revised, and a number of barrels brought into use, the consequence being a vexatious delay of several hours. As I watched the proceedings I could not help being heartily grateful to the Boer for having moved on. Had he stayed to oppose our passage, and had that bridge been built under fire, what a different story should I have to tell of the crossing of the Orange River !

Our men had breakfasted in the moonlight, in the expectation that they might have to fight, and that they would cross the river, at latest, about 10 o'clock. As a fact, they began to cross at five in the evening. A bridge of a sort could have been ready earlier, and, no doubt, would have been, had there been an enemy to contend against. There being no opposition, a good bridge was made and finished off before any troops were allowed upon it ; therefore the long delay was not so bad as it may look. The breakdown in the construction work was wholly due to the defective material supplied to the engineers, and as they had to improvise, and the disappearance of the enemy had obviated the need of excessive haste, they improvised well, and made a good, safe bridge, of which any engineer corps in the world might well be proud.

The first troops to cross by the bridge were our gallant friends, the Inniskilling Dragoons, with whom the Australian Regiment has been so pleasantly associated throughout this campaign. We did not grudge them the precedence. Next to them were the first of the Australians, Colonel Hoad, Major Rankin, and Captain Lascelles in the lead. Then came Captain M'Leish and his company of the Victorian Mounted Rifles, followed by Lieutenant Pendlebury and the Victorian Rifles. The New South Wales Company, headed by Captain Legge, was next. City Volunteers, artillery, and other corps

intervened before it came to the turn of the Second Victorian Contingent and the Tasmanians, all of whom, however, crossed the bridge on what was to everybody a very interesting evening.

By some the crossing is described as historic, and the word is not misused; but the importance of the movement was necessarily discounted by the fact that it was made in rear of a flying enemy, and with Lord Roberts already in possession of Bloemfontein.

General Clements and his staff stood by the south end of the bridge and watched the crossing, the golden opportunity presented of inspecting every man, horse, and gun being fully used by the keen and observant commander of the column. As each body of mounted troops and artillery crossed it at once went to an assigned position, and before darkness set in we had examined and occupied all the kopjes of strategic value on our new front on the northern bank of the river. The Victorian patrols pushed their way northward and eastward, and ascertained that the road to the bridge was clear. The Tasmanians went to the left as far as the Colesberg waggon bridge. Then the whole of the troops on the north side lay down on their arms, and spent the night without adventure on the veldt of the Free State.

Did not the Boers fire a single shot on that "historic" but peaceful day? I heard just one Mauser report, far away on the right, and had some difficulty in persuading others that it was less a reality than the effect of a day-dream, caused by the hateful military practice of starting things at 3 o'clock in the morning. Next day I met Captain Howland, when the South Australian Company was withdrawn from its much-sniped-at post on the right of the broken railway bridge. Howland told me that there had been one shot fired by the enemy. It was directed against Sergeant-Major Johnston, who had almost crossed the river by swimming on the previous evening, and who, on the morning of the 15th, got across on to the *débris* at the point where the bridge was smashed. The South Australian party of seven counter-snipers quickly returned the fire, and the Boers had nothing further to say. The gallant Sergeant-major has the distinction of being the only man fired at by the Boers on the day we crossed the river.

On our part there were a few shots on the left, in order to stop a Cape cart containing two men who were making an honest effort to get away, but who were easily induced to halt and become our prisoners. We heard of more Boers from an aged woman met near Donkerpoort, a pass through the first range of hills on the right bank. On the day of

the crossing, about 1500 of them, she said, had passed north, and she had been able to tell them that the British were at Bloemfontein, for which they were heading. They at once changed direction to the left, and moved as fast as their horses could carry them towards Philippolis. There were no war casualties on our side, but I heard that a young and popular Inniskilling officer was drowned during the afternoon while bathing in the river. I proved the strength of the current by personal experience the same day. It would take a very strong swimmer indeed to make any headway against it. It was as much as I could do to hold my own.

A Colt's gun, at first attached to the Australian Regiment, figured in the arrangements for crossing the river. It came from the Colt's Gun Company, London, under the charge of Major W. H. Edwardes, Lincolnshire (Militia) Artillery. He was not with us when the gun arrived on the 14th, but Colonel Hoad had it fitted up, and detailed Sergeant-Major Paul and a party of the Victorian Permanent Artillerymen, serving as mounted infantry with us, to work it. It was tried the same night, and a satisfactory result reported to the General, who thereupon ordered the gun out the next day. Colonel Hoad had been directed to accompany the General, and, at his own request, was allowed to keep a special eye on the gun. He rode out with it, and stood by to take it into action if it had been needed. I do not wish to impugn their humanity, but I cannot help suspecting that that gun party was disappointed because there was no killing to do. The elevating effects of war one finds less easily in a campaign than the desire for blood which so often asserts itself even in ordinary mild men. This Colt gun is on the Maxim principle, but it is managed without a water-jacket, for the strike and recoil action works a sort of air pump, which keeps the barrel cool. It is a serviceable weapon, mounted on a light galloping carriage, and should have a useful place in future Australian armament.

On the 16th March, the day after the crossing, all the mounted troops had an active day in the Free State. M'Leish's company advanced to Donkerpoort, and others pressed further east. Six prisoners were taken, and were brought to head-quarters, south of the pontoon bridge, by Lieutenant Staughton. The Second Contingent of the Victorians and the Tasmanians had a quiet day holding the left of the position, and slept in a consciousness that the enemy was afar off. Few of the companies got much baggage over the river on the 16th. Those who did went into camp; the remainder bivouacked. The weather was fine and mild, although cold towards morning, as, having then spent several

nights in the open, I can testify. What time officers and men spared from patrols and like duties they spent in discussing the then great questions of the hour, "Was the war really over?" "Would the Transvaal fight?" "If it did, how long would the thing last?" All the *quid nunes* had answers to give, but most of us were sceptical as to the soundness of these answers, and went on speculating.

The head-quarters staff of the Australian Regiment moved up from Van Zyk's Siding to Norval's Pont on the 16th. Our trains ran up to the broken bridge, and at once an army of men got to work. The damage done to the bridge previously in use was so extensive that it would probably take months to make the necessary repairs. Meanwhile, transport was by waggon across the pontoon bridge, and there was a great demand for vehicles. I know of a corps which was in such desperate straits for transport vehicles that it offered to barter away its chaplain for a Scotch cart. I believe that corps would have given half a dozen chaplains for a buck-waggon. To such straits are pious men reduced in time of war. A sort of aerial railway was made across the break in the bridge. A car ran upon stout steel cables, and carried a good load, so that in a sort of way we had already re-established communication between the banks of the river at the railway bridge.

When, on the afternoon of the 16th inst., a train from Bloemfontein brought down to Norval's Pont General Pole-Carew and an escort of Grenadiers, we realised that fortune had been much kinder than we could have imagined or suspected. The Boers must have departed in such a hurry that they were unable to smash up the line. It was quite clear and intact from Norval's Pont to Bloemfontein, and there was a large supply of Free State rolling stock in our hands. General Pole-Carew, who brought the news, and whose own journey demonstrated its accuracy, was warmly received at Norval's Pont, and a contact, not likely to be easily broken, established between him and the force under the personal command of Lord Roberts. The way was clear to Bloemfontein.

CHAPTER LXVI.

Death of Captain Salmon—Sergeant Hensman Succumbs—Attitude of the Free Staters — Adventures of Westralians.

Captain Robert Salmon, Adjutant of M'Leish's company, died of fever on the 16th March. It was my sad lot to convey the news from the telegraph office at Van Zyk's Crossing to the head-quarters camp of the Australian Regiment, where, I

need hardly say, it was received with profound regret. A few hours later I had conveyed it to the late officer's company, then a good ten miles into the Free State, and the 16th became a day of mourning for us all. Poor Salmon! As sterling a man as ever stepped. Not only a brave and efficient officer—as he proved under test conditions in the fight at Jasfontein—but a loyal, kind friend, and prince of good comrades. Had he fallen in action, while we should have keenly felt our own bereavement, yet should we have rejoiced to know that he had met a soldier's death facing an enemy's fire. Alas! he was the victim of disease. Yet who shall say that he has not met a soldier's death?

Disease is an enemy which in this campaign has proved much more insidious, much harder to deal with, than the Boer. At that time there were said to be nearly a thousand cases of enteric in the base hospital at Nauuwpoort. The Australian Regiment was held to have "got off well" because, so far, we had had no more than two fatal cases; particularly "got off well" when it is remembered under what insanitary conditions we were for days encamped at Arundel. Disease, then, is one of the foes which those who fought the Empire's battles had to meet, and he who fell under it as surely died a soldier's death as if he had gone down under the shells of the Boer. It was rumoured that Captain Salmon, on a very hot and trying day, yielded to a temptation to slake his thirst at a dirty pool on the line of march, and it is certain that our poor friend was ailing before we retreated to the series of pools, pregnant with the wash of latrines and horse lines, which for a period formed our camping ground at Arundel. In our hour of grief and mourning we all recognised that the issues of life and death there, as elsewhere, are in higher hands. It was only for us to submit with what resignation we could, and to offer our respectful condolence—cabled by Colonel Hoad—to the two well-known military brothers of our late comrade whose remains had been laid in a South African grave.

It is with the greatest regret that I record also the death of Sergeant Hensman, of the Western Australian Company, which took place on the 12th March at the Military Hospital, Maitland. Hensman was badly and repeatedly wounded on the day that Captain Moor and twenty Westralians made their gallant defence of the isolated hill at Slingersfontein on the 9th February. A man of exceptionally fine physique, he was unusually tall and built in proportion. His commanding figure, deep bass voice, and quiet, effective ways will not be forgotten in the Australian Regiment. Sergeant Hensman had his right thigh shattered by a bullet, and ulti-

mately it was necessary to resort to amputation. It is understood that death soon followed the operation. A gallant man was called away. Sergeant Geoffrey Hensman was the son of a distinguished soldier, and the nephew of Justice Hensman, of Western Australia. He held mining interests in the western colony, to which he came several years ago from Taunton, Devonshire. The deceased was educated at Repton College, was about thirty years of age, and his commission as an officer was understood to be on its way to him when he breathed his last.

Colonel Price rejoined the column while it was encamped near Van Zyk's Siding, and his tent was pitched with those of the head-quarters staff of the Australian Regiment. He came on to Norval's Pont, and on the 17th left with the intention of crossing the river and camping further out. The Colonel appeared to be fully restored to health, and described himself as a free lance, for his two companies and the Tasmanians were under the command of Major M'Cracken with the latter's battery of artillery. There really was not a great deal for Colonels to do with General Clements's column. Colonel Hoad had a certain amount of administrative detail, as also had Colonel Henderson, of the Inniskillings. The companies of their commands were distributed all over the front, chiefly under artillery Majors. I am inclined to think that the Colonels did not altogether like it, but "the exigencies of the service" demanded that they should submit.

On the 17th March there was a reconnaissance towards Philippolis, half-way to which town went a force commanded by Major Butcher. Lieutenant Thorn commanded the advance party, composed of about forty Victorians chosen from M'Leish and Pendlebury's companies. New South Wales furnished the escort to the guns, and Captain M'Leish rode with Major Butcher. Between these two fine officers there had sprung up a great mutual respect and admiration. Butcher wanted no better supporter than M'Leish, and the Australian was well content with the fine leadership of the Imperial gunner.

No enemy was met with during the reconnaissance, but much of time and effort were devoted to following up what proved to be a party of alarmed farmers, who, dreading the British, had decided to trek. The farmers were speedily reassured, and returned to their homes. At each of the farms visited a big white flag was displayed, this emblem of peace and amity being sometimes fastened to the chimney. Almost invariably the troops were met at the gateway by the women of the family, who professed friendship, and *usually* declared that the men had never been away from

home during the war. If these statements were not always truthful, perhaps they are of the character said to be excusable owing to "the exigencies of the war."

The women, for the most part, spoke English much better than the men did. When it was intimated that the British, and particularly the Australians, were willing buyers for hard cash, no end of "good things"—poultry, vegetables, etc.—were quickly collected and sent to Butcher's camp at Donkerpoort. Prices were not unreasonable, and good business was done by the citizens. What the resources of the country are was indicated by the first-rate breakfast which that morning was furnished to a party of officers at one of the farms. The lady of the house personally attended on them, and no doubt admired the magnificent appetites shown by the Britishers, most of whom had been on short commons for some time. The landdrosts (officials in charge of districts) were sending in their submission to Lord Roberts, and an attempt at a rally made by President Steyn was met by a number of the Free Staters with the Dutch equivalent of "Go to blazes!" In the evening a concert was held in Donkerpoort camp in honour of St. Patrick's Day, and bits of green were much in evidence amongst the delighted troops, English and Scotch, as well as Irishmen, entering fully and heartily into the pleasure and enthusiasm of the hour.

The Westralians had been brought in from their post, or, rather, series of posts, on the right to take part in the march to Bloemfontein. They had a very good time on the whole, and lived on the fat of the land. Out of a few little brushes with the enemy on the river's banks they all emerged scathless. Sergeant Lessey, with a party of 15 men, had a narrow escape just before the Boers finally crossed to the north side of the stream. The enemy got between his post and his main body, and he had two days' dodging of a very exhilarating kind.

On his first night out there was a heavy fall of rain, and huge stones, loosened by the running water, came tearing down the side of a kopje into the shelter of which he had brought his party. One of these stones knocked a man over, and, landing amongst the horses, caused the animals to stampede. Searching in the darkness for horses which had galloped off towards the Boer lines is described by Lessey as far too exciting for words. Happily, the horses were found, largely owing to the fact of their keeping together, as troop horses usually do, and our men got clear.

So much mixed up with the Boers had they been that, when finally they approached their own post, they were fired upon by their comrades. The unkindest cut of all.

The party had been almost given up for lost, but the confidence entertained by Moor and his officers in the courage and resource of Lessey and his men was well justified.

Lieutenant Darling had an adventure during the same tour of duty. He was caught by a party of Boers at very short range, and took refuge behind a small bank. There was a little hill in his rear, and the difficulty was to reach it without giving the Boers too much target with his tall figure on horseback. The bullets were fairly numerous, and Darling decided that he and the mount must travel separately. He let the horse go and managed to direct it safely to the rear. Then he crawled after it, under a fusilade of bullets, for the snipers had observed and appreciated the movement. Darling reached his horse, mounted in the cover of a small bush, into which three bullets whizzed, and then, waving an adieu to the discomfited enemy, galloped off in safety. It would take a deuced smart Boer to capture our Darling.

CHAPTER LXVII.

Forward Again—An Impression March—The Free State Farms—Arrival at Philippolis.

The column under General Clements, in which the whole of the Australian Regiment and the Second Victorian Contingent are included, arrived at Longkop, two miles from Philippolis, on the 22nd March, *en route* to Bloemfontein, *via* Fauresmith. What I venture to call an Impression March was quite devoid of noteworthy incident, and than it nothing could be more peaceful. It would even have been quite agreeable if the men had been allowed to carry tents, and the Army Service Corps had not made a few mistakes in regard to the destination of rations. As it was, the early morning hours were exceedingly cold, and the men shivered in their scant bedding on the bare veldt. My own sleeping-out experience had never included two such cold snaps as we had, between one and five, on the last two mornings of the march to Philippolis.

A circuitous march from Norval's Pont on which the column was ordered was intended to impress the inhabitants of that portion of the Free State lying south-west of Bloemfontein. Up to Philippolis there were very few inhabitants to impress. A number of the farms had been deserted by their owners, and, all told, they did not amount to many. The main column was in sight of less than twenty during the whole thirty miles' march from Norval's Pont, but our *two flanking* parties would also see and be seen from a few

more. The column proper halted at a farm called Longkop, about two miles south of Philippolis, through which it marched the next day to impress the three or four hundred adult whites who had made their homes in the picturesque little settlement. I am glad to say that the march was marked by a steadfast upholding of the best traditions of British arms. The farms are usually in clusters of twos and threes, held, maybe, by members of the same family. Near one of these clusters the halt for the day was made, for there was to be found that indispensable commodity for man and beast, a supply of water.

The force under the command of General Clements was divided for the purpose of this march into three columns, *i.e.*, the main column and two moving respectively on what I may call the frontal flanks. The Second Contingent of Victorians, under the personal command of Colonel Price, had the honour of forming the mounted portion of the advance guard to the main column, and, therefore, led the way. One or two divisions usually furnished the forward groups and small flanking parties, the remainder marching in extended order in column of divisions. The work was useful and instructive, but as the pace was only that of infantry it could not be called hard. First touch with any opposing Boers our men of the Second Contingent would have, always provided that neither of the frontal flanking columns got it.

That which moved on the right, under the command of Major Dauncey (Inniskillings), included the Westralians and South Australians, also our Colt's gun ; while the left flanking column, under Major Glee (R.E.), included the balance of the Australian Regiment—that is to say, the two Victorian companies, the New South Wales men, and the Tasmanians. Colonel Hoad, Major Rankin, and Captain Lascelles (Adjutant) marched with the main body, and were in the delightful condition, for the time being, of having no harder duty to perform than to come along.

We left Captain Bruche (Quartermaster) and Captain Kendall (Veterinarian) at Norval's Pont in charge of sick and resting horses, stores, and a few details. Sergeant-Major Paul got away from the humdrum duties of Quartermaster-sergeant in order to take charge of the Colt's gun, and that he heartily appreciated the change I need hardly assure anybody who knows one of the most smart and enterprising of our Victorian warrant officers.

With each of the flanking columns were artillery and cavalry, therefore each was able to make a good resistance if the enemy had been met with.

The several portions of General Clements's command marched independently to Donkerpoort, the rendezvous, on Tuesday, the 20th March. The flanking columns went their several ways, a few miles to the right and left front, and the remainder halted for the night at the bright little brook which runs across the south side of the pass between the hills through which our way lay. At daylight next morning the Second Victorians, headed by Colonel Price, marched through the pass. From a point on the side of a hill where I had spent the night I was able to see the whole main column and supply train pass. It included five regiments of infantry, a battery of artillery, the Second Victorians (the only mounted infantry with the main body), ambulance people, and all the brigade details, the total being about 6000 men, and the length of the column not less than five miles. I wanted to be sure that it was an impressive sight, and, therefore, watched the entire procession go by before mounting my horse and catching up to the advanced guard. I was quite satisfied, and if the Free Staters were not, Lord Roberts cannot be blamed.

Each man carried two days' rations, and the waggons started with supplies for fourteen days. Much "bully" beef and biscuit, tea, and coffee this means, and the oxen drawing the heavily-laden vehicles had a hard pull out of the dark pass (Donkerpoort). A small herd of slaughter oxen was driven with the column, and sheep were bought as required. Only about four days' forage was carried, for we expected to be able to purchase as we went along.

The first day's march was to a place called Rienaarefontein, where the troops halted for the day on a piece of flat country surrounded by a most perfect circle of hills. A first-rate camping ground, close to several farms, whose owners were at home, and appeared glad enough to see us. As I have said, they were keenly business-like. For a little party with whom I was associated I made some purchases at a farm, for even war correspondents have to eat sometimes. It would, perhaps, mildly interest my readers to know that my purchases included a couple of fowls, a lamb (killed and dressed), bread hot from the oven, new potatoes (which by a tactical distribution of effort I induced one of our party to dig), a few eggs, a pumpkin, and some fresh milk. Costly things all these, but so long as one can muster hard cash it is plain that one need not starve while on a pilgrimage through the Orange Free State.

The farmer with whom I did my business had handed over his rifle on the previous day, and freely admitted that he had fought against us. He pathetically demanded of me what he

was to do in order to protect himself against baboons, one of which had seized a lamb from his paddock that morning. I felt the pathos, although I could not understand the particular Dutch in which it was expressed, his Dutch and mine differing on points of pronunciation. But one of Rimington's Guides acted as interpreter, and I advised the farmer to see the General personally, and—produce the baboon!

The rapidity and vehemence of his Dutch after that was positively distressing, and the interpreter told us that the man was actually explaining his inability to produce the baboon. Satire is a weapon of not the least use against a Dutchman. Thanks, however, to this good man and his wife, we dined well that evening, and lay down on the veldt thankful in the consciousness that we could keep the wolf from the door for a day or two.

Everything that persons of any rank wanted had to be paid for in cash at the farmer's own price, and that usually meant a pretty stiff one. I heard one gallant soldier, who had paid eighteenpence for a loaf of bread, put the matter thus—

"It's darned 'ard. Why, them chaps was a-peltin' lead into us chaps only a few days ago. Now they're 'lowed t' impose upon us as they darned well like."

It is certainly hard on Mr. Atkins, and he does not readily understood international niceties, yet I would not have the situation in the least altered. When the army officials demand supplies, a fair price was fixed by a responsible officer, and the theory was that necessary rations were thus secured. All else counted as "extras," and the great principles of "freedom of trade," the "law of supply and demand," etc., were triumphant.

The Dutch farmer, who had just surrendered the Mauser he had been using against us, was, I found, a wonderfully keen business man, and he laid up for himself treasures on earth whenever he got a chance. Our Impression March suited him most admirably, and he was usually candid enough to say so.

Our march on the following day was to Longkop, a point where the main body, with the left flanking column in sight, bivouacked two miles from Philippolis. General Clements and staff pushed on, and the Tasmanians, led by Captain Hamilton (Inniskillings), entered the town from the south, proud in the belief that they were first in. Alas for their pride! General Gatacre, for some reason quite incomprehensible, if you omit the "personal equation," had thought proper to get ahead of Clements, and already Philippolis was held by a mounted company of the Derbyshire Regiment under Major Godley. This company, with Gatacre himself,

had rushed the situation on the previous day, and we found the town placarded with a proclamation signed by Gatacre. What Clements thought one can imagine. Gatacre had gone out of his way to forestall his brother officer at so small a thing as the taking of a quite undefended town. Things like these do occur in the British Army, and they're not nice. Worse than that, Gatacre's action spoilt the whole plan of campaign. He had given the people fourteen days within which to surrender their arms; Clements wanted the arms by twelve o'clock next day. Then Gatacre had been granting passes to people. In one case a pass had been issued to a man suspected of having stolen a number of cattle and two of our waggons.

As it was, we had a decidedly humorous situation. Gatacre's men (the Derbys) were in possession at the north end of the town, Clements's (the Tasmanians) held the south end. The central room of the local hostelry I held myself.

The landdrost, by the way, while professing friendship to Major Godley, and helping him in several ways, had to be rather sharply told what we expected. General Clements had requisitioned grain from him, and he replied that he had "no orders from his Government to supply it." Thereupon Clements promptly sent an "escort" to the landdrost, who was required to go out to Longkop, the General's head-quarters, and get instructions at first hand. He promised to obey.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

At Philippolis—General Grobler Interviewed—Clements Makes Formal Entry—The Dutch who Submitted—Interesting Ceremonies—Some Wet Campaigning.

I cannot believe that Philippolis people were well pleased to see us, although they all appeared glad that, for them at least, the war was over. They were courteous to our officers, and that afternoon there was much coffee-drinking and other social amenities in the houses of the "best families," British officers being honoured guests. Personally, I met with nothing but the greatest kindness. A number of the Cape Colony rebels had been identified by our intelligence officers and arrested here, and their local friends did not like it. Therefore, side by side with displays of courtesy were many gloomy faces and unpleasant looks. Yet, perhaps, on the whole the reception of the few British who had so far reached the town was quite all that any reasonable being could expect under the circumstances. It is unusual for the conquered to go into ecstasies over their conquerors. And one man significantly told me that we had "not done with the Free State yet."

That view was borne out by a rather remarkable episode. Surgeon M'Williams, while camped with the First Victorians at Donkerpoort, was told that a sick Boer lay at a farm about nine miles off. He had kindly seen and attended other sick in the neighbourhood—gratuitously in all cases—and did not hesitate to seek the sufferer reported to him. Imagine his surprise when he found that his patient was no less distinguished a person than General Esias Grobler (sometimes rendered Groublar or Groubblar), chief commander in the southern district, and the man who directed the operations against us at Pink Hill on the 12th February. It appeared that the General had been injured by a fall from his horse. Being thereby rendered unfit for further fighting, he had retired to his farm in the Free State, and, taking advantage of Lord Roberts's proclamation, relinquished his arms.

Grobler was a member of the Legislature, and is a well-read man. He received the Australian doctor with marked coldness, accepted his ministrations while sitting on the stoep of his house, into which M'Williams was not invited to enter.

"I cannot say that he was actually discourteous," says the doctor, "but he was decidedly cold, as also was his wife. I had to ask for a drink, and they gave me buttermilk, but ultimately, at my request, they brought me some fresh milk."

Grobler was very bitter against the British.

"We must submit," he said to the doctor, "because we are beaten. We were advised by German authorities, and I thought myself that Great Britain could not put more than 50,000 troops into this war against us. We knew we could deal with 50,000. We cannot deal with a quarter of a million. Great Britain has conquered, but this will be a perilous possession for her. She will always have to deal with rebellions, and there will continue hostility to England and her persecution of a free people in our children and our children's children."

He seemed to get very excited, and his wife had frequently to restrain him. Then she would become excited and bitter in turn.

"We know," she said, "that for every one of our killed we killed ten of yours. That is our satisfaction. We gave it to you at Magersfontein and other places. We have that to think of and rejoice over."

Grobler told the doctor that he was anxious only to get away. He would sell his farm to anyone who would buy it, and go to America, the only place he could now live in.

Major M'Williams's story of his visit to the Grobler family indicates that, if there are many such people, the South African problem of the future is a much more serious one than some fond, foolish people are apt to think.

Amongst the men arrested near Philippolis were a couple in whom the Inniskillings were specially interested. They were the persons who induced an officer of that regiment to accept hospitality at a farm, and then betrayed him into the hands of the enemy. It is fortunate that these men were not recognised in the midst of active hostilities. The chances of their being made prisoners would have been very, very slight.

One "slim" young fellow put his head into the lion's mouth in a particularly audacious way. He approached Captain Hamilton, who was in charge of the guard (furnished by Tasmanians) at Philippolis, and pointing out a horse, claimed it, with the remark—

"Here, that pony followed your troops, and there he is tied up. I want him."

"Yes," said Hamilton, "and what is your name?"

The reply excited the recollection of the well-informed officer, who, after a moment's reflection, suavely inquired, "And what became of that horse of ours you have, and the three Government mules?"

