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ARTS UNDER ARMS

AN UNIVERSITY MAN IN KHAKI
ARTS UNDER ARMS

AN UNIVERSITY MAN IN KHAKI!

BY

MAURICE FITZGIBBON

LATE TROOPER AND SERGEANT-MAJOR, 45TH COMPANY
(IRISH HUNT CONTINGENT) IMPERIAL YEOMANRY

Ex Africa semper aliquid novi

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS

INGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
NEW YORK AND BOMBAY

1901

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ARTS UNDER ARMS

AN UNIVERSITY MAN IN KHAKI

BY

MAURICE FITZGIBBON

MODERATOR IN CLASSICS AND B.A., TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN UNIVERSITY.
LATE TROOPER AND SERGEANT-MAJOR, 45th COMPANY
(IRISH HUNT CONTINGENT) IMPERIAL YEOMANRY

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NEW YORK

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
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1901

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TO

MY MOTHER

AS A POOR RETURN FOR HER LOVING CARE

MANIFEST BY THE HOME LETTER

WRITTEN TO ME IN EACH WEEK OF THE PERIOD

OF MY ACTIVE SERVICE

NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
PREFACE

In the pages which follow I have tried to set down in the form of simple narrative the events in course of which, after closing my books as an University student, I came to be engaged in the fire of the Boer war.

This little book contains, I believe, the first published account of the events which led up to, took place at, and followed upon the capture of the Thirteenth Battalion of Imperial Yeomanry by Boer-Commandant Christiaan de Wet after five days resistance outside the town of Lindley, Orange Free State. It is of course a matter of difficulty to describe occurrences such as those which took place at Lindley in a manner which will satisfy the recollections of all those who took part in them.
Out of regard for the two men named therein, I have here set down a letter which I received from the commander of the company of which I was a member. The letter was written on the subject of some suggested alterations in the text of that part of the narrative which appeared in the pages of 'T.C.D.', the College Miscellany of Dublin University.

12 Chesham Place, S.W.

Dear FITZGIBBON,

I think that I won't interfere any more with your historical work; as my corrections are, on the whole, unimportant and immaterial. But if you do publish it, there are two names which I hold to be those of the bravest men we had—Stannus and Sergeant Bell.

Believe me, yours most sincerely,

LONGFORD.

In some instances I have had to rely upon verbal and written accounts of other members of the Thirteenth Battalion. I have stated the general belief of myself and my authorities, founded upon such evidence as was at the time available in each case.
PREFACE

Three of the photographs by which this book is illustrated—Nos. II., III., and IV.—I purchased at Reitz, O.R.C., from the man who took them. He was a Swiss photographer who had been on service as a burgher with the Heilbron commando.

I have of set purpose refrained from giving in these pages the names of comrades-in-arms lest I should thereby awaken sad memories for the relatives and friends of those who fell.

To readers and critics I prefer this humble request, that they will make every allowance possible for a first attempt.

Maurice FitzGibbon.

10 Merrion Square, Dublin.
CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. THE FIRST ANSWER TO THE CALL</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. ORDERED SOUTH</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. ORDERED NORTH</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE FRONT</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. AT BAY FOR FOUR DAYS; THE THIRTEENTH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BATTALION OF IMPERIAL YEOMANRY AT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINDLEY</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. PRISONERS OF DE WET</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. RELIEF</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX: SOME EXTRACTS FROM MY DIARY</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ILLUSTRATIONS

FRONTISPICE

I. SOME MEMBERS OF NO. I TROOP OF THE DUBLIN SQUADRON, I. Y., AT MAITLAND CAMP, CAPE TOWN (TABLE MOUNTAIN IN THE BACKGROUND) . . To face p. 81

II. THE BLOWING-UP OF THE VET RIVER BRIDGE, MAIN LINE, ORANGE FREE STATE , 113

III. THE VET RIVER BRIDGE JUST AFTER THE EXPLOSION : WITH THREE MEMBERS OF THE NETHERLANDS RAILWAY DESTRUCTION GANG , 115

IV. BOERS IN POSITION ON TOP OF A KOPJE , 135

V. TEMPORARY MILITARY HOSPITAL AT REITZ, O.R.C. , 205
AN UNIVERSITY MAN IN KHAKI

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST ANSWER TO THE CALL

'It first came to us in winter as we spoke of Christmas cheer,
When the fireside of the home we gathered round;
And amidst the merry greetings which were waiting the New Year,
It was passing through our streets with saddened sound.
Then strong men stood as they heard it, full of grief and sore perplexed,
Men determined for their homes to do or die;
There was but one eager question—it was, "What is coming next?"
As the story of the war was passing by.'

I quote the above—the first verse of a poem by a well-known author in a well-known weekly 'periodical'—not as an example of meritorious versification, but merely as expressing, in some sort, the circumstances in which all loyal subjects of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria found themselves in or about the last week of the year of grace 1899.

Few will forget that time of awful suspense which followed upon the 'regrettable incidents' at
Colenso, Stormberg, and Magersfontein—that time when a deep gloom settled upon London, emptying of their frequenters the theatres, music-halls, supper restaurants, and other haunts of pleasure-seekers; and, as the daily papers told us—*ecce signum!*—depriving of its employment an army of over two thousand waiters.

Even Dublin, the city which has the warranty of Charles Lever for being the most cheerful city in the world, containing, as he says, 'the greatest number of decent fellows with nothing to do,' was included in the penumbra of that eclipse which was shrouding in darkness the capital of the empire. Our case was in some respects worse than that of London, for had we not, in addition to the grief for the disasters which had fallen heaviest upon the regiments of our own fellow-countrymen, to bear with hot hearts the reviling exultation of a self-styled 'National' Press. At home in our houses, and abroad in our streets, communion was avoided, and the usual amenities of life omitted; how could the ordinary topics of conversation be entered upon at the breakfast-table, while upon it lay that paper with its double-leadened war type, and its lengthy lists of casualties? We passed each other by in the street with a mere nod of recognition, hoping that
THE FIRST ANSWER TO THE CALL

our kinsfolk or acquaintance would not stop to speak of what was uppermost in mind.

It was a time when many of us felt that possibly we might be of use; but, useful or useless, we wanted to be up and doing something.

Would we be let?

Men who had been at school or college with us had already fallen, or might be included in tomorrow's list of casualties. Why not let us go and do our best to retrieve their position, or, if that was not to be, let us go down with them?

Good luck, our chance came in its own good time.

On Tuesday morning, the day following Christmas Day, the following notice appeared, just as it stands, in the leading page of each of the great English newspapers, and also in that of the Irish Times and of the Daily Express in Dublin:

CALL TO ARMS

War Office Orders

The War Office has issued the following:

FORMATION OF AN IMPERIAL MOUNTED FORCE
FOR SERVICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

1. This force will be recruited from—

(a) Yeomanry; (b) Volunteers; (c) civilians. Such volunteers or civilians as may be selected must first satisfy the officer commanding a yeomanry
regiment, or such other officer as may be appointed for the purpose, that they are good riders and marksmen according to yeomanry standard.

2. Applications. — Applications for enlistment should be addressed to officers commanding yeomanry regiments, or to an officer to be appointed for this purpose.

3. Period of Enlistment.—The period of enlistment will be for one year, or for not less than the period of the war. If, however, the war is over in less than one year, the man may either be discharged at once, or remain until he has completed a year's service at his option.


Married men will receive separation allowances. On completing their period of service the men will receive a gratuity of 5l. in addition to any gratuity given to the troops at the termination of the war.

If discharged in consequence of wounds, injuries, or disability received or contracted while on service, they will be entitled to pension in accordance with the Royal Warrant for pay, &c., of the regular army. The sum of 40l. will be allowed to every Imperial Yeoman who brings his own horse; a
preference as a rule should be given to small horses. Transport will be provided for men and horses.

5. Age and Standard of Men.—Age, from 20 to 35 years; height, 5 ft. 3 in. and upwards; chest measurement, 34 in. and upwards; weight, 115 lb. and upwards.

6. Medical Examination and Enlistment.—Candidates will proceed to, or be despatched to, the headquarters of a yeomanry regiment, or to such other place as may be appointed, for the purpose of—

(a) Being passed as physically fit by a medical officer approved by the War Office.

(b) Being attested by the adjutant of a yeomanry brigade, by a magistrate, or by some other officer appointed by the War Office to administer the oath.

7. Final Approval.—Recruits will be finally approved by the officer commanding the yeomanry regiment, or by an officer appointed for this purpose.

8. Assembly.—After final approval, the officer commanding the company will make his own arrangements for the assembly of the company.

Ireland

In the case of Ireland the above-mentioned duties discharged by officers commanding yeomanry regiments will be entrusted to the officer command-
ing at Newbridge and the officer commanding 83rd Regimental District. Any candidate willing to enlist should apply to one or other of these officers.

**General Instructions**

1. *Billets.*—When the company assembles, the men and horses may be billeted, unless the officer commanding prefers to draw lodgings, forage, and stable allowances at 6d., 1s. 6d., and 9d. respectively.

2. *Formation of Companies.*—Each company will be of the following strength:—1 captain, 4 subalterns, 6 sergeants, including one colour sergeant, 1 farrier sergeant, 2 shoeing smiths, 1 saddler, 1 bugler, 115 rank and file, to include 6 corporals, 2 cooks, and officers' servants.

3. *Numbering.*—Each company is to have a distinguishing number, to be allotted, as it is raised, by the Imperial Yeomanry Committee.

4. *Clothing and Equipment.*—A capitation grant will be allowed for the supply of clothing, personal equipment, horse equipment, stable necessaries.

A sum will also be allowed for each company to cover the cost of camp equipment.

Arms and ammunition will be provided by Government. Officers will be allowed to buy Government pistols at Government price.
Transport will be either supplied by Government, or at Government expense.

5. Baggage.—When on service, all officers will be limited to 35 lb. weight of baggage; and for other ranks not more than what the regular soldier is allowed.

6. Horses.—Horses must be passed by a veterinary surgeon as working sound, and will be inspected twenty-four hours before embarkation to prevent spread of infectious disease.

7. Forage and Stable Allowance.—From date of purchase of each horse, stable and forage allowance will be allowed at the rate of 1s. 6d. for forage and of 9d. for stable allowance. Third-class railway fare (from home to place of enlistment) will be allowed in the case of finally accepted candidates.

8. Documents.—The original attestation of men enlisted and their medical certificate will be left at the headquarters of each yeomanry brigade.

9. Headquarters.—The headquarters of the Imperial Yeomanry will be at 12 Suffolk-street, London, where any further information will be obtainable.

10. One medical officer and one veterinary surgeon will be detailed for every 500 men and horses. Two pack animals, with saddles, will be allowed for
each company, and one pack horse for the medical officer.

Such was the preliminary announcement of the formation of the Imperial Yeomanry made public on Tuesday, December 26, 1899.

It was unkind—but, no matter!—in section 1, to spell 'civilians' with a small c, when 'Yeomanry' and 'Volunteers' were each distinguished by a capital. In Ireland yeomanry and volunteers were non-existent, presumably because the necessary arms would have come in too handy on the occasion of 'Demonstrations' and such-like national festivals.

I shall not quickly forget the day on which I read the announcement of the formation of the Imperial Yeomanry Corps.

I was leaving Kingsbridge Station, by the early morning train on St. Stephen's Day, in the company of a friend with whom I was travelling down to the Co. Kilkenny for the purpose of a few days' shooting. We had taken our seats in a third-class carriage some ten minutes before the train was due to start: I opened the Irish Times and saw the announcement to which I have referred: before the engine whistled I had made up my mind that my application should go to Newbridge that night—and it did.
THE FIRST ANSWER TO THE CALL

One incident of that journey down to Kilkenny is indelibly impressed on my memory. We had the compartment to ourselves as far as a small country station in the Queen’s County. Here there entered it a tall man, evidently of the farming class, but with an air that is in most cases unmistakeable by one of ordinary observation—that of the soldier in private life. In spite of the man’s slouch hat, weather-beaten frieze, and leather gaiters, I felt sure of my ground, but I wanted to make certain. I waited a few minutes, and then got up and moved over to the far end of the compartment, where the newcomer was seated.

I offered him a fill of tobacco, which he accepted, then I filled my own pipe, and said to the man, ‘I’d be willing to bet you a half-crown you were once a soldier.’

‘I am one now, sir,’ he said, and with that he told me that two days previously he had been called up for service in South Africa as a reservist.

He slowly took from his pocket his papers, one of which was an Army pass to the Pembroke Dock, South Wales, via Waterford, for embarkation; another showed that he had been a sergeant in the Royal Horse Artillery—since reduced to a corporal; a third contained an order to report himself on or before
the 29th inst. at the Pembroke Dock, South Wales, for embodiment in a battery to proceed forthwith to Cape Town; while a fourth showed that in eighteen days he would have completed his term as a reservist, and would have been no longer available, save voluntarily, for military service.

'But,' he added, 'that would not have mattered; I'd have volunteered for service any way. The old dog, you know, sir, always wants to be at it.'

Then he gave me an account of his service, chiefly in India, and including a share in the war against King Theebaw in Burma: nor did he neglect to explain how there would be nothing like artillery to meet the present needs of England.

He was a fine man, and one look was enough to assure one that he had seen his share of the hard side of life.

When the train stopped at Kilkenny the carriage was invaded by a noisy crowd of St. Stephen's Day revellers, and I had perforce to retire to my old seat opposite my friend at the other end of the carriage.

As the train moved off the reservist had for his vis-à-vis a somewhat exhilarated Kilkenny citizen, on the way, no doubt, to Waterford, to celebrate the season. This gentleman was the funny man of the
carriage, and, after exchanging gibes with all its other occupants, and evidently ingratiating himself—to judge from their laughter—with them, he turned his attention to the sober-looking man opposite him, who did nothing but smoke a clay pipe and look out of the window.

How is it that in such circumstances, and I have seen them many a time, the garrulous will always leave the ninety and nine who seem willing to listen to him, and concentrate all his efforts upon the one who desires no attention?

So it was in this case. The wag tapped the grim stranger on the knee, and after trying every other subject, and eliciting nothing save a ‘Yes,’ or a ‘No,’ he finally entered upon the theme of the war.

‘Eh! misther,’ he said, pushing his face over to the disguised soldier, ‘Lord Roberts is a Waterford man, isn’t he?’

‘So they say,’ replied the veteran.

‘And they say,’ persisted the other; with a tone of inquiry, ‘that the small men do make the best warr-r-r-iors.’

‘I dare say,’ slowly said the man, who was just en route for embodiment in the last month of his term as a reservist, and after many years of active
service in the British Army, 'but I don't understand such things.'

How that man would have pleased Antisthenes!

The next station was my destination, and as I stepped across him I asked the man to come out and have a drink: we each had a bottle of stout, and as I wished him good luck and a safe return—how stale that wish is now!—I added, 'who knows, I may be out after you.'

I have often wondered what the next few months discovered for that reservist.

The few days spent shooting were soon over, and I returned to Dublin on the Saturday following.

On the same evening that I reached home, I received a type-written 'memo.' from Newbridge Barracks: 'Your application re enlistment in Imperial Yeomanry duly received. You are to report yourself at once to the Officer Commanding here.'

The words 'at once' were written in handwriting in place of words 'at your earliest convenience,' which had been crossed out.

This may now seem a small matter; but, at the time, I could read no other meaning into the correction than that I was to go to Newbridge next day—Sunday: in the Army they have gained the reputation for meaning what they say—more
especially when the latter involves, as it not infrequently does, a correction.

The first train on Sunday morning took me to Newbridge, and I travelled down in a compartment with a number of horse-dealers on their way to Mallow Fair, which was to take place next day. I well remember one of these gentry recounting how a purchaser for the Government had, a few days previously, given him a most satisfactory price for a large number of mules for immediate shipment to South Africa, 'and not one of them was cut,' he added, chuckling.

I arrived at Newbridge about 10 a.m.—a bright, frosty Sunday morning, not a breath of wind, and the roads frozen as hard as nails: the very day to be in the country, and I agreed with myself that I did not care whether I had read that 'memo.' right or wrong.

I walked about a mile to the barracks, at the gate of which I found a Lancer posted and doing his guard, nor did it ever occur to me that before six months were out I should know what it meant to be 'on guard' in real earnest.

In view of my own errand I had half a mind to go up and call the guard 'Chummy,' and ask him where the commanding officer was: however, I
reflected that he might be quick-tempered, and that he had a lance, so I contented myself with the latter part of the address.

'He's in church now, sir!'

I did not want to be dignified with 'sir' by a man whose junior I should probably be in half an hour, so I said, 'Look here! I'm going to enlist, and I got orders to apply here. Can you tell me where the devil I'm to go to?'

He looked a bit taken aback, and then he simply said: 'You'd better try the orderly-room—through the archway and to the left.'

No 'sir' this time; that was satisfactory.

I soon discovered the orderly-room, presided over by the orderly-room sergeant, a portly-looking gentleman with a red face and in the undress uniform of the 21st Lancers: while, seated at high desks, were two or three orderly-room clerks also in Lancers uniform; a good fire, partly obscured by the posterior portion of the orderly-room sergeant's frame, completed the picture.

I had knocked at the door, in obedience to a card with the legend, 'Knock before entering,' placed there, no doubt, to guard the orderly-room staff from surprises.

I wished the sergeant a Good Morning.
'Good morning, sir, and what can I do for you?'
'I came here about enlistment in the Imperial Yeomanry,' I replied.
'Oh, yes,' said the sergeant, 'we've had one of your lot here already—yesterday, and filled up his papers for him. He passed the doctor yesterday, and we have him here in barracks now.'

And then I was shown how that the paper of one Colin Brown, of Carrick-on-Suir, was the first attestation paper filled in for the Imperial Yeomanry in Ireland at Newbridge Barracks.

'But,' continued the sergeant, 'this is Sunday, and we can't do anything with you to-day.'

I then produced my notice which I had received the previous night, and asked the sergeant why the 'at your earliest convenience' had been exchanged for 'at once.'

'Oh,' he answered, 'that was just to show you that you would have to suit your convenience to ours if you were coming into the Army.'

'All right, sergeant,' I said, 'I hope you will give me credit for the best intentions when I came down here by the first train on a Sunday morning.'

'Fair enough,' said he, relenting. 'At any rate we'll be able to make out your attestation paper, and have it ready for to-morrow.'
He then took me over to a desk and produced a form, in which he filled in my name, age, religion, number of times I had been in gaol, and other details, the whole ending up with a declaration that I was willing, if accepted, to be enlisted in the service of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen in South Africa for a period of one year, or until the war being there carried on is ended.

This having been duly pigeon-holed, he asked me to take a chair at the fire and warm myself; and, in true recruiting fashion, the sergeant proceeded to recount to me the experiences of himself and his regiment in the late Soudan War. This was the regiment which had so distinguished itself by a charge through the dervishes at Omdurman, and the exploit lost nothing in the telling that Sunday morning in the orderly-room at Newbridge Barracks.

Having warmed myself and listened to the orderly-room sergeant’s tale, I got up to take my leave: he enjoined on me to present myself again next day.

A finer Sunday nobody could have desired, and I decided on a walk to Sallins by way of Naas, along the country road. I had plenty to think of as I walked—*nunquam minus solus quam quum solus.*
I had a good dinner in a small hotel at Sal-lins, and caught the afternoon train back to Dublin.

'The orderly will take you to the doctor: if he passes you, you will hear, as soon as we can let you know, the date for your tests in riding and shooting.'

The scene was again Newbridge, on Monday morning, and I had been ushered into the presence of the C.O. of the 21st Lancers.

'Thank you, sir; and shall I bring my own horse for the riding test?'

'Yes, by all means.'

I then went with the orderly—a trooper of the 21st, 'detailed' for the day as colonel's orderly (I learnt all about that in the course of the next few months)—on my way to the doctor.

'Good idea this 'ere Yeomanry!' said my conductor.

'I dare say it 'll work all right,' I said.

'Ow 'll you like the groomin'? ' went on the trooper.

I had not thought of that—one of the many accessories of a soldier's life which had not at that time occurred to my mind—but, of course, I said, 'Oh! it will be nothing when you 're used to it, I
suppose—as the man said to his wife when he was going to be hanged.’

‘Oh! nothing,’ said the orderly; ‘you’ll get used to it quick enough.’

He was perfectly right.

I had no trouble with the doctor, and returned to my friend, the orderly-sergeant, in his sanctum, bringing my vet.’s certificate with me.

‘All right, sir, sign here, and we’ll let you know when to come down for your riding and shooting—probably Thursday.’

I signed my paper, and went back to Dublin by the next train.

The orderly’s remark about ‘groomin’’ had set me thinking. We had an old cavalry man in the stable at home; and every morning from that day onwards until the day of our ‘mobilisation,’ I groomed under his direction two horses according to Army regulations before my matutinal ‘tub.’

Tuesday night’s post brought another ‘memo.’

‘You are directed to report yourself at Newbridge Barracks, on Thursday next, at 10 A.M.

‘Come prepared to ride.

‘By Order,

‘O.C. 21st Lancers.’
Here then was the riding test!

Visions of going over stone walls, with my hands tied behind my back; of shooting while at a full gallop at the 'running man'—visions of other atrocities appeared to me. What would they make us try to do?

But this was Tuesday night, and I had to be at Newbridge Barracks, horse and all—so the colonel had told me—by 10 A.M. on Thursday morning, and to be 'prepared to ride.' Dublin to Newbridge, by road, twenty-eight miles.

That means I must ride down to Newbridge tomorrow, and give the horse plenty of time for an easy journey, if he is to be 'prepared to ride' a test on Thursday.

It took me some time to get to sleep that night, and I had no difficulty in leaving my bed next morning.

I rode out from Dublin, upon the Naas road, at 10.30 A.M., the sun shining brightly on a lovely winter's morning; and entered the stable-yard of Harrigan's Hotel at Newbridge just as night fell, having watered and fed my horse by the way at Naas.

With an earnest of a shilling I ingratiate my-
self and my mount with the smartest-looking groom to be found in Mr. Harrigan's yard, and watched him rub down, feed, and sheet the horse: then I went to look for some dinner.

Inside the hotel I found that I was only just in time to secure the last available bed; and in the parlour, which served also (in the absence of ladies) as a smoking-room, I found many nondescripts like myself; and, to judge from gaiters and whips, also come 'prepared to ride.' But there was as yet no bond of union between them; anticipation of those shooting and riding tests acted as a non-conductor, and it was evident that only those who had previously known each other thought it worth while to talk.

What was the use of making friends when on the morrow they might be accepted, and yourself rejected?

In one respect, and one only, the recollection of that evening is a sad one. I saw faces for the first time that night, buried for the most part in papers, faces that I have since seen in far other surroundings, and that are now, alas! buried in a sense more real.

I, too, plunged into, and tried to interest myself in, some stale ephemeral literature found upon the
parlour table, while I was waiting for a steak and potatoes to be served.

After dinner I wandered out, and bethought me to go once more and see my friend the sergeant of the orderly-room up at the barracks.

I found him having just copied out the regimental ‘orders’ for the morrow, which showed that seventy troop-horses were to be ready saddled in the barrack-yard at 10 A.M. next morning, in order to proceed to the Curragh, for the purpose of testing recruits for the Imperial Yeomanry.

‘What?’ said I, as he showed me the paper, ‘aren’t we to bring our own horses then? The colonel told me to do so.’

‘Oh, you can if you like,’ said the sergeant; ‘but, if you take my advice, you won’t; because they’ll be rifle-firing all day on the Curragh to-morrow—and, maybe, the artillery too—and these old troopers will stand it all right, and your ’oss might n’t—eh?’

That was cogent enough, and I saw the force of what the old sergeant said, but I could not help adding, ‘But hang it all, I’ve ridden down here to-day twenty-eight miles from Dublin, and all because the colonel told me to bring my own horse.’

‘Oh, well,’ said the imperturbable sergeant,
'not bad to begin on! Come up here to-morrow, and we 'll see what you 're worth; only, if you take my advice, don't do what the colonel told you, and don't bring your own horse. And now, Good-night, I 've got to go round with these 'ere orders; but come along first into our mess, and 'ave a wet.'

In we went, and I found myself in a long, low room, with two billiard tables in it, and a bar at one end. The room was resplendent with sergeants' 'stripes,' and I afterwards learned that the 'mess' is sacred to sergeants and their guests; and here they were, some in full dress, some in undress, while beer, glorious beer—and pipes—reigned supreme.

I had my 'wet,' as the sergeant had described it, and then made my way back to the hotel, had a look to my horse, and went to bed.

Before I went to sleep, as a twenty-eight mile ride can make it, I had decided to adopt the sergeant's advice, in preference to that of the colonel, and to entrust my chances on the following day to a troop-horse.

I had no trouble about getting to sleep that night, and at a quarter to ten next morning I was in the barrack-yard.

There they were, dozens of men, known and unknown to me, mostly arrived that morning by the
early trains from north and south: the motley array of various coats, hosen, and hats, set off in rear by a background of seventy saddled troop-horses drawn up in two ranks.

On all sides I heard men greeting one another. 'Hullo, old man! I never expected to see you here. Well, we're in for it now, eh?'

As the clock struck ten Colonel Wyndham of the 21st, with four or five other officers in uniform, came into the yard, and without more ado the names of those who had been summoned were called over by a non-commissioned officer of the regiment. As each man's name was called he was told off to a troop-horse, adjusted his leathers, and mounted.

When all were mounted, the colonel led the way out of the Newbridge Barracks, and the cavalcade of military horses and civilian men started on a three-mile jog to the Curragh.

On arrival at the 'short grass' a large ring was formed: round and round we went, first at the walk, then at the trot. Soon after we got the word to halt, and we were then divided into two parties—one to go through the shooting test, the other for riding.

I was included in the latter division.
The shooting party then went off, to make or mar their fates at the butts.

Our party was then again subdivided into two sections, and charge of my section was taken by an officer and a sergeant. We followed our leader for a short space at a walk across the Curragh; then the word came, 'Trot,' and then 'Gallop.'

It was a grand morning, and the turf was in good condition; the hitherto orderly 'test' rapidly became a 'five furlongs on the flat' to a distant whin bush.

But the officer was one too many for us.

'H-a-a-lt!' he shouted.

Lo and behold! the horses knew the word, and the race remained undecided.

Then we heard 'Dismount!' and all came down, thinking we were going to receive a complimentary address; but no sooner were we on the ground than—'Mount!' and immediately after 'Tr-r-ot!'
The horses again knew the word, and were off before half of us were mounted. I ran along beside my charger and vaulted 'anyhow' into the saddle.

'Ah! yes, sir! that's all right now; but you couldn't do that if you had a rifle.' It was the sergeant—unperceived, but beside me—who spoke, but he did not see fit to report me for inefficiency.
THE FIRST ANSWER TO THE CALL

Soon after came the jumping tests: a furze hurdle, a low stone wall, a bar, a small bank and ditch—all very easy—and only two of my section were discarded. My old troop-horse took all the obstacles like a bird.

This ended the riding test; and those of us who had passed moved off to the butts to try our shooting power.