The far too "slim" young man first protested, but finally admitted, and possibly he wished he hadn't bothered about the pony. In any case, Captain Hamilton was certain to be the chief scorer in that deal.

On the day that our column approached Philippolis, the General's escort into the town was composed of a couple of divisions of the Second Victorians, under Lieutenant Bruce, with whom was Lieutenant Anderson. The Victorians were received with great warmth by British residents, and one of them, a Mrs. Munro, showed her kindness in a very material way. The Australians were pleasantly entertained, and the officers returned to camp with a nice hamper of cakes and ale which Mrs. Munro was good enough to prepare for them, and which was keenly appreciated by the officers' mess. Of this more anon.

As the hotel stocks of grog had long been exhausted, and supplies of all sorts were very short in the town, the Victorian first-comers may claim to have made a decided score. For those who came later the good folks did what they could. There were cakes for them, but no ale. And as spirituous liquors had been unknown here for months, Philippolis was, perforce, one of the most sober towns in South Africa.

It was at first intended that General Clements's column would pass through, and duly impress Philippolis, on the 23rd. Instead of that, the troops were kept at Longkop, and the military demonstration consisted of the entry of General Clements and staff, escorted by a squadron of Inniskilling Dragoons. It was, however, a sufficiently impressive entry, and the

main street of the little town was crowded with people who assembled to witness it.

The great crowd was outside the Town Hall, for to this place the burghers had been summoned in order that they might put themselves right with the British authorities, now in possession. From all parts of the surrounding district the burghers came, many of them driving their own carts, the others on horseback. Each man carried at least one, and sometimes two, rifles, for the General's orders were to gather in the arms of the people, and thereby deprive them of their means of resisting our authority.

By nine o'clock a fairly large number had assembled, and the crowd gained strength all through the forenoon. I joined it early, and had some interesting conversations with the men who had decided that they wanted no more fighting, and sought only to be left in peace. For, with hardly an exception, the men assembled in the streets of Philippolis had been "on commando," as the phrase is—that is to say, they had been in the ranks of those fighting against us.

It was, in many respects, a remarkable crowd. Men of all ages were in it, and apparently of all conditions of life. Here you saw a smartly dressed citizen, spruce and bright in his tailor-made suit, boxer hat, and polished boots, enjoying his morning cigar, and leaning upon his Mauser. There a mere lad, hardly emerged from school, one would think, sitting on a stoep, holding his rifle between his knees.

Scores of men in advanced years, bearded, grizzled, and stern, clad in the attire usually known as "slops," and almost invariably smoking pipes. All carried weapons. Then there were the young men of the farms, smart, active fellows, nearly always wearing short beards, and dark being the prevailing complexion. Sullen-looking many of these were, plainly engaged on a business they didn't wholly like. There was more than a suggestion of affection in the way they handled, or, should I say, fondled, their rifles.

The men chatted in a quiet, subdued way, but, notwithstanding the presence in it of the sullen young farmers, it was not an uncheerful crowd. There were many meetings of friends who, apparently, had not seen each other for months. They had been serving in widely separated commandoes. I observed that around a large proportion of the hats were bands of crape—sinister reminder of what war time has been to these people, as it has been to ours, a period of bereavement and sorrow. Many a fine man has gone down while fighting for the Transvaal, for that is just what the part of the deluded Free Staters amounted to.

"I was against the war from the first," said one burgher to me, "and as I have been thirty years living in this country, and hold a good many interests in it, I am just as capable of being patriotic as the most pronounced of my own countrymen. For I am no Englishman, but a Dutchman to the backbone. We had no quarrel with Great Britain, were always on the most friendly terms with her. Why, then, should we fight?"

"You had an offensive and defensive alliance with the Transvaal?" I suggested.

"Quite true," said my friend, who spoke English well; "but you forget that we were not consulted in regard to the making of the alliance. This is—or rather has been—a Republic, and President Steyn was not entitled to enter into any such agreement with the Transvaal without taking our votes upon it. That is my opinion. We were at peace with England, and had the alliance with the Transvaal been proposed to us, we should have known at once that it was an alliance as against England. We Dutchmen are not really such infernal asses as some people think. Of course, when our Government plunged us into war, we had to accept the situation and fight. Now we are beaten, and I suppose we shall lose our independence because the man who, for the time being, was able to control our affairs has made a huge blunder. It is hard on us, as I think you will admit."

In like terms a number of the more intelligent burghers spoke. There were others who took different views, who did not hesitate to justify Steyn and complain of Great Britain's interference in the affairs of the Republics.

"We came here to-day to give up our arms," said one of these to me; "but we don't pretend to like it. A good many have gone north to the commando, and you will have to deal with them yet. Some of us would have followed if we had the chance, or if following had not meant that we should have to make large personal sacrifice. For, had we gone fighting, what would have become of our property? I suppose the British would not respect the property of men fighting against them."

I do not think that what I had to say convinced the burgher that his supposition was incorrect, perhaps because I did not think it politic, under the circumstances, to wholly undeceive him.

Other men to whom I talked professed to be chiefly concerned at having to give up guns which had long been their private property, and without which they would be at a great disadvantage in working their farms. They admitted, however, that the inconvenience to which they were being

subjected was not one of the most awful hardships incidental to a state of war.

Just before noon a trumpet blast announced that General Clements was approaching the town, and a few minutes later he and his staff rode in. The escort carried their lances, and drawn swords gleamed in the hands of the officers.

"By the Lord! this is what we wanted to see," exclaimed a delighted British resident standing beside me; "this does me good."

There was no cheering, however, and the burghers received the British commander respectfully but quietly. The General went at once to the Town Hall, and all burghers were requested to enter. They quickly accepted, and very soon the building was crowded.

The General read Lord Roberts's proclamation, setting forth the terms upon which burghers who had fought against us might surrender their arms, and escape being made prisoners of war. These conditions included the taking of an oath to abstain from any further active part in the war. This proclamation was followed by a statement of the situation to date (by way of set-off to the lies industriously circulated by the Transvaal authorities), and by a proclamation written by the General himself.

In this latter the burghers were told that the old Government had ceased to exist, and that, while the future of the country had yet to be determined by the advisers of Her Gracious Majesty the Queen, they might rest assured that their previous system of Government would not be restored. The General advised the burghers, therefore, to accept the inevitable, and to stay quietly on their farms pending the reorganisation of affairs. He warned them against the disobedience of any military orders, and intimated that persons discovered giving information to the enemy would be treated as spies. All of this, after having been read by the General in English, was afterwards read in Dutch, therefore nobody was left in the dark.

"Now," said the General, in conclusion, "if anybody has any complaint to make in regard to any proceeding on the part of any officer, soldier, or civilian with my force, let him make it now, and I will endeavour to do justice and punish any offender."

The few complaints made turned wholly on the cutting of wire fences.

"It is necessary," explained a staff officer, "to sometimes cut wire fences in order——"

"That you may escape," exclaimed a pert little lady present, and there was a general laugh, in which the British joined as heartily as the Dutch.

Rifles were then handed in, many burghers at once subscribed to the oath pledging them to non-interference, and the proceedings, which in many of their phases were very impressive, ended.

General Clements did not make any stay in the town, but at once returned to his head-quarters at Longkop. The sky had been overcast all the morning, and rain began to fall just as he arrived. The rain continued with hardly an intermission all through the night, and our men, vainly trying to sleep in the open air, had a miserable time. It was in wet weather that the absence of tents was principally felt. There were large barns and other shelter available, and for the life of me I don't know why they should not have been taken advantage of. The "military principle" by which men without tents are left in the soaking rain, when it is quite possible to put them under cover, commands no admiration from me. I know vulgar folks who call it "damned nonsense."

CHAPTER LXIX.

OUR TROOPS MARCH THROUGH—SUNDAY IN PHILIPPOLIS—A FIGHT FOR THE FLAG.

Sunday, the 25th March, was a great day in the history of Philippolis. When Gatacre's force of about 100 men entered the town a few days before, the burghers asked, "Is this the whole of the British army ?"

Whereupon an Englishman who heard the derisive question answered, with the favourite Dutch expression, "Vacht een bietje" (Wait a bit).

The burghers waited, and saw—the Tasmanians and the Inniskillings. They also saw the crowds of British officers who thronged into the town, and the foraging parties sent to buy supplies. Even these, however, did not constitute an army, and perhaps some of the burghers remained unimpressed.

On Sunday morning their last trace of scepticism disappeared when the whole of General Clements's column marched through the town. The rain, which had prevailed for a couple of days, had ceased, and the morning, although overcast, was fine.

At half-past seven the General and staff arrived with a mounted escort, and close behind him came the whole body of troops, which, now reinforced, numbered not less than 7000. First the two flanking bodies, then the main body of troops, finally the transport.

The Australians were very much in evidence, the whole Australian Regiment and the Second Victorians being in full strength. Marching in column of route, as the troops did, the whole procession took quite three and a half hours to pass the Town Hall. All the townsfolk and hundreds from the surrounding district assembled to see the sight, and if ever people were astonished these were. Each of the four regiments of infantry had a band, and to the strains of martial music the soldiers of the Queen passed through, and duly impressed Philippolis.

Never was such a sight seen there before. Never was the possibility of it conceived by even that most important and prolific-minded person, "the oldest inhabitant." The few British residents—and I include some who had become burghers of the Free State—were moved to a deep emotion, and there were wet eyes amongst them as the gallant Imperial regulars and Australian citizen soldiers passed in review before them.

True, as all were attired in khaki, there was an entire absence of such colour as you would see in an Albert Park review or a Jubilee march. Moreover, the soldiers' attire was anything but smart, for months of hard work had left its impress, and the bulk of the clothing was patched and dirty and grease-spotted. But the men who wore it were all right, and, marching at attention, with regular step and soldierly precision, they were in marked contrast with the mere hordes of Boers, with whom Philippolis had lately been acquainted.

It was, indeed, a great occasion, and yet quite unmarked by any vocal demonstration. It seemed strange to me, as I stood and watched the whole of the *cortège* pass, that British troops should march through a town and nobody raise a cheer. For the moment I had almost forgotten that it was the progress of a victorious army through the enemy's country. It could hardly have been expected that the vanquished would cheer, and it would have been decidedly impolitic for the British residents to give demonstrative expressions to the gratitude they so deeply felt.

Funeral-like was the march, in its perfect quiet, during the intervals between the welcome band-playing. Possibly, to every man who took part in or witnessed it, the experience was new and quite unique. The Dutch people talked quietly amongst themselves as the column went by, and some of those who had been "on commando" assumed the *rôle* of military instructors to their friends as they pointed out and criticised each of the several arms—artillery, cavalry, mounted infantry, footmen, cyclists, ambulance corps, transport, etc. And long after the last waggon had receded from view the burghers

talked and argued, and, I am afraid, even forgot that it was the Sabbath Day, and that it was time for church.

The British population of Philippolis has not, in recent years, numbered more than thirty or forty, but they own a very pretty little Anglican church, built in times when they mustered a good many more. To this church I turned my steps when the troops had departed, supposing that there might be something special in the service, conducted by the Rev. Mr. Wilson, long a refugee from Colesberg, who is one of the chaplains to the column. But I was disappointed. All I saw was a very High Church service, and a congregation of about 20 people, only half of them adults. It was the Feast of the Annunciation, and only that fact was remembered in the prayers and the sermon, not a reference of any kind being made to the altered condition of affairs, political and military, at Philippolis. Apparently the British residents had yet to speak with bated breath, for, as one citizen put it to me—

"We have to live with these Dutchmen. We have our homes here, and they can make it very uncomfortable for us when the troops have departed."

For the same reason a number who would have liked to be present abstained from attending a concert given on the previous night, in the Good Templars' Hall, by the Tasmanian Company. The hall was well filled by the "Tassies" themselves and the men of the Derbyshire garrison, but the civilians were few. A first-rate programme there was, and finally the audience joined in singing "God Save the Queen."

"Ah!" exclaimed a resident to me, as we passed out together, "this is the first time that the English National Anthem has been sung here."

I ventured the observation that it wouldn't be the last. By the way, there was a story current at Philippolis that a teacher engaged in the public school had been giving the children instruction in a little ditty, in which a line ending "Queen" was balanced by a line "Boil her in paraffin." A sweet thing in petticoats this teacher.

Going to church that morning led to my missing the departure of the Cape Colony rebels who were made prisoners there, and who were sent to Norval's Pont under a small escort of Australians. The prisoners numbered about 40, and most of them left the town on foot, their swags being carried on a waggon. Their departure was marked by open demonstrations of grief on the part of the Dutch people. Women assembled on the stoeps close to the starting point, and the air was filled with their cries of mourning. As the prisoners moved off, the mourning voices blended with those of the men themselves in singing the "Old Hundred."

A deeply pathetic incident it appears to have been, for even now some of these poor women, whose relatives were amongst the prisoners, most seriously and sincerely believed that British punishments are always most rigorous and merciless. As a matter of fact, with few exceptions, the "rebellion" charged against the prisoners turns upon their having, as the outcome of misguidance, come to the Free State at the opening of the war. Their sufferings would be slight. There were, however, a few cases of a more serious sort, and the fear that a good many of us entertained was that men who, by their sedition, have caused a fearful amount of human misery—yes, and human butchery—would escape far too lightly.

General Clements marched off proud in the possession of a Free State flag. He was delighted to have it, and, I happen to know, set great store upon that piece of official bunting. Now, where did he get it? Certainly it was not won in action, and, therefore, has no significance in that regard. Major Godley, commanding the Derbys, and, after Clements's departure, senior officer at Philippolis, told me that the flag belongs to him. He had secured it on the day of his arrival, and put it in what he believed to be a place of safety at the Town Hall. There some of Clements's people got hold of it, and, as in duty bound, surrendered it to the General.

"It is my flag," said Godley, "and I don't think I ought to be deprived of it in such a way."

General Clements, on his part, did not, apparently, recognise the right of Gatacre's officer to any control, and, naturally, resented the sharp conduct of his brother General in anticipating him at Philippolis after, it is said, having first ascertained by wiring to Clements what the latter's route was.

Whether this particular "fight for the flag" was seriously prosecuted I do not know, but Major Godley is distinctly of opinion that the insignia belongs to him. The Major is the most good-humoured of men, makes his claim laughingly, and will hardly, I think, take the case to the Commander-in-Chief.

CHAPTER LXX.

FORAGING FOR EXTRAS — PASTOR FRASER — RELIGIOUS, BUT BUSINESS-LIKE—DR. KRAUSE—THEY WANTED THE GENERAL

It was very amusing on that march to watch parties of officers foraging for little extras. There is a story that lately an officer had to consult an army surgeon with a view of being relieved of what in my youth was known by the homely name of stomach-ache.

"You'll have to take plain diet," said the surgeon; "what have you been eating?"

"Nothing but bully beef and biscuit for a fortnight," was the reply.

"Ah!" was the rejoinder; "diet much too rich. You'll have to liver plainer, sir; you'll have to live plainer."

A doctor with a nice sense of humour this. Anxiety to escape from the eternal round of bully beef and biscuit brought many an officer into the hotel, and sent many others exploiting the town. A loaf or two of fresh bread, a bit of butter, a few eggs, a little milk—these were greatly in demand, and it was no unusual sight to see field officers carrying handsful of eggs, or starting back to camp with loaves of bread protruding from their wallets.

"Before you came," said one of the Derby officers, "we fared well; now we get nothing."

"I'm quite cleaned out of everything," said a leading storekeeper to me; "and if they don't give me a pass to Port Elizabeth I may as well shut up shop."

After the column had departed the demand would cease. The Derbys were only to remain a few days longer, and the town was to be left without a garrison. This decided me against the acceptance of the post of Governor of Philippolis should that billet be offered. Meanwhile a goodly number of honest British sovereigns reposed in the stockings—or whatever else in the absence of the bank they use—of the Philippolis tradespeople.

An interesting figure in the life of the town is the Rev. Colin Fraser, pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church. This gentleman was born in the country, but he is of Scotch descent, was educated at Edinburgh, and is married to a Glasgow woman. The rev. gentleman has the distinction of being the father-in-law of President Steyn, who married one of his daughters. Mr. Fraser is one of the most bitterly hostile men that the British have to deal with. He strongly supports the policy of his "guid-son," and is vehement both in the pulpit and in private conversation in his denunciations of British policy in South Africa.

As lately as the Sunday before we arrived he told his people that upon those who took advantage of Lord Roberts's proclamation, and surrendered to the British, the "curse of God" would light. This deputy-Providence is so influential a man that it may be surprising that our military authorities did not deprive him of the opportunity of making mischief, but he was merely disregarded.

A party of Australian officers, who had not known what manner of man he was, called on him, and it must be conceded that, notwithstanding his political views, he was perfectly courteous and hospitable. Mr. Fraser is a Free State

burgher, and owes us no allegiance. He has done his duty to the burghers, ministering to them in the trenches during the war, and taking his chance of being hit by shot or shell; but it appears that his sense of duty did not impel him to follow the fortunes of his people any further than Philippolis, the very best house in which, and probably the most comfortable post, belong to the pastor.

"Are not the Dutch a very devout people?" I asked of a British Africander who has lived amongst them all his lifetime.

"In outward observances they are," was the reply; "but I regard them as more superstitious than really religious. The pastor is a great power amongst them, because he is an educated man, and they are often very ignorant, and I have little faith in either their truth or their honesty. If you go to a Dutchman's house, quote Scripture, and make a parade of religion, you will easily impress him, but the same Dutchman will lie with the greatest facility and cheat you if he can."

This is the opinion of a man with whom I have been associated sufficiently long to make me regard him favourably, but who, I quite realise, suffers from the strong antagonism which the British living in South Africa almost invariably entertain towards the Dutch.

Regarding the latter's Sabbath observance, I heard here a good story suggesting an episode in one of Ian M'Laren's books. It seems that if a cattle buyer goes to a Dutch farm on Sunday and mentions business, he is quickly told that it is no day for conversation of the kind.

"No," assents the wily dealer, anxious to get on; "you are quite right. But suppose it were Monday, and I asked you how many cattle you had?"

"Ah! if it were Monday," the farmer might reply, "I would say 200 head."

"And if it were Monday, what would you want for them?"

"Ah! on Monday I would want £8 a head."

"Well, if it were Monday I would give you £7 10s. Would you take that?"

"If it were Monday, yes, I would."

So on until the dealer writes his cheque, dated Monday, of course, arranges for delivery of the stock, and goes his way rejoicing that he had saved a day, and did everything that a Dutchman's conscience demanded of him. I do not guarantee this story. It fairly marks the attitude of a class of men I met—long before going to South Africa!

While at Philippolis I met Dr. Otto Krause, one of the surgeons to the Free Staters, but he was not then in a communicative mood. On the contrary, he was distinctly surly. The

doctor is also a chemist and druggist, and when I asked for mustard leaves for the relief of a sick man—he angrily remarked, "You stopped our getting in supplies by Delagoa Bay. How can you expect such things?"

Dr. Honman, of the Second Victorians, got on better than I. He had a long talk to, and finally dined with, Dr. Krause, who comes of a family quite famous in South Africa. The doctor bitterly denounced the British, declared that they had broken their pledges to the Dutch people, and so on. The same old rigmarole, apparently, that we heard so often, and which did not become a bit truer because of frequent repetition. The only thing really interesting to me in Dr. Honman's account of the conversation was the fact that Krause was at Pink Hill on the day we lost so heavily there, and had seen Captain M'Inerney. A bullet, he told Honman, had perforated the Victorian officer's thigh, but the wound was not a bad one, and the bone was not seriously injured.

There is an interesting sequel to my story of the present made at Philippolis to the officers of the Second Contingent of Victorians. It seems that the cakes and ale were handed by a kind British lady to Lieutenant Anderson, generally admitted to be one of the most handsome and distinguished-looking men in the contingents. Duty had carried him into the town in advance of the main body, and it now appears that he was taken for the General. I do not wonder at the error, for Clements, at his best, could never present so fine an appearance as Anderson does always, and without the least effort. It was *qua* General that the Victorian officer received the present, and I need hardly add that his acknowledgment was graceful.

Later on the donor formed one of a party of ladies driven to our camp. Naturally they inquired for the General's headquarters, but it took a lot of persuasion to convince them, when the General was pointed out, that the right man had been found. "No, no," said one lady, persistently, "that is not the General. The General is a tall, fine-looking man, with an auburn beard. We saw him in Philippolis to-day." Nor were they content until they found Lieutenant Anderson. There had been a mistake, but I have not heard anyone say that the lady regretted the fact of her present going into hands other than those for which it was originally intended.

Should the newspapers which I had the honour to represent in South Africa ever again require representation in that part of the world, I would strongly advise the appointment of a man who can speak Dutch. The great advantage possessed by those who can over those who can't I was able to frequently observe and realise. For instance, I did not discover, but a Dutch-speaking man did, that the place where

we were camped one evening was familiarly, although not geographically, known as "Pharaoh's Fountain." And, to get on well with these people, it is necessary to speak at least Cape Dutch. I say at least, because less than Cape Dutch won't do.

One day a British officer was making inquiries, through an interpreter, as to the nature of the road the transport was to pass over the following morning. After the Boer farmer questioned had given all the information in his power, the officer had a little go on his own account. As near as I could catch it, what he said was—

"Den de paat es not too goet."

"What do you say?" inquired the Boer, in English, and I never saw a more badly astonished officer.

CHAPTER LXXI.

A Ride with the Parson—We Visit Several Farms—On to Fauresmith—We "Occupy" the Town.

On Sunday General Clements's force, having marched through and sufficiently impressed Philippolis, continued its quite peaceful progress, and camped for the night about eight miles beyond the town. The weather had cleared, and the night was spent on the veldt without more discomfort than is almost necessarily associated with sleeping out. The ground was damp after the continuous rain, but it was not excessively cold, and the wearied troops were glad that, in addition to a cold wind, they had not to endure a downpour of rain in their hours of rest.

These things I have been told, for I was not with the column. On the contrary, being a comparatively free person, not feeling quite well, and, moreover, reflecting that good people are scarce and bad ones afraid to die, I resolved that duty required me to stay in Philippolis, write up my notes, go to church in the evening (the second time that Sunday), and overtake the column next day.

In this arrangement I was able to count upon the companionship of Chaplain Wilson, a man who in his time has played the parts of journalist, trooper (Cape Mounted Rifles), and clergyman, and I have little doubt played them all well. A prince of good fellows is the boyish-looking little man who ministers to the spiritual necessities of a large section of the column, and nobody could wish for a truer, pluckier, and more spirited comrade. He had had a small congregation in the morning, but in the evening the church was filled, and the strong voices of the Derbyshire Mounted Infantry made a volume of sound

in that pretty little building such as it had never in its history known before. Mr. Wilson and I spent the balance of the evening at the residence of Mr. Stewart, the local schoolmaster, and daylight found us astir ready for the business of the day.

We had let the column get quite away from us; we were not too certain of the roads, and it was a wet morning. A conjunction of circumstances not wholly pleasant, yet not half bad enough to give us any concern. We had resolved before starting that, whatever the column might do, we were going into Fauresmith before nightfall. As we had all day wherein to do the ride of, by the right road, about 32 miles, the travelling involved was not very serious. But we had also resolved to call at some of the farms *en route*, and ascertain how matters were going with the Free Staters. This, in the disturbed condition of the country, was a somewhat difficult, and might easily be a perilous, business. Perhaps neither of us, in the first instance, realised it as acutely as we should have done, but the gentlemen at the first farm we called at were so decidedly gruff and unpleasant that it was early brought to our consciousness.

Not even the fact—carefully and tactfully pointed out—that one of us was a clergyman, and that the other ought to have been, seemed to impress that first met group of Free State bucolics. We had ridden six miles in the rain, and were feeling moist and chilly, yet those inhospitable persons drank their morning coffee right before our eyes, and never offered us any. We did not ask for it, and went our way, not quite certain whether we should not have our pace accelerated by a Mauser bullet.

A few miles further on we turned the point of a hill, and suddenly found ourselves face to face with three fully armed Boers. Their rifles were slung across their shoulders, and their bandoliers were as full of cartridges as if they were just going into action. Neither of us carried arms, and both the parson and I felt that the situation was not wholly agreeable. However, there was no get out of it, so we went straight on, and were pleasantly relieved when the enemy—each of him—pulled off his hat and bowed to us.

"Going to give up your arms?" I inquired, with the air and in the tone of a Field-Marshal.

"Yes," was the reply.

"All right; go on to Philippolis, and see Major Godley," I commanded. "Good-morning," and with that we rode on.

It would be absurd to say that this bluff saved us, for the chances are that the three men had not the faintest intention of being hostile, yet still I was heartily glad when we were fairly out of range of those dreadful-looking rifles, and gladder

still when we knew that "our friend the enemy" was a few miles in the rear.

The country north of Philippolis is that in which the traveller from Cape Colony gets the first idea of the characteristic flatness of the Free State. For the first time for a month we escaped from seas of kopjes, and rode across broad, grass-covered plains, beautiful in their glossy greenness under the quick influence of the long-needed rain. We would have been well content ourselves had the rain fallen at a time when we were under the shelter of an honest roof, and we reflected that the foot soldiers, trudging wearily along, somewhere on our right, were having a bad time that day.

We made good pace, and presently reached a point where it was evident that troops had passed the night. A sullen-looking Dutchman and a dull, shabby boy appeared to be the only living creatures about, and we managed to glean enough from them to—put us on the wrong road! True, they indicated which way the troops had gone, and we followed it. Only, however, to find later on that we were outflanking the left flanking column instead of following the main body. In happy ignorance that this was the case, we held on until we blundered upon a farm occupied by no less distinguished a person than Commandant Jacobs and his six or seven stalwart sons.

Had we arrived much earlier our reception might have been unpleasant, but we had the good luck to come upon the scene as a patrol of Inniskillings was making ready to depart with a great store of war material, which had been packed in Mynheer Jacobs's own waggon.

"We have just seized 32,000 rounds of ammunition," said the subaltern in charge of the patrol, "and a nice little supply of rifles."