We had two ranges from which to fire; from two hundred yards at a foot bull's-eye, and from five hundred yards at an eighteen-inch 'bull'! Seven shots at each range; a 'bull' to count four points, an 'inner' three, and an 'outer' two. We were allowed to choose any position, and in order to pass we had to total thirty points out of a possible fifty-six.

I was in luck, and made thirty-two.

I should add that some weeks after, as will be seen, we had to pass a supplementary and much harder shooting test. We who had succeeded in satisfying our judges on this occasion returned forthwith to Newbridge Barracks, and were sworn in as 'Tommies' before Colonel Wyndham, and in presence of our future captain, Lord Longford, who sat in a chair regarding with an air of criticism each of his future troopers as they in turn kissed the book.
The day's work had occupied several hours, and it was after five o'clock when we all reassembled in the bar-parlour of Harrigan's Hotel. What a difference from the previous evening!

A common bond now united us, and we were, all at once, sworn friends. Every accent in the length and breadth of Ireland could be heard in the room, with an obbligato accompaniment of jingling glasses.

The riding and shooting tests were of course fully discussed, in tones of contempt by those who had passed, of condemnation by the rejected.

Many and various theories were propounded as to what earthly good we should all be upon active service. The speaker who asserted that we should be used as scouts 'because, you know, we'll be so much more intelligent than the ordinary "Tommy,"' seemed, for a time, to have gained the approbation of the audience.

'Well, now, boys, I'll tell ye what it is,' came a voice with a fine Cork accent. 'The troops out there in South Africa are this way—they never know where the Boers are in an engagement, and they just want some mounted men to go and find out for them. Well, now, when we get out there, they'll just put us at the head of the army and say: "Now, then, you beggars say you can ride—well,
now ride!' and we'll just be set out to draw the Boers' fire. The divil a much more good we'll be; and the divil a one of ye will ever come back.'

All agreed that the last speaker had hit the nail accurately upon the head, and we absolutely refused to allow him to pay for the next round of whiskies and sodas.

I stayed that night in Harrigan's Hotel—it was a rather uproarious evening—and rode up to Dublin the following morning.

I arrived back in Dublin late in the afternoon, and in ample time for dinner with my people at home. I was conscious of standing, towards them, in a new relation: here was I to all intents and purposes a 'Tommy,' nor was anybody bearing my own name even dreaming of my predicament.

Both before and since I have been in South Africa, I have met a great many men, both in Ireland and England; men who, I am sure, were more fitted than I, both in marksmanship and horsemanship, to have answered their country's call (and whose absence from the land of their birth could have been quite as easily put up with as was mine), who have said to me: 'We wanted to go, and had made up our minds to volunteer, but our people would not let us.'
I had mentally disposed of this matter thus: 'The country has asked for, and certainly appears to want, men who can ride and shoot. If I'm good enough, I'll go; but I'm not going to prate about the thing until I know if I'm accepted; in the event of my being accepted, my enrolment will be no longer optional for me, or anybody connected with me.'

When a man is 'twenty off,' and when his State says she requires his services, I do not see that either he or his connections—of course, I leave the responsibilities of the married out of consideration—have anything further to say on the subject.

Moralising was all very well; but here was I, a 'Tommy' beyond recall, and under the necessity of forthwith acquainting a possibly irate parent of my condition.

I knew that after dinner had always been a favourable time for trenching upon money matters and other delicate subjects. I accordingly determined to await that season upon this occasion also. Dinner passed rapidly that night.

My father had been a Classical Scholar of his University before me, and I had essayed to follow in his steps. I bethought me of a Classical allusion as I made my way to his study after the evening
meal. I remember well the scene—my father was seated in a chair, his back to the light, reading Punch. I filled my pipe, then lit it, sat down, and looked into the fire.

'Father, do you remember in our undergraduate course we read that the Medes—or was it the Persians?—set great store by three things—ἐπεμεύνω, καὶ τοξεύω, καὶ ἀληθεύεσθαι:'—philosophical discussion between myself and my father had not been usual, and I certainly felt at this stage of the conversation that he must be regarding me (I kept my eyes fixed on the grate) as if he thought I was drunk. However, I went on, 'It so happens that I have been submitting myself to a test in the first two branches, and I now come to the third—I was sworn in yesterday a trooper in the Yeomanry.'

A pause, during which the clock on the mantelpiece appeared to me to be ticking nineteen to the dozen.

'Why did you not tell me about this before?'

'Well,' I said, 'I did not know before yesterday whether I should be good enough to pass the tests, and I was not going to blarney about the matter until I knew whether I should be accepted. You see I was in a dilemma.'
I had broken the ice as well as I could; and, in view of the fact that I was beyond recall, it did not take long to melt.

The evening post of Thursday, January 11, brought the following:—

'Imperial Yeomanry Offices,
115 Grafton Street, Dublin: '11, 1, 1900.

'Sir,—The Dublin Company of the Irish Imperial Yeomanry is ordered to assemble at the Royal Barracks, Dublin, on Saturday, the 13th inst.

'You are required to present yourself there as soon as possible after 11 a.m., in plain clothes, without a horse.

'Bring your own necessaries—a small portman-teau or kit-bag is advisable.

'By order,

'LONGFORD,

'Capt. 2nd Life Guards.'

In this connection it should be pointed out that although the Company was here described as 'the Dublin Company of the Irish Imperial Yeomanry,' this designation was not quite appropriate.

An attempt had been made, at the expenditure of much time and trouble on the part of two gentlemen, Mr. Harold E. Dickinson, and the Hon.
Victor Gibson, to recruit the Company from the followers of hunts throughout the length and breadth of Ireland, and from the devotees of sport in all its branches.

This attempt had been completely successful, and the nominal roll of the First Dublin Company, or as it was also called, The Irish Hunt Contingent of Imperial Yeomanry, contained representatives from every county in Ireland, more especially from the southern counties.

Our commanding officer—and here let me say that to the end of the chapter he proved himself, by common consent of all his men, *facile princeps* in personal appearance, work, endurance, good humour, and courage—was Thomas Pakenham, Earl of Longford, Captain in Her Majesty’s 2nd Life Guards, and Master of the Westmeath Hounds.

The Kildares supplied two other officers, Captain Stannus and Mr. Blackburne; and the Duhallows gave us Lieutenant Viscount Ennismore, who had also served in the 1st Life Guards.

Many of the rank and file had been even better known in the annals of Irish sport than their commanders.

The following account of the events of Saturday, January 13, is from a pen other than mine:—
'On Saturday morning the Irish contingent of the Imperial Yeomanry, in response to the call of their commanding officer, Lord Longford, assembled at the Royal Barracks to take up their quarters and undergo a short course of instruction in drill. The muster was a prompt and satisfactory one. Riding-Master J. W. Bayliss called the roll, after which the men were shown their sleeping quarters and provided with the necessary bedding. It was rather an amusing sight to see the members of the corps, nearly all of whom are of good social standing, carrying mattresses to their dormitories, arranging their beds, and generally settling the condition of their new residence. They found in the task unlimited opportunities for badinage, and they, throughout,comported themselves with the mirthfulness of schoolboys.'

For the benefit of those who are unacquainted with the Royal Barracks, Dublin, it may be well to state that the buildings, although contained within the one boundary wall, are, in effect, divided into two depôts. The eastern portion is arranged for the accommodation of a regiment of the line; the western for a division of the Army Service Corps.

At the time with which I am now dealing almost the entire Army Service Corps was absent in foreign
parts; and the First Dublin Company of Yeomanry were accordingly installed in the western portion of the barracks.

It was in the quadrangle, or barrack-square, of this depot that we 'fell in' for the first time, two deep, on Saturday morning, January 13, and our names were called over by our future sergeant-major, J. W. Bayliss, late riding-master at Dublin Castle.

As I shall have occasion later on to refer to this gentleman in his important rôle as sergeant-major to the Company, it will not be out of place to here give a short appreciation of him.

He was a very tall, thin, and somewhat cadaverous-looking Englishman, and quite a militaire, being, so far as I am aware, the only member of the Company above the rank of sergeant who had previously experienced what is commonly described as 'active service'; albeit we had several members of the rank and file, below the status of sergeant, who had served in the North-West Rebellion in Canada in '85, and in the Matabele campaigns in South Africa. Sergeant-Major Bayliss wore the medal for a campaign in the Soudan, the Khedive’s star, and a good-conduct medal. During his tenure of his position as sergeant-major of the First Dublin Company
he always gave us the impression of treating us, his charges, with a kind of parental solicitude not unaccompanied by a certain air of deference. He was universally liked in the Company, and proved himself an excellent man of business. However, he seemed occasionally to fall foul of his superior officers, through the quality usually described as 'knowing too much'—a quality which is generally accompanied by a desire on the part of the possessor to impart this excess of knowledge in and out of season.

After the roll-call on this particular morning, our commanding officer explained to us that we were now to enter upon a short residence in barracks, that this first day would be spent in garnishing our quarters, that on the morrow, being Sunday, leave would be granted to any who desired it, and that on Monday, when all must be present to answer their names at 7 A.M. roll-call, drill would begin. We were then put in charge of the sergeant-major, who forthwith divided us—I forget on what system—into three detachments, each of which was assigned to one of the three barrack-rooms which had been placed at our disposal by a grateful Government.

The barrack-room requires very little description
—a long, high, well-ventilated hall, with a large fire-place at each end, four hanging gas jets, two timber and iron tables, and wooden racks arranged on the railway-carriage principle all round the walls at a height of about seven feet from the ground—that was all.

Each division, consisting roughly of about thirty-five men, proceeded to an ordnance store, and each man then had assigned to him a metal bedstead, three ‘soldiers’ biscuits’ (which three being laid end to end, each ‘biscuit’ being 2 ft. 6 ins. square by 4 ins. thick when new, form one soldier’s bed), and bedding to match.

The ‘biscuits’ surpass in hardness every other material upon which I have ever made my bed—the African veldt included—but they are not, perhaps, quite so unyielding in consistence as the real military biscuit supplied for gastronomic use on active service. None of us ever had the hardihood to examine the ‘insides’ of one, but from an experience gained by six weeks’ recumbence upon two sets of these arrangements for wakeful slumber (one at the Royal Barracks, Dublin, the other in a hut at the Curragh), I am inclined to think that they are made up of a mixture of chopped straw with loose ‘breeze’ mortar. The soldier must rely upon the
heat of his body to rid the last-named material of its water, of which it seems to retain, night after night, an inexhaustible supply.

The conveyance of the beds, 'biscuits,' and bedding to the places assigned to them in the various barrack-rooms occupied some time, but the process was completed at 1.30, when the bugler of the Company—an ex-Dragoon trumpeter—sounded, in the middle of the barrack-square, that familiar call to which the appropriate *libretto* 'Come to the cook-house door, boys, come to the cook-house door,' has been supplied.

After a space of an hour, during which beef, potatoes, and stout had been put out of sight, the 'fall-in' sounded, and we were again two deep in the barrack-square.

Volunteers for 'coal fatigue,' cleaning up, and other duties, such as lighting fires in the barrack-rooms, were called for and at once supplied; and the afternoon was spent in the discharge of these pursuits. At 6 o'clock the bugle sounded for tea, after which we were free, but confined to barracks.

Until 9.30 we practised making beds, and discussed our future prospects, both in and out of the canteen. At 9.30 'Last post' was sounded, the
canteen closed, and we betook ourselves to our barrack-rooms.

To guard against ‘ructions,’ we had been told that sergeants from the Liverpool Regiment, which was stationed at the time in the other half of the barracks, would be detailed, one for each barrack-room, to keep order; and that these functionaries would come on duty at 10 P.M. when the call ‘Lights out’ had sounded.

‘Lights out’ sounded in due course, the gas was switched off all through the barracks, and we awaited with some expectancy, in the light thrown by the glare of the barrack-room fire, the arrival of our representative of martial law.

After a few minutes there was a slow step on the stairs, the latch of the barrack-room door was raised, there was a clink of glass bottles, and then appeared in the doorway a man in a red tunic, with the most cærulean ‘black-eye’ I have ever seen, two large bottles of Irish whisky in each hand, and under each arm as many bottles of soda-water as he could inconveniently carry—that man, although a sergeant in the Liverpool Regiment, was an Irishman.

And the morning and the evening, and that night, were our first day in barracks.
Some considerable time later, the last words spoken before silence fell upon the room came from our military guardian, 'Mind now! you gentlemen, when that bugler of yours blows his "Revally" in the morning, none of you knows what it means till they come in here and tell ye.'

Our commanding officer had described to us on Saturday morning the general formation of our Company, which consisted of approximately one hundred and twelve rank and file, this number not including five commissioned officers, one sergeant-major, and four sergeants. One hundred and twelve rank and file would be divided up into four 'sections,' each consisting of twenty-eight men: one commissioned officer would take command of each section, and would have under him one sergeant. The remaining commissioned officer was of course the commandant of the whole company. But there was a further authorised subdivision, and this more nearly concerning the rank and file. Each section of twenty-eight was to be further subdivided into seven 'sub-sections' of four men; and these four men would in future stand together, march together, mess together, sleep together, fight together, and maybe—but I dare say I have already made it sufficiently plain that for the ordinary trooper this
last subdivision into 'sub-sections,' as they were called, was the most important of all; and our comrades were to be those of our own choosing. Some afterwards had cause to regret that day; others to be satisfied; I to be more than satisfied. I gained that day—'t was all he wished'—three friends (one now gone, alas! as the Boer hath it, 'on the long trek'), and nowhere more than in a campaign, and in that as a full trooper, does one really appreciate at its true value the Greek saying κοινὰ τὰ τῶν φίλων.

For better or for worse, then, on Monday morning, we fell in by mutual agreement in sub-sections. The four subalterns, or section commanders, then came out from their quarters, stood at some distance the one from the other, and each sub-section decided for itself under which commander it would serve: and thus was determined the last act of free will that we, as troopers, were permitted.

Of our daily life at the Royal Barracks from Saturday, January 13, till Saturday, February 17, little need be said. 'Reveille' sounded at 6.30 A.M.; first 'fall in' at 7; breakfast at 8; muster parade at 9; dinner at 1; afternoon parade at 2; tea at 5; 'last post' at 9.30; and 'lights out' at 10. Every day two men from every section were
'told off' by rotation to assist the cook in cutting up meat and vegetables, to make out the rations, to wash up all utensils, and to sweep out all rooms. 'Coal fatigue' was another highly delectable occupation, which came round at stated intervals.

Going through on foot the evolutions which would afterwards be required of us mounted, alternated, day after day, with excursions to the rifle range of the Dublin Gun Club at Dollymount: emulation ran high between the four sections, and between their commanders, in drilling and in shooting; while the commanding officer and the sergeant-major watched over all.

Twice a week the horses of a riding school were requisitioned, in order to give us practice in riding with one hand while carrying a service rifle in the other. It was on one of these occasions that our sergeant-major gained for himself an undying fame by taking to task one of the finest polo-players in Ireland for 'not holding his reins properly.'

Our manual exercises as mounted infantry armed with the rifle and the bayonet, were directed by staid and solemn sergeants, detailed for the purpose from our neighbours, the Liverpool Regiment. However, after a couple of hours drill in the barrack-yard these severe martinets would occasionally
unbend towards their pupils in the more congenial atmosphere of the Yeomanry canteen; and once, in all humility, we ventured to question one of our instructors, 'Do you, sergeant, find it as hard to teach us the drill as to teach your regular recruits?' The sergeant's reply exalted his hearers to the seventh heaven—'Oh, no!' he said appreciatingly, as he quaffed his pint of bitter, 'but then, you know, we treat you gents as being as heddicated as ourselves'—and it was a Scholar of his University who had put the question.

Opportunity was taken, after some days rifle-practice, to make us undergo a further test of marksman ship, and for this purpose each section journeyed down to the military ranges at the Curragh Camp. In order to be retained in the first Dublin Company, it was necessary to compile a score of fifty-seven points, out of a total eighty-four, standing and sitting at two hundred yards, and lying down at five hundred yards. There was no small stir anent this second task, but only six men failed in the end to pass.

Our spare moments during this period were spent in tailors' shops and ordnance stores, collecting uniform in the one and equipment in the other. Almost every day added a new article to our accoutrements, till at last the order came, 'All
mufti is to be removed from barracks by 6 p.m. this evening.' Then was the time of trial; when it became necessary to appear in uniform upon the city streets. Whereas, in London, khaki served for the wearer as a passport to every theatre and place of amusement, in Dublin the uniform of active service was too frequently greeted with hooting and muttered cries of 'Robber!'

On Friday, January 19, our rifles and bayonets were issued to us. As each man was handed his rifle and bayonet, he was cautioned that culpable neglect in regard to either was, in accordance with the provisions of the Army Act, punishable by not less than six months imprisonment; that, in order to ensure the utmost care, each man must keep his rifle and his bayonet upon the rack above his bed in the barrack-room. Thither, accordingly, we carried the guardians of our lives. Perhaps ten days later, and one night after 'Lights Out' had sounded, our barrack-room was gradually being hushed, and voices were one by one falling into silence, when all of a sudden, a wakeful voice from one end of the room propounded the question, 'Is n't it strange that we 've heard nothing about fleas in these barrack-rooms since we 've been in occupation here?' The answer came in a gruff voice from the
opposite end, 'What fools they 'd be to come in here, when every man in the place has a rifle and a bayonet at the head of his bed.'

On Friday evening, February 2, an impromptu concert was arranged. It was held in a large hall in the barracks, and a small 'fatigue party' spent some hours of the morning in decorating the room. The object of this function was the entertainment of the friends of the members of the Company, and all the expenses were, of course, borne by ourselves. Time, and the daily round of our duties, did not admit of any regular organisation for the entertainment; no tickets were printed, and we were at home for the evening in an 'open house.' How enviable was the position of a Volunteer in Dublin, and how grateful for our hospitality were some of our *soci-disant* friends upon this occasion may be judged from the following account of the proceedings which appeared in a Dublin paper next day. The account is a literary curiosity; it would be hard to find an equal to it in the pages of descriptive romance. Harry Lorrequer may emulate, he can hardly surpass it:—

'There was a complimentary concert in the Royal Barracks last night by the members of the Khaki Yeomanry to their friends and relations. There
was apparently no check to those seeking admission; many a young man with a heart beating for the Boer cause strolled in. The Volunteers, who are to save the nation, were in a high state of jubilation, and as the hours wore on and champagne began to flow like water, there was little attention paid to the programme. Wild chorus succeeded wild chorus; boisterous songs, and deafening cries of "To the devil with Kruger," and other patriotic cries, made the barrack-square echo with the clamour. The tables were made extemporary platforms, and six or seven songs were howled at the one time. The luscious wine still went round, and young gentlemen in uniform who never spent half a dollar on a bottle of Chateau Margeau (sic), were revelling in the finest brands of France. At the upper table sat Lord Longford, the commander of this force, and beside him was Mr. Villiers Stuart, of Dromana, grandson of Lord Stuart de Decies. In introducing him to the Company, who were now like the guests of Heliogabalus, his Lordship referred to Mr. Stuart as a County Councillor for Waterford, and made passing references which were assumed to be out of place by a Waterford gentleman who was seated at the guests' table. This gentleman was heard to protest and mention Lord Stuart. He was imme-
diately set upon by officers and men, now all mixed up, and savagely beaten. It takes three British soldiers to beat one Boer, but it took ten Khakis and ten Trinity boys to eject this guest of the mess. The scene, whilst it lasted, was disgraceful. One man beaten by an entire mess. Torn and bleeding he was hurled outside the barrack gates. There a policeman endeavoured to take him in charge, but he resisted stoutly, and a great crowd collected, who, on learning what had happened, would have stormed this barrack-home of song and wine for the mere asking. This morning many men were employed in clearing away the empty bottles and the Volunteers who remained in the concert-hall over night.

For word-painting this was admirable; for picturesque departure from the truth it was beyond compare. The champagne, which 'flowed like water,' did not deceive the eyes of the chronicler—it actually was water. Water and whisky, stout and beer, were, alas! the only beverages we could put before our friends, real and pretended; our pockets had been too severely strained by the purchase of our outfit to enable us to revel in the 'finest brands of France'—ne dicam her fabulous products, among which 'Margeau' must be reckoned. The conception of the Earl of Longford and his
officers struggling with their men to be 'in at the kill' of a Hercules from Waterford only requires the pencil of a 'Phiz.' The trope of matutinally 'clearing away the empty bottles and the Volunteers' is immeasurably superior to that of the young lady who 'went home in a flood of tears and a sedan-chair'; it is, however, otherwise spoilt by the fact that all the Volunteers had to be, and were, present in their barrack-rooms at 12 p.m.

On February 7 the Company was inspected by H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught at the Royal Barracks. The words of Royalty always command attention; and these were spoken by the Duke on the occasion in question:—'Lord Longford, and Yeomen of the 45th Company of Imperial Yeomanry, having just had the pleasure of inspecting you, I wish to say how pleased I am with what I have seen. You are soon going to embark; and, as you are now about to go to the Curragh, I may not, perhaps, see you again, and I did not want you to leave here without wishing you God-speed and a successful time in South Africa. I admire, with all others, the splendid spirit that you have shown by coming forward on this occasion to help in the defence of a portion of the Empire; and I feel convinced, from what I have seen of your appear-
ance on parade to-day, that you will one and all show that devotion to duty and that devotion to your Sovereign and to your country that will enable you to return to Ireland, having upheld the good name of your country, and having been a credit to the Army to which you are attached. Lord Longford, I congratulate you on what you have done in a very short time. You have formed this Company; and, when placed with the other companies of Imperial Yeomanry that have already been formed, I am sure you will know how to maintain your position.'

The evening following, officers and men were entertained at a concert and supper by the united generosity of all the principal clubs in Dublin; and, under the presidency of Lord Farnham, the execrations that had at times met us in the streets, and the vilification of a rebel press, were as completely forgotten as they had previously been little heeded.

On Saturday, February 17, we left the Royal Barracks, and journeyed to the Curragh Camp, there to go through a course of mounted skirmishing, and to complete our course of musketry.

Our stay at the Royal Barracks, in addition to drill and rifle-practice, had also provided us with an excellent climatic training. Snow lay on the
barrack-square almost continually, and the water-pipes of the barracks remained blocked with ice almost till mid-day. No one was sorry for the change of quarters to the Curragh Camp, even though it advanced us a further stage in the art of 'roughing it.'

A company of Yeomanry seen on parade, even when unmounted, appears to be a fairly large unit, and it would hardly occur to the casual spectator that the body of troops in front of him will not fill three third-class railway carriages of the ordinary six-compartment type: he might, however, have satisfied himself upon this point on the morning of Saturday, February 17, when the First Dublin Company of Irish Yeomanry entrained at Kingsbridge Station, en route for the Curragh Camp, Co. Kildare. For military purposes a railway compartment in England accommodates eight men; at first sight this savours of roomy travelling, but, when the travellers are in full marching order, the compartment has also to accommodate eight rifles, eight bayonets and bayonet-belts, eight cavalry cloaks, eight haversacks, waterbottles, and bandoliers, and last, but by no means least—when it comes to stowing them out of the way—eight helmets. Of course they do these things worse in France, in
which country the attentive visitor may observe that every covered cattle-van is obtrusively inscribed 'Chevaux 8. Hommes 32.' On this occasion we had a railway journey of only three-quarters of an hour in front of us; but we might have reconciled ourselves to our surroundings, even more readily than we did, could we have had a presentiment of the time when our whole Company was to travel, in the middle of the Free State winter, for two nights and two days within the confines of one open truck; with the further accompaniment of one horse per man, otherwise accommodated in another part of the same train. I have said that we reckoned in our number several men who had campaigned before in Riel's Rebellion in Canada, in Matabeleland, or elsewhere; these veterans were always to hand for the purpose of bidding the younger, and perhaps more cantankerous, blood to bide their time, with the admonition that we had not yet begun. I am not at all sure that I agree with this attitude on the part of the seasoned veteran. I am a firm believer in the truth of the precept 'Sufficient unto the day'; and a good round of abuse of persons and things in general, of course when circumstances permit, has wonderful efficacy in clearing an overcharged atmosphere; it is specially entertaining for those who can manage to
steer clear of the wordy mêlée. Lest I should forget to refer to the matter again, I may here say that the veterans to whom I have referred admitted subsequently, one and all, that their experiences in the Soudan, Matabeleland, in the Canadian North-West, or elsewhere, were as so many picnics compared with their share in the South African Campaign of 1900.

On arrival at Newbridge we had a four-mile march in front of us to the Curragh Camp. After detraining and forming up we marched out of the station, and found awaiting us outside the band of our old friends the 21st Lancers. Need I say that we felt six inches higher, that we mentally—discipline forbade the act—dug each other in the ribs, when the band set our steps to 'Soldiers of the Queen'? Half way to our destination the Lancers played us off, and here we were taken up by the band of the Rifles, who played us on to the Camp. On arrival at the main entrance we were met and cheered by a large body of the Belfast A Company of Irish Yeomanry, who had arrived at the Camp the day before. This company was afterwards brigaded with us, as will be seen, in the 13th Battalion of Imperial Yeomanry.

We remained at the Curragh Camp from Saturday, February 17, till Monday, March 12.
During this period we carried out, with the assistance of a draft of seventy horses taken over from the 21st Lancers, the evolutions which we had already practised on foot at the Royal Barracks in Dublin. Specially interesting—more particularly to one man in every four—were the tactics in which three men of each sub-section dismounted, left their horses in charge of the remaining man of the sub-section, advanced half a mile or so on foot, and, after an interval spent in skirmishing business, signalled to their comrade, who remained mounted, to bring up quam celerrime the led horses. I doubt if one's hands had ever felt so full as when thus engaged with the bridoon reins of three other horses besides one's own. When thus situated we not infrequently had occasion to doubt the accuracy of the dictum, homini fidelissimi sunt equus et canis. I have heard the question discussed as to why a groom hisses when rubbing a horse down; is it because he himself likes it; or because he thinks the horse likes it; or for no reason at all? We had ample opportunity, during our stay at the Curragh, for solving this problem in our own case. Hissing in

1 Full particulars as to these evolutions and tactics may be discovered in 'Regulations for Mounted Infantry, 1899,' printed and published by Messrs. Harrison & Sons, St. Martin's Lane. Price 3d.
the process of grooming a horse is a natural expedient on the part of the groom to prevent the results of the process from entering his own air passages.

We were exhorted to make a careful study during our spare moments of Major Baden-Powell's book, 'Aids to Scouting,' and our officers were wont occasionally to examine us as to our progress in this and cognate subjects. That the matter had pitfalls of its own may be judged from the following catechism which actually took place.

_Officer_ (addressing Trooper G., who, by the way, was an excellent horseman and shot).—You are on outpost duty—on active service—and have occasion to challenge a stranger who is approaching you. How do you act?

_Trooper G._—I say, Halt! Who goes there?
_Officer._—Yes, what then?
_Trooper G._—If he says 'Friend!' I say, 'Pass, friend, all's well.'