I earnestly and honestly assured the officer that we were glad to hear it, and urged him to stay a while. Then, pointedly and deliberately, I asked for coffee. This was quickly forthcoming, also other kindly hospitality. My companion had become very wet. The sight of him waiting on the Boer Commandant's verandah for his clothes to dry, and meanwhile clad in home-made trousers intended for one of the boys of the household, was something to see and remember. It was even potent enough to reach the sense of humour of a Dutch family, and the Commandant's household possibly never laughed so much in their lives as they did that morning. We outstayed by an hour the departure of the dragoons, fed our horses, smoked, and talked (through a pretty young lady interpreter) to these interesting people. The idea of two men in their senses careering about an enemy's country without arms or escort seemed to impress them as the most strikingly

funny thing they had ever heard of. At the "cheek"—that was the word used—of it they were simply lost in astonishment.

From the dragoons my companion and I ascertained in which direction we might expect to fall in with the main body, and we struck off across country. About an hour and a half's riding from Commandant Jacobs's brought us to a farm called Spitzkop, from which not only did we come in view of the rear of our baggage train, but into distinct recognition of several horses standing in the farm kraal. Therefore we entered gaily, and although not in time to join, we were ready enough to follow, a party of Australian officers who were having a very nice midday dinner with the family.

The owner of hospitable Spitzkop is a Mr. Lubbe, one of a large family of the name in the Free State. He and his sons and brothers had been out against us, and the whole family had been taught to believe that when the British came they would take everything they wanted and burn the rest. A cheque for £32 for fodder supplied to our commissariat helped largely to convince the Lubbe family of the error of their former beliefs; but even to the end some of them were sceptical.

As I sat on the stoep a young lady of the household pointed to the smoke rising from the British camp fire, just newly lighted, at the halting place, six miles further across the plain. "What is that?" she asked in alarm, and it cost me some effort to convince her that our troops were not burning a homestead hard by the camp. Probably not until we had gone on, and the family was left in full possession of all that had not been paid for, did the Lubbes really believe that we had no designs on their property, and had merely deferred the use of the fire stick until we had finished our after-dinner pipes.

An easy ride brought us to the camping place of the column, and it was ascertained that the march had been unmarked by any adventure. The Boer commando which was to have opposed us at Fauresmith had, it was understood, melted away, but Fauresmith was quite fourteen miles off, and the precise situation there was not very clearly known. Was it safe to enter Fauresmith? That was a question nobody could clearly answer. Perhaps it was, perhaps it was not.

"The commando who laid down arms have resumed them," said one comforter. "The place is perfectly quiet," said another.

Had it been a fine afternoon, perhaps the chaplain and I would have hesitated. As it was raining hard, and likely to continue all the night, we decided to take our chance and

move on. After all, we reflected, if the Landdrost noticed us and put us into the "tronk," we will be released by the British next day, and we could not fare worse than we would on the rain-soaked veldt. We had already ridden 38 miles by the circuitous road we had travelled, so we rested our horses before the last stage was undertaken. At its close we had travelled 42 miles, and entered Fauresmith half an hour before dark. As we rode down the main street, groups of people, whose curiosity was apparent, scrutinised us very closely, and for a while we imagined that we were first in. But in a crowd, at what proved to be the Market Square, I presently saw some faces and figures of horsemen with whom I was not unfamiliar, and in a few minutes I was shaking hands with Captain Sergeant, of the Victorian Second Contingent.

"We're first in," he said; "we came for the Landdrost. The General sent for him, and he refused to meet him. We've got him, and are just taking him out."

"Are you leaving men in the town?" I asked.

"Only one, whose horse is lame," was the answer; "and I believe one of the Rimingtons is staying." Then off the man went, attended by Lieutenant Anderson and 50 stalwart Victorians who had been told off to escort the wilful Landdrost.

I was certainly the first war correspondent into Fauresmith, but the situation might be disagreeable. Never mind; here we were, and we stayed.

The important town of Fauresmith was "occupied" by the British on the evening of Monday, the 26th March. The "army" of occupation consisted of four persons, viz., Private Cox, of the Second Victorian Contingent; Guide Lucas, Acting Chaplain Wilson, and myself. And, notwithstanding many things, the "army" was perfectly intact next morning, there not being a single casualty.

To say that it was a great night for the British residents is but faintly to describe the situation. A genial leader of the revels was Dr. Key, a robust and handsome Scotchman, well on the young side of middle age, and a prominent figure in the social life of this town. Never were men made more welcome than the diminutive "army of occupation"—four all told. The doctor and his fellow-Britishers could not do enough for us, and their long pent up enthusiasm was allowed a degree of expression which, had the Dutch been in less retiring mood, might have proved unpleasant. I was introduced to, and received many kindly courtesies from, Mr. R. D. Beddy, a County Louth man, and member of the Free State Legislature for Fauresmith. I also met the Rev. Reginald Stephens, the Anglican minister, and quite a score of others

who for months had lived under a virtual reign of terror in this town.

"This is Mr. X.; he was a month in the tronk," was quite an ordinary and strongly recommending form of introduction, and the stories told of what the British had to endure when the Dutchmen were triumphant are of much the same class as those I reproduced in connection with the emancipation of the British town of Colesberg.

If you want to know what heartiness is, you should have seen the way our one toast—"The Queen: God Bless Her!"—was honoured when the doctor entertained the "army of occupation" at dinner. While the British were letting off the steam inside, a party of equally delighted "boys" (Kaffirs) tried on the same game outside, venturing even to serenade our dinner party, and play "God Save the Queen" on tin whistles. But the vigilant Free State policeman on his beat couldn't stand that, and he angrily drove the "boys" off with his whip. I am afraid that policeman's occupation is gone.

CHAPTER LXXII.

AT JAGERSFONTEIN—THE BRITISH ENTRY—SOUTH AUSTRALIAN WORK—LEGISLATOR BEDDY—PHILIP DRUNK AND PHILIP SOBER.

Six miles east of Fauresmith stands the brisk little town of Jagersfontein, famed for its diamond mine, and made by it. For years the Dutch had, in a half-hearted fashion, scratched the earth in this locality. It was left to an Australian, named Kerr, an experienced digger, to demonstrate that Jagersfontein would pay, and from it are now won the finest diamonds found in South Africa. The De Beers hold a large controlling interest in the Jagersfontein Mining and Exploring Company, of which Mr. Dobell is local manager, and Legislator Beddy a local director. This mine is worked in co-operation with those of Kimberley, and represents great wealth and enterprise. When in full going order it employs about 280 whites—generally at high wages—and 2500 Kaffirs, and the monthly expenses amount to about £25,000. But as Jagersfontein turns out diamonds to the tune of about £60,000 a month, the expenditure is more than justified.

The town which has sprung up around the mine rivals Fauresmith in importance, therefore General Clements did not overlook it. In the morning I drove over with Dr. Key, had breakfast, inspected the local hospital, where some wounded British soldiers were under treatment, had a look at the huge hole in the ground where the diamondiferous stone is being

quarried, and was ready for the General's reception at nine o'clock.

The British commander was attended only by a squadron of Inniskillings, and his reception was markedly cordial. The proclamations were read in English and Dutch, as at Philippolis, and the business of receiving the arms of the burghers at once entered upon.

"Is that all the ceremony," exclaimed one English lady when the whole thing was over; "I thought we should at least have had 'God Save the Queen.'"

"Ah! vacht een bietje" (wait a bit), said another, significantly, at which apt application of the familiar Dutch sentiment everybody laughed.

General Clements made a good impression, visited the mine and the hospital, shook hands with everybody, and showed that he can be pleasant and genial as a citizen, although stern and rigorous as a General. He and the escort were warmly cheered on their departure from Jagersfontein, their treatment being in sharp contrast with the coldness shown at Philippolis. Jagersfontein had never in its life such an interesting and exciting morning. Even the Dutch there appeared to be in good humour, and exceedingly glad that the fighting was over.

Only the left flanking column—which included the two Victorian and the New South Wales and Tasmanian companies of the Australian Regiment—marched through Jagersfontein. Fauresmith was honoured, as Philippolis had been, by a march through of the whole force, and once more there was martial music in the air. The troops went into camp for the night a little beyond the town, and General Clements conducted the now customary ceremony at the Town Hall. A new Landdrost was appointed, owing to the old one being still disinclined to acknowledge our authority, and arrangements made for carrying on the official business of the place under British auspices. The two hotels in the town did a great trade that day, and there was only one toast tolerated, "The Queen: God Bless Her!"

Captain Howland, at the head of a section of his own company (South Australians) had a fair share of adventures in and around Fauresmith. It was his delicate and unpleasant duty to search the premises of Commandant Van Der Post, one of the Free State leaders, who managed to keep out of the way after our troops came into the district. Madame Van Der Post objected, and the Netherlands Consul, coming on the scene, asked Howland for his authority. The South Australian Captain pointed to the stars on his shoulders, and replied, "There is my authority. I only obey orders." More-

over, he carried these orders out in their entirety, notwithstanding the claim made that Van Der Post was a Hollander.

Whatever be the merits of the claim that the Netherlands flag protects this man's property, it was evident that he did not trust his sacred person to it, for Van Der Post was still in hiding. It is known that he was the commandant of a Boer force which fought against us, and that he did all he could to prevent the burghers from surrendering. Therefore, no act of ours had done violence to international law.

Another of Howland's duties was to discover a number of field pieces said to have been buried at a point indicated to him, a few miles north of Fauresmith. His men had some fine digging exercise before it was admitted that a previous disturbance of the earth was fully accounted for by the fact that a party of prospectors had been over the same ground, and had, in accordance with the State mining laws, filled in the shaft they had sunk when convinced that the claim was a "duffer."

The searching for arms led to a strong development of a marked feature of the Dutch character. In most cases the searching parties were met with protests by the owners of premises that they had no arms of any kind. In some instances the burghers even went the length of taking their oath that they had none. The Australian searchers became experts at the business, and it is wonderful how often they succeeded in proving that the protesting burghers were quite unornamental liars. The large stores of weapons and ammunition found in and around Fauresmith demonstrated that it was not for lack of warlike stores that the burghers gave in so precipitately. They had field guns, Maxims, and immense supplies of ammunition.

Amongst the foremost in kindly courtesies to our troops at Fauresmith was Mr. Beddy, who, as I have mentioned, represented the town in the Free State Legislature. One of this gentleman's acts of kindness may be specially mentioned. About midnight on the day before we marched out, a New South Wales party, 33 all told, under Sergeant Liggings, arrived from Jagersfontein. They had been without rations all day, for some blunder had been made in ordering their movements, and after their arrival in Fauresmith they found that they belonged to nobody in particular. Major Rankin, second in command of the Australian Regiment, happened to be about when the party arrived, and Mr. Beddy chanced to be with him. The genial Irishman met the situation in a fashion both prompt and efficacious. First he found stabling for the horses, then food and drink for the men, and ultimately he turned several of the rooms at his private house

into barracks, put mattresses on the floor, served out a generous ration of rum all round, and made everybody happy.

The one thing which seemed to surprise Mr. Beddy was that, although he left a further supply of rum within reach of the Australians, they took no more than was allotted them.

"That I can hardly regard as surprising," I thought proper to say.

"Well, perhaps not," said Mr. Beddy; "but it is to the credit of those tired and, I have no doubt, very thirsty Australians all the same."

We heard stories of the behaviour of some British prisoners who happened to pass through or near Fauresmith on their way to the capital. One party of infantry, said to have been captured by a despicable piece of white flag treachery, insisted upon singing "The Soldiers of the Queen," and similar songs, in defiance of their captors. The latter ordered these men to take off their metal water-bottles, articles of equipment always welcome to the Boers. Our fellows complied with the order, and each then deliberately put his foot on his water-bottle and smashed it. The Boers were much exasperated, and threatened to shoot the prisoners, but did not even "make an example."

This threatening to shoot was very common in Fauresmith and Jagersfontein. Into the latter town a couple of the Guides came in advance of our troops, and carried Lord Roberts's proclamation. A party of armed Boers in the town promptly seized the audacious Guides, declaring that they would shoot all who opposed them, and the two men slept that night in the "tronk." They were liberated next day, only to find that the enemy had cleared out northwards with their (the Guides') horses and equipment.

Over a hundred of the supply waggons captured from Lord Roberts during the first stage of his advance into the Free State passed through Jagersfontein, and so liberally were Boers helping themselves to the provisions that the waggons must have been greatly lightened before they reached Bloemfontein. While well-to-do farmers and other comfortable burghers serving in the laagers lived well during the fighting, first-rate supplies being regularly sent by their families, the poorer fighting men were often pinched, and a capture of British supplies was a Godsend to them

What a difference a little liquor makes! On my way to Fauresmith I sat for half an hour on the stoep of a farm, whose owner, as he smoked his pipe and made observations touching upon the state of the country, said, in good, pious Dutch style, "God will hold responsible those who caused this war." The same man was in Fauresmith two days later, and, although the supplies of ordinary grog were supposed to

be exhausted, managed to get enough Cape wine, or other liquid brain-disturber, to make himself a conspicuous person amongst the British guests at the leading hotel. He was more than affectionate, and used English swear-words with an ease and success which could only have been acquired after diligent study of our figures of rough speech and a fair amount of practice. In no spirit of unfriendliness, but apparently with a desire to make everybody feel quite at home and happy, he called a number of British officers by an epithet said to be used as a term of endearment amongst sailors, and he seemed pained and grieved to learn from one of them that the continued use of this word might lead to his ears being boxed. His apology was marked alike by its downright earnestness and its euphonious profanity. Philip drunk was a very different person from Philip sober, and I could hardly believe that anything could have wrought such a marvellous change in the tone and language of my *ci-devant* pious host. Wine is indeed a mocker!

CHAPTER LXXIII.

Death of Captain Hopkins—More of Sergeant Grant.

It was at a period of general rejoicing that sad, very sad, news reached us at Fauresmith. In the midst of the foregatherings, health-drinking, and other jubilation, a telegram from the military hospital at Naauwpoort came as a shock indeed, for it stated that the brave Captain Hopkins had, after a comparatively brief illness, fallen a victim to the fearful disease which, only about a fortnight previously, had killed Captain Salmon. "Hard luck! hard luck!" was the general exclamation on all sides, and it is easy to say that the words are poor and feeble, perhaps meaningless; but they are those which men on service almost invariably use when a good and esteemed comrade dies in hospital, and the circumstances invest them with sorrowful meaning which non-fighting folks, who stay quietly at home and read their daily newspapers, can hardly understand or appreciate.

"Poor chap! poor old chap!" is the soldier's comment when a comrade falls under the enemy's bullets; "Hard luck! hard luck!" it is when one dies of disease. No terms, however graceful and ornate, could the soldier endow with greater wealth of pathos than those simple and homely expressions of sorrowing hearts.

Captain Hopkins contracted typhoid while serving with the Western Australians at a point on our extreme right just before Clements's column crossed the Orange River. It had been decreed by the Highest Power that he was not to accompany

us beyond the limits of Cape Colony, that he was not to see the wealth of the Free State, as I know he had hoped to see it. On the second day of General Babbington's reconnaissance, I rode with him into the Free State, when we made investigations on its western border; therefore, I got to know his mind on the subject of our expected future doings.

"I *would* like to see Bloemfontein," he remarked, and I recollect answering, "All in good time, doctor; all in good time." Alas! how finite is human knowledge, how short the range of human vision! That some of us would get snot before Bloemfontein was reached, we quite counted upon. The idea of Hopkins dying of typhoid certainly never crossed my mind, probably never entered his.

At the beginning of his illness he rode from the advanced post to the head-quarters camp at Van Zyk's Siding, and stayed there a day. His medical *confrère*, Major Toll, was quick to form the opinion that the case was one that could only be properly treated at a hospital, and arrangements for the sufferer's removal were quickly made. For his conveyance to the railway station an ambulance waggon was used. In it he lay when we said "Good-bye." He looked so well, and was so bright and cheerful, that there was no end of chaff and badinage.

"Nice little holiday, doctor," said one.

"Are you going to make it a week or a fortnight?" asked another.

"We'll give you three weeks, Hopkins," I recollect saying; "then you must come back fit and well, for we can't spare you."

"Ah," was his reply, "I'll never come back. If I pull through, this is a six or eight weeks' business, and I can only hope to meet you in Cape Town, old man. My campaign is over."

Prophetic words, the fulness of whose truth was borne home to us as we sadly read and re-read the unwelcome telegram announcing his death. The life's campaign of a true man has been suddenly closed. I could wish myself nothing better, when my turn comes to cross the bar, than an ability to present as good a record as that of our comrade called to his reward.

Readers will hardly need to be reminded of the great work done for the Australian Regiment, and for the forces generally, by Captain Hopkins. On that fatal day at Pink Hill he received his real baptism of fire, and went through it like the gallant man he was. No post was too perilous, no danger too great to be incurred if a wounded man had to be reached or attended, and his several escapes under a remorseless pelting of bullets were almost miraculous. He has won a fame that will live for ever in the hearts of the Australian Regi-

ment. Because of it—because he has played well his part, Australia will remember him as one of its heroic spirits, as one who in the hour of test proved himself worthy of the confidence reposed in him, and nobly sustained the fame of our continent in the cause of the Empire. To the loved ones bereaved, those ever in his thoughts and deeply considered in bright schemes for the future, which he and I often discussed together, the Australian Regiment offered not merely a conventional expression of regret, but real tribute in the tender, heartfelt sorrow of those who are also mourners, who deplore the loss of a beloved comrade, a soldier and a man.

On my way into Fauresmith, on Monday evening, I rode with a young fellow named Lubbe, who had been fighting against us at a number of places during the war. He was able to tell me something new in regard to the death of Sergeant Grant, of the Victorian Mounted Rifles, who was killed in February, near Hobkirk's Farm, under circumstances already generally related.

"I recollect the patrol, with whom Grant was, being fired upon," said Lubbe, who speaks English well, "for I was one of our party at Hobkirk's that day. Grant was hit the first time we fired, and he fell behind a small bush. He lay still for a few minutes, and then he moved in such a way that one of our men thought he was making ready to fire from behind the bush. Our man at once fired, and Grant did not stir again. It was unfortunate that he moved, for it may be that he was not fatally wounded by the first bullet, and that the second killed him. Had he remained still we should have simply taken him prisoner, and he would have had a chance for recovery."

Poor Grant! He was not the sort of man to "remain still" with the enemy in front of him. Yet I agree with the Free Stater in the view that "it was unfortunate he moved," under the circumstances. It might have been otherwise, but "every bullet has its billet," they say, and it was ordered that one of the two fired by the enemy that day was to kill Sergeant Grant. Honour to the memory of my dear old comrade!

CHAPTER LXXIV.

THE COLUMN MOVES ON—THE MARCH NORTHWARD—A VISIT TO PETRUSBURG.

The right flanking column, to which the First Victorians, New South Wales men, and some Tasmanians belonged, started at daylight on the 28th on a lengthy detour, their business being to enter and impress a number of villages, and to join the main column on the road to Bloemfontein. Other of

the mounted troops, chiefly the Second Victorians, were at this time busy in the district visiting farms and seizing munitions of war. Some field pieces and a Vickers-Maxim (the famous "Pom Pom") fell into our hands, also a great store of small arms and ammunition. Near Philippolis we found and destroyed a quantity of dynamite, but of that explosive there appeared to be little in this district. The town was full of farmers who had come in to surrender their arms, and on the whole they seemed to be doing so gladly enough, except that they do not like being deprived of their means of shooting the springbok and other game upon which some of them depend in large measure for their meat supplies. It is a little hard on the British residents that they, too, had to hand over their sporting equipment, but they were forced to yield to "the exigencies of war," and it was quite understood that the British General was not a man to be played with.

Before General Clements left the Fauresmith district he established a military hospital in the commodious hospital buildings at Jagersfontein. Dr. Key, medical superintendent, received into the establishment no fewer than 143 British soldiers. Some of these were treated by the army surgeons and allowed to go into tents outside, but 54 cases were serious enough to require inside treatment.

Ultimately the local work was declared accomplished, and the Impression Column marched again.

The word Driekop will hardly suggest to the mind of the Australian reader the name of a place. As a fact, it is only the name given to a farm, beside which General Clements's column halted for the night after a fairly long march. The Impression Column had to endure all sorts of weather. Before reaching Fauresmith there were days and—what is worse—nights of rain, and our unlucky, tentless men had a very bad time indeed. After leaving Fauresmith we were favoured with delightfully fine days, not very hot, with perhaps the exception of the 1st April, when the sun was more trying than usual, even to those who were partly acclimatised after living in the country for over four months, and enduring the worst of the summer.

The first day's march from Fauresmith, which we left early on the 29th March, brought us to Reit River, the junction of which with the Modder marks the settlement near which Lord Methuen so long sat down in front of Magersfontein. We crossed a serviceable, but ugly, bridge, and camped on the bank of a lovely stream, where many of us enjoyed a bath in the cool of the evening. Next evening the distance covered was about fifteen miles—a good day's tramp for infantry—and we halted at a farm familiarly called "Bettyput," but which really is Biesjesbult, and ought always to be carefully

pronounced, even at the risk of lockjaw. I was able to buy fresh bread and butter for my party, which, I may say, included Colonel Hoad, Major Rankin, Captain Lascelles, and some orderlies. It was a party with few duties on this march, but with many human wants, and probably the reason that I was selected to buy supplies was found in my growing though recent acquaintanceship with Cape Dutch. Notwithstanding this intimacy, I found it convenient to operate through the medium of a Guide amongst the orderlies who knew the familiar language of the country in many more of its phases than I could pretend to. I found everywhere the same commercial keenness on the part of the farmers and their good ladies as I observed further south. If they had supplies they were only too eager to sell, but the way in which the tariff was regulated positively gave the lie to the idea that the Boers never charge. The third day from Fauresmith brought the main body to Boschkop, a farm south of Petrusburg; and the fourth brought us to Drickop.

The work which General Clements's column had to do was of such a character that it involved a considerable distribution of forces. For some days the great problem had been to know where people were. The Australians were scattered all over the face of the country. Small patrols of the mounted men, sometimes under officers, at others under non-coms., had worked through the district, visiting and examining the farms, searching for hidden stores of arms and ammunition reported to exist, and occasionally arresting bellicose burghers who had not had enough fighting, and refused to submit to British authority. There were not many of such, but the few dissidents had to be secured as an essential feature in the establishment of "law and order," as we want it in the Free State.

The Second Victorians had their part in this work while the infantry lay at Fauresmith, but on our moving out they were brought together again, and resumed their former duty of advanced guard to the main body. The Tasmanians had much hunting for hidden arms, and were for the most part left at Jagersfontein with a garrison mainly composed of the Berkshire Regiment; but a party of the "Tassies" were with Major Dauncey, who also had the Western Australians and some of the South Australians in one of the flanking columns, and we of the main body had only a long-distance, bowing acquaintanceship with them.

In addition to the strategic flanking work in which our men figured, and the searching for arms, there was the all-important business of foraging. The commissariat original supplies of fodder had long since given out, and we were dependent day by day upon what the foraging parties could accomplish. As

foraging means going from farm to farm inquiring, begging, commandeering, it will be easily understood how much the Australians were scattered. In fact, you could hardly visit a farm over an area of many square miles of the district without either encountering or hearing of a patrol of Australians. I have reason to believe that General Clements is thoroughly satisfied with the way in which they did their work—in every department of it.

Our route was intended to be a circuitous one, and we made a long round. Your map will not show the many "fonteins," "pans," and "kops" we passed, or beside which we camped, but it ought to show the town of Petrusburg. Clements's main body marched from Fauresmith to a point within about four miles of Petrusburg before turning eastward. That turn was made on the 1st April, and at Driekop we struck the main road to Bloemfontein at a point about fourteen miles east to Petrusburg. So long as the column, or parts of it, moved well south of the line of Lord Roberts's advance into the Free State the feeding of horses and transport mules was a comparatively easy matter. Most of the farmers possessed supplies, and the dumb animals with us got the regulation allowance of forage. Further north it was a very different story. Some 17,000 troops went through Petrusburg a few weeks before we arrived at Driekop. The Boers have described our men as a swarm of locusts, as numerous, and of the same colour (khaki). The description is made the more complete by the fact that, like locusts, they had eaten up all the supplies. Some of the farms we met with had been deserted by the owners, the others were bare. It was only owing to a wide scouring of the country that the commissariat people succeeded in getting enough fodder to provide half rations for the horses. Fortunately, there were patches of grassy veldt on the way, and at each halt the poor animals got a little grazing.

Although the column did not get into Petrusburg, I found an opportunity of visiting it and making a few observations. It is a small town, remarkable for the size of its two ugly churches. The few British residents found life sufficiently exciting just then, for there was no garrison in the place, and armed Boers made visitations almost every day. On the day before my visit a small foraging party from our column rode in and were sniped at the entrance to the town, the horse of one man being killed. A Boer leader named Visscher is said to have headed the parties of the enemy, who have a weakness for horses, and I shouldn't be surprised to learn that Visscher was stocking a nice little farm. Certain it is that the Boer visitors—not a bit more welcome to the Dutch residents than they are to the British—were helping themselves at Petrus-

burg, and the peace-loving residents would have been delighted to see a British garrison in the town. As I had no wish to fall in with one of the enemy's armed parties, I did not stay long in Petrusburg; but, as fresh water had been scarce for a couple of days, I had a good bath at the hotel, and risked being caught in it by the wily Boer. Honesty compels me to say that there was a fairly strong British forage party not far away, and had any Boers arrived they would probably have been entertained quite long enough to permit of my strategic retreat. It is just as well to mention all the facts, for I don't want my readers to write me down an idiot, and I have learned to entertain a wholesome respect for Boer bullets.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE MARCH COMPLETED — ARRIVAL AT BLOEMFONTEIN—CLEMENTS'S COLUMN DISPERSED—WORK OF THE FLYING COLUMN—SITUATION AT KOFFYFONTEIN.

The last few days' march of the column were devoid of much noteworthy incident. There was some wet, uncomfortable weather during Sunday night and Monday morning, but it did not last long, and by midday we were once more under a strong sun. In order that the horses and mules might graze during the day, when there is less danger of the grass making them sick than is said to exist in the mornings or evenings, we had one evening march. It was very dark, things got a good deal mixed up, and, altogether, it is a mercy that the Boer did not happen upon us. We had been told by the camp liar that the enemy was many miles away, that he had been smashed up at Kroonstad, and so on. As a matter of fact, he was at that moment capturing British guns close to Bloemfontein, and had he been a little more spirited he might easily have given Clements's column a very hot time. A miss is, happily, as good as a mile, and we had a fortunate let-off. Few of us are likely to forget, however, the discomforts and possible perils incidental to that quite avoidable night march—one of the worst-managed bits of work done under Clements's orders.