I said that our change to the Curragh Camp advanced us all a further stage in the art of 'roughing it.' The Camp at the Curragh originally consisted of nothing but a huge aggregation of wooden huts. At the time we were stationed there half of these had been replaced by fine brick buildings. The latter did not fall to our lot, and we were
quartered in the old 'H.' Lines of 'Curragh huts.' We instinctively nicknamed them the Hard Lines. These huts are built with overlapping planks, and 'the wind bloweth where it listeth.' Be it also remembered that this was the month of February, and quite a typical Irish February to boot. There is neither let nor hindrance to weather on the Curragh, and nothing was left to the imagination in the climatic training of the First Dublin Company; nor do I suggest for a moment that this was not as it should have been.

Days passed, and at length we received orders to leave the Curragh on Monday, March 5, and to embark at Liverpool the following day on board H.M. transport 'Montrose' for Cape Town. Leave had been granted for two days to those who desired it, with the exception of two men per section who were detailed as guard during the absence of their comrades, and all had returned to Camp on Saturday evening, March 3. Just after 'Last post' on this evening, the orderly-sergeant came round to each hut with the order that a telegram had been received from Liverpool to say that our transport, while swinging into dock, had damaged her bows, and could not be repaired in less time than a week. Before 'Lights out' sounded, a deputation waited
upon the C. O. guaranteeing six hundred pounds, on the part of the men, towards defraying the expense of special transport. But it was not to be. Monday afternoon, March 12, at 3 p.m., saw us drawn up in marching order, all kits and stores packed and gone, on the parade-ground of the 'H.' Lines. Major-General Prior, Commandant of the Curragh District, inspected us, and in bidding us farewell said: —

'Lord Longford, officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the 45th Company of Imperial Yeomanry, it has given me great pleasure to inspect so fine a body of men, and I congratulate you on your smart turn-out, your soldier-like bearing, and your steadiness under arms. I am very sorry for the disappointment the Company experienced in the delay of their departure to the front, owing to the breakdown of their transport. This was a pure accident, and I think will not materially interfere with the chances of the Company seeing service. The accident to the ship may really be said to have proved of advantage, for it has enabled the Company to show the public spirit with which they are imbued, and to make an offer than which, in a course of forty years' service, I have never heard any more sporting, and that was to pay a large
sum of money towards being taken to South Africa in a private steamer. I am glad to say that nothing could be better than the reports I have received of the efficiency of the Company, especially as regards their shooting from the District Inspector of Musketry. I think I can in all truth say that no finer and better trained company of Yeomanry will leave the shores of the United Kingdom for South Africa, and I shall have much pleasure in reporting the same to His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, the General Officer Commanding the Forces in Ireland. I would also congratulate the Company on their good fortune in having as their leader an officer of the regular forces. I am sure that this company will do its best to emulate the gallant deeds already performed by the brave Irish regiments now in South Africa. In conclusion, in the names of all the ranks at the Curragh, I beg to wish the Company God-speed, protection in perils, and a safe return.'

'Fours right. The Company will move off by sections in succession from the right. Heads of sections right wheel: walk march!' and we were off.

Four bands were in waiting to play us out from the Curragh Camp to Newbridge Station, and half
way on the march we were taken up by the band of
the 21st Lancers from the barracks at Newbridge,
so that there was no dearth of music in the course
of that four miles. The music, in fact, never ceased
from the time we left the Camp until the train left
the station to the accompaniment of 'Auld Lang
Syne.' An hour and a half later the special ran
into the terminus of the Midland Great Western
Railway at the North Wall, and here it may almost
be said our campaign began. It took us three-
quarters of an hour to fight a way for ourselves and
our heavy kit-bags along the couple of hundred yards
which separated the train from the boat. So great
was the crowd of those who had assembled at the
wharf. Personally I had rather scale kopjes all day
long for a week than repeat, in marching order and
with two kit-bags, the burrowing process of that
Monday evening at the North Wall. The early hour
of 5.30 A.M. on the following morning found us filing
down from the railway terminus at Liverpool to
the Langton Dock, where our transport was berthed
alongside the quay. We and two other companies
of Yeomanry were to divide the responsibility of
tending some three hundred and odd horses on the
outward voyage to the Cape, and the morning and
afternoon of Tuesday, March 13, were occupied
in leading our charges, willing and unwilling, on board the transport, and berthing them in their stalls on the middle deck of the vessel. It was a busy scene that day in the Langton Dock at Liverpool.

At eight o'clock in the evening the hawsers were dragged on board, and H.M. transport 'Montrose' swung out into the tideway of the Mersey.
CHAPTER II
ORDERED SOUTH

Wednesday, March 14, was our first day at sea, and we had an opportunity of acquainting ourselves with the prospect of our three weeks' voyage to Table Bay. H.M. Transport 'Montrose,' length 444 ft., beam 52 ft., and 5440 tons register, had first put to sea in the merchant-service of the old Beaver Line from Liverpool to Montreal; had recently been bought up by the Elder-Dempster Line of Birkenhead; and her cargo, which had previously consisted mainly of apples and timber, was now men, horses, guns, and other 'warlike stores.' The lower portion of the hold contained many hundreds of bales of hay, each weighing about one hundred pounds, and tightly bound with wire; countless sacks of oats; boxes of 'bully' beef, of biscuits, and of ammunition (twelve hundred rounds in each box); sets of saddlery by the score; several machine guns; nor should I omit to mention a
considerable number of barrels, each containing six dozen bottles of Allsopp's beer 'for present use.' At a level half-way up the hold, a timber flooring had been laid down; on this forty tables, or 'messes,'—twenty port and twenty starboard—of the Regulation pattern, and each to accommodate twelve men, had been constructed; wooden racks fitted overhead with metal hooks, from which each night our hammocks hung, formed the ceiling; and the wooden floor, and the tables, and the overhead racks, constituted the Troop Deck. Three double gangways forward the engine-room led from the Troop Deck up to what had been the permanent metal roof of the hold. This, however, was now overlaid with cement, and fitted from stem to stern on each side, and where possible in the middle, with some four hundred and odd stalls for horses. Each was just large enough to contain one horse standing up, and the stalls were ranged side by side along the whole length of the ship save where ports intervened. Each horse was backed into a stall, the breast-board fitted into place, and there they remained throughout the voyage, three hundred and odd of them, thwart the ship, heads inward and tails outward, except when 'at exercise' for an hour each day, weather permitting. Exercise for horses
on board ship may sound somewhat Gilbertian; but, actually, it was a very real event for both horses and men. Every day at specified hours each Yeomanry company fell in at its stalls, lengths of cocoa-nut matting were hauled into place upon the asphalted Horse Deck, breast-boards were taken out, and one party led the horses round and round the deck, over and under steam pipes, water pipes, waste and other pipes; while a second party set to work with hoses and chloride of lime, and 'mucked out' the vacated stalls. It can well be understood that the exercise for the horses proved also no inconsiderable source of exercise for the men.

Washing and sanitary accommodation was provided upon the ship's upper deck, but it was soon discovered that, for the purpose of washing ourselves or our clothes, the utensil *par excellence* was a horse-bucket in a secluded corner.

The Regulation daily routine, which was of course rigidly adhered to, was as follows:—

6 A.M.—Bugle 'Reveille.' Turn out and stow hammocks.


7 A.M.—Bugle 'Breakfast.'
7.30 A.M.—Bugle 'Rise.'—Troop Decks cleared of all but Mess Orderlies, who clean out messes and swab Troop Decks.

8 A.M.—Bugle 'Fall in.'—Day Guard falls in, and is on duty (each man two hours on and four hours off) till 8 P.M.

10 A.M.—Bugle 'Assembly.'—Fall in for inspection and rounds: then go to stables for grooming and exercising of horses, weather permitting.

11.30 A.M.—Bugles 'Stables' and 'Draw rations.'

—Feed horses. Mess Orderlies draw dinner rations.

12 noon.—Bugle 'Dinner.'

1 P.M.—Bugle 'Four Gs.'—Troop Deck cleared of all but Mess Orderlies, who sweep out messes and empty refuse.

4 P.M.—Bugle 'Stables' and 'Draw rations.'—Feed horses. Mess Orderlies draw supper rations.

4.30 P.M.—Bugle 'Supper.'

5 P.M.—Bugle 'Rise.'—Troop Deck cleared of all but Mess Orderlies, who sweep out, &c.

5.30 P.M.—Bugle 'Quick.'—Sling Hammocks.

8 P.M.—Bugle 'Close.'—Clear decks for the night.

Night Guard falls in, and is on duty till 8 A.M.
8.15 p.m.—Bugle 'Lie down.'—Lights out.
8.30 p.m.—Rounds by Officers of the Day and Police.
9 p.m.—Every man below.

Anyone who looks deeply into the duties involved in the above programme, which was posted in prominent positions throughout the ship, cannot fail to see that the authorities did not leave much opening for the person who is said to provide occupation for idle hands; and even when it did come, spare time was much too valuable to be wasted on mischief. Smoking was only permitted on the upper deck, and here we sat and washed our clothes or our persons, played cards, or watched the flying fish, or tried to 'pot' the rising porpoises with empty beer-bottles, which, as they passed astern, became marks for the officers revolvers upon the bridge. Retrospect and prospect were fruitful sources of discussion, and upon one occasion a knotty point was raised in one large group seated on the forecastle head—'Why on earth are we here at all?' I do not believe anyone was candid enough to give the real reason, but the following solution of the question provided by one philosophic trooper, lying the while upon the broad of his back, had at all events the merit of originality:
'I came out,' he said, 'because I thought the Boers were in the right, and in order that the wrong might triumph everyone must volunteer.'

Each morning sharp to time as Four Bells rung, and as the bugle sounded the 'Reveille,' our sergeant-major, to whom I have elsewhere referred, used to appear upon our Troop Deck, push his way through the crowded and still pendant hammocks, and, in order to show that he was equally conversant with the phraseology of the forecastle as with that of the barracks, used to ejaculate in a voice still rusty from his night's sleep, 'Show a leg there now, show a leg, gentlemen, please!'

Our daily menu on board ship is perhaps worth recalling: For breakfast, at 7 A.M., we got bread, butter, tea, and on different mornings either Quaker oats porridge, meat hash, or salt ling; for dinner, at midday, soup, meat, and potatoes, an orange or an apple per man; for tea-supper, at 4.30 P.M., tea, bread, butter, and tinned jam. In all cases where butter is mentioned, I refer to a pale-coloured commodity scooped out of a large cylindrical tin with 'Margarine' printed in broad characters on the outside—the compound fortunately was completely devoid of taste.

The bread was quite the pièce de résistance, freshly
baked every day by the ship's baker, assisted by the
baker's mate—a boy of about eighteen years of age.
These two were cat and dog for the entire voyage.
The ship's baker was quite a 'character'—a tall,
gaunt, saturnine, lantern-jawed, watery-eyed, North-
of-Ireland man, with an unquenchable thirst for
beer: a cook's cap, bodice, and apron, which may
at one time have been white, completed the appa-
rition. He was, however, a man in whose graces
it was by all means advisable to be; more especially
as no small portion of the daily ration of flour used
to be deducted during the bread-making process—
of course to the detriment of the loaves—in order to
make 'curranty' cakes for those who should supply
the baker with beer, or its equivalent in cash: the
North of Ireland has always been famous for its
commercial astuteness, and this native of the
'Black Nurth' was no exception. I once suc-
cceeded, by dint of much ingratiating, in persuading
this deity of the oven to talk: nor is there any subject
on which a Belfast man so easily finds his tongue
as on that of his religion. In Belfast they thoroughly
understand, and dearly love to dispute, the rights
and wrongs of the Presbyterian, the Protestant, and
the Catholic. So be that your companion is a
native of Belfast, you will always find him ready
to take up the cudgels on behalf of one or another of these three persuasions as against the remaining two. To such an extent is this true that the terms 'rake Protestant,' 'rake Presbyterian,' are applied to things in general as ordinary terms of commendation.

Sure enough in the case of this man, whom I could never afterwards induce to put ten words together on any other subject—albeit to the end of the voyage he was most beneficent to me in the matter of 'curranty' cakes—the moment I said to him in a confidential whisper, 'Now, I'm sure, you're either a Presbyterian or a Protestant,' off he started—'Och! twenty-five years ago,' he said, much in the tone in which one speaks of a dear, long-lost relative, 'I was as red-hot a Presbyterian as you'd find in the length and breadth of the Nurn, but after twenty years knocking about this way there's not much of it left now.' 'Faith!' he went on, 'I made one of my worst mistakes over the same thing. The first place I was sent to, after I left Belfast, was the School of Army Cookery at Aldershot; and just after I got there I was put under a master baker who was a Catholic; but I didn't know that. He gave me a lump of dough to knead up and cut into loaves—just like these here;
and when after a bit he came round and asked me had I the loaves cut yet: "Yes, indeed," says I, pointing to them, "there they are—rake Presbyterian loaves for you!" And with that he caught me a clout over the head, and, says he, "Well, now cut them again, and perhaps they'll be Catholic loaves the next time." Yes, and he made me cut the whole batch over again, so he did!

On one or two occasions, when this gentleman got drunk and fought with his mate (I know that in the course of one particular and very special fight one of them got bitten), no bread was baked, and we had our first introduction to the Regulation biscuit.

Days passed by quickly, and each morning the sun had a stronger glare as it rose away to port; each day the wind grew warmer, and the day itself grew hot sooner than the day before; and before long it began to be quite a relief to get on deck, and the possibilities of a canvas bath began to be discussed. Then men began to talk about heat, only to be told that they were not even at Las Palmas yet.

When we were some days out from Liverpool, a ship's pet came to light in the form of a stowaway. He was a small, satanic-looking Polish Jew, of
about sixteen or seventeen years of age. At first he pretended not to understand English; but as he had been at the first detected in pilfering from a trooper’s kit-bag, and was being threatened by the ship's captain with punishment for the theft, he discovered a sufficiently extensive vocabulary of opprobrious terms for use at that officer. He subsequently refused to work for his passage; but after being handcuffed for an hour to a stanchion on the after-deck, he relented, and soon became a most deserving member of the ship’s crew.