On the morning following it (Tuesday) we started at daylight, and moved on a few miles to a farm about twenty miles out of Bloemfontein.

Knowing that the column would not arrive till next day, and my duties requiring more rapid movement, I rode into the capital on the 3rd, in the company of a Rimington Guide bearing despatches. Arriving about four o'clock, I was able, before dark, to do some of my business and take a casual look

at an interesting place. It is a picturesque, fairly well laid-out city, although the streets are rather narrow. It contains some fine buildings, and most of the conveniences of civilisation. The hotels were full of officers, as also were the clubs and leading boarding-houses. Camps were pitched all around, and the streets were full of soldiers. There were bugle calls, and band-playing, and the marching of armed men at all hours of the night and day, and the martial spirit was everywhere.

I was surprised to find the place so British. Our countrymen appear to occupy a considerable proportion of the business establishments, our language is spoken everywhere, and the sign-boards offer such plain English intimations as these :—"Bread and Biscuits—Wedding Cakes made on the shortest notice." I quote this because it happened to confront me when I looked through the window of a room where I was writing, and I rejoiced that I was once more off the veldt and within the area where you could get a wedding cake if you wanted it. At least, I did rejoice until an orderly sought to buy a cake for some officers still camped outside. Alas! it appeared that no such luxury was then available, as Bloemfontein was short of supplies, and the baker had no sugar. Better things for him all in good time.

General Clements's column arrived at Bloemfontein on Wednesday, 4th April, on the completion alike of its circuitous march through the western district of the Free State and of its own existence. A few miles out orders were issued which brought once more together the scattered parts of companies and regiments, and also broke up the column. Its purpose had been served, and there was, perhaps, no need of its continuance as a separate military organisation. The infantry were sent to one of the divisions camped near the city, and the artillery repaired to their several brigades.

All the mounted troops, which included the Australian Regiment, the Second Victorians, and a company of the Oxfords, were placed under the senior officer, Colonel Tom Price, and marched to a camping ground within a mile and a half of Bloemfontein. Some few detachments had yet to come in, but, with these exceptions, all were brought together once more, after a trying march, and it was surprising how fit and well the men looked. The horses had suffered most, not so much because of the actual work done as because of the small allowance of forage available to them during the last five or six days. To such a pass did things come in some parts of the column that the horses were fed on army biscuits. The "forty-niners" were put into the nose-bags and pounded, and the hungry animals ate greedily, and with a crunching that could be heard afar off, their unaccustomed diet.

Before the column broke up General Clements took occasion to express to Colonel Hoad his unbounded admiration of the work done by the Australian Regiment while it formed part of his command.

"I shall see Lord Roberts this evening," said the General, "and I shall tell him what splendid service you and your men have rendered. I thank you very much."

A few days previously General Clements used an opportunity to make some favourable remarks concerning some of the Australian officers, and on that occasion said, "I wish to say that I particularly admire the excellent work of Captain M'Leish at all times. He is a good officer, and I think a great deal of him." It is plain that the Australians passed out of the disintegrated Clements's column with a good, and now well-established, reputation.

We had expected to find here the horses, tents, and baggage left under the charge of Captain Bruche at Norval's Pont. We arrived to find that Bruche, with men and horses, were marching up, and had only left on the 2nd. The tents and baggage had been loaded on a railway truck, but, by Lord Kitchener's orders, they were taken off again, as the rolling stock was required for other purposes. Everybody was very much inconvenienced and uncomfortable by being deprived of their canvas shelters and necessary changes of clothing. Major Toll and Chaplain Wray came up by train, arriving on the same day that Clements's column completed its march. Captain Kendall was with Bruche, bringing up the horses and men. Lieutenant Darling (W.A.) had been left behind with the baggage.

The reunion of the several parts of the column near the city enabled me to ascertain how the First Victorians, New South Wales men, Westralians, and some of the Tasmanians had fared on an interesting piece of detached work set for them at Fauresmith. Being all mounted, they got over a good deal of ground at a fair speed. General Clements accompanied the flying column as far as Koffyfontein, a little township at the diamond mine of that name. He left his artillery and the other Australians at a farm about half way, and only took the two Victorian companies and a squadron of Inniskillings the whole 36 miles, which is the distance of Koffyfontein about north-west of Fauresmith. There are a good many Britishers in the little town, and the Kaffirs are intensely fond of us. Not, perhaps, so much because of our virtues as by reason of the rigour of Dutch rule. For your most "democratic" Dutchman, who decries monarchies and empires, and talks much about the inherent rights of man, is often a merciless brute in his treatment of Kaffirs.

The Koffyfontein mine employs a great deal of black labour, but there was little work done on the day our troops marched in. It was holiday for everybody, and kept in right royal fashion. The Britisher who, on the following morning, vainly searched for a bottle of whisky he had possessed on the previous day was surprised to learn the absolute truth about the missing liquor. In the excess of his enthusiasm he had drunk it all. The folks turned out in gay rosettes of red, white and blue, and British hearts rejoiced with a great joy when it seemed that the Boer dominance was at last over. General Clements read the proclamation, and made the now customary announcements, after which there was a fine gathering in of arms, many burghers surrendering their weapons voluntarily, others doing so under a little gentle pressure. There were the usual protests in certain cases, but rarely did the protesters tell the truth, and the Victorians had a busy time in demonstrating it. There had been armed Boers in the town only the day before our men's arrival, so that the change from the one regime to the other was all accomplished within a very brief period. No garrison was left in the place.

Of course, the Koffyfontein mine produces "the finest diamonds in the world," but, then, none of them escape that distinction. The trouble at Koffyfontein is that the quality of late is not what the shareholders would like. Yet it is a valuable property, and the town has prospects as well as interests. It seems a pity that we could not spare it a small garrison and allow the folks to sleep quietly in their beds, none daring to make them afraid. As it was, the Britishers feared that once our troops marched away their condition would be more uncomfortable than ever.

Koffyfontein possesses just one hotel. Curiously enough, the landlord, Mr. Edwards, is a native of our Richmond, and came to South Africa as a youth. He was delighted to welcome his brother Victorians, and "did" them handsomely. Each of the three or four stores is kept by a Jew, and remarkably well kept, supplies being generally plentiful and quite wonderfully cheap. In this town the children of Israel have beaten the whole race of Macs, for Scotchmen are usually predominant in the commercial life of South African towns.

At Koffyfontein Major M'Williams visited the hospital, which is under the control of Dr. Hunter, an Englishman, praises of whom I heard on all sides. Three British infantrymen in the convalescent stage were ready and eager to go on, and the Westralian surgeon used the golden opportunity. The men had been wounded some weeks previously, and were daily fearing that the hour would arrive when they should have to go on to Pretoria as prisoners of war. Owing to the

resource and kindness of Major M'Williams, they were able to come on with our column to Bloemfontein. These men particularly express their indebtedness to Dr. Hunter, and it is certain that they fell into excellent hands. By the way, on the journey across country, M'Williams was informed that a Kaffir woman was suffering from a severe illness. He neither hesitated nor made easy excuses, but, going a great deal out of his way and into a place which nobody would call sweet, attended and operated upon the poor creature, to her intense relief. Honour to the man who thus, without regard to colour or condition, uses his art for the benefit of suffering humanity.

Near Koffyfontein an important arrest was made. A man named Oberhausen, well-to-do, and highly respected, and certainly one of the mildest-looking persons I have ever seen, was seized on a charge of deliberately shooting an officer of the Bedfords after the Britisher had surrendered. The allegation of murder was made in precise terms by one who declared that he witnessed the occurrence. The accused, on his part, utterly denied the charge, and said that he could call numberless witnesses to disprove it. On the journey to Bloemfontein he drove his own Cape cart, and was attended day and night by a strong guard of Victorians. He knew that an attempt to escape meant almost certain death by bullet and bayonet, and showed not the faintest sign that he was inclined to break away. On the contrary, he asked for, and studiously read, his Bible. It was understood that Oberhausen would be tried at Bloemfontein, and the kind hope of all who met him was that his innocence would be established, for he seemed a very decent and agreeable man.

The flying column only stayed at Koffyfontein one night, and came on by fairly easy stages to Bloemfontein. It passed through Petrusburg on Monday, two days after my visit, and found everything quiet, although the Boer was much heard of in the neighbourhood. All along the route our men searched for, and usually found, arms, occasionally, also, persons who were "wanted" by the military.

At the house where one of these persons was supposed to be, a venerable, white-haired lady appeared at the door. With uplifted hands, she called upon God to witness that the man sought was not there, that she loved Queen Victoria, and that, generally, she was so good and pious that whatever she declared ought to be received without the least question. A Kaffir, who had been the informant, thereupon turned on the venerable lady, and fired at her a volley of obscenity. The horrified Captain Haig was just on the point of interfering when the ancient one chipped in on her own account, and used her plainly-experienced tongue to such purpose that the

obscenity of the Kaffir was at once and completely eclipsed. The man was making a feeble attempt to match it, when the General rode up, and naturally demanded, "Why do you allow the fellow to speak in that way to the old lady?" "You ought to have heard the lady, sir," replied Haig, and—well, the house was searched, and the person wanted found.

It is not always safe at these farm-houses to trust to appearances. In saying this I would be borne out by a party of officers who one day tried, unsuccessfully, to buy bread and eggs from a hostile household, all the members of which affected to be profoundly ignorant of our language.

"No luck?" said one of the party, inquiringly, as the foraging officer turned disconsolately away.

"No," was the reply; "the fat old frau won't sell us anything."

The roar of laughter with which the young folks of the family received this, and the high indignation of the "fat old frau" herself, showed that the remark had not only been overheard, but also fully understood.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

A New Brigade Formed—General Hutton on the Scene—Australian Regiment Dissolved — Consequential Arrangements—Colonel Hoad's Farewell.

An important work was now entered upon and rapidly pushed forward. It was nothing less than the formation of an Australasian and Canadian Brigade of Mounted Infantry, which was placed under the command of Major-General E. T. H. Hutton, C.B., recently commandant in Canada, and formerly commandant in New South Wales. General Hutton had not been long in South Africa, but not for a single day had he lacked employment. First he was sent up Kimberley way on a special mission, and now Lord Roberts had decided to utilise his fine ability as a leader of mounted men by making him responsible for the organisation and working of a Colonial Brigade. In this brigade the mounted infantry of Canada and Australasia were included, but not, in the first instance at least, the Australian Horse or Sydney Lancers. These, it was then thought, might come in later as divisional troops, for the new brigade was to be one of two forming a division under the command of General Ian Hamilton.

The First Brigade of the Division, as I have said, included all the Australasian Mounted Infantry, and the second, under General Ridley, had all the South African volunteer mounted troops, including Roberts's Horse, Brabant's Horse, Kitchener's Horse, the Prince Alfred's Guards, etc. Australians

are but incidentally concerned in No. 2. In No. 1 their interest will centre, and it is with it, with the command given to General Hutton, that I am now dealing.

It has been apparently felt by Lord Roberts that the Australians would work together in the most satisfactory way under conditions which provided for the association of each of the units of each colony. The new organisation provided for that, not fully, but in considerable part. All the Victorians, for instance, then at Bloemfontein, were associated, and made one command. As already stated, the New South Wales cavalry was separated from the mounted infantry companies, and the Bushmen would be far away from both. The union was not quite complete, although the scheme made for a large measure of unity, and certainly for the compacting together of each of the several colonies' companies of like arms.

It was intended to have four corps in the brigade, and in each corps there would be a battalion, or part battalion, of Imperial Mounted Infantry. Writing at the time, I said :—"This, in my judgment, is undesirable, affecting as it does the representative character of the brigade. Incidentally—and perhaps this is the explanation—it has the effect of investing the command of each corps in an Imperial instead of in a Colonial officer, an arrangement to which also I take exception. It is not pretended by anybody at this stage of the campaign that Australian Mounted Infantry have anything to learn from the kindred Imperial arm, and if it be expected that the Imperials will learn from our men, then our officers ought to command corps." That being said, I admit, without reservation, that the corps' commanders were men well and favourably known in mounted infantry work. They were Lieutenant-Colonels Alderson, De Lisle, Pilcher, and Henry, named in the order of corps allotted to them. The Victorians, South Australians, and Tasmanians came under the control of Colonel Henry, of whom I do not profess to know much. He had the reputation of being a skilful officer.

A consequent effect of the new arrangement was the dissolution of the Australian Regiment. Formed as it was under exceptional circumstances, and converted after arrival in South Africa into mounted infantry—for at first only Captain M'Leish's company was mounted—this regiment had been a great success, and done splendid work. To that I have frequently testified. Let the expert and observant General Hutton now speak on the subject. On the 5th April he visited the camp at Rustfontein, inspected the ground, and finally had the Australian Regiment paraded (dismounted) under Colonel Hoad. The officers were introduced to him, and the General, who has a remarkably good memory, renewed his

acquaintanceship with a good many he had met in Australia. What he thought of the regiment, which was then as such on its last parade, his own words convey much better than any of mine :—

"Colonel Hoad, officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the Australian Regiment," he said, "I wish to explain to you the circumstances which have led up to an alteration now to be made in the constitution of the various contingents from the Australian colonies. As you are no doubt aware, the Australian Regiment was formed, in the first instance, with a view of simplifying the administrative work of the units from Australia. This object, I may tell you, has been fully achieved, and the organisation has been a complete success. I may further express to you my high appreciation, not only of the administrative work, but of that done in the field by the regiment since its formation. That work redounds to the credit of Colonel Hoad and of every officer and man in the regiment. As later contingents have arrived, it has been thought desirable that in future troops from individual colonies should, as far as possible, work together. The advantages of this arrangement are no doubt obvious. While small units engaged in a large campaign like this are unquestionably doing good work—most admirable work—they can scarcely, while acting separately, make their work sufficiently pronounced and distinctive of the several colonies they come from. By becoming units in a larger sense they may be able to play a much more important part in operations in the field.

"I am sure that every officer and man present desires to add to the honour of the colony from which he comes. The formation of a Colonial Division, comprising as it will do two brigades of about 6000 men each, should materially assist you in accomplishing that object.

"I am very pleased indeed to renew my acquaintanceship with my old friend, Colonel Hoad, and also with Australian troops generally. Some of your faces are well known to me, and recall pleasant recollections of the time I spent in Australia. I feel sure that the disposition of troops from the several colonies which has been decided upon will considerably increase your volume of usefulness."

The General here proceeded to state how the Australian troops would be brigaded, and concluded with the words, "I have appointed Colonel Hoad my A.A.G., and he will represent me here in camp."

A little later the General requested Colonel Gordon to intimate to the units of other corps that Colonel Hoad had been selected as A.A.G., and that intimation was at once conveyed to them.

After the General had ridden off, Colonel Hoad addressed a few farewell words to the regiment.

"Officers and men of the Australian Regiment," he said. "As this is the last parade on which you appear as a regiment, I desire to express to you my appreciation of the loyal support and assistance I have received from you during the period of my command. The work done by the regiment speaks for itself. I may tell you that General Clements yesterday informed me that he was going to report to Lord Roberts on the admirable character of that work—work performed by you in the field. The organisation of the regiment at Enslin on a new basis as a mounted infantry corps, needless to say, involved a great deal of work. I desire to express my personal indebtedness to Captain Lascelles, who, as you know, wrought like a Trojan, as our Adjutant, at a period when there was very much to do. In saying good-bye to you as a regiment I am pleased to know that I am not to be disassociated from you, and can only express the hope that every officer and man may be able to look back to the time we have spent together, and think of me not so much as a commanding officer, but as a friend and comrade, as one who has slept beside him on the South African veldt. I may tell you that the alteration now to be made, and which the General has described to you, is one about which I was consulted, and in which I have at every stage most heartily concurred, and I feel that it will be a great advantage to the troops from Australia. I wish you all good-bye and good luck, and I pray that if God wills you may all be spared to return to your wives, families, and dear ones in Australia."

During the latter part of his speech the Colonel's tone was marked by deep emotion, which was fully shared by all present. It was an affecting episode of the campaign, and at its close the several companies were marched off to the camping places selected for them in accordance with the brigade arrangements.

My readers will have gathered from the foregoing that Colonel Hoad was placed at no disadvantage in the new order of things. He stepped from the post of commander of a regiment to that of A.A.G. of a new brigade, and served once more under the man to whom he was attached for instruction when, as a Major, he went to England in 1889. More than that, he took up the work of an Assistant Adjutant-General, in which he has so distinguished himself since his appointment to it in Victoria. Unquestionably he was the right man in the right place in the new brigade, under one of the most genial, at the same time one of the most exacting, Generals.

It is noteworthy that Captain Lascelles (Adelaide), Adjutant of the Australian Regiment, was also under General Hutton at

the time that Hoad was training in England. The General placed this officer on his staff, and Major Rankin (Queensland), second in command of the now disintegrated regiment, was informed that he also would have a staff post. A prominent member of the General's staff was Colonel Gordon, the South Australian commandant. At the General's request he undertook to manage the supply department, working depôts established at Cape Town and Bloemfontein, and following the march of the brigade. This duty, in respect of 6000 mounted men, was an arduous and troublesome one, for it meant making due provision for remounts, personal and horse equipment, etc. Colonel Gordon, whom I had great pleasure in meeting again, would, I fancy, have preferred a different post, but he promptly admitted the importance of the duties assigned to him.

With General Hutton in command, our men were in the hands of an officer both skilful and enterprising. He was, therefore, quite to their liking ; I regretted only that the Bushmen would not form part of his command, for we learned at Bloemfontein that their orders were to go to Biera for work with Sir Frederick Carrington.

General Hutton's aide-de-camp was none other than Lord Rosmead, the son of our old friend and ex-Governor, best known as Sir Hercules Robinson. Lord Rosmead reminded me that he was once a Melbourne public school boy, and says that some of his pleasantest recollections are of the Queen City of the South. In 1881, when Sir Hercules Robinson, then High Commissioner for South Africa, went to Pretoria on a political mission, Hutton commanded his escort. Now Sir Hercules's son was to serve in the Colonial Brigade as aide-de-camp to Hutton—once more bound for Pretoria, under slightly different circumstances.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

THE ORGANISATION—HOW THE POSTS WENT—SOME OF THE DETAILS—COLONIAL OFFICERS' TREATMENT—A QUESTION OF FAIRNESS.

The work of organising the Australasian and Canadian Brigade proceeded quickly. General Hutton is a man of tremendous energy, works very hard, and expects all those associated with him to do likewise. He is graceful yet plain in his manner, as Australians who have met him will recollect, but strict and exacting on all points of discipline and duty. He was literally besieged by officers who wanted to serve on his staff, or, in fact, any capacity, in the new brigade. Belief in a General is a most useful quality, and everybody

there thoroughly believed in General Hutton. His popularity is beyond all question. For a brigade staff he had an exceptionally large number of officers. Remembering that it was a mounted corps, one which would be swift-moving, and also one which must often move in parts rather than as a whole, the staff, large as it is, would probably be all required.

The following is the list:—General Officer Commanding, General E. T. H. Hutton, C.B., A.D.C., etc.; Aide-de-camp, Major Lord Rosmead; Brigade-Major (chief staff officer), Lieut-Colonel Cyril Martyr, D.S.O.; D.A.G. and Line of Communications Officer, Colonel J. M. Gordon, Military Commandant of South Australia (base at Cape Town, advanced depôt at Bloemfontein); Assistant Adjutant-General, Colonel J. C. Hoad, A.A.G. of Victoria; D.A.A.G. (a), Major Bridges, New South Wales Artillery; D.A.A.G. (b), Major Cartwright, Canada; Assistant Provost-Marshal, Captain Lascelles, R.F. (A.D.C. to Governor of South Australia); Transport Officer, Major Vandeleur, Scots Guards; Supply Officer, Captain Lea. Major Rankin (Queensland) had duties assigned to him in the department over which Colonel Gordon presided. Sergeant-Major Johnstone, of the Australian Regiment, became Brigade Sergeant-Major, and Sergeant-Major Paul, of same regiment, became Brigade Quartermaster-Sergeant. Both are Melbourne men, although Johnstone went out with the South Australian company, and Colonel Hoad recommended his Government to grant him a commission. Of such a reward for good services both Johnstone and Paul had proved themselves thoroughly worthy. Johnstone got his a little later on; that of Paul has not yet been given. Merit in a non-commissioned officer is much quicker recognised in the other colonies than it appears to be in Victoria.

The brigade arrangement brought together, in No. 4 Corps, the four Victorian companies (First and Second Contingents), under command of Colonel Tom Price. The senior South Australian officer, Captain Reade, of the Second Contingent, commanded the two companies from that colony, and Major Cameron had the Tasmanians. All these were, of course, under the corps' commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Henry. Four companies of New South Wales men—that is to say, the First and Second Contingents—were under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Knight, as part of No. 2 Corps, and with them were the two companies of Westralians, under Major Moor. In No. 3 Corps the New Zealanders, under Major Robin, and Queenslanders, under Colonel Ricardo, were associated. No. 1 Corps did not contain any Australians, it being composed exclusively of the Canadians and the battalion of Imperial mounted infantry allotted to it. Here in tabular form is the corps' distribution and strength:—

FIRST MOUNTED INFANTRY CORPS—UNDER LIEUT.-COLONEL ALDERSON.

	All ranks.	Horses.
1st Battalion Imperial M.I.	400	400
1st Battalion Canadian M.I. (Lessard)	367	368
2nd Battalion Canadian M.I. (Herduman)	367	368
Strathcona's Horse	575	548
	1709	1684

SECOND MOUNTED INFANTRY CORPS—UNDER LIEUT.-COLONEL DE LISLE.

	All ranks.	Horses.
6th Battalion Imperial M.I.	400	400
New South Wales M.I. (Knight)	625	530
West Australian M.I. (Moor)	169	165
	1194	1095

THIRD MOUNTED INFANTRY CORPS—UNDER LIEUT.-COLONEL PILCHER.

	All ranks.	Horses.
3rd Battalion Imperial M.I.	200	200
Queensland M.I. (Ricardo)	538	560
New Zealand M.I. (Robin)	730	740
	1468	1500

FOURTH MOUNTED INFANTRY CORPS—UNDER LIEUT.-COLONEL HENRY.

	All ranks.	Horses.
4th Battalion Imperial M.I.	500	500
South Australian M.I. (Reade)	216	216
Tasmanian M.I. (Cameron)	98	98
Victorian Mounted Rifles (Price)	460	460
	1274	1274

BRIGADE TROOPS.

P.M.O.'s (Colonel Williams') command	265
New South Wales Cavalry	280
Scouts and Guides	36
	581

SUMMARY.

1st Mounted Infantry Corps	1709
2nd Mounted Infantry Corps	1194
3rd Mounted Infantry Corps	1468
4th Mounted Infantry Corps	1274
Brigade Troops	581
Total	6226

These figures are approximate, but are the best now available. It will be observed that the splendid Medical Corps from New South Wales, under the command of Colonel Williams, is included amongst the brigade's troops, and all were pleased to learn that the services of the corps would be made specially available to the Australians.

The General established his head-quarters at a handsome two-storied house in Maitland-street, Bloemfontein, right opposite the Government offices, and lived there with several of the principal members of his staff. I was living at the Phœnix Hotel, and a fair share of my time, when I happend to be in, was taken up in directing people to the brigade head-quarters. This is mentioned, not for the purpose of obliquely vaunting my good-nature, but of showing what a much-sought-after man the General was. He had, probably, to say "No" to a good many requests, as he did to me when I asked that a private chat might be converted into a press interview. The General has a very pleasant way of uttering the negative when he likes, but I am quite aware that he is capable of other moods. Officers don't like to get in his way when he is angry.

Apropos of the inclusion of Imperial mounted infantry in the new brigade, I may say that this phase of its constitution was a good deal discussed amongst the colonials. It is understood that General Hutton warmly approved of the project as it was, on the ground that, by the bringing into the brigade of well-seasoned British mounted infantry—for such it was declared to be—the brigade would be constituted on a good tactical basis, and each corps be Imperial as well as Colonial in character. My point was that the corps should be made wholly representative of troops from Canada and Australasia respectively. If it were necessary to have Imperial mounted infantry, they might have formed a separate corps of the brigade. I know that there are Australian senior officers, capable and experienced, who, while loyally accepting the posts allotted to them, hold the same views. Colonel Price, for instance, after some forty years' soldiering, and being, as he is, practically the father of the Mounted Rifles in Australia, was surely entitled to a corps command. The men he has trained have proved their fitness, and his own ability has been demonstrated, not only in the colonies, but in this campaign.

"I am perfectly satisfied," said General Clements to him, before the dispersal of the column which had recently marched through the western district of the Free State, "with the way in which you have discharged every duty allotted to you."

Colonel Price obtained a good, and largely independent, command in the four Victorian companies, but why was he not

allotted a corps in the new brigade? I do not hesitate to reiterate the opinion that it was because certain Imperial officers had to be "provided for." There is far too much of that class of thing in the British Army.

The brigade, when fully established, had with it all the machine guns brought with the contingent, and, in addition, no fewer than six Vickers-Maxims (the famous "Pom Poms"), the value of which the British learned from the Boers during the campaign. Captain Howland had an addition to his command in the Colt's gun sent out from South Australia, under Sergeant-Major Press, who arrived with his gun party in good health. The party included, as Australian readers know, the nephew of the always enthusiastic Chief Justice Way, and also the same distinguished South Australian's stepson, Private Blue. A son of my friend, Colonel Makin, South Australia's Chief Commissioner of Police, was also one of the party. All were eager for active service.

There were nine commissions going in the Imperial Army for officers of the auxiliary forces serving here, and some of our young officers were applicants. That gallant young Victorian, Lieutenant Staughton, was offered a commission in the Inniskillings. He referred the matter to his father (Mr. Staughton, M.L.A.), and I know that he would dearly like to adopt the profession of a soldier.

Lieutenants Anderson and Holdsworth, of Victoria, were also applicants, and were duly recommended and appointed. It is understood that all sought posts in some mounted arm of the service, and that does not necessarily mean cavalry. One effect of the war will be to make mounted infantry a much more important department of British military life than it has ever been before. For those of our young men who seek to become professional soldiers, I would wish nothing better than to see them gazetted as officers of Imperial Mounted Infantry. In that arm there is promise alike of distinction and rapid promotion for an officer who undertakes to thoroughly master his work and has brains enough to ensure its intelligent performance.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

Colonel Umphelby—How He Fought and Died—His Last Chance for Life—It was Cruelly Sacrificed.

It was just as we were leaving Norval's Pont that we heard of the death of Colonel Umphelby, several days after that melancholy event. It was not until I reached Bloemfontein, on the 3rd April, that I learned the circumstances under which fell the beloved commander of the Victorian Garrison Artillery. The particulars will be read with profound indignation,

for it is as certain as the sunrise that the Victorian officer had a chance for his life, and that this chance was sacrificed to a, under the circumstances, heartless utilitarianism. Let the facts speak for themselves.

When Colonel Umphelby arrived in South Africa he was doubtful, as a special service officer, in regard to the duty at which he would be employed. His first experience was, it will be remembered, as a press censor at Cape Town, where his gifts as a linguist were employed to advantage. But Umphelby was essentially a gunner. He took the first opportunity of getting gunner's duty, and took service under Colonel Barker, with the Howitzer Brigade, at Modder River. Shortly after General Roberts advanced from the West through the Free State Colonel Barker was called to the command of the 76th, 81st, and 82nd Batteries of Field Artillery, and on the 28th February Colonel Umphelby started from Modder River to join him. Paardeberg had been fought, and the Victorian officer, accompanied only by his orderly, Gunner Whybrow (Victorian Permanent Artillery), rode into the camp, about five miles from the battlefield. There the British force rested for a week, and the next move was made on Friday, 9th March.

The division in which Colonel Umphelby served was under General Kelly-Kenny, and, during the earlier part of Roberts's advance, was the southern force. As such it fought at Osfontein on the Friday of the advance. The Boers fell back, and the division was going into camp about 5 o'clock in the evening, when a despatch came from Lord Roberts ordering a further advance. The troops went five miles further, and ultimately, about 8 o'clock, halted for the night in front of the position known as Driefontein, 36 miles west of Bloemfontein, which was destined to be the scene of a fierce, protracted, and fatal fight on the following day.

It was barely daylight on the morning of Saturday, 17th March, when Kelly-Kenny's division, moving slightly northward in its eastern march, and becoming the centre division of Roberts's army, advanced on the Boer position at Driefontein. The enemy occupied in force a long, low ridge, running well across the front, and Kelly-Kenny's force had not gone more than three miles when it was under the Boer fire. The guns of Barker's brigade came into action at a range of about 3000 yards, and had a very busy and exciting day.

Colonel Umphelby, as staff officer to Barker, was engaged during the whole time carrying orders to and helping to direct the movements of three batteries. His work was marked alike by the high intelligence of a skilled artilleryman and the intrepidity of a gallant soldier, riding about under fire the whole time. All day long that battle raged, and the Boers,

who made a stubborn defence, were not driven back until their position was rendered untenable, largely owing to the splendid work of the gunners. Little by little the Boers retired, and the guns, as they followed, gradually reduced the range to about 2000 yards. It was about half-past five, and the sun was rapidly sinking, when the guns made their last move for the day. A fatal move it proved for the commander of Victoria's Garrison Artillery.

Apparently it was imagined that the enemy had moved much further back than was actually the case, for the artillery dashed forward, and came under a smart rifle fire at a range of less than a thousand yards. There had previously been a certain amount of sniping, but now the Boers, posted on a ridge commanding a hollow, in which, for lack of better position, the guns re-opened fire, worked their rifles vigorously. For a few minutes the bullets fairly rained upon the gunners, several of whom were hit—three fatally. It was the enemy's last effort for the day, and almost his last shot killed Colonel Umphelby.

When the guns re-opened fire Colonels Barker and Umphelby and Major Onslow, of the Royal Artillery, alighted from their wearied horses, and for a while stood together. Umphelby passed his left arm through his reins, and, sitting down on an ant-hill, proceeded, with the aid of his field-glasses, to examine the enemy's position. In his right hand he carried a little riding whip, which was raised perpendicularly above his head as with both hands he held his glasses before his eyes. He was in that position when the bullet whose particular mission it was to deprive us of our valued officer was fired from a Boer rifle.

The missile struck him just above the waist, a little on the front of the right side, and came out a little in rear of the left side, thus passing diagonally through his body. It had perforated the liver in its passage, as was suspected from the position of the ingress and egress wounds, and Colonel Umphelby fell, alas! to rise no more. First aid was quickly forthcoming, and after the wounded officer's orderly (Whybrow), who was close to him all through the day, had removed impeding accoutrements, the field service dressing was applied by one of the brigade surgeons. A stretcher was sent up from the rear, and arrived within five minutes, but even then not before the Boers had ceased firing and galloped off. Almost the last shot, I repeat, fired on a day full of perils had done what was destined to prove fatal work, and Colonel Umphelby was carried away.

The field hospital to which our unfortunate comrade was borne stood about a mile and a half from the spot where he was hit. Tenderly and carefully was he carried. Never for

a moment did he lose consciousness, nor did his fine, genial humour fail. He had bled a good deal, as a punctured and stained tunic (in possession of Whybrow when I saw it) shows, but he evinced but slight signs of weakness then, and his brave spirit never faltered. At the field hospital Umphelby came under the attention of (Surgeon) Major Pike, and there he lay all the Saturday night. He did not appear to suffer much pain, but complained that he had no feeling in his right leg, the effect of the wound being, apparently, to produce partial paralysis of the side.

Whybrow sat by him all night, and several vain attempts were made to nourish the wounded man. Beef tea, brandy, and other drinks were tried without success. On Sunday morning, after much difficulty, a little milk was procured, and this was the first nourishment to stay on his stomach. The milk appeared to revive the sufferer, and he was so bright that the doctor and others began to think that the case need not necessarily prove so serious as they at first feared it must. Cases of perforation of the liver by a Mauser bullet have, I know, been successfully treated at Orange River Hospital, and had Colonel Umphelby been fortunate in the treatment given to him I might be writing a different story to-day.

It seems to have been necessary to strike the tents of the field hospital, and to remove the wounded Victorian. That the patient was not in a condition for removal is generally admitted. In fact, I may go the length of saying that the removal destroyed his one chance of recovery. And such a removal it was! It might have been expected that a small bearer party, directed by a skilled non-com., if no surgeon could be spared for the purpose, would undertake the duty of carrying the suffering officer to quarters found for him at a farm-house about three-quarters of a mile from the site of the field hospital, or at least that a proper ambulance waggon would be made available. The distance was not great, and the patient's condition admittedly critical.

Now, what do my readers suppose really happened? Will it be believed that our wounded comrade was put into a buck-waggon—one of the transport vehicles—and roughly jolted over the broken veldt, without the least concern or consideration? "The Kaffir driver seemed to find the worst places in the road," says Whybrow, who was Umphelby's only attendant, not a solitary ambulance man being sparable to give his aid or directions. It is hard for one to write that which must harrow the feelings of the bereaved loved ones, but the Australian public are entitled to know how Umphelby was treated, and it is my business to tell them. On that horrible journey in the buck-waggon the wounded man literally cried from the

fearful pain which every jolt caused him, and he vomited blood with almost every concussion.

A more utterly shameful piece of work than this removal it would be hard to discover in the history of a campaign a distinguishing mark of which is the tenderness and care with which the wounded, whether Britons or Boers, are generally treated. It is melancholy to reflect that our Colonel Umphelby was destined to furnish the exceptional case. I denounce his treatment as disgraceful. The exigencies of a battlefield are such that treatment of the wounded has often to be delayed, but nothing can justify the removal of Colonel Umphelby under circumstances such as I have narrated—circumstances involving downright cruelty, and destructive of the officer's last chance.

About 6 o'clock on the Sunday evening it was that Colonel Umphelby, now very exhausted, was carried from the buck waggon to a bed at the farm-house. He asked faintly for the doctor, and his orderly went for him. He found the doctor at his tea, and was met with the remark, "It's no use my going. I know what he wants, and I have no drugs. Tell the Colonel I'll come presently." The doctor did not arrive, however, until the wounded man had once more sent for him. Then he came, stopped for half an hour, and some drugs which had been sent for were used with a temporary good effect. Umphelby directed his orderly to make up a bed at his (the Colonel's) door, and dropped into what seemed to be a soothing sleep. It did not last long, and at one o'clock in the morning he asked again for the doctor. A second message was sent before that officer was in attendance, and then the end was very near. Our comrade had become unconscious, and about half-past one his brave spirit passed from the wounded and ill-used body. His earthly sufferings were over, and a gallant soldier had gone to his reward.

Colonel Umphelby gave no last message to his orderly, nor, so far as I can ascertain, to anybody else. Early on the Sunday evening he had directed Whybrow to take charge of his watch, compass, purse, etc. These, with a locket containing family portraits and his signet ring, were handed for safe keeping to Colonel Williams, chief of the New South Wales Medical Corps, to whom the late Victorian officer was well known, and by whom he was held in high esteem. On Monday evening the remains of the dead officer were laid in a soldier's grave, and the chaplain read the service in the presence of the few comrades who were able to attend. The grave is close to the farm, on the bank of a great pan, at present quite dry. The New South Wales Medical Corps has marked the spot by a cross, on which is inscribed his name, rank, and corps, and the date of Colonel Umphelby's death.

I had a conversation at Bloemfontein with (Surgeon) Captain Perkins, of the New South Wales Medical Corps. He was able to get away from his duties for a short period and visit Colonel Umphelby while he lay in the field hospital near Driefontein on the morning (Sunday) after he was hit. "He looked very haggard," said the doctor, "and the first field dressing was all that had been applied to the wound. He was vomiting biliary matter, complained of pain in his side, and he looked to be in a very bad state. We cheered him up, but I think he felt that he would not recover. He was moved that evening, and I do not hesitate to say that the removal greatly jeopardised his chances of recovery. He was carried in a buck waggon—a most unsuitable vehicle—into a not very clean place, and I did not see him again."

"He was not in any way under your charge, doctor?"

"No. I wished he had been, and so did he, poor fellow. We all knew him, and liked him so much."

"Do you know why the removal took place under the circumstances disclosed?"

"I'm afraid I cannot tell you anything on that subject."

The doctor who attended Colonel Umphelby I did not find. I do not necessarily attribute blame to him for that disgraceful removal, as probably he had simply to carry out a superior officer's orders, for the general directions would be given by someone higher in authority.

The news of Colonel Umphelby's death was sad news indeed to all Australians. A splendid man he was, the idol of the Permanent Artillery in Victoria, popular amongst all ranks, and liked and respected by all sorts and conditions of people who had the good fortune to know him.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

MAJOR CAMERON—HOW HE WAS CAPTURED—HE SAVED THE GUNS—"ABANDONED" BY THE ENEMY.

One of the first men I found in the city was our friend Major (recently Captain) Cameron, the gallant commander of the Tasmanians, who was taken prisoner by the Boers some weeks previously, and who was once more at liberty. Cameron had suffered a good deal since I last saw him, first from his wound, next from erysipelas, then from a sort of low fever, and generally from much knocking about. Only a few days before, while he was still under treatment at the hospital, Lord Roberts had a chat with him, and got the story of his adventures from his own lips. In Cameron the British Commander-in-Chief recognised an officer who was with him at

the battle of Candahar, and on other service in India, and I need hardly say that the Tasmanian was charmed with the cordiality and kindness which he experienced, and which, as a fact, Lord Roberts shows to everybody. Major Cameron occupied a pleasant room at a boarding-house when I paid my respects to him, and got from his own lips the story of how he was captured and treated.

On the 24th February, it seems, Major Cameron was ordered by Colonel Price to occupy the same ground, west of Arundel, as the troops had held on the previous day. He did so, and had with him about 30 of his own company and a similar number of the Port Elizabeth Volunteers, under Captain Massie. Cameron reconnoitred the hills to his front, and finding that they had been vacated by the enemy, he took possession. While doing so he observed that four guns and a squadron of the Inniskillings were moving towards a pass, through a range of hills not far from Kuilfontein Farm, then the head-quarters of General Grobler. Cameron conformed to the movements of the guns, and took up a position on their left rear. A fortunate thing this for the guns, as was afterwards made apparent. The Tasmanian officer received (through Captain Haig) an order from Colonel Page-Henderson, who was in general charge of the operations, to reconnoitre the kopjes and ground to the left. A patrol which Cameron sent out presently reported the presence of 40 Boers on an isolated kopje. Captain Massie was directed to move on to the left, while Major Cameron himself took the Tasmanians forward, with a view of cutting off the Boers' retreat by occupying a kopje about 500 yards to the right of the kopje on which they were.

There were several wire fences to get through, and when Cameron approached the kopje he intended to occupy, he found it already in possession of the enemy, who opened a smart fire. Cameron succeeded in withdrawing his men without loss. While retiring, he looked back to see what the Boers were doing, and observed a party of British in a shallow water-course, under a heavy cross-fire, about 300 yards from the Boers. Cameron immediately galloped back, and found an officer of the Inniskillings, who cried out, "For God's sake, cut the wire; my arm is broken!" There were several men with this officer. Cameron cut the wire, and the Inniskilling mounted and rode away—with scant ceremony, it appeared to me.

At this point Cameron found that three of his men, who had followed him, had, during the course of the action, lost their horses. He was left with three dismounted men and his own horse. He put a man upon the horse and ordered him to go for assistance. One of the other men had lost his

carbine, and he was ordered to get to the rear, and the third man was quickly sent after him. Eight Boers now detached themselves from their main body on the kopje, galloped forward, and Cameron saw that he was in for a rough time. He had a fair supply of ammunition, and each time the Boers dismounted he emptied his magazine upon them. Ultimately the Boers divided, and worked around the intrepid Tasmanian, completely encircled him, and kept up a vigorous fire. Cameron had fought his way back quite three-quarters of a mile, every minute expecting assistance, but ultimately he fell with a bullet through his left leg.

To the end Cameron resisted capture, and a Boer officer coming up after the prisoner had been secured, remarked, "You ought to be shot for not surrendering."

"It was not for the want of trying that you haven't done it," replied Cameron.

There is very little reason to doubt now that the presence and capable handling of Cameron's men, who quite covered the left rear of our guns and made it possible for them to retire, if the need arose, by a gorge through which they had come to a forward and perilous position, saved the artillery from capture. The Boers afterwards told Cameron that their dispositions that morning were made with a view of trapping the guns. Close behind the forty seen on the isolated kopje, a force of 400 Boers lay concealed, and it was their intention, after allowing the guns to get far enough forward, to encircle their left and cut them off.

"We wanted guns," said a Boer leader to him, "and we felt that we could do little without them. We laid the trap for your artillery, but your men coming into the kopjes, which we had purposely evacuated in order to make you think that we had retreated, upset the whole of our plans."

Cameron deserves the fullest credit for saving those guns. Why was there no assistance forthcoming to save him?

In the Boer hands Major Cameron was treated generally with kindness, always with respect. They took his boots from him, however, and he had to buy a pair of straw shoes at Colesberg. His wound and the consequential physical disturbance gave him a good deal of trouble, and there were periods when his condition was serious. From place to place he was moved as the Boers fell back, and ultimately he was taken to the railway station at Springfontein. The intention was to send him by rail to Pretoria. A train was expected from Bloemfontein at 4 o'clock on the afternoon of the 13th March, but the strong circumstance which prevented its coming was the arrival of Lord Roberts at the Free State capital. The cutting of the line by the Guards, and their arrival at Springfontein by the train which was to carry

Cameron off, are now matters of history. When the Guards came they found that the Boers had left in such a hurry that they had either forgotten or disregarded the Tasmanian officer.

"I was abandoned," he observed, with a laugh, "quite abandoned."

Not having been put on parole, or left under conditions which precluded him from carrying arms again during the campaign, Cameron quickly rejoined his company, all of whom were delighted to welcome back their beloved commander. Indeed, after the company's arrival in Bloemfontein, there was a continuous procession of officers, non-commissioned officers, and men to the room of the Major, and the hand-grips which I saw exchanged in that chamber testify to the strength of an affection which man may have for man.

CHAPTER LXXX.

Our Naval Representative—Fine Work by Colquhoun—Some of His Doings—How He Repaired the Guns.

It was with great pleasure that I met once more Lieutenant Colquhoun, of the Victorian Navy, the one Australian naval representative, so far as I knew, in the campaign. He was not only safe and sound, but fit and well as ever. Owing to the sickness of a brother officer, he was in charge of his battery, camped near Bloemfontein. Our once transport officer has gone through a good deal since I saw him, in January last, shelling the Magersfontein position, and the Imperial authorities made no mistake when they accepted him for active service in South Africa. Colquhoun has accomplished some exceptional work, and is admitted on all sides to have done honour alike to Victoria and to the navy of our Empire. Indeed, owing to his singularly fine work he was honoured at Bloemfontein by a special presentation to Lord Roberts.

It was on the 11th February that two naval guns, the left half-battery, left Modder River camp and went by train to the Australian Regiment's old camping ground at Enslin, one of the points of departure of the force which, under Lord Roberts, successfully invaded the Free State. Lieutenant Dean, R.N., was in command, and managed one gun, Colquhoun being in charge of the other. They were long 12-pounders, having a range of 8000 yards. Such ordnance has done splendid service in South Africa in places where the field artillery was, by reason of much shorter range, wholly ineffective. From Enslin the half-battery began its

march, all ranks on foot, across the Free State, and our naval Lieutenant was furnished with all the excitement he could have desired. The first day out the gallant tars, as part of General Kelly-Kenny's Division, reached Randam, which, perhaps, readers will recollect as the rendezvous on the occasion of General Babbington's reconnaissance of the Free State border country. On the next day they went on to Waterfall Drift, on the Reit River, and from there proceeded, *viâ* Wegdraal, to Klip Drift, on the Modder, the last march covering no less than 25 miles of country within 23 hours.

At Wegdraal there was an affair of outposts, but the naval guns did not get into action until after the crossing at Klip Drift, which took place at daylight on the 15th. They were ordered into a position one and a half miles north, but on to the kopje selected it was not possible to take them by the ordinary means. The sailors were equal to the emergency, and simply carried the guns up, bringing the carriages with them. The wheels of Dean's gun were broken in these operations. The gunners had to dig a hole in the ground for the "trail," and worked the gun on a wheelless carriage.

Good service did the naval men that day in support of French's advance on the Boer position. The range was quickly found, and the gunners worked in perfect comfort, for none of the Boer field pieces could reach them, and they were well out of rifle fire. It is noteworthy that the order to open fire, and information as to the kopje upon which it might be most effectively directed, came from an old Geelong boy, Lieut.-Colonel Martyr (then in charge of a brigade, and subsequently made chief staff-officer in the newly-formed Australasian and Canadian Brigade). This gallant officer, whose left breast bears two lines of ribbon, is a son of a former Victorian solicitor, and has seen a good deal of service as an officer of the Imperial Army.

In response to his directions, Colquhoun brought his gun to bear on the kopje indicated to him as being "full of Boers," and the execution was terribly fatal. Ultimately the enemy retreated across the left front of the sailor men's post, and, as they came into the open, Colquhoun's shrapnel was thrown amongst them as fast as his gun could be served.

"I had had to shell positions before," says the Victorian officer, "but on this occasion I, for the first time, saw the fearful effect of shrapnel. We knocked over men and horses right and left."

In the shelling of Cronje's laager, near Brown's Farm, Colquhoun took his part, and then followed the magnificent rearguard fight of the Boer leader. Lieutenant Dean went on with the sound gun, and left the Victorian with the broken one. Colquhoun did not dilly-dally about it, but took a couple

of wheels off a buck-waggon, made them fit, hauled the gun off the kopje, remounted it, and had it ready for action within twelve hours. Much improvisation this meant, of course, but trust a sailor man for that, particularly one who, like Colquhoun, has had a large share of his training in the merchant service. The newly-mounted gun quickly joined the division at Paardeberg, going to the front with a transport convoy. Colquhoun had to overcome a difficulty, because orders had been given to detain the gun, and the Victorian had to persuade an officer in charge that these orders were issued on the supposition that the gun was disabled, as indeed was the case.

The fighting commenced on a Sunday, and Colquhoun was in it on the following day. Cronje had entrenched himself in the famous river-bed death trap, and there were times when the Victorian's guns, now working with the rest of the Naval Brigade, were under smart rifle fire, at a range of about 1100 yards. Why any naval guns were brought so close, while they would have been equally effective quite out of Mauser range, nobody appears to know. As it was, several of Colquhoun's gunners were hit, one being killed.

By Thursday evening, so much knocking about had the guns received, that the trails in the left half-battery were broken, and in their disabled condition the weapons were of no use. It was then that Colquhoun got a nasty set-back. He was ordered to march with the disabled guns to Modder River, and there entrain for Simon's Town (naval depôt near Cape Town), with a view of having repairs made. There was nothing for it but to obey. He sadly turned his back on the scene of the fighting, and made his way back to Modder River. There, however, Colquhoun learned that there was a chance of getting the necessary work done at Kimberley, and promptly accepting all responsibility for departing from his written orders, a few hours later saw the gun entrained, bound north instead of south.

At Kimberley, Lord Methuen, who was in command, could do nothing from his own resources, and suggested that Cecil Rhodes be appealed to. Colquhoun saw the great man's secretary, and finally saw Mr. Rhodes himself, with the result that the engineering department at the big De Beers mine undertook to do what they could. But they had no wheels, and expressed the opinion that wheels would not be found in the district. So well and successfully did Colquhoun search, however, that he soon had four suitable wheels delivered at De Beers' works. He indicated what he wanted done, selected suitable timber, and the artisans did the rest.

Colquhoun lunched with Mr. Rhodes and his secretary, and was treated by both with marked kindness. He had been allowed three days to go from Paardeberg to Modder River.

He did the journey in two. He lost no time in going on to Kimberley, and the De Beers' engineers got to work without delay. The guns came into their hands at 11 o'clock on a Monday morning. They were remounted and ready for action again at 11 o'clock on Tuesday night. The delighted Colquhoun at once entrained his guns, got to Modder River, received a new supply of ammunition and stores, and started back for the front. He reached Paardeberg just a week after he had left it, and caught up to the Naval Brigade, which had moved on, the next morning. Captain Bearecroft warmly complimented the Victorian officer upon his tact, judgment, and practical performance, for really it was a fine piece of work throughout. Instead of a train journey of over 600 miles south, the disabled guns had gone by train 25 miles north, and were made as good as—if not a trifle better than—ever.

Colquhoun had missed the surrender of Cronje, but saw the Boer leader when he was brought in a prisoner to Modder River. Our officer was in the fighting at Poplar Grove, and his gun silenced the Krupp 9-pounder which for a time caused the British some annoyance, and which, on its being abandoned by the enemy, fell into our hands. On that day one of Colquhoun's shells fell close to President Kruger and Minister Fischer while they were vainly endeavouring to keep the Boers from retiring; therefore Victoria's naval representative was within an ace of creating very important vacancies in the official life of the Transvaal. But Kruger is a person not easily killed. From Poplar Grove the naval guns went on to Driefontein—fatal to the brave Colonel Umphelby—but the division was not in time for the battle, and the march was continued to Bloemfontein without further adventure.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

GUNNER JOHNSTON — HIS WORK WITH THE ARTILLERY—"AUSTRALIA" USES HIS CHANCE — HIS ACCOUNT OF PAARDEBERG—"SIMPLY HELL ON EARTH."

Captain (now Major) Johnston, of the Victorian Field Artillery, one of our special service officers in South Africa, was amongst those camped near Bloemfontein. As in the case of Lieutenant-Commander Colquhoun, I am able to present Captain Johnston to the Australian public as another of the Victorian officers who have done splendid service during the war. At Modder River our gunner was attached to the 62nd Battery of Royal Artillery, and speedily made himself one of the most popular of its officers, not only by his pleasant, cheery ways, but by reason of his undoubted usefulness and

resource. Johnston has done his share in demonstrating that a military training gained in the colonies, plus Australian *nous*, perfectly equips a man for hard campaign work, even though it may not always enable him to figure quite so ornately as a Guardsman in a swagger march-past. Captain Johnston would do us credit—nobody, indeed, could be better chosen—if achievement depended only on looking well, and I cannot say that of all our campaigners. In addition, he has proved himself a hard-goer, fearless, enduring, capable. All-round, a first-class artillery officer.

Shortly after a visit that he paid to the Australian camp at Enslin, Captain Johnston became attached to the 69th Battery, and at the beginning of February the battery marched, under General Hector Macdonald, with the Highland Brigade to the fight at Koodesberg. Johnston had charge of a section (two guns), and was in action on the second day out, the good fortune of war providing him with a most acceptable bit of detached duty. The Boers lay in trenches on the banks of the Reit, and also occupied a number of advanced posts. From these latter they were able to make things very exciting for the advancing Highlanders, who had to operate in open country. So hot was the fire that for a time the British advance was checked. It was necessary to obtain artillery aid, and on the Battery Commander getting his order from the General, he turned to Johnston with the words—

"There you are, Australia; it is your turn now. I don't know where the enemy are, but the bed of the river is full of snipers. Take care of yourself, and for God's sake don't lose any horses."

Note the special anxiety about the horses, beside whom in the campaign men were of comparatively small value. You can replace men easily, but what is field artillery to do without horses?

"Australia," or "Marsupial," as Johnston is indifferently nicknamed, scouted for himself in advance of his gun section, and, although he came in for most assiduous attention on the part of the carefully observant snipers, neither he nor his horse was hit. The movement being covered by infantry volley-firing, he took up a fairly good position for his guns on the side of a kopje. First he opened upon the snipers, and cleared them out. Then he gave the Boer advanced posts all the shrapnel he could throw at them in the quickest time on record, and very soon the way was open for the infantry advance, the Boers scampering along a donga (gully), and taking refuge in their main trenches. "Australia" had used his "turn" to some purpose.

While Johnston was plugging away, and it was obvious to all that the enemy felt his presence, a company of the High-

land Brigade passed the flank of the guns, and a young officer shouted greetings as he went by.

"That's right, 'Australia,'" he cried; "give it to them."

A few minutes later a prostrate human form was carried to the rear by the bearer company, and a faint wave of his hand in Johnston's direction was all now possible to the buoyant young fellow, who had so lately marched forth a picture of health and strength. Johnston acknowledged it with a cheery word, but, alas! that wave of the hand was a last farewell, for the stricken Highlander died a few hours afterwards. A sniper had caught him during the advance, and a promising career abruptly closed.