Saturday, March 17, was, of course, just as much St. Patrick’s Day for us, four days out from Liverpool, as it would have been at home in ‘the only old country’; shamrocks made their appearance fresh and green from the kit of every man in the 45th Company; and, when an order was read out on morning parade that the canteen was to remain open an extra hour for those who boasted St. Patrick as their patron saint, great was the demand among the other companies on board for a bit of the national emblem. We numbered, in the ranks of the 45th, a member of a famous and philanthropic firm of Dublin whisky blenders, and a surprise was sprung upon us that evening, at a concert on the after-deck, when, thanks to his generous forethought,
a bottle of Dublin whisky was served out to every six men of his company: the other companies were our guests for the evening, and them we regaled with English beer. The genius of Ireland was there that night, and one of the guests was heard to say, 'Why, even our officers have to laugh at these 'ere Irishmen!'—and laugh they did. One song that night, which specially caught the spirit of the time, was sung by a fine baritone voice among our guests; its burden was 'Who'll carry the gun?' each verse dealing in turn with England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. I can only recall that which referred to the Green Isle of Erin:—

Who 'll carry the gun?
The lad from the Emerald Isle:
We'll let him go,
For well we know
We 've tried him many a while:
We 've tried him East, we 've tried him West,
We 've tried him on sea and land,
But the boy to beat old Ireland's best
Has never yet been planned.

Three days later, at 6 A.M., on Wednesday, March 21, when the greater number of us had, for the first time of our lives, been for over a week out of sight of land, we anchored at Las Palmas, in order to coal the ship.
ORDERED SOUTH

The sun had just risen when the transport 'Montrose' dropped her anchor off the breakwater of Las Palmas. The land, which we now saw for the first time since leaving Liverpool, was certainly worth gazing at: in the distance big volcanic-looking hills, overgrown with a low vegetation which, at long sight, looked like some species of lichen, overhung a long straggling town of stucco-faced Spanish houses, here and there huddled together along the sea line. From one end of the town the long breakwater jutted out, and inside this, high and dry upon the rocks, lay the ill-fated 'Denton Grange,' which had failed some months previously in her task of conveying a cargo of traction-engines and guns to the seat of war. The first boat alongside us was a small pinnace, with a shabby-genteel Portuguese gentleman in the stern: in response to all questions he only replied 'Forty-five fathom.' Soon afterwards out came a British man-of-war's long boat of twelve oars from H.M.S. 'Arrogant'—(much cheering). The boat brought us the latest telegrams, which were at once read out from the bridge of the 'Montrose.' The most important were the announcements of Lord Roberts's occupation of Bloemfontein, and of the fact that St. Patrick's Day had been officially and otherwise
recognised throughout the Empire—that, in fact, England's difficulty of A.D. 1899-1900 had been Ireland's opportunity.

All day long, during coaling operation, small rowboats full of oranges, bananas, tobacco, cigars, eggs, and such-like marketable commodities, swarmed round the ship. The market had, however, been spoilt—a shilling would only fetch twenty-five oranges, and the same sum was demanded for ten eggs. Just before we weighed anchor, at 6 P.M., with orders to proceed with all speed to Table Bay, the transport 'Britannic,' the once-famous White Star liner, arrived two cables distant, with the 2nd Scots Guards on board—the men all wore their red tunics, and I remember that they looked warm.

Soon after we left Las Palmas, fifty men were told off each day to undergo a new experience, as laid down in Queen's Regulations—typhoid inoculation. What came to be termed 'pig-sticking drill' took place each afternoon at 3 P.M.: the patients received their hypodermic injection, were then told to walk about for an hour on deck, after that to lie down Socratic-wise, and await results which were far from pleasant. The common symptoms described were those of great heat—present in any case—followed by a shivering from top to toe, with
a splitting headache thrown in, and a general feeling like that of a dog in a wet sack. In some cases men were back to duty in twenty-four hours, in others the effects remained for several days; and the whole after-deck was transformed into a temporary hospital. Day by day the heat grew more and more intense; nothing would keep; tempers grew short; butter ran like water; and as down below and stripped to the waist we washed up greasy plates over necessarily boiling water, we wondered what an orthodox place of torment could be like.

The horses now began to suffer, and before the end eight had to go by the board: one day a mare gave rise to much commiseration by slipping a foal, which only survived its birth a few hours; the mare happily reached Cape Town in safety.

Each day the sea became bluer and more oily looking, while at night phosphorescence along the ship's side gave the water the appearance of molten metal.

On Monday, March 26, we crossed the Line, fortunately with a spanking breeze, and in the afternoon the ship's crew organised in the ship's canvas bath a most complete edition of the customary proceedings. The boatswain, as Father
Neptune, wore an imitation hempen beard, but his policemen had provided themselves with very real bâtions, with which to coerce the recalcitrant. The absence of ladies permitted the rites to be carried out in puris naturalibus. What I have since been told was an original device consisted of a long canvas tunnel, provided by a wind-sail ventilator, through which the novice, after summary ejectment from the bath, had to make his escape by a wriggling process, pursued the while from behind by the ship's hose. Officers and men—and the stowaway—went through the mill alike.

About April 2, in cooler air, and with a stronger breeze, we entered the Cape seas. The ship now began to roll considerably, and many who thought they had found their sea legs, and sea appetites, had their impressions sadly corrected. Orders commanded a full marching-order parade on the upper deck, and thither we had to drag ourselves and our kit-bags fully packed; the men in complete accoutrement—even down to spurs. To carry two kit-bags and a rifle in full marching order along two decks and up two gangways of a rolling ship, and to meanwhile allow satisfactorily for a pair of spurs, is an Art in itself.

On reaching the upper deck orders were given to
turn out our bags, and a kit inspection was gone through in half a gale of wind.

The object of a kit inspection, which under ordinary circumstances was a weekly event, is to show that each man is in actual possession—

"Si possis recte; si non, quocumque modo,"

of:

- Tunic, 2.
- Puttees, 2 pairs.
- Trousers, 1 pair.
- Spurs.
- Dubbin grease.
- Flannel belts, 2
- Belt.
- Hair-brush.
- Comb.
- Spoon.
- Fork.
- Knife.
- Razor.
- Socks, 3 pairs.
- Towels, 2.
- Housewife, 1.
- Horse rubber.
- Corn bag.
- Soap.
- Cavalry cloak and belt.
- Waterproof sheet.
- Blanket.
- Underclothing, 2 sets.
- Ankle boots, 2 pairs.
- Boot laces, 4 pairs.
- Clasp-knife.
- Jersey.
- Handkerchiefs.
- Wire-nippers.

All these articles in addition of course to those of ordinary cavalry equipment. Some of us had also provided ourselves with a compass, field-glasses, flint-and-steel, and a filter. The three former turned out afterwards to be of the greatest service; the filters were worse than useless. A man never has time on active service to use a filter: it is an encumbrance until thrown away.
It is a sight not soon forgotten to see a long line of horses adapt themselves to the roll of an ocean-going steamer: by alternately shortening and lengthening their hind and fore legs they contrive to keep their backs horizontal.

By Thursday, April 5, we began to be in expectation of seeing our destination: the sea had meanwhile been getting rougher each day, and on the previous afternoon we had had the first 'squelch' down the forward hatchway. Of seabirds we had seen none since leaving Las Palmas, but we were now continually taken up by long-winged gannets—a sure sign of proximity to land. The fag end of our journey was not, however, destined to pass off without incident.

At daybreak on April 5, the 'Montrose' had run into a thick fog, and about 10 a.m. the interest of all on board was aroused by the booming of two steamer's sirens in our immediate neighbourhood. Soon afterwards the fog lifted somewhat, and a most striking spectacle came to view. About fifty yards off us there lay two large steamers; the huge white hull of a Union Castle liner, with a heavy list to starboard, and close beside her Transport No. 99, with her bows as flat as a pancake. The engines of the 'Montrose' were stopped, and the
bugles sounded the 'Fall in.' Everyone fell in at his place on the deck, and soon afterwards we picked up a ship's boat, containing five men who had succeeded in reaching the ship's side with the aid of one oar only. Some of us were told off to take these shipwrecked hands below and feed them, and from them we heard their case.

The Union Castle liner 'Mexican,' in which these men had shipped, had left Cape Town the previous evening: she had been running in the service of the Union and Union Castle Companies for twenty-four years, and this was to have been her last trip as a mail steamer. She carried one hundred and fifty saloon passengers and mails for England. At midnight she had steamed into a fog, and soon afterwards got into the vicinity of the S.S. 'Winkfield,' Transport No. 99. Both vessels began hooting at one another in the fog, with the result that at 1.30 A.M. they were in collision. The old 'Mexican' was struck hard amidships, and almost immediately began to fill. The steam pumps were got to work, but the sea gained the upper hand and entered the coal bunkers. The stokers kept at work till the water was up to their middles, and then the captain ordered them on deck. The passengers had been transferred to the
'Winkfield,' which had come off best in the collision, and when the 'Montrose' arrived upon the scene the mail-bags were in course of being rescued. Thus we had seen a sight which does not fall to the lot of many. The 'Montrose' joined in the work of rescuing the mails, and we had the distinction of conveying back to Cape Town the first mail bag—since the famous siege—labelled 'Ladysmith to London.'

We lay by the disabled vessels for four hours, and then proceeded on our way to Table Bay, it having been arranged that the 'Winkfield' was to take the liner in tow. However, at five o'clock in the morning the hawser was cut, and the 'Mexican,' fast sinking, was left to her fate—and to insurance.

At 10 A.M. on Friday, April 6, a lovely morning, we saw the promised land. We were lying at anchor in Table Bay, and had now to await among a dozen other transports our turn to enter the Cape Town Docks for disembarkation. The spectacle presented by Cape Town and the Table Mountain cannot be described on paper. One of the places within our view was the Green-point Common, on which were seen the tents in which Commandant-General Cronje's army was now contained. One of
our number, before leaving Ireland, had left cards of farewell upon his friends, inscribed 'P. P. C. pour prendre Cronjé.' He now learned that he had arrived too late to assist in that undertaking.

All day long, on Friday, April 6, we lay at anchor in Table Bay; nor was it until 4 P.M. on Saturday that the pinnace of the Disembarkation Office came alongside with orders for the transport 'Montrose' to enter the Cape Town Docks. By the time our hawsers were made fast to the wharf it was too late in the day to begin unlading, and we accordingly spent one more night confined to the ship. At six o'clock on Sunday, April 8, after a breakfast about which nobody troubled much, disembarkation began. This was no simple undertaking. We had first to clear out the hold, and load up the cargo and our own stores on traction-waggons at the wharf. By two o'clock in the afternoon this had been accomplished, and we stood lined up at the Docks in full marching order, each man with a horse to be led to the Yeomanry Base Camp at Maitland. The horses were of course weakened by their long voyage, and riding was not permitted. We had been performing the duties of stevedores for eight hours of a scorching day; we were now in full marching order with cloaks rolled,
a rifle in one hand, a horse in the other, and it was a good five miles march to Maitland Camp in a blazing sun, the whole coming at the end of a three weeks confinement on board ship. Near the end of our march a man came out of a house with a large bed-room jug full of water in each hand, and I dare say that many of us will remember that drink of water as long as we remember anything. On arrival at Maitland Camp, situated on high ground five miles to the North of Cape Town, we marched up through thousands of tents and hundreds of 'horse lines' to the Remount Depot. Here we handed over the horses—they were not for us—and then marched on to our own 'lines.' Tents were assigned to us, one tent for every ten men; our cooks made tea for us, and, after the most complete infraction of the fourth commandment, we threw ourselves down to sleep for the first time upon the sands of Africa.

Mackenzie's Farm, Maitland, upon which the Imperial Yeomanry Base Camp was situated, is a high-lying stretch of sandy soil, comprising many hundreds of acres, and hemmed in on two sides by a broad shallow stream called the Salt River. The only permanent structures upon it at this time were a fine dwelling-house, approached by a long avenue of
tall pine trees, in which house the Yeomanry Head-
quartes Staff had its habitation; and, about a mile
distant, a large mill with a group of storehouses, in
and outside of which were huge piles of Govern-
ment rations and stores. At this time there were
in camp upon the Farm over seven thousand
Yeomanry; but, at ten men to the tent, this number
is easily stowed away, and the hundreds of other
tents in sight were occupied by 'details' and drafts
of other branches of the service. The tents were
all pitched in symmetrical lines, and between the
rows of tents, in the case of mounted units, the
horse lines were laid down on which the troop-
horses were picketed.

During our first three days we were without
horses, and those days were spent in unmounted
skirmishing drill in and near the Camp, and we
were also instructed in the art of picketing horses.

On Wednesday evening an order was read out
that the transport with our horses on board had
arrived in Table Bay; that we were to go in next
morning to the Docks, and to bring our horses out
to the Camp.