During the same day a poor fellow was shot through the body, but his injury was not so serious as to excite fears of a fatal result. He was got out of action with some difficulty, placed in an ambulance waggon, and later on conveyed to the Modder settlement, with a view of there obtaining suitable treatment. The ambulance cart travelled in safety over the twenty-five miles of intervening country—to what end? Will it be believed that, just at the journey's close, while on the pontoon bridge which crosses the river, the mules shied and overturned the ambulance waggon into the stream. The helpless wounded man was thrown out and miserably drowned. As an instance of really "hard luck" in the campaign that would be difficult to match.

The fighting near Koodesberg lasted three days, and the Boer, falling back from position to position, finally retired across Pointer's Drift. The force under Hector Macdonald was ordered to join General French, and Johnston, in charge of his section, accompanied it. By way of Randam and De Keil's Drift the guns went on the march through the Free State, and there was some incidental fighting at the drift. Johnston was with those sent back to Waterfall to protect our convoy, but ultimately orders came to abandon it, and the battery proceeded to Jacobsdal, where men and horses had an all too short day's rest.

The march from Jacobsdal to Paardeberg Captain Johnston describes as the best done by field artillery in the campaign. The horses were in a bad way on starting, and the strain was terrible. Jacobsdal was left at 9 o'clock at night, and the column marched till daylight. A rest had been expected, but orders arrived to "push forward with all speed the whole of the guns." The battery went on. One by one the thoroughly beaten team horses, already on half rations, yielded to the strain, dropped and died on the road. First the forge and store waggon was abandoned, its horses being used to renew the gun teams, then another waggon was left behind, as other horses gave out, and further renewals were required

for the teams. Finally, the men were dismounted, and their horses yoked in. Still the battery went on, its path being marked by dead horses and abandoned equipment. Without halt, the battery marched the whole 40 miles which separates Paardeberg from Jacobsdal, and at noon on the second day of the great fight the guns were in action.

Owing to some internal changes, Johnston took the post of the battery captain, and, therefore, his place at Paardeberg was with the ammunition waggon. The "sickest job in the world," he describes this, and I can quite appreciate his remark. The peril is quite as great—just think what an enemy's shell would do if it dropped into the waggon !—as that involved in serving the guns, and the work lacks the excitement which so stimulates and sustains those engaged loading and firing. At Osfontein, Johnston had the same duty, but on the road thither he had a pleasant little experience. Lord Roberts happened to pass, and noticed that our gunner's shoulder straps bore the word "Australia." The Field-Marshal accosted him at once.

"You are from Australia, I see," said the redoubtable Little Bobs ; "I am glad to see you, and hope you are doing good work."

"I am trying to, sir," was the reply.

"That's right, that's right," said the great chief, as, with a smiling "Good-morning," he rode on.

"I cannot tell you," says Johnston, "how much I valued, at a time when I was dreadfully wearied, that little word of encouragement from that great man."

At Osfontein the Boer sharpshooters wounded some of the gunners and killed three of the horses, but Captain Johnston got through without a scratch. His battery was engaged in administering the check to the reinforcements sent to Cronje, and here again it did good work, arriving just in time to support the K.O.S.B.'s, whom the Boers, gallantly advancing across the plains, had compelled to retire. The enemy could not, however, stand the guns. After a few rounds of shrapnel had been fired at them the Boers turned and ran in hundreds for the shelter of the kopjes, where they had left their horses.

The flying Boers pursued such a shrewd and erratic course that they offered only the smallest gun target, and the shrapnel did no great harm. One fine old man disdained to run. He simply shouldered his rifle and walked away. Our infantry had come back, and rifle bullets rained about him, but our brave foeman never quickened his pace, and, apparently, escaped unhurt. I saw a precisely similar thing when we were searching, with gun and rifle, the north bank of the Orange River, near Norval's Pont. All the Boers were not like the old man who won Johnston's admiration, for 160 of

them gave the thing best shortly after the artillery fire opened, and meekly surrendered to a weak company of the K.O.S.B.

"It was simply hell upon earth," was Captain Johnston's description of the destruction of Cronje's laager, when for two hours 50 guns pelted, with shrapnel and other abominations, an area of about half a mile square. Every living thing actually inside the laager was killed, waggon after waggon was set ablaze, and from time to time, as the bursting shells struck stores of ammunition, these blew up with fearful earth shaking explosions.

"Never," says Johnston, "had I imagined I would see such a sight, and I repeat that it was simply hell on earth."

Captain Johnston was close to Lieutenant-Commander Colquhoun in the fighting at Poplar Grove, and he marched, *via* Petrusburg, into Bloemfontein with French's column. Colonel Hoad, commanding the then Australian Regiment, had applied to have Captain Johnston attached, and as the gunner was willing to take mounted infantry work, he relinquished his post in the 62nd Battery and awaited the arrival of the regiment at Bloemfontein. Alas! that arrival was only the precursor to reorganisation, and the artillery officer was "out of a job," as the military phrase is. Not for long, however, for he quickly found a place on the staff of Colonel Jeffries, commanding the 11th Division of Artillery. As a gunner, then, his campaign work was continued until typhoid smote him. Happily, he got through, made a good recovery, and, on being invalided home, landed in Melbourne at the end of July almost completely restored to his usual health.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

ARRIVAL OF CAPTAIN BRUCHE—THE MARCH FROM NORVAL'S PONT — THEY REMEMBERED THE SABBATH — PRICES AT BLOEMFONTEIN—VICTIMS OF TYPHOID FEVER.

The force with which Captain Bruche and his men marched from Norval's Pont on the 2nd April, and arrived at Bloemfontein on the 10th, consisted of 1400 men and 1800 horses, about 600 of the latter being remounts for regiments at the front. Major Enthoben, commanding J Battery of Royal Horse Artillery, was in command, and Bruche's special charge consisted of about 60 Australians, men of different units who had been left behind to look after sick horses or do other rear party work.

The column was mainly composed of South African irregular troops, re-sworn for service outside Cape Colony, such as the

E.P.H. (Eastern Province Horse, sometimes irreverently called the Electro-Plated Horse), Prince Alfred Guards, Uitenhage Volunteers, First City, *et hoc genus omne.* Included in the column, too, were the 2nd Company of South Australians, under Captain Reade, and Lieutenant Blair's party of the First S.A. Company, which had been sent to Norval's Pont with an escort of prisoners.

It was a wonderfully heterogeneous collection of men and horses, and on the march it dropped companies here and there, and, on the other hand, picked up men, horses, mules, and waggons which had gone on before. The march was on the road parallel with the railway line. As the Boers were known to have become active again on the east side, and had actually captured five British companies (Royal Irish and Northumberlands) near Edenburg, everybody had the jumps rather badly during the whole journey, 2000 Boers here and 5000 Boers there being the almost invariable daily report received from the magnificently imaginative *employés* of the Intelligence Department.

Donkerpoort was gained first night out, and Bruche's command furnished the outposts, moving forward next day as the advanced guard. Prior's Siding was reached on the 3rd, and Springfontein on the 4th, Australians doing such road duties as flank patrolling and gun escorting, without getting contact with the enemy. On the 5th the column caught up to a force of about 500 details from different regiments, who had started earlier, and with whom were 1000 transport mules. The command of the column had devolved upon Colonel Hamilton, who, with the 10th Hussars, had joined *en route.* The Hussars, J Battery, and Australians went on to Jagersfontein Road, where it was intended to rest a day, but an order from the front hurried them on to Kruger's Siding, where 35 ox-waggons were labouring along, and the Boers were said to be particularly close.

Bruche's men were made rear guard, and the pace was dreadfuly slow. Reit River was crossed at a drift near the railway bridge, and Bethany reached about four o'clock in the afternoon. There General Gatacre was found. At eight o'clock all officers commanding units were ordered to repair to head-quarters, where Gatacre read a report that 3000 or 4000 Boers were moving on the railway bridge with the intention of destroying it.

The Australians with the column met Gatacre for the first time, and were not favourably impressed by his manner, which was slow, hesitating, and indecisive. Certain dispositions were made, and the men slept on their arms, but the Boer didn't come. The ox-waggons went towards Basutoland next

day, and our men continued their journey north, reaching the Kaffir River at 6 p.m. The South Australians, under Captain Reade, pushed forward to a bridge nearly five miles beyond, where General Pole-Carew, with the Guards, was in command. Bruche was ordered to join them the same night, more rumours of a coming enemy being in circulation. The Australians stood by the bridge all night, but there was no attack.

When Captain Bruche arrived in South Africa he was posted to the Grenadier Guards, with whom he served several weeks, including that of Magersfontein. Since joining the Australian Regiment he had not seen his old friends until he met them near the Kaffir River. The Australian was warmly welcomed by the Guardsmen, who hardly knew him in the wonderfully nice helmet—nobody quite knows where Bruche got that head-dress—which he had substituted for the Australian crusher hat he had worn at Modder River. There were foregatherings and exchanges of experiences that evening, and next day the Australians, taking with them the 1000 transport mules, reached Bloemfontein.

"We had no fighting," says Bruche, "but we were in momentary expectation of it, and took every precaution. The Boers were not far off, but it is doubtful whether they were in large numbers, and as we were always on the alert they were afforded no opportunity of springing a surprise upon us." In these words is pithily put the story of the march from Norval's Pont.

It has been my pleasure to notice on several occasions with what signal success Lieutenant Pendlebury managed the company of mounted infantry which, after the capture of the wounded Captain M'Inerney, fell into his hands. Managed it, as readers may recollect, without the assistance of any other officer, he being the only man of commissioned rank left with the company. Colonel Price, under whose command the company now passed, bears testimony to Pendlebury's work. As the three subalterns asked for by Colonel Hoad were not being sent from Victoria, either readjustments or promotions from non-commissioned rank, perhaps both, had to be resorted to. Colonel Price told off his battalion in companies of three instead of four divisions each, thus saving a subaltern. I was glad to know that he would recommend Captain M'Leish for promotion to the rank of Major, a step which he has since got—one fairly earned by his long and good service as a Captain in Victoria, to say nothing of the splendid work he did in South Africa. This promotion is acclaimed by everyone as an act of simple justice to a first-rate officer. Lieutenant Pendlebury was recommended for the Captaincy which he proved himself so well qualified to hold, and has received it.

Sergeant-Major Healey was made Regimental Sergeant-Major for the Victorians, and Sergeant Wallace was appointed Sergeant-Major of the No. 1 (M'Leish) Company.

Colonel Gordon, the South Australian commandant, developed a taste for adventures during my stay at Bloemfontein. He was at Glen Camp, about 16 miles north-east, visiting some of the New South Wales companies, on a Sunday, and was made a party to a little project for catching a Boer patrol which had acquired the habit of annoying the Australian outpost every evening. Colonel Knight, who commands the mother colony's soldiers at the Glen, proposed to go himself with a few men.

"Would you like to come?" the S.A. commandant was asked.

"Like to come? Of course I would," was the prompt reply; "and so would my two men (Privates Way and Blue)."

The party of enterprise did not number more than fifteen, and in the moonlight it moved stealthily out to a position about a mile beyond, and on the flank of, the annoyed outpost. There the Australians, with considerable intervals between them, so as to present a long line of fire, stretched themselves on their stomachs as close to the earth as they could get, and each held his rifle in readiness for the word from Knight. There was just the smallest rise in front, and over this Gordon from time to time kept popping his head in order to reconnoitre. The South Australian commandant wears glasses, and does not back himself to see as well as he could twenty years ago; therefore his anxiety was natural.

"Down with that head," would come from the observant and tactful Knight, who didn't know, and possibly didn't care, whether the offending head belonged to a full colonel or a full private, and the commandant ducked quickly on the word of command.

It was a long wait, and the evening air became cold. The position was uncomfortable, especially just after dinner. Everybody wanted a smoke, and there was no sign of the Boer patrol which it was intended to extinguish. More than that, the idea had occurred that if some other Boer patrol should happen to come upon the rear of the party, the original programme might be varied to a degree quite beyond the taste and expectation of its framers. Presently a thought struck the S.A. Colonel, and in a husky whisper he expressed himself.

"Knight! Knight!" he called.

"Well," was the reply, "what is it?"

"Do you know what day this is, Knight?"

"No, I don't," was the quite candid reply of the New South Wales officer, far too busy to take count of days.

is Sunday," whispered Gordon; "and
do nothing on Sunday."
I believe you're right," answered Knight,
alised that the plot would fail.
niping party got up off its stomach, and
t had come out, crept swiftly back to c
s as well to take count of days.
s have not been numerous in the Austr
e conduct of the men being generally good
two cases serious enough to be investigate
rtial. Seven days C.B. (confined to barra
ourteen days in the cases of second offen
tioned as the most usual punishment.
really confined, but he is denied leave and p
iven fatigue work all the time. The punish
orse with a sore back was being made hea
ledge that a man whose horse becomes
have to walk whenever the troops moved w
n inducing him to look after his nag, and pre
eable contingency. Of one remarkable off
Victorian of the Second Contingent found s
ountry a 50lb live shell, which had been
unexploded, therefore was in the most su

from "No baths allowed" to "Please economise the water," in accordance with the host's resources. I heard, too, of a scarcity of soap. It was the same at Colesberg. Surely the Boers use more of this material than they are popularly supposed to use. Go after them where you will, you find it difficult to buy soap. Of course, there is another explanation, but perhaps I had better not discuss that. It will be sufficiently obvious to ill-natured people, and the good-natured would have none of it.

The Bloemfontein hotels were, at this time, in what may be called an in-and-out condition. One day the host had supplies, and his bar was crowded with thirsty souls. Next day the shelves were bare, and there was a drought until the military director of railways made available a few trucks for the local purveyors of grog. Here is the copy of a memo. left in my room by the man who preceded me :—"Dear H.,—On second thoughts I don't think I'll come and dine with you, but want you to come and dine here. No refusal. Whisky famine is over ! ! Time, 7.30 sharp.—Yours, etc., A. D. K." It is easy to understand the writer of that letter's "second thought." It is explained by the sentence to which he attaches a double note of exclamation. For a week the guests at dinner drank tea and coffee. One night nearly all had bottled beer or spirits, for our host had secured supplies. Next day all were back on tea and coffee once more. And so on.

News of four deaths amongst Australians reached me while I was at Bloemfontein. Private Thomas B. Marsden, of the Second Contingent from South Australia, succumbed to pneumonia. He was with the company on its march to Prieska when he contracted the disease. Dr. Jermyn (formerly of the V.M.R. at Koroit, Victoria), medical officer to the S.A. Second Company, tells me that the attack was an acute one, and that poor Marsden had to go into hospital at Britstown. He never emerged from it, and his very short campaign was quickly over. The news of Private Marsden's death brought sadness to South Australians, for the deceased soldier appears to have been very popular amongst his comrades.

The first company, I am sorry to say, lost Private F. G. Matthews, who succumbed to enteric at a military hospital south of De Aar. A very fine man Matthews was, the picture of health and strength as I last saw him, and a skilful member of the St. John Ambulance Corps. He had not been long ill, and his chums had relied with confidence upon his good constitution to pull him through. Alas ! that terrible disease, typhoid, declares its power over and over again by vanquishing the strongest.

My obituary record is, unfortunately, not yet complete, for there died, on the 16th April, in the New South Wales hos-

pital at Bloemfontein, Lieut. Basche, of the Second Contingent of Mounted Infantry sent by the mother colony. Mr. Basche, who belonged to the Army Service Corps in Sydney, was a subaltern in Captain Bennett's company, and was quite a young man. I am told that he had been only about six months married when he left his newly-made home to fight the battles of the Empire in South Africa.

Another victim was a fine young Tasmanian, Private Black, who died of typhoid fever at one of the local hospitals on the 19th. Black was one of the first-comers, had seen six months' campaigning, had come safely from under showers of Boer bullets on several occasions, and, throughout all, carried himself like the gallant soldier he was. All for what? To reach the Free State capital, go into hospital, and die of a miserable disease. Casualties on service we expect to have, and the folks at home know that this one or the other held dear may any day be struck down by a Boer bullet, or rent by a shell. When the enemy claims a man we yield him, sadly, it is true, yet in a spirit which recognises the strict justice of the demand. We cannot expect to do all the killing, and yet all escape being killed. It is quite a different thing when disease rears its ugly head and seizes upon one of our gallant young fellows. Bitterly do we grudge him. Poor young Black! He was unmarried, I learn, nor will a mother's tears pay a tribute to the gallant dead.

Major Cameron felt such a loss as this cruelly, and, what is more to the purpose, had throughout, and at all times, realised his own responsibility in regard to the men under his charge, those concerning whom the parting injunction from some heart-strained woman was, "Oh, sir, take care of my boy!" Cameron did his level best to protect his men from disease, but, of course, he could not always succeed. Owing to heavy rains, the camping place at Rustfontein, where our men were, had become a mere manure-soaked morass. Indeed, the South Australians and Tasmanians had to shift their quarters to higher ground. To visit the camp was a trial; to live in it was hardly tolerable.

There was a terrible amount of typhoid, and several war correspondents were amongst the sufferers. All the hospitals were filled, and almost every notable building in the city, including Parliament House, was doing hospital duty. The medical officers were exceptionally busy and attentive, and, so far as my observations went, there was nothing that could, in common honesty, be called neglect. The accommodation was strained, yet, generally speaking, sufficient. Were I to write columns I could not exhaust the praises due to those sweet women, the red-cloaked sisters of the nursing brigade—regulars and volunteers. God bless them!

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

EASTER DAY IN CAMP—THE DRUM HEAD SERVICE—GENERAL IAN HAMILTON'S INSPECTION—"WHERE DO YOU COME FROM ?"

Few of us who left Australia in October, 1899, had imagined that the campaign would last long enough to keep us away, not only over Christmas, but over Eastertide as well. But, despite our strong expectations to the contrary, we spent our Easter in South Africa. Apart from the religious significance of Easter Sunday, it was remembered by most Australians as Camp Sunday, as the one occasion in the year for the majority of our defence force serving so far from home when they attended a church parade. But a church parade of soldiers on active service differs in a good many particulars from one held at a camp of instruction. So the men knew and felt as they fell in under arms, and marched to the vacant space selected for public worship, under the presidency of Chaplain Wray, of Victoria. The 2nd and 4th Corps of the New Brigade were represented, the former only partially—for several companies had yet to come in—the latter almost wholly. I have said that the men paraded under arms. For some reason, the Victorians and South Australians did not, but all the others appeared in full war array, carrying their rifles and bayonets, and with their bandoliers full of cartridges. Yet, well inside the outposts as we were, and knowing as we do from experience that the Boer does not initiate military operations on the Sabbath, the Victorians and South Australians were quite safe—from everything but wet jackets. For it was a decidedly moist morning, and light rain fell while the men were listening to the chaplain's admonitions.

General Hutton and most of his staff were present, and the service was made specially suitable for Easter Day. Unfortunately there was no band to help in the musical portions, but about thirty of those who were supposed to have nice voices formed a choir, and did their part well. I have noticed that when good singers are thus allowed to openly conspire, and give the lead, they invariably pitch the tunes so high that the ordinarily-voiced find it difficult to climb to the vocal altitude necessary, and, after a few attempts, acknowledge failure by silence.

Our choir was no exception to the rule, and the "congregation" hardly got an even show. A man close beside me made repeated and meritorious efforts to conform to the pitch, and he sailed along quite comfortably as far as the low notes went. He was a man who took great interest in his work, and went as high as he dared on the ascending scale, but that wasn't

high enough for the choir, and a well-intentioned singer had to mark time in silence here and there, missing words, occasionally, indeed, a whole line, salient to the sense.

Not claiming to be quite exact, and hoping that Professor Marshall-Hall, well-known authority on "hymns," won't think it necessary to show up my errors, the result was something like this :—

"For ever with the Lord !
Amen ; so let it be ;
Life —— —— —— is —— —— ——
'Tis ————
Here in the body pent
Absent from Him I ——
Yet —— —— —— moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

My comrade did this for a verse or two, gave a despairing sigh, and held his peace for a while. Then an idea struck him, and he tried singing an octave lower than the choir, but this time got into difficulties with the low notes, gave it up a second time, and was heard no more during the service. Personally, as I am a vocalist of the order who "never sing without the music," and didn't happen to have my hymn score with me, I was able, with rigid fairness and impartiality, to alike enjoy the excellent voices of the choir, and pity the sorrows of the would-be emulators.

One of the prayers offered during the service was that authorised for use in the diocese of Cape Town during the present troubles. It is as follows :—Oh, Lord God Almighty, by whose permission nation riseth against nation (Who usest their swords for Thy judgments), and Who makest wars to cease in all the world : Vouchsafe, we beseech Thee, to our forces now engaged in conflict, protection and courage in danger, and mercy in victory. Grant to the wounded succour ; to the dying, pardon and peace ; to the mourners, comfort ; to those who minister to the suffering, skill and gentleness ; and to us all, when Thou willest, the blessing of a righteous and abiding peace ; through the merits of Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." The final benediction was followed by one verse of the National Anthem.

The religious service over, General Hutton addressed the troops, remarking that two of the corps paraded together that day for the first time. He expressed his great satisfaction with, and high appreciation of, the effort made by all ranks to as speedily as possible pursue the work of re-equipment and preparation which lay before them. The new brigade has thrown upon it vast responsibilities—not military only, but Imperial and Colonial, in a fuller sense. Upon them rested

the grave responsibility of representing, as they practically did, the whole Empire. The General referred to the way in which the brigade was constituted, and said that he had given instructions to have this set out on paper and printed for general information. All ranks would then see that, while a brigade in name, the command was really a division, self-contained, and complete in every department. "In ourselves," read the General, in conclusion, "we are a complete unit, with great work to do."

"Let us have some music," then commanded the General, and the buglers—Victorian and South Australian—played a march, while the companies moved in succession past the commanding officer. Each group of four was keenly scrutinised, and it is understood that the General was well pleased with the men's appearance. Well he might be, for a harder-looking lot of men he will not find anywhere amongst Her Majesty's forces in South Africa. The Australian soldiers always impress an observer as men who mean business, and in this instance appearances may be relied upon. Our men are not only as good as, but usually a trifle better than, they look. After the companies had been dismissed, the General had a conversational confab with officers commanding the respective units in each corps, after which he inspected the lines, and rode back to his head-quarters. I am glad to know that he found an opportunity of especially complimenting Lieutenant Pendlebury.

"I have heard a good deal about you," he said, "and I wish to say I much appreciate your work."

Pendlebury's lines were also specially commended, and some of the other company commanders significantly invited to inspect them. Altogether the Victorian officer scored—as he deserves to score.

An overhaul of the Victorian horse gear led to the final rejection by Colonel Tom Price of nearly all that is left of the saddles brought from Melbourne with the Second Contingent. They were regarded as too small. All suitable gear was being softened and got into condition for the work yet to be done, for it was felt that when Lord Roberts did move, he would travel very fast, Boers or no Boers to block the way. We had all such unbounded faith in Little Bobs that we firmly believed in his capacity to do most anything. If he had said at this time, "We are going to Pretoria in a week," we would not doubt him for a minute; what's more, we'd go. Clothing was coming to hand every day, and the khaki serge was replacing the cotton jackets worn during the summer, for the nights were said to be bitterly cold in June and July.

On the 17th April General Ian Hamilton, the division commander, made his first inspection of that portion of the Canadian and Australian Brigade then at Rustfontein camp, near the city. Part of the 2nd Corps, under Lieutenant-Colonel De Lisle, and the whole of the 4th Corps paraded, therefore all the constituent parts of what was the Australian Regiment were there, plus the Second Victorians, the Second South Australians, and the draft of 45 men sent from Tasmania to the company under Major Cameron. These Tasmanians were sent as a draft to an infantry company since mounted, therefore no horses accompanied them, nor had mounts yet been obtained, and the men paraded on foot. They were said to be all fairly good riders, and to be quite ready for horses expected for them during the week.

General Hutton had charge of the brigade—or, should I say, half-brigade—and the companies were assembled in what, in Australia, we would call line of company columns—that is to say, first divisions of companies constituted the front line, with their respective second, third, and fourth divisions forming lines at wheeling distances in rear, with twelve yards interval (lateral space) between companies.

This formation is eminently suitable for practical inspection purposes, and General Ian Hamilton used it very fully. After his formal reception he rode around each division in turn, closely scrutinising the men, horses, and equipment, and asked many questions. It was no mere formal business, such as one sees when an inspecting officer rides down the front and then back along the rear of a close line, possibly chatting all the time to some of the staff, and just incidentally glancing at the men he is supposed to "inspect." I was much impressed by General Hamilton's method.

It is noteworthy that the horses were spared as much as possible, and that Ian Hamilton did not require the troops to gallop about in field manœuvres in order to demonstrate their fitness to fight the Boer. After inspecting in the way I have described, the officers were called up.

"I am very glad to meet you, gentlemen," said the General, "and to know that I have under my command so fine a force. This is not the time for speech-making, eh, Hutton? We'll leave that until after we have won a battle."

"After we get to Pretoria, sir?" remarked General Hutton.

"Quite so," was the reply, and the officers were then introduced to the Division Commander.

He asked the seniors a number of questions, and said a few words of commendation to the Australians, some of whom he particularly asked whether they were permanent or but *partially* employed (*i.e.*, militia or volunteer). The officers

having rejoined their companies, the latter ranked past the inspecting officer by groups (fours).

I placed myself so that, before they reached the General, they ranked past me, and was able, therefore, to do a little inspection on my own account. While I did not find everything perfect, from my point of view, at least I formed the opinion that the Australians compared more than favourably with the Imperial Mounted Infantry in each of the corps. What the General thought on that subject I do not know; but I do know that he commended the Victorians and also the Westralians. The corps commanders were, furthermore, instructed to convey to their respective commands an expression of his general satisfaction. By the way, while General Hamilton was going the round of the divisions, he asked several of the men where they came from, what was the size of the town they lived in, etc. For instance, in one case he inquired—

"Where do you come from ?"

"Warrnambool, sir."

"Oh !" (reflectively, and in the tone of a man to whom the word conveyed little information). "Is it a large town ?"

"Yes, sir."

"Larger than Bloemfontein, for example ?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Much larger ?"

"Oh, yes, sir, a good deal larger."