After breakfast on Thursday morning, April 12,
half the 45th Company paraded, each man with two
head-collars in his hand, and marched into the Cape
Town Docks. There we found a cargo of several hundred Hungarian horses just landed from a large horse transport; they were linked in pairs, and each man was now ordered to bridle up two horses and to 'bring 'em along.' In about ten minutes we were on our way back to Maitland with the mounts for the 45th Company. Meanwhile the other half of the Company had been preparing the 'lines' on which the horses were to be picketed in the space between our two rows of tents. As this operation was an interesting one, and one which had some weeks afterwards to be repeated each night when on the march, it may not be out of place to give of it here a short explanation. Each man was always held responsible for the safe carriage of two metal picketing-peggs, each furnished with a metal ring; also of a section of picketing-rope and a heel-rope. The section of picketing-rope was about a yard and a-half long, having at one end a T-shaped piece of wood, and at the other end a loop large enough, when slack, to just fit over the cross-piece of the T. When horses are to be picketed, each man brings out his section of rope. This is fitted to the next man's section, and so on until a 'built-up' rope for the whole troop has been formed. The metal pegs are then called into requisition, driven into the soil,
SOME MEMBERS OF NO. 1 TROOP OF THE DUBLIN SQUADRON, I. Y., AT MAITLAND CAMP, CAPE TOWN
(Table Mountain in the background)
and by means of these the rope is securely fixed in a straight line upon the ground. Each horse has attached to his head-collar a coiled-up head-rope; this is unwound, and by means of it each horse is secured, in order due, to the 'built-up' rope upon the ground. A heel-rope is then secured to the near hind leg, and the horse, thus tethered hind and fore, is kept in his place. They had, of course, sufficient length of rope to permit them to lie at ease, and some even contrived at times to roll.

The first few days spent on and off our mounts were days of incident; suffice it to say that by the appointed time we had fulfilled the directions contained in Section 4 of the Regulations for Mounted Infantry:—'Even should the horses be raw untrained ones, in three or four days the men should be able to drill by sections; while by the end of the first week they should be able to ride with arms and drill as a company.'

Even so early in their foreign duty as their period at Maitland Camp the Imperial Yeomanry were called upon for active service. Fifteen miles from Cape Town there was a large railway viaduct, upon which two separate dynamite attempts had been made by persons ill-disposed towards the British cause. For this reason a twenty-four hours guard
of fifty mounted men had to be found each day by one of the Yeomanry companies from Maitland.

Our daily life was now regulated by a succession of trumpet-calls from Reveille at 5.30 A.M. through the day until 'Lights out.' Each company had its own call, and it was a weird and soul-stirring sound to hear the hundreds of Reveille calls ringing out each morning across the Maitland acres half an hour before sun-rise. Surely he was a musician of no mean order who composed a call at the sound of which even the most sluggish sleeper becomes at once alert!

In the African autumn it is but a space of ten minutes from dawn to broad day, and each rising sun found us busy with our horses, for mounted skirmishing-drill at 6 A.M. Early enough as this seemed to us, we had still times in front of us when we learnt what it was to be saddled-up and on the march at 4 A.M.

The most important part of the day's work at Maitland, both for the horses and ourselves, was of course this skirmishing drill, including as it did the instruction of the horses in being led three at a time from the saddle; and into what amazing knots they used to get at first! 'Bring up the led horses'—the order would be shouted from the
dismounted party some half-mile away. Bring them up, indeed!—when Nos. 1 and 3 were staring you in the face, while No. 2 was doing his best from behind to pull you out of the saddle backwards. However, patience and perseverance had them all right after a few days.

It would be hard to devise circumstances more strange than those under which most of us here saw for the first time a foreign land; as each morning we trampled down in columns of subsections the karoo-bushes and tall veldt-rushes, still crisp and glistening with hoar-frost. How many of us had ever seen before white frost formed on the top of dust? And the strangeness of it all, when we knew that in another two hours we were to swelter in a roasting sun!

Tent-life in camp at Maitland discovered many situations, all making for rapidity of movement; and the scene may be more easily imagined than described, where the ten occupants of a tent were all endeavouring to gird themselves, at short notice, with ten bayonet-belts, bandoliers, haversacks, water-bottles, field-glasses, and rifles—all of which articles were attached in medio to the one tent-pole. At ‘Last post,’ when it became necessary to lie down in our tents, we were confronted by a puzzle in
mosaics; during the day-time few lying-down problems had arisen,

'But now, two paces of the vilest earth'

had to be 'room enough' for each man. The congestion was of course occasionally relieved by the absence of one or more men, who had been detailed for Stable Picket or Camp Guards. For each of these duties six men had to be found every night by each company; and in the case of Stable Picket, the six men were on duty from 6 P.M. to 6 A.M.—a couple of men two hours on post, and four hours off, by rotation throughout the night. Their duties while posted consisted in looking after the lines, hammering down loosened picketing pegs, and quieting restless horses as best they could. The Camp Guard, of course, furnished the sentries, who were on duty, each man two hours on post and four hours off, for twenty-four hours.

Washing and shaving were open-air luxuries not lightly to be indulged in; water was scarce, and dribbled through a long wooden trough in a fitful stream, from a supply-tank on which a guard was posted. He who was furthest from the tank got his water at tenth-hand. A wash and shave by moonlight or starlight was the last and best resource.
And what nights those African nights are! more especially up country. If the moon be up she seems, in that clear air, to be as near to earth as any city arc-lamp; but if she is new, there is need neither of sun to glare nor of moon to shine; the stars alone, more of them than we ever dreamed of under the dark skies of our own poor climate, give light enough; and, if we had not already found cause sufficient for a facilis somnus, the chirping of cicadas and the bubbling of countless frogs would have supplied it.
CHAPTER III
ORDERED NORTH

The detention of the 45th Company at Maitland was not destined to be a long one; and on Thursday, April 19, we received orders to break camp on the following day at noon, to entrain at Cape Town, and proceed to a destination which was not divulged.

Next day, at twelve o’clock, our tents were simultaneously struck to the trumpet-call, we rode in to the Cape Town terminus, boxed our horses, loaded up our stores upon the train, and at 6 P.M. we started for our unknown destination.

Deemed efficient for service within eleven days from the date of landing in South Africa, we had established a record for the Imperial Yeomanry Base Camp.

On the day when we broke camp at Maitland, our kit-bags had all been sent into store, for we were only permitted to take with us up country such articles as man and horse could carry. It may
be of interest to set down the articles which now composed our kit; and it will certainly be instructive to compare this list with the extensive *trousseau* of which up to the present the ownership had been so precarious. It could now almost be said of each one of us—

'Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator.'

The front saddle-pack comprised a spare tunic, riding breeches, and blanket, rolled in the waterproof sheet on which we lay at night. The near wallet contained a grooming brush, picketing peg, and a knife, fork, and spoon, wrapped up in half a towel: the off wallet carried a change of under-clothing, a piece of soap, and as much tobacco as would fit in beside. Outside the wallets a spare pair of boots were strapped. The rear saddle-pack consisted of a cavalry-cloak, a sweater for night wear, an empty sack, and picketing gear. In addition to these, the saddle carried a leather case with a spare pair of horse-shoes, a rifle-bucket, and a corn-bag with one day's ration of oats. Each man was girt with a bayonet-belt, haversack, water bottle, and last but not least a bandolier carrying one hundred rounds, or nine pounds weight, of ammunition.
When day broke on Saturday, April 21, we felt that we were in a new climate. At Maitland we had lain at the base of the Table Mountain; we were now nearly six thousand feet up, on a level with its summit, and at an altitude equal to the top of Snowdon. We had left Cape Town on the previous evening at six o’clock, and the line had at first risen slowly; but at the one hundred and tenth mile it began to mount up through the Hex River Mountains, and for thirty miles our two engines had panted up an almost continuous gradient of one foot in forty, till, at the hundred and fortieth mile, we ran out upon a level five thousand and odd feet above the sea.

Every yard of the line from Cape Town was closely picketed, and at bridges here and there along the railway a dozen tents would show that a whole company was on guard. If the train stopped, two questions were always addressed to us: first of all, ‘What are you?’; and then, ‘Have you any papers to spare?’

When the train stopped at Beaufort West, we turned out to water and feed our horses as they stood in their cattle trucks, a feat requiring no small degree of activity and patience—activity in avoiding the heels and teeth of eight horses
crowded together in a truck, patience to water and feed them all. At two o'clock that day our train ran into Matjesfontein, a station in the heart of the Karoo, and here we received orders to detrain. This was to be, as events proved, our post for three weeks.

Matjesfontein lies two hundred miles to the north of Cape Town, in a valley of the Karoo Desert, and is bounded on either hand by two long rows of kopjes, which here almost attain to the dignity of two ranges of hills. The village itself consisted of two hotels, a store, and a group of houses, chief among which was the residence of one Logan, a South African millionaire, who had obtained his wealth by the erection and supply of refreshment-rooms upon the railway system of the Cape Government from the sea to the Orange River. Mr. Logan's residence, complete with an installation of electric light, was, without doubt, the chief object of interest in Matjesfontein; and, at the time when the war broke out, its enterprising owner had made, by means of two newly-erected hotels, all arrangements for exploiting as a health-resort this most salubrious little spot, situated amid the fresh breezes of the Karoo. It may have been with some such object in view that, after the battle of Magersfontein, Mr. Logan secured permission to bring away the
dead body of the commander of the Highland Brigade for interment at Matjesfontein; for so it happens that the mortal remains of the late leader of the Black Watch lie full five miles from this village, and sightseers who go to view Wauchope's grave must needs have recourse to carriage-hire from Mr. Logan's hotel.

We got our horses out of their boxes, our stores off the trucks, and then moved away to the camping-ground, which was on a height overlooking the railway. Here we found in camp another unit of our battalion, the Duke of Cambridge's Own Company of Imperial Yeomanry, in one respect like ourselves, a 'special' corps, but of which each member had, at its formation, put down a sum of one hundred and thirty pounds to find his own horse, outfit, and passage to the Cape; in addition to this, arrangements had been made by which all the pay due to the corps was to be turned over to the Soldiers' Widows and Orphans Fund: truly, so far as patriotism goes, this was a second Sacred Band! In charge of these, and now of us also, we found the Commandant of the Thirteenth Battalion—Colonel B. E. Spragge, D.S.O.

Our tents and horse-lines had now to be pitched on virgin ground, and for this purpose a hundred
square yards of clearing had to be made in the stones, scrub, and bushes of the Karoo.

The ordinary form of veldt-scrub is perhaps worth description: its chief constituent is a low-growing, myrtle-like shrub, with a faint scent of thyme, and attaining a height of about a foot and a half—of such there are usually three or four bushes to every square yard—this plant is an evergreen, unless burnt up in very dry seasons. In a wet season, grass grows up in the intervals between these bushes, and the veldt then assumes a uniformly vegetative appearance. Scattered about among these are single plants of two other kinds of growth, the milk-bush and the cactus. The former, a succulent and easily-crushed plant, often attains a height of four feet, thus towering above the surrounding growths: it can, moreover, resist the most scorching rays of the sun, and is at all times full of a milk-like sap. The cactus, which is the least common of the three shrubs, also occurs singly: it is a stumpy, non-prickly, warty growth, with round, thick arms like fir-cones. Under almost every cactus plant a brown lizard has its habitation. This reptile is there, presumably, to catch flies; on these, however, to judge from their number, it is but an inefficient check.
We made a clearing, picketed down our horses and pitched our tents: in these we were now re-arranged—thirteen men to each tent.

In regard to our fortunes in the future, students of the black art may here, perhaps, find grist for their mill. Mobilised first in Dublin on January 13, we had been enrolled in the 13th Battalion, had left Liverpool on March 13, and were now disposed on active service, thirteen to a tent. The object of our post at Matjesfontein was duty as a patrol of this portion of the Karoo, which was regarded as a possible rendezvous of the disloyal. The main part of the camp was in occupation of an unmounted body of fifteen hundred men of the Duke of Edinburgh's Volunteer Rifles, raised in Cape Town in August, 1899, and sent to Matjesfontein in the November following. Here they mounted guard over a huge depot of supplies, and they found in addition patrols for the line of railway, and each night a picket for the town. The supply depot consisted here, as elsewhere, of a great stack of cases of tinned 'bully' beef and biscuits—in this instance about one hundred yards long by twenty feet high; there was also a huge pile composed of many hundred bags of oats, sacks of bran, and bales of hay 'chop.' During the
fortnight preceding Christmas, 1899, the Rifles had stood to arms by companies day and night at Matjesfontein.

The only other troops who shared with us the camping-ground here were the Shropshire Company of Yeomanry, and the battery attached to the City of London Volunteers. The two last-named units were wont to accompany us upon our daily marching-order patrols, which extended from ten to fifteen miles in all directions from the camp. On reaching our furthest point, usually a small stagnant lake, or farmhouse dam, our horses were watered, then linked together and given a feed of hay, which each saddle carried in two round nets slung across the wallets. Each sub-section of four men then lit a veldt scrub fire, and each man made the best meal possible from a half-pound of raw beef or mutton, and a split onion. Half an hour was allowed for the meal; the outposts were then called in, scouts thrown out, and we made our way back to the Camp. On these occasions a straight line was always followed across country; if we could not find a way round the kopjes, we dismounted, scaled up, and so passed over them. No praise could be too great for our hardy and sure-footed Hungarian horses. ‘Reveille’ at Matjesfontein was at 5.30 A.M.,
half an hour before sunrise, and we had at once to get to work in the grey dawn at rubbing down our horses after the cold African night. Then they had to be taken to water, and while some men were away upon this errand, the others buckled to, and cleaned up the horse lines. The only water to be obtained was that which was run off from the engine-tank at the railway station into an improvised wooden trough. At first each man was told off to take four horses at a time to water, a number which was at all times rather a handful. Here one day, while two hundred horses were awaiting their turn for water, the entire troop took fright and we saw our first stampede. Each group of four horses burst away, as it were with one consent, from its leader, wheeled round and galloped madly back to Camp. Several men were of course badly knocked out, one or two from all further service, and as a consequence horses went thereafter two and two to the trough. The effect of such a stampede is lasting, and for several days our horses when at water were always seeking an excuse to indulge once more in this mad frolic.