"Really," and the General, his geographical knowledge materially improved, passed on.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

SECOND SOUTH AUSTRALIANS—DISCOMFORTS OF THE AUSTRALIAN CAMP—QUESTIONS OF SENIORITY—MILITARY POLICE FORCE—A KIPLING POEM.

While the Second South Australians were on their first expedition after arrival—a ride to Prieska, under Lord Kitchener—they had some fast work to do. The last 38 miles of the journey was a forced march, and the company covered the final 25 miles in about three hours. Smart work, and all done, seemingly, without injury to their excellent mounts. Other companies lost horses. The South Australians got through with all their steeds intact, and brought them to Bloemfontein in first-rate condition.

When the Orange River was reached, the commanding officer found that the large pont used for crossing men and horses was on the far side. There also the rebels were supposed to be lurking, but this did not deter a party of our brave men

from doing what, under the circumstances, was necessary. First, Privates Newlands and Brown stripped and swam the river, with a view of getting possession of the pont. There was a strong current running, and it was touch and go with the gallant pair. Happily they were not fired upon. Lance-Corporal Good and Privates Huskinson, Fetch, and Cuttle were prompt to follow, and the combined efforts of the six South Australians resulted in the pont being secured and profitably employed. Although the enemy did not wait for the coming of the force with which the Second South Australians was associated, our men did good, useful work, and, I am told, won commendation in the highest quarters.

I had the pleasure of meeting, at the Rustfontein Camp on the 20th, six of the South Australian nurses, who had come out from town in a Scotch cart for the purpose of visiting the gallant boys under Captains Reade and Howland. The ladies looked very well, and quite fit for all the work which either Boer bullets or disease might give them. It is understood that they would act in connection with the New South Wales Field Hospital. The S.A. nurses paid the camp an off-duty visit, but they did not stand on ceremony when they heard that a young fellow lay ill in his tent. Off they went at once to see him and cheer him up. Bright, lively young ladies they are. Really one would almost wish to be a little sick if one could be assured—but I'd better change the subject.

Some feeling was excited by the action of the West Australian authorities in dictating on the matter of seniority and promotion amongst the contingents. Owing to the inaction of the South Australian Government with regard to an exactly similar question, discontent arose. The West Australian authorities decided that all who accompanied the first contingent should take relative precedence of officers with the second contingent, to whom, previous to this active service, they might have been juniors. The South Australian Government seems to have decided that no such difference should be made because it happened that some men did their duty in South Africa while others did it at home in South Australia.

It would have prevented this vexed question arising if certain senior officers could all have come with the first contingents, but partiality is said to have been shown, and trouble has arisen. In the case of the Westralians, Major Moor, the first-comer, took command of the "battalion," as the two now united companies were called, and Captain Pilkington, said to have been senior to Moor in W.A., did not quite like it. On the other hand, Captain Reade, who came with the second South Australians, took command of all the troops from that colony—that is to say, he had charge of the first company as well as the second, and Captain Howland was displeased. So

much so, indeed, that he wrote home asking his Government to recall him. Howland considered that, as he had borne the brunt of the work so far, he was unfairly treated in having to take his orders from the new-comer, and appeared to suggest that the authority given to Reade was not merely confined to battalion affairs, but entered unduly and improperly into the internal working of the first company. Howland had done good work, as I have from time to time testified, and I can only regret that he thought the circumstances strong enough to warrant his asking for a recall. Personally, I don't think they were.

The tents of the companies which formed the Australian Regiment arrived from Norval's Pont on the 19th, and late in the evening were got out to the camp at Rustfontein. They were very badly needed, and their long absence had caused great discomfort to our men, for we had another spell of wet weather. On Monday night it rained without ceasing all through the hours of darkness. Bivouac blankets had been issued, and these, skilfully used, furnished some shelter, but I am afraid not sufficient to ward off troubles incidental to the said-to-be unusual wet season. A considerable crop of colds, and, perhaps, some cases of pneumonia, was expected as the outcome of leaving our men so long without proper shelter. After the inspection it rained heavily, and the tents were heartily welcomed. But the ground was now thoroughly soaked, and the horse lines had become broad rivers of mud. The infantry companies of what was Clements's column were no better off than the Australians, their tents being still delayed.

The Australians had their proportion of sick, but not more, I think, than their proportion. Major Honman (Victoria), who was out of sorts himself for a few days, believes in tackling disease at the earliest stages. If a man be really sick, he sends him off to the hospital without more ado, resisting all appeals to be allowed to stay in the lines, and the result is usually satisfactory. The man gets prompt and proper treatment under the most favourable conditions, and is, generally speaking, back again quite well in a week or so.

Serving with his regiment at Bethany, south of Bloemfontein, was Lieutenant Vallange, son-in-law of Victoria's Lieutenant-Governor. Melbourne readers will recollect the marriage of this gallant young gentleman to Miss Madden, and what a great social function it was. Lieutenant Vallange left his bonny bride to take his share in the fight for Empire in South Africa. Our Lieutenant-Governor's son-in-law is in the 3rd Battalion of the Buffs—that is to say, the militia battalion of the East Kent Regiment. I did not see them, but I venture to hope that they are more like soldiers than some

of the English militia I met in South Africa. It must be a sore trial to a man of Lieutenant Vallange's ability and spirit if his rank and file are anything like—well, for instance, some I saw in February at Hanover Road.

The Hon. Mrs. Fitzgerald, a daughter of Lord North, and daughter-in-law of the Hon. N. Fitzgerald, M.L.C., has remembered the Victorians on service here. Two huge bales of goods she sent from London for their delectation. Opened out, a very handsome present, looking for all the world like a well-appointed general store. Articles of clothing, little diet extras, pipes and tobacco, all sorts of good things were displayed, and Colonel Price, who suitably acknowledged the graceful and kindly act of the honourable lady, had no small difficulty in making a suitable distribution. He succeeded, however, in disposing of the gift in a way which the donor would approve, and many hearts have been gladdened.

Particularly, I should say, those of smokers who received pipes, for you could not then buy an ordinary pipe in Bloemfontein. The shops were sold right out of all but high-priced gew-gaw things, which would be about as convenient on a campaign as a grand piano or a belltopper. It cost me 5s. 6d. to get a very ordinary pipe, which I would buy in Melbourne for eighteenpence, and that was the "last of the box." Mrs. Fitzgerald's present came most opportunely to the Victorian rank and file, who all deeply appreciate her kindness.

By the way, we heard with pleasure that her brother-in-law, our M.L.C.'s soldier son, has been recommended for the V.C., a distinction won by gallant service in Natal. Those who know anything of Victorian politics are aware that the brave young officer comes of a good fighting stock. Worthy son of worthy sire.

About the middle of the month an order was issued in regard to a new South African police force, and applications were invited for membership in it. Under what conditions the following memorandum shows :—

"A limited number of men are required for enrolment in a Provisional Mounted Police Force for employment in the districts of the Orange Free State occupied by the British troops. Volunteers are now called for from Colonial corps from all portions of the British Empire which are now serving in South Africa. Engagements for the force will be for three months, to be extended (with the man's consent) to six months if found necessary later. Men joining this force will revert to their corps if found unsuitable for police duties, and also on completion of any limited engagement. Men enrolling in the Provisional Mounted Police Force, who are found suitable for police duties, have first claim to the appointments in any permanent police force which may be created in this State when

the country is settled; appointments carrying non-commissioned rank will be reserved for those members of the Provisional Mounted Police Force who may possess the necessary educational qualifications.

"Men volunteering for this force from the Mounted Colonial Corps will bring with them their uniform, arms, and equipment, including saddlery. A Government horse will be provided by the State for each man. Consolidated pay will be issued, which will include regimental pay at present rates, and allowances in lieu of free rations and forage. The rates of pay for the several ranks will be as follow:—Lieutenant, 25s. per diem; sergeant, 15s. per diem; corporal, 12s. 6d. per diem; private, 10s. per diem.

"Owing to the nature of the duties which the Provisional Mounted Police Force will be called upon to perform, only the most reliable and steady non-commissioned officers and men should be recommended for appointment. Candidates for the African Corps will find a knowledge of the Dutch language a great advantage, but this knowledge is not compulsory. In cases where men have a knowledge of Dutch, officers commanding will record the fact when forwarding their recommendation."

Officers commanding Mounted Colonial Corps were requested to call for volunteers from their own corps and to forward a list of the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men offering their services whom they could thoroughly recommend to the Military Governor of Bloemfontein, so as to reach him not later than noon of the 20th April. It is rather remarkable that, up to late on the 20th, no copy of the order conveying this information had reached Colonel Price, so I learned from him. But the existence of the order speedily became known through its publication in the *Friend*, the local newspaper, and there was a rush of applicants. Captain M'Leish's company applied almost to a man, and in each of the other Victorian companies there were many who would like to join the new force, not, perhaps, so much because of what it provided as for what it promised, for it was considered that membership would lead to good civil or military appointments in the future. South Australians were to the fore in considerable numbers; also Queenslanders, New Zealanders, Westralians, and New South Wales men. Commanding officers sent in their lists, but Colonel Price was plainly antagonistic to the whole thing, saying that his men came to South Africa for a purpose quite different from that which the new police were to fulfil. Be that as it may, however, he forwarded the applications, for, as the custodian of his men's interests, it was his duty to see that they had an equal chance with the citizen soldiers from other colonies in getting any good things going.

The following 23 Victorians were among the first chosen :— Sergeant Geary, Corporal Connor, Corporal Malcolm, Private D. Lyle, Private H. Hortum, Private H. W. Atkinson, Private C. Killeen, Private A. N. M'Donald, Private H. D. M'Lay, Private H. Fisher, Private C. Winsor, Private J. Griggs, Private J. Rogers, Private A. Butcher, Private A. G. Hornsby, Private W. E. Hall, Private C. Miller, Private H. Campbell, Private W. Seymour, Private J. Fletcher, Private R. J. Lyle, Private H. Pattison, Private J. Brooks. These non-commissioned officers and men were called up from the 1st May.

During the short period that Rudyard Kipling remained at the front, he wrote, to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne," some verses delightfully sung by Miss Fraser—a highly gifted vocalist—at a concert held at Bloemfontein The concert was managed by a committee of war correspondents—these men are always found doing something—and was in aid of a fund for widows and children whose breadwinners have fallen under "the hand of war." There will be varied opinions as to the quality of the Kipling verse for the occasion. Here is the text :—

"Be welcome to our hearts to-night, oh, kinsmen from afar,
Brothers in our Empire's fight, and comrades of our war.
For Auld Lang Syne, my lads, and the fight of Auld Lang Syne,
We drink our cup of fellowship to the fight of Auld Lang Syne.

"Again to all we hold most dear in life we left behind,
The wives we wooed, the bairns we kissed—and the loves of Auld Lang Syne.
For surely you'll have your sweetheart, and surely I'll have mine ;
We toast her name in silence here, and the girls of Auld Lang Syne.

"The shamrock, thistle, leek, and rose, with heath and wattle twine,
And maple from Canadian snows, for the sake of Auld Lang Syne.
For Auld Lang Syne take hands from London to the Line,
Good luck to those who toiled with us since the days of Auld Lang Syne.

"And, last, to him the little man who led our fighting line
From Kabul to Kandahar in the days of Auld Lang Syne.
For Auld Lang Syne and Bobs, our chief of Auld Lang Syne,
We're here to do his work again, as we did in Auld Lang Syne."

CHAPTER LXXXV.

The Order to Advance—Captain Nethercote—Chat with General Hutton—Good-bye.

The order to advance was received by the Fourth Corps of the First Mounted Infantry Brigade on the evening of Thursday, the 19th April. It was intimated that the troops were to move next morning, but we were in the midst of another period of wet weather, and the swollen condition of the Modder River, which the troops had to cross in order to reach the new objective, Karee Siding, furnished a temporary difficulty. A postponement of the movement was ordered, and it was not until Saturday that the march was commenced.

The Australians of the Fourth Corps (Victorians, South Australians, and Tasmanians) had endured much at Rustfontein. The Second Victorians were the only men who had their tents, those of the others arriving—by a strange piece of fortune—almost simultaneously with the order to move on. As that order also stated that no tents were to be carried, the feelings of the men may be imagined. It must not, however, be supposed that they grumbled. Nothing of the sort. "Hard luck" was the comment on the prospect of a further period of living in the open, but everybody welcomed the forward move and the prospects that it meant of new activity. Therefore our men were in quite cheerful mood as they saddled up on Saturday morning and started for Karee, the most northerly outpost of General Tucker's Division ; yes, and of the British Army in the Free State.

Not an ounce of sparable kit was carried, and the march of about 22 miles was taken by two easy stages. On the Saturday night the corps camped at the river, and early on Sunday Karee Siding was reached. There the corps took up the ground for some weeks past held by the second contingent sent by New South Wales, and prepared to accept all the sniping that an enterprising foe not far in front was prepared to give. For, although there had been neither pitched battle nor incidental big "scrap" at Karee Siding, it was known that the enemy's marksmen were ever on the alert, and that you took liberties at your peril. Our lads had had a spell of quiet inside the outpost line. Now it was the turn of New South Wales to rest while Victorians, South Australians, and Tasmanians kept watch and ward.

At Bloemfontein, just before the 4th Corps moved to the front, I met for the first time in this campaign ex-Captain Nethercote, at one time Adjutant of the Victorian Mounted Rifles. Nethercote is a man over whom the years pass without leaving any mark whatever. If anything, he is younger in appearance than he used to be, and he always looked absurdly

juvenile for a man of his years and experience. He is the manager of several mining properties in Western Australia, and readily getting leave from patriotic directors, he came to South Africa on the chance of obtaining a military job. He landed in Cape Town early in February, went at once to the war authorities, was offered and accepted a lieutenancy in Kitchener's Horse, and the same afternoon found him busy drilling a troop. Nethercote is no time-waster. He went on the now famous expedition to Prieska, and got his baptism of fire, a man near him being killed. He did well enough to win the compliments of Kitchener, which is saying a good deal. There was some talk of the ex-Victorian getting the adjutancy of Kitchener's Horse. In that case we should once more have the pleasure of addressing him as Captain Nethercote. By the way, one whole troop of Kitchener's Horse is composed exclusively of Australians.

On the eve of my departure from the front to join the ranks of the home-returning, I had an interesting interview with General Hutton. He had, I knew, accompanied by Colonel Hoad, A.A.G., ridden round the whole of the outposts during the week, and visited troops of the brigade who were considerably removed from the base at Bloemfontein.

"How are you satisfied with the Australians?" I asked.

"Perfectly," was the reply; "they quite bear out all I said about them and predicted for them while I was in Australia. You recollect, perhaps, some of my speeches."

"Quite well, General; we newspaper people have quoted from them in Melbourne."

"Yes, the Australians furnish splendid material, and they are troops of such high intelligence that the serious question is—How are we going to get officers good enough to command such troops? The greatest care must be exercised, and, I think, generally speaking, is being exercised."

"Are you, then, satisfied with all ranks?"

"Yes, with all ranks. I admire their work, and also their cheerfulness under difficulties. For instance—because I do not want to say that the troops of any one colony are exceptional in this regard; they are not—I visited the New South Wales outpost the other day. There were men who had been lying in the open, without tents or personal comforts, for weeks, and in the presence of the enemy all the time. Supplies had not reached them, and many of their men were ragged and almost barefooted. Not one word of complaint, not a murmur. Everybody quite conscious of the campaign difficulties, quite satisfied to accept the trials and discomforts. I was much impressed, and, of course, very much pleased. And what these men did all the Australians have done, or will do, with a like willingness and good nature."

"The brigade will do great things, General ?"

"War is largely a game of chance. All I can say is that, under Providence, the brigade will, if the chance come, do useful work, and the colonies will have every reason to be proud of it. There is much sickness, but that appears to be incidental to every campaign—appears to be inevitable. We'll get over that, and when the advance is made I think I can promise that the brigade will give a good account of itself."

It was only left for me to express the hope that the General's promise would be amply fulfilled, and that speedily ; then to shake hands with him and my many good comrades of the campaign, and say good-bye.

APPENDIX I.

FIRST FEDERAL REGIMENT.

THE OFFICERS—STAFF OFFICER HOAD.

It is an important fact in the history of Australasian Federation that a Federal Regiment was formed at Cape Town, when the units from this country were brought together. The officers of the First Australian Federal Regiment were as follow :—

Commanding Officer—Colonel J. C. HOAD (Chief Staff Officer, Military Forces, Victoria).
Major G. A. EDDY, Victoria (killed in action).
Major COLIN D. W. RANKIN, Queensland.
Capt. (since Major) C. ST. C. CAMERON, Tasmania (wounded).
Capt. (since Major) H. G. MOOR, West Australia (killed in action).
Adjutant Capt. G. R. LASCELLES, Royal Fusiliers.
Capt. (since Major) D. M'LEISH, Victoria.
Capt. F. H. HOWLAND, South Australia.
Capt. J. G. LEGGE, New South Wales.
Lieut. (since Capt.) T. M. M'INERNEY, Victoria (wounded).
Capt. R. W. SALMON, Victoria (died, fever).
Lieut. (since Major) W. HOLMES, New South Wales.
Lieut. F. A. DOVE, New South Wales (wounded).
Lieut. J. H. STAPLETON, South Australia.
Lieut. F. N. BLAIR, South Australia.
Lieut. WALLACE BROWN, Tasmania.
Lieut. (since Capt.) H. W. PENDLEBURY, Victoria.
Lieut. (since Capt.) G. F. THORNE, Victoria.
Lieut. A. J. TREMEARNE, Victoria (wounded).
Lieut. F. B. HERITAGE, Tasmania.
Lieut. J. W. POWELL, South Australia (killed in action).
Lieut. F. M. PARKER, West Australia.
Lieut. T. STAUGHTON, Victoria.
Lieut. G. CHOMLEY, Victoria.
Lieut. J. C. ROBERTS, Victoria (killed in action).
Lieut. H. F. DARLING, West Australia.
Lieut. J. CAMPBELL, West Australia.
Lieut. G. E. REID, Tasmania.
Lieut. M. W. LOGAN, New South Wales.
Quartermaster-Capt. J. H. BRUCHE, Victoria.

MEDICAL.

Major G. F. M'WILLIAMS, West Australia.
Capt. J. J. TOLL, South Australia (died on passage home).
Capt. W. F. HOPKINS, Victoria (died, fever).
Veterinary Capt. E. A. KENDALL, Victoria.
Regtl. Sergeant-Major A. W. JOHNSTON, South Australia.
Quartermaster-Sergeant-Major PAUL.

The Regiment was formed at Cape Town on 26th November, 1899, and was disbanded at Bloemfontein on 7th April, 1900. It consisted of one company of Mounted Rifles from Victoria and one company of Infantry from each of the following colonies, viz. :—New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, West Australia, Tasmania. Total, 716.

The Australian Regiment served under the following General officers, viz. :—Wauchope, Elliott-Wood, Methuen, Kelly-Kenny, French, and Clements.

The whole Regiment was converted into Mounted Infantry on the 1st February, 1900, and afterwards formed part of a column under Major-General R. A. P. Clements, D.S.O., A.D.C.

Prior to becoming commanding officer of the Regiment Colonel Hoad acted as Staff Officer for four colonies, under circumstances disclosed in the following despatch from the Premier of Victoria to the Premiers of South Australia and Western Australia (the concurrence of the Premier of Tasmania having been already obtained) :—

"In view of the difficulty among the officers on board the *Medic*, I submit the following as the views of this Government :—Cablegram from the Secretary of State, of 18th October, 1899, to Acting-Governor of Queensland, states that colonial forces may be held to be, from the date of embarkation, serving with part of the regular forces within the meaning of Section 177.

"It appears to this Government that while officers and men of colonial units are apparently in accordance with above telegram, while on board the *Medic*, subject to the Queen's regulations, this does not render it necessary, nor is it advisable, that officers should interfere with the management, drill, and control of units of other colonies.

"It is, however, certainly necessary with troops embarked together, as in this case, that in matters in which concerted action may be requisite, as well as in matters affecting the common interest of the units, the senior officer should decide, and this Government therefore suggests, on the recommendation of our Military Commandant, that Colonel Hoad, Assistant Adjutant-General of this colony, who joins the *Medic* at Adelaide, going to South Africa for instruction, and who will be senior officer on board, should act as Staff Officer, on behalf of the four colonies, to decide in all questions, as already

stated, requiring authority, representing all the units—that is, in all questions other than the immediate command and control of each separate unit, which should be left entirely in the hands of the officer commanding the respective unit.

"I shall be glad of your reply by wire, and if you concur, instructions will have to be communicated to all officers concerned."

In this the Premiers addressed promptly concurred.

APPENDIX II.

MARTIAL LAW.

The following is the explanatory memo. on this perplexing subject, issued by Sir Redvers Buller while Commander-in-Chief :—

"The object of proclaiming martial law is to enable all steps necessary for the defence of the district to which it applies—whether against a foreign invader or rebels—to be taken with the greatest promptitude, and without the restrictions of ordinary civil process. While it exists the authorities, military or civil, have the power to arrest, without warrant, any person suspected of being a spy, or otherwise aiding or abetting the enemy, and to detain him pending his trial by a special court constituted by the military authorities. The orders of the Senior Military Officer in any locality are binding upon all persons within that locality, and must be implicitly obeyed, but I wish you to make it clear to all within your district that the proclamation of martial law in a district does not give the Military Commander the right to commandeer persons for military service. It does give him the right to claim to take things at a price to be fixed by the Civil Government—that is to say, it prevents interested persons holding out for extreme prices, but should anything be taken by requisition of any officer it will be fully paid for, and there can be no commandeering.

"At the same time it is not my desire that the ordinary work of civil administration or the ordinary jurisdiction of the Civil Courts should be unnecessarily interfered with. Unless, therefore, otherwise directed by the military authorities, I desire that you and the civil officers under you should carry on your work as usual. The civil authorities are not absolved from the discharge of their ordinary duties by the establishment of martial law, though they exercise them subject to any directions which may be given them by the military authorities in the paramount interest of the defence of the country."

APPENDIX III.

AUSTRALIAN HORSES.

On the eve of starting on the march from Norval's Pont to Bloemfontein there was a great overhaul of horses. The several companies of the Australian Regiment sent in their sick animals to the head-quarters' camp at Norval's Pont, and in most cases were able to get them regimentally replaced by horses that had rested and recovered from the hard work which had brought them for a time into the sick lines. Fourteen remounts were provided from the depôt at Naauwpoort, and only about twenty-five men were left to come on by train. These not necessarily because they could not be mounted, but rather because they were required to look after the resting horses, baggage, etc. It is worthy of note that Captain M'Leish's company went on with 80 per cent. of the horses brought from Melbourne, notwithstanding the fact that fifteen were killed in action. The Second Victorian Contingent did not fare anything like so well. No fewer than 105 sick horses were sent to the base at Norval's Pont, and of these seven were so bad, chiefly with sore backs, that, I understand, they had to be shot. The others got a spell—for rest and recuperation. Meanwhile, the Second Contingent received a draft of 68 fresh horses from the Remount Depôt. They were light Indian cavalry horses, of the stamp which had been already tried and used with a great amount of success in the Australian Regiment. Throughout the campaign, however, I found that Australian horses were particularly suitable for the country—people were asked to believe the contrary before our First Contingent went away —and the work. South Africa's need of horses ought to be Australia's golden opportunity to establish and maintain a profitable trade.

APPENDIX IV.

THE ARMY RATION.

A correspondent asks whether our troops did not get fresh meat throughout the campaign. The Australians certainly had fresh meat during the greater part of the period I was with them. (See Page 68.) Bouilli (or, as it was usually called, "bully") beef was carried as part of the reserve ration.

APPENDIX V.

CAPE DUTCH.

A Sketch at Enslin.

Hoe gaat dit met yo? I open with this delicate and graceful inquiry in order to demonstrate that I have acquired some familiarity with that most surprising of languages, Cape Dutch. If you, friend reader, have lived in this great country (South Africa), and become acquainted with the speech of the bulk of its people, you will politely reply to the interrogation, "Goed danki." As you will pronounce the last word "donkey," it may occur to you that Cape Dutch is cynical. It may also strike you that it is a language in which there is here and there a sort of phonetic special providence. This last would be the outcome of placing too large a dependence upon sound, for I have merely asked, "How goes it with you?" and you have replied, "Well, thank you."

Cape Dutch has to be very well understood in order that, on the one hand, mistakes may be avoided; and, on the other, that the beauties of the language may be fully perceived and appreciated. It is possible that, in the case of those who have started very young and remained studious, a sufficient degree of comprehension to prevent serious mistakes may be acquired, yet it would be difficult to find the human being who had obtained a grip of the language adequate to a complete appreciation of its elegance.

While waiting for the Australian Regiment to kill somebody, I have been constrained to turn my attention to Cape Dutch. Satirical persons will ascribe this to an irrepressible desire for the mere "joy of battle," to the insatiable yearnings of a man who must be in a fight with somebody, if it be only with irregular—woefully irregular!—verbs—irregular, as Anstey would say, to the verge of impropriety. It is owing to such unkindness of thought, to such misapprehension of motives, that the reputations of many peaceful men suffer.

As a fact, what led me into the vast, and, as yet, only partially explored field in which Cape Dutch thought becomes vaguely articulate in the speech of man was the circumstance that I had on several recent occasions realised the disadvantage of being unable to impart to residents of this country the charms of my conversation. On most of these occasions I was on the march, hungry and thirsty. My wants were few, and chiefly in the domain of dairy produce, but not my most winning way was equal to the task of communicating them without an amount of gesture and prodigality of speculative

expression which detracts from a middle-aged man's dignity. Take the case—purely hypothetical, of course—of a traveller who at a Cape Dutch farm wants, with honest shekels, to buy a fowl for the camp pot. To be obliged to flap his arms about, and imitate the sounds of a poultry yard, is to make a wholly gratuitous appeal to the sense of humour of an astonished bucolic family crowded around a gateway. A proper sense of this was one of the several factors which led me into the intricacies of Cape Dutch.

First, I used a Dutch grammar, but soon got over that initial mistake. It is not in a regulated parts-of-speech scheme that you discover Cape Dutch. The language is far too broad and deep and long to be confined by the arbitrary dicta of any grammarian. It is as expansive as its habitat, the great veldt, where it lives and moves and has its being. You look for it where only it can thrive. You look for it in chaos. And, naturally, you find it in chaos.

When I had finally discharged myself of the illusion that a Dutch grammar would be helpful, I turned to a phrase-book compiled by the military Intelligence Department of Cape Colony. True, in this are only scraps of the language, but, at least so far as those scraps are concerned, the going was at once much easier. Perhaps it would have been easier still if I had first had my teeth removed—said to be an indispensable condition to any foreigner's right pronunciation of Russian. A week or two at the phrase-book, a few earnest consultations with those skilful interpreters, Major Rimington's "tigers," and after undergoing suitable operations to cure the series of lockjaws caused by the unaccustomed use of my articulative faculties, I am vain enough to imagine that I can ask my way in Cape Dutch. I once thought that I could also ascertain the way as the result of such interrogation, but after the Cape Dutchman had finished replying, that beguiling idea was in ruin.

Perhaps you wonder that that happened. But before condemning me for lack of intelligence let me quote a little. "Is dit de pad?" ("Is this the road?") I ask with a suave confidence, and the answer is, "Ni mijnheer gij moet naar de lenkerhand gaan, en als gij bij de rivier kom, moet gij de regterhandse pad neem. Dan draai gij om 'n stijle bergje; en dan is gij bij de plaats van mijinheer Koos Niekerk." This, being interpreted, means, "No, sir; you must to the left hand go, and when you by the river come must you the right hand road take. Then turn you round a steep hill, and then are you at the farm of Mr. Koos Niekerk." Simple enough when it is worked out, and even catchable if, while the man is talking, you remember the trick the language has of parading the verb in front of

'hy such store is set upon verbs that questions are thus decided in their favour, I have not yet discover. It is almost as bad when a voluble you the Dutch equivalent for the following :— an hour from here, in the road which along the es, is there a very marshy place, which keeps four hundred yards, and then is the road again cannot through-come if you it not well pave." o about a bit of marshy road which you can't !

ve been made to write Cape Dutch, but they disastrously. Colonel Baden-Powell is being the Boers, and called an ignorant man, because, of a sort of manifesto he issued from Mafeking, rported to be in "Taal," he used whole slabs which look very impressive in print, but are red to be untranslatable. "Cape Dutch," my ery pertinently says, "is, strictly speaking, a ot a written, lauguage." Precisely my opinion, careful comparison of how the Cape Dutchman , and how he pronounces it. For instance, we dat gij kare en wa'e het" ("You say that you waggons") but the Cape Dutchman says at

in order to have his own way). "I see that the one front wheel is not so new as it ages ago was." So I have to admit that to subtle satire the language occasionally lends itself.

Suppose that a railway accident happens. Here is the Cape Dutch way of describing it :—"The railway steamer and three waggons have from the line off ; from the morning early is the train upheld." "Railway steamer" for engine is bad enough, but to say that the train is upheld (derailed), when that is precisely what it is not, is surely a needless outrage on relevancy, not to say common decency and plain fact.

Of course, a railway accident is a melancholy occurrence at any time, and when the Cape Dutchman hears of it he expresses the grief of his mind by remarking, "That's sad." A simple thing to say, but how does he say it ? "Dit is spijtlijk," which, being phoneticised, becomes "Des spaytlek." If that is the best they can do to declare the anguish of a stricken soul, can you wonder at their firing upon the white flag ?

You may fancy I'm quibbling about the speech of a free people, who attend church and honour Mr. Kruger, but what *can* I honestly think of a language which refers to a headache as a hoof-payn (spoken), hoof-pyn (written) ? The idea of calling a man's head his hoof is only possible in the minds of people who are intellectually upside down.

To employ the graceful idiom of the vernacular : If discover you in this essay through to abide symptoms of sand colic, blame you the fierce willy-willy, which to the camp come now has, to a condition of unspeakable dirtiness reduced has everybody, and off-carried has notes I had made of other points the Cape Dutch language in, but blame not the writer.

APPENDIX VI.

THE VICTORIAN LOSSES.

The following is a complete list of the Victorian casualties up to 1st September, 1900, and all in this year :—

Killed in Action or Died of Wounds.

Lieut.-Colonel C. E. Umphelby, Special Service Officer; wounded 10th March, died at Driefontein 12th March.

Major G. A. Eddy, in command of First Contingent; killed in action, Rensburg, 12th February.

Lieut. J. C. Roberts, First Contingent, V.M.R.; dangerously wounded, Rensburg, 12th February, died shortly afterwards.

Lieut. A. G. Gilpin, Imperial Australian Regiment (4th Contingent); killed in action, Ottoshoof, 20th August.

No. 2—Sergt. N. Grant, First Contingent, V.M.R.; killed in action, Rensburg, 9th February.

No. 395—Sergt. H. J. Goodman, Third Contingent; killed in action, Kosk's River, 21st July.

No. 404—Sergt. D. H. Pruden, Third Contingent; killed in action, Kosk's River, 21st July.

No. 4—Corp. A. Ross, First Contingent, Infantry; killed in action at Rensburg, 12th February.

Lance-Corp. O. D. King, First Contingent; killed in action, Hatherly, 17th July.

No. 440—Private J. I. M'Cartney, Third Contingent; dangerously wounded, Kosk's River, 21st July, died Eland's Kraal, 31st July.

No. 432—Private J. M'Clure, Third Contingent; dangerously wounded, Kosk's River, 21st July, died 26th July.

No. 418—Private S. J. Oliver, Third Contingent; killed in action, Kosk's River, 21st July.

No. 74—Private A. H. Willson, First Contingent, V.M.R.; killed in action at Rensburg, 9th February.

No. 88—Private F. Suttie, First Contingent, V.M.R.; reported wounded, 27th February; then reported killed at Baster's Nek, 10th February. In a third cable received on 13th June, Sir Alfred Milner said he feared the report as to death was true.

No. 89—Private T. Stock, First Contingent, V.M.R.; killed at Rensburg, 9th February.

No. 488—Private H. O. Walford, Third Contingent; killed in action, Kosk's River, 21st July.

No. 343—Private A. T. Woodman, Imperial Australian Regiment; killed in action, Ottoshoof, 20th August.

No. 197—Private W. E. Clarke, Second Contingent; killed in action, Dinaarspoort, 7th July.
No. 55—Private C. E. Williams, First Contingent, V.M.R.; killed at Rensburg, 2nd February.

KILLED BY ACCIDENT.

No. 384—Sergt. H. Brent, Third Contingent; killed railway accident, near Umtali, 1st May.

DIED OF FEVER.

Capt. and Adjutant R. W. Salmon, First Contingent, V.M.R.; reported seriously ill 15th March; died at Naauwpoort, 16th March.
Capt. W. F. Hopkins (surgeon), First Contingent, Infantry; died 27th March.
Lieut. R. S. R. S. Bree, Second Contingent; died at Bloemfontein, 26th May.
No. 94—Farrier-Sergt. T. J. Rose, First Contingent; died Pretoria, 29th June.
No. 263—Private G. E. Bristowe, Second Contingent; reported wounded on 6th May, and died at Brandfort, 10th May.
No. 43—Private A. E. Coulsen, First Contingent, V.M.R.; died at De Aar, 26th February.
No. 206—Private H. A. Sealey, Second Contingent; died at Bloemfontein, 30th April.
No. 272—Private H. J. Smart, Second Contingent; died at Kroonstaad, 3rd June.
No. 186—Private V. O. Wakley, Second Contingent; died at Kroonstaad, 21st May.
No. 65—Private M. W. Atkinson, First Contingent; died at Smithfield, 27th June.
No. 367—Private T. B. Foster, Imperial Australian Regiment (4th Contingent); died Umtali, 22nd August.
No. 94—Private R. Barbour, First Contingent, Infantry; died at Bloemfontein, 6th May.
No. 214—Private H. J. Hiscock, Second Contingent; died at Bloemfontein, 19th May.
No. 584—Private J. C. D. M'P. Swan, Third Contingent; died at Umtali, 28th May.

WOUNDED AND PRISONERS.

Capt. T. M. M'Inerney, First Contingent, Infantry; wounded and prisoner, 12th February; released Pretoria; appointed magistrate of High Court of Pretoria.
Lieut. and Adjutant J. L. Lilley, Second Contingent; wounded and prisoner, 7th May; since found in Bloemfontein Hospital and released.

APPENDIX VI.

THE VICTORIAN LOSSES.

The following is a complete list of the Victorian casualties up to 1st September, 1900, and all in this year :—

Killed in Action or Died of Wounds.

Lieut.-Colonel C. E. Umphelby, Special Service Officer; wounded 10th March, died at Driefontein 12th March.

Major G. A. Eddy, in command of First Contingent; killed in action, Rensburg, 12th February.

Lieut. J. C. Roberts, First Contingent, V.M.R.; dangerously wounded, Rensburg, 12th February, died shortly afterwards.

Lieut. A. G. Gilpin, Imperial Australian Regiment (4th Contingent); killed in action, Ottoshoof, 20th August.

No. 2—Sergt. N. Grant, First Contingent, V.M.R.; killed in action, Rensburg, 9th February.

No. 395—Sergt. H. J. Goodman, Third Contingent; killed in action, Kosk's River, 21st July.

No. 404—Sergt. D. H. Pruden, Third Contingent; killed in action, Kosk's River, 21st July.

No. 4—Corp. A. Ross, First Contingent, Infantry; killed in action at Rensburg, 12th February.

Lance-Corp. O. D. King, First Contingent; killed in action, Hatherly, 17th July.

No. 440—Private J. I. M'Cartney, Third Contingent; dangerously wounded, Kosk's River, 21st July, died Eland's Kraal, 31st July.

No. 432—Private J. M'Clure, Third Contingent; dangerously wounded, Kosk's River, 21st July, died 26th July.

No. 418—Private S. J. Oliver, Third Contingent; killed in action, Kosk's River, 21st July.

No. 74—Private A. H. Willson, First Contingent, V.M.R.; killed in action at Rensburg, 9th February.

No. 88—Private F. Suttle, First Contingent, V.M.R.; reported wounded, 27th February; then reported killed at Baster's Nek, 10th February. In a third cable received on 13th June, Sir Alfred Milner said he feared the report as to death was true.

No. 89—Private T. Stock, First Contingent, V.M.R.; killed at Rensburg, 9th February.

No. 488—Private H. O. Walford, Third Contingent; killed in action, Kosk's River, 21st July.

No. 343—Private A. T. Woodman, Imperial Australian Regiment; killed in action, Ottoshoof, 20th August.

No. 197—Private W. E. Clarke, Second Contingent; killed in action, Dinaarspoort, 7th July.

No. 55—Private C. E. Williams, First Contingent, V.M.R.; killed at Rensburg, 2nd February.

KILLED BY ACCIDENT.

No. 384—Sergt. H. Brent, Third Contingent; killed railway accident, near Umtali, 1st May.

DIED OF FEVER.

Capt. and Adjutant R. W. Salmon, First Contingent, V.M.R.; reported seriously ill 15th March; died at Naauwpoort, 16th March.

Capt. W. F. Hopkins (surgeon), First Contingent, Infantry; died 27th March.

Lieut. R. S. R. S. Bree, Second Contingent; died at Bloemfontein, 26th May.

No. 94—Farrier-Sergt. T. J. Rose, First Contingent; died Pretoria, 29th June.

No. 263—Private G. E. Bristowe, Second Contingent; reported wounded on 6th May, and died at Brandfort, 10th May.

No. 43—Private A. E. Coulsen, First Contingent, V.M.R.; died at De Aar, 26th February.

No. 206—Private H. A. Sealey, Second Contingent; died at Bloemfontein, 30th April.

No. 272—Private H. J. Smart, Second Contingent; died at Kroonstaad, 3rd June.

No. 186—Private V. O. Wakley, Second Contingent; died at Kroonstaad, 21st May.

No. 65—Private M. W. Atkinson, First Contingent; died at Smithfield, 27th June.

No. 367—Private T. B. Foster, Imperial Australian Regiment (4th Contingent); died Umtali, 22nd August.

No. 94—Private R. Barbour, First Contingent, Infantry; died at Bloemfontein, 6th May.

No. 214—Private H. J. Hiscock, Second Contingent; died at Bloemfontein, 19th May.

No. 584—Private J. C. D. M'P. Swan, Third Contingent; died at Umtali, 28th May.

WOUNDED AND PRISONERS.

Capt. T. M. M'Inerney, First Contingent, Infantry; wounded and prisoner, 12th February; released Pretoria; appointed magistrate of High Court of Pretoria.

Lieut. and Adjutant J. L. Lilley, Second Contingent; wounded and prisoner, 7th May; since found in Bloemfontein Hospital and released.

No. 78—Private J. M'Cance, First Contingent, Infantry; wounded and prisoner 12th February; returning by *Medic*, left Cape Town 13th August.

No. 87—Private W. Stanford, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded and prisoner 12th February; released Pretoria; recovered and returned to the front.

No. 114—Private S. G. Hamilton, First Contingent, Infantry; wounded and prisoner, 12th February; released Pretoria, 6th June.

No. 98—Private R. J. Byers, First Contingent, Infantry; wounded severely 12th February, and taken prisoner; released Pretoria, 6th June.

No. 33—Private W. J. Burrows, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded and prisoner 10th February; subsequently discovered in Pretoria Hospital; returning by *Medic*, left Cape Town 13th August.

No. 284—Private E. W. Coughlan, Second Contingent; wounded and prisoner 30th April (leg broken); released Pretoria, 6th June; left Cape Town 13th August by *Medic*.

No. 70—Private A. E. Gifford, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded and prisoner 10th February; released Pretoria, 6th June.

No. 80—Private F. M. Meagher, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded 12th February; found in Bloemfontein Hospital after British occupation; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 26th July.

No. 85—Private T. J. Maxwell, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded 12th February; found in Bloemfontein Hospital after British occupation; returned to Victoria by *Persic*, 9th August.

PRISONERS UNWOUNDED.

No. 1—Regimental Sergt.-Major J. W. Healy, First Contingent, V.M.R.; prisoner 30th April; released Pretoria, 6th June.

No. 69—Private E. Mawley, First Contingent, V.M.R.; prisoner 12th February; released Pretoria, 6th June.

No. 100—Private R. Roberts, First Contingent, Infantry; prisoner 12th February; released Pretoria, 6th June.

No. 231—Private F. A. Boys, Second Contingent; taken prisoner 29th May; released Pretoria, 6th June.

No. 316—Private D. J. Bradford, Second Contingent; taken prisoner 7th July.

No. 347—Private F. W. Daff, Second Contingent; taken prisoner 29th May; released Pretoria, 6th June.

No. 226—Private F. E. Durean, Second Contingent; taken prisoner Dinaarspoort, 7th July.

No. 72—Private G. Kingston, First Contingent; taken prisoner 29th May; released Pretoria, 6th June.

No. 277—Private F. G. Ramsay, Second Contingent; taken prisoner Dinaarspoort, 7th July.
No. 324—Private U. Whelan, Second Contingent; taken prisoner, Dinaarspoort, 7th July.

WOUNDED.

Lieut. A. J. N. Tremearne, First Contingent, Infantry; wounded 12th February; invalided to England.
No. 7—Lance-Corp. H. S. Hennessy, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded 3rd May; returned to Victoria by *Salamis*, 10th July; developed enteric on the voyage; recovered in Alfred Hospital; left it.
No. 49—Private L. M. Inglis, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded severely 12th February; returned to Victoria by steamer *Moravian*, 24th May.
No. 112—Private J. Kilbeg, First Contingent, Infantry; slightly wounded 4th May.
No. 64—Private A. Lawdorn, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded 12th February; returned to Victoria by the steamer *Moravian*, 24th May.
No. 57—Private D. H. M'Cauley, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded 12th February; recovered and returned to the front.
No. 117—Private E. Peters, First Contingent, Infantry; wounded 12th February; returned to Victoria by the steamer *Moravian*, 24th May.
No. 50—Private W. J. Pearce, First Contingent, V.M.R.; slightly wounded 4th May.
No. 56—Private F. W. Wallace, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded 12th February.
No. 61—Private W. Williamson, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded 12th February.
No. 455—Private W. W. Anderson, Third Contingent; slightly wounded, Kosk's River, 21st July.
No. 383—Private S. B. Brooker, Third Contingent; slightly wounded, Kosk's River, 21st July.
No. 381—Private L. T. Butler, Third Contingent; slightly wounded, Kosk's River, 21st July.
No. 536—Private F. J. Bird, Third Contingent; severely wounded, Eland's River, between 4th and 6th August.
No. 476—Private W. Harris, Third Contingent; severely wounded, Kosk's River, 21st July.
No. 540—Private J. J. W. E. Peters, Third Contingent; severely wounded, Kosk's River, 21st July.
No. 90—Private H. Bush, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded 2nd February; returned to Victoria by steamer *Moravian*, 24th May.

No. 97—Private H. J. Colley, First Contingent, V.M.R.; reported as wounded and seriously ill, and returned to Victoria by the steamer *Moravian*, 24th May.

No. 51—Private J. T. Elms, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded 12th February.

No. 112—Private S. W. Edwards, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded dangerously 12th February; reported wounded 6th May; returned to Victoria by the *Moravian*, 24th May.

No. 205—Private E. T. Elmore, Second Contingent; wounded 4th June.

No. 108—Private P. Falla, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded 22nd January.

No. 35—Private W. Gamble, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded 12th February; returned to Victoria by the steamer *Moravian*, 24th May.

No. 114—Private S. E. Gazzard, First Contingent, V.M.R.; severely wounded 6th May.

No. 161—Private A. Greenwood, Second Contingent; wounded 29th May; recovered and rejoined his regiment.

No. 43—Private H. W. Hagon, First Contingent, Infantry; wounded 12th February.

No. 485—Private J. F. Hillier, of the Third (or Victorian Bushmen's) Contingent; severely wounded at Vaal Kop. Report received 29th August.

No. 431—Private J. Kennedy, Third Contingent; slightly wounded, Kosk's River, 21st July.

REPORTED MISSING.

No. 264—Bugler D. G. Akins, Second Contingent; missing 3rd May; rejoined 16th May.

No. 561—Private (Bugler) H. Haycroft, Third Contingent; reported missing 22nd July.

No. 203—Bugler F. W. Hortle, Second Contingent; reported missing 23rd May; reported himself as being attached to W.A. Contingent.

INVALIDED.

Colonel J. C. Hoad, special service; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Damascus*, 26th August.

Major G. J. Johnston, special service; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

Capt. Jenkins, Second Contingent; invalided to England in May.

Captain M. T. Kirby, Second Contingent; invalid; convalescent; about to return to Victoria.

Lieut. G. O. Bruce, Second Contingent; invalided to England.

Lieut. A. J. Christie; invalided to England.

Lieut. T. A. Umphelby, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Warrnambool*, 13th August.

Coy. Sergt.-Major E. M. Coffey, First Contingent; invalided; returning by *Medic*, left Cape Town 13th August.

No. 4—Sergt. C. Patterson, First Contingent; invalided to England.

No. 132—Sergt. W. G. Miller, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Damascus*, 26th August.

No. 9—Saddler-Sergt. A. E. Satchwell, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 258—Farrier-Sergt. W. H. Smith, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Persic*, 9th August.

No. 79—Corp. R. S. M'Alpine, First Contingent, V.M.R.; reported seriously ill 12th February.

No. 240—Corp. A. H. Dowd, Second Contingent; invalided home; returned to Victoria by the steamer *Moravian*, 24th May.

No. 63—Corp. C. B. Archer, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Aberdeen*, 2nd August.

No. 244—Lance-Corp. G. M. Taylor, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Damascus*, 26th August.

No. 179—Lance-Corp. A. Morley, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 362—Saddler W. H. Tate, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 201—Private R. Thomas, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Persic*, 9th August.

No. 77—Private C. R. Topham, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Aberdeen*, 2nd August.

No. 331—Private A. J. Tweedle, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 330—Private M. R. Somerville, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 30—Private C. G. Streitberg, First Contingent, Mounted Infantry; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 29—Private W. T. Tackaberry, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 149—Private R. Tait, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Persic*, 9th August.

No. 58—Private G. F. Ve'all, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Aberdeen*, 2nd August.

No. 271—Private P. Walker, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Persic*, 9th August.

No. 76—Private J. M'P. Welch, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 261—Private D. R. Wells, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 215—Private H. J. Williamson, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 322—Private C. Williamson, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Persic*, 9th August.

No. 256—Private J. F. Wood, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Persic*, 9th August.

No. 189—Private T. M'K. Welch, Second Contingent; invalided; returning by *Medic*, left Cape Town 13th August

No. 167—Private C. W. C. M'Leod, Second Contingent; invalided; returning by *Medic*, left Cape Town 13th August.

No. 48—Private W. Kirby, First Contingent; invalided; returning by *Medic*, left Cape Town 13th August.

No. 142—Private B. T. Woods, Second Contingent; invalided; returning by *Medic*, left Cape Town 13th August.

No. 113—Private E. W. Tyers, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Damascus*, 26th August.

No. 242—Private W. Baird, Second Contingent; dangerously ill; returning by *Wilcannia*, left Cape Town 16th August.

No. 507—Private N. G. Jarrett, Third Contingent; landed at Cape Town from *Euryalus*, ill.

No. 73—Private R. M'Minn, First Contingent, Infantry; dangerously ill, Naauwpoort, 11th June; 5th July, progressing favourably.

No. 159—Private H. A. Gooch, Second Contingent; invalided to England.

No. 30—Private F. Hull, First Contingent, Infantry; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 106—Private E. C. Jewell, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Damascus*, 26th August.

No. 130—Private G. W. Lean, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 10—Private R. T. Lindsay, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 211—Private W. M'Larry, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 37—Private F. Michel, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 208—Private W. A. Morrison, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 108—Private J. A. M'Ghie, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Salamis*, 10th July.

No. 474—Private G. A. Neville, Imperial Australian Regiment; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Damascus*, 26th August.

No. 17—Private T. R. Newby, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 327—Private H. S. Norwebb, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Persic*, 9th August.

No. 337—Private G. Pettit, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Persic*, 9th August.

No. 375—Private W. G. Rigg, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 219—Private R. H. Robertson, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Aberdeen*, 2nd August.

No. 115—Private C. V. T. Robey, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Persic*, 9th August.

No. 86—Private D. Ross, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Persic*, 9th August.

No. 104—Private M. Ross, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Persic*, 9th August.

No. 13—Private E. Chiron, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 100—Private C. A. W. Anderson, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Aberdeen*, 2nd August.

No. 290—Private J. A. Beecher, Second Contingent; invalided; returning to Victoria by *Medic*, left Cape Town 13th August.

No. 190—Private L. W. Bethune, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

Private R. C. Boyes, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Damascus*, 26th August.

No. 236—Private H. Brooks, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 270—Private H. P. Cotter, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Persic*, 9th August.

No. 200—Private R. Coustley, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 131—Private F. J. Dalgarno, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 310—Private G. Davis, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 39—Private A. H. de Kuyper, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 118—Private E. N. V. Ditchburn, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 319—Private E. W. Earnshaw, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Damascus*, 26th August.

No. 257—Private E. R. W. Gardiner, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 254—Private J. E. Goodwin, Second Contingent; invalided; returning to Victoria by *Medic*, left Cape Town 13th August.

No. 341—Private R. J. Greening, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 21—Private W. Hicks, First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

No. 8—Private T. W. Jenkinson; First Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Aberdeen*, 2nd August.

No. 551—Private R. Wellan, Third Contingent; landed at Cape Town from the *Euryalus* on account of illness.

No. 47—Private J. F. Towt, First Contingent, V.M.R.; invalided home; returned to Victoria by the steamer *Moravian*, 24th May.

No. 110—Private W. J. Henshaw, First Contingent, Infantry; invalided home; returned to Victoria by the steamer *Moravian*, 24th May.

No. 181—Private M. R. Crosbie, Second Contingent; invalided home; returned to Victoria by the steamer *Moravian*, 24th May.

No. 20—Private W. Kemmis, First Contingent, V.M.R.; invalided home; returned to Victoria by the steamer *Moravian*, 24th May.

No. 292—Private W. M. Carr, Second Contingent; invalided home; returned to Victoria by the steamer *Moravian*, 24th May.

No. 351—Private H. A. Osgood, Second Contingent; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Persic*, 9th August.

A. H. Massina & Co., Printers, Howey Street, Melbourne.

No. 97—Private H. J. Colley, First Contingent, V.M.R.; reported as wounded and seriously ill, and returned to Victoria by the steamer *Moravian*, 24th May.

No. 51—Private J. T. Elms, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded 12th February.

No. 112—Private S. W. Edwards, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded dangerously 12th February; reported wounded 6th May; returned to Victoria by the *Moravian*, 24th May.

No. 205—Private E. T. Elmore, Second Contingent; wounded 4th June.

No. 108—Private P. Falla, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded 22nd January.

No. 35—Private W. Gamble, First Contingent, V.M.R.; wounded 12th February; returned to Victoria by the steamer *Moravian*, 24th May.

No. 114—Private S. E. Gazzard, First Contingent, V.M.R.; severely wounded 6th May.

No. 161—Private A. Greenwood, Second Contingent; wounded 29th May; recovered and rejoined his regiment.

No. 43—Private H. W. Hagon, First Contingent, Infantry; wounded 12th February.

No. 485—Private J. F. Hillier, of the Third (or Victorian Bushmen's) Contingent; severely wounded at Vaal Kop. Report received 29th August.

No. 431—Private J. Kennedy, Third Contingent; slightly wounded, Kosk's River, 21st July.

Reported Missing.

No. 264—Bugler D. G. Akins, Second Contingent; missing 3rd May; rejoined 16th May.

No. 561—Private (Bugler) H. Haycroft, Third Contingent; reported missing 22nd July.

No. 203—Bugler F. W. Hortle, Second Contingent; reported missing 23rd May; reported himself as being attached to W.A. Contingent.

Invalided.

Colonel J. C. Hoad, special service; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Damascus*, 26th August.

Major G. J. Johnston, special service; invalided; returned to Victoria by *Karamea*, 29th July.

Capt. Jenkins, Second Contingent; invalided to England in May.

Captain M. T. Kirby, Second Contingent; invalid; convalescent; about to return to Victoria.

Lieut. G. O. Bruce, Second Contingent; invalided to England.

Lieut. A. J. Christie; invalided to England.