Stationed at Matjesfontein, we found that the plagues of Egypt were not confined to that region of the African Continent—frogs, lice, flies, boils
and blisters on man and beast, thunder, lightning, rain, and hail; all were with us, from time to time, in greater or lesser degree; and we could have added to the list the ever-present danger of the scorpion. On days when we were fortunate enough to have returned to Camp before the sinking of the sun, we found it possible to drive the millions of flies from out our tents; but once the sun had set, no means that we could devise ever succeeded in expelling them. The tropical thunderstorms, which only occurred with us by night, were not unmixed evils. Even if we did get soaked through and through, while standing to our horses in order to guard against stampedes, we could reflect that the morrow would bring with it a general order, 'Dry and clean,' and a respite from marching parades.

As for meals and washing, they were nothing accounted of in the days at Matjesfontein. We were within full sight of the railway; and at Matjesfontein Station there is a loop upon the single line which forms the Cape Government Railway. Surely this line was worked in the year 1900 as never railroad was before. It was a sight, and that a daily one, fit to make the hair of any English traffic-manager stand on end, to see three long and heavily-freighted trains run in upon the loop within
a few hundred yards of one another. Troops, horses, and stores one way; prisoners of war, and hospital trains with their broad red crosses, the other. Times were that a Cape Town train would bring a few sacks of mails for the camp at Matjesfontein. Those were days of eager expectation; for no bags were opened till the day's work was done. Then was the reading of letters from home, and month-old papers, when one copy of the *Irish Times* containing a report of Fairy-house Races went the rounds till there was neither printer's ink nor paper left. Other news we had none, and even the events of the war were known to us at Matjesfontein by way of London only, save what we learnt of them by the sight of prisoners and hospital trains passing through on their way to Cape Town.

Time passed quickly; and on Tuesday, May 8, news leaked out that orders had been received for the 13th Battalion of Yeomanry to hold itself in readiness to break camp, and proceed forward by the first available train. Empty trains upon the Imperial Military Railways in South Africa were no easier to find than transports had been at Government docks in England; nor was it until the morning of Sunday, May 13—once again thirteen!—that a fatigue party of twenty men got to work at
loading up the trucks. We had now, for the first time, to take a large supply of forage with us, so, in addition to other stores, the fatigue party of that day had to shoulder three hundred and sixty eight-pound sacks of oats, and the same number of bales of 'chop,' each also eight pounds in weight, from the supply depot to the trucks. From eight in the morning of Sunday, May 13, till six in the evening, that party worked without a break under a blazing sun. The Duke of Cambridge's Own were the first to entrain, and they preceded the Dublin Company by some three hours, leaving Matjesfontein about eleven o'clock that night. We then boxed our horses by starlight and entrained; but it was not until the small hours of the morning that our troop-train steamed out of the station, leaving, as the only sign of our occupation, a huge fire of all kinds of refuse blazing in the middle of the ground—now bare as a board—which had been for several weeks the home of over two hundred men and horses.

Can it be believed that we had developed an affection of a sort for even these few square yards of arid ground?

We were off once again, and in ignorance as before of our destination. De Aar would be for us the parting of the ways, and here at all events we
should learn whether we were intended to take part in the Campaign which was being carried forward at this time in the Orange Free State.

The Karoo Desert extends northwards as far as De Aar Junction, and so it happened that when day broke on Monday, May 14, we found our train still winding its way amid the same series of interminable kopjes which had begun at the time when we left the Hex River Mountains, and of which the hills at Matjesfontein had formed a part. We had stopped at the first station to which we came after daybreak, had there watered and fed our horses in their trucks, and were now munching our breakfast of bully beef and biscuit, as the train threaded its way, in and out and round about, among kopjes, which in some cases we might have almost touched at arm's reach, and which hardly ever left a space of more than a hundred yards of open level ground.

"'Pon my word,' said one trooper, as he leaned out of a window in the hinder part of the train, from which position he could at the time have almost shaken hands with the engine-driver, 'this line must have been built by the yard.' He had himself been a surveyor in the old country, nor could he have better expressed the impression pro-
duced by the writhing of the Cape Railway among the kopjes of the Karoo.

There is, so far as we saw, neither tunnel nor cutting between the Hex River Mountains and De Aar Junction, three days journey; and yet, if an engineer were to tunnel each kopje lying in the direct route he must have made a boring or a cutting every hundred yards. The same veldt-scrub described above grows over all; there is never a tree save about the doors of farmhouses, and these are only seen at intervals of ten or maybe twenty miles. Such was the scenery through which we passed at a pace sedate, and recalling, as one man said, the donkey rides of childhood, for we travelled fast down hill only.

We reached De Aar Junction at night time, and here learned that we were to continue on the main line route, and so to join the forces then operating in the Orange Free State. It was while our train was waiting here, along with two or three others which had come from the Base or from the Kimberley line, for orders to proceed, that we were witnesses to the most dramatic méprise it has ever been my lot to have seen, heard, or read of. A dirty station-lamp threw a flickering light over a thickly-packed cargo of human beings squatting

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half upright in a long open truck. This belonged to a train which had just run into De Aar Junction from the Kimberley line, and it was the only truck at this time in the station carrying such a freight. Two officers travelling by a train from Cape Town, which was also waiting at the Junction, were strolling up and down the platform, their rank just recognisable in the dim light. 'What are those chaps—niggers?' said one of the officers to the other, as he jerked his thumb at the dusky figures huddled together, wrapped in blankets, and many of them sleeping in the long open truck; it was in all probability the speaker's first sight of men in such a conveyance. 'Yes, niggers, I suppose,' replied his companion in a voice just loud enough to be heard; 'they'll be stinking us out, I expect, before long.' 'All right, sir!' sang out a cheery voice from the truck, 'you wait till you've 'ad a month or two shifting about in that 'ere sun up at Orange River, and maybe you'll look as like niggers as we do, in the dark with the light behind ye.' The 'niggers' were a company of Suffolks on transfer from the Orange River to the main line of operations. The officers hurried off to their first-class carriage, and returned carrying four bottles of whisky, which were forthwith handed
into the truck as an *amende honorable* to its occupants.

At dawn of the following day our train was running through the hundreds of hospital tents which were grouped about the railway at Naauwport Junction, and soon afterwards we passed in succession Arundel, Rensburg, Colesberg, and in full view of the fatal Coles Kop where a false bugle-call which sounded the 'Retire' had lured a British regiment to disaster. Little did I think then that in a few weeks I was to speak face to face with the man who had blown that call. Arundel, Rensburg, Colesberg—a long succession of veritable Thermopylæ, where groups of low mounds along this line on which our train was running, were silent evidence to the truth of the soldier poet's words that here

'Every rivet was a wound, and every rail a man.'

Colesberg lay but a short distance from Norval's Pont, the last station on British territory, and from which the bridge which spanned the Orange River had led across to the Orange Free State. This bridge had of course been destroyed by the Boer forces, and the train now crawled down to the level of the river by means of a steep and winding deviation, crossed the water on a trestle raft, and
ascended the Free State bank by a second deviation on that side—a wondrous feat of engineering skill. Soon after we had entered upon Free State soil, kopjes became fewer, the veldt stretched far and wide on either hand, and grass fresh and green took the place of the sand, scrub, and boulders of Northern Cape Colony. Farmhouses, too, were now more frequent, and here and there Dutch women and their daughters, in white sun bonnets, stood at their doors gazing at the troop-train as it passed along, while flocks of sheep and herds of African goats roamed across the many-acred farms.

One more night we spent in the train, and on Tuesday morning ran into the goods station of Bloemfontein. In two hours we had unloaded our stores and saddled up our horses, and we then made our way through the streets of the Free State capital to our camping-ground. This was a wide short-grass plateau commanding the town, and upon it many thousands of troops, infantry and mounted men, were encamped, surrounding on all hands the magazine of the captured city. Here we found in camp all the units composing the 13th Battalion of Imperial Yeomanry—the 46th (Belfast A), the 47th or Duke of Cambridge's Own, and the 54th (Belfast B), Companies. An Army
ORDERED NORTH

Order had been issued directing that in future all Companies of Imperial Yeomanry were to be designated as squadrons, and the four component parts of each squadron as troops, while each division of four men were henceforward to be referred to as a Section. What's in a name? Here for the last time we pitched our line of tents; we were only destined to sleep for three more nights with other shelter than the sky.

A route march the following day took us past the trenches which the Boers had thrown up for the defence of Bloemfontein; these had never been put into actual use, as the result of the fight at Abram's Kraal had determined the Boer leaders to leave the Free State capital undefended. The trenches themselves were, however, wonderful instances of the ingenuity to be found on the Boer side; they were so constructed as to afford complete shelter for a triple line of defence, the first row to consist of riflemen in a lying position, the second of men sitting or kneeling, while the back row of defenders could stand and fire from complete cover, over the heads of the two rows in front. A flanking movement had enabled the British forces to enter the town from the opposite direction. On the night of Wednesday, May 16, an order was issued
that the 45th (Dublin) Squadron in charge of Captain the Earl of Longford was to proceed at daybreak, on Friday, May 18, to the village of Thaba 'Nchu by way of Bloemfontein Waterworks. Thaba 'Nchu lay forty-five miles due east from Bloemfontein, and had been the centre of several Boer attacks not many days previously. Bloemfontein Waterworks, situated on a small tributary of the Modder River, lay twenty-two miles distant, and about half way on the route to Thaba 'Nchu; near to the Waterworks, a rough and ugly rise, known as Sanna's Post, had been the scene of the now famous engagement with Olivier's commandoes. In order to reach the Waterworks we had to pass by Bushman's Kop, which had also been chosen by the Boers as a strong defensive position.

We had now few possessions about which to trouble ourselves, preparation for route marching now caused us no anxiety, and at daybreak on Friday we left Bloemfontein for Thaba 'Nchu—our first expedition away from the line of Free State railway. The regulars, through whose lines we passed on leaving camp, shouted good luck to us, we crossed the railway, and struck off upon the veldt. We had ridden a mile or two when we dismounted: our commander said, 'Look here,
boys! we've only twenty-two miles to do to-day, and we're going to spare our horses all we can on this march.' He kept his word, and for fully three-quarters of our journey that day we trudged along on foot, our leader setting the pace for us, and that a round one: but then he carried no rifle, nor had he slung about him, as impedimenta in true sense, one hundred rounds of Lee-Metford ammunition: moreover, his charger led well. By one particular spell of marching on foot in cavalry accoutrements, one hour and forty minutes without a check and in a midday sun, even the best among us began to wince: aye, and the kilted Highlanders when on the march sit them down to rest for ten minutes of every hour. Kopjes were here few in number, and widely scattered, and the veldt was broad and undulating. Every here and there lay such as was not good enough for vultures of the carcases of horses, mules, and waggon-bullocks, the latter in almost every case lying hard by the crests of the inclines, their heads pointed to the top, and showing that the poor brutes had nobly struggled to the last; such is the nature of the trek-ox, the most ungrudging worker of them all. At midday we passed Bushman's Kop, a treacherous-looking hill, thickly grown with bush,
and showing here and there the stone schantzes which had screened the Boer fire. As night fell, we reached the waterworks by which the town of Bloemfontein is supplied; a tall chimney which we had marked for many miles across the veldt, wondering when we should reach it, rose from the pumping-station, and grouped about it were four huge concrete reservoirs, each brimming with what we wanted most of all, clear filtered water from the Modder tributary: for it was no uncommon sight in Africa to see man and horse drinking side by side from the same stagnant farmhouse dam. The Waterworks were now held by a strong force of infantry, and we found on our arrival a football match in progress, between two of the companies there stationed, upon the ground which had been so dearly won a few weeks before. Our camp-fire that night was made of dry brushwood which had helped to form a Boer schantz breasting the gorge of the river.

We watered and picketed down our horses, disposed of our ration of bully-beef and biscuits, spread out our waterproof sheets, buried our heads in our saddles, and slept as well we might after a day's foot marching in cavalry equipment.

'Reveille' next morning was at 3 A.M., and we had orders to be ready and saddled-up for a move
onward to Thaba 'Nchu an hour later. Our horses stood ready at four o'clock, nor did we omit before starting to make our way in the darkness, darkest before the dawn, to the reservoirs, in order to fill, with freezing fingers, our waterbottles in the ice-cold water of the tanks. We knew what that water would be worth, when in a few hours we should be parched with heat and thirst. We crossed the spruit of the Modder tributary, and advanced along the route making for Thaba 'Nchu. We had been warned that the whole district was full of snipers, and we were directed to proceed with all vigilance. Our scouts, however, found nothing to report and, after one halt by the way, we passed through the outposts of the Thaba 'Nchu garrison towards the close of the afternoon.

Thaba 'Nchu, nestling amid a group of precipitous hills, forty miles from the border of Basutoland, is said to be the most picturesque village to be found in the Orange Free State.

The town was at this time held by a detachment of the Worcester Regiment, and on the previous Sunday the garrison had been called upon to repel a Boer attack. The men had been intent upon cooking their midday dinner when, on a sudden, their outposts were driven in, and thirty-five shells
from a Vickers-Maxim 'pom-pom' had dropped in
rapid succession upon their camp from the hills
to the north of the town. Four hours work was
necessary before that Sunday dinner could be re-
sumed: such was life at this time in the outlying
villages of the Orange Free State.

We marched up through the main street of the
town, before the eyes of the villagers, who came
out upon the stoeps of their houses to gaze upon
this latest addition to the strength of the garrison:
the men smoking their long Dutch pipes in stolid
indifference, their women folk regarding these un-
invited British visitors with an air of interested
criticism. Here and there a cheer or a salutation
to our officers betokened the good wishes, real or
pretended, of the family whose house we passed.

It is a principle of military tactics that the
garrisons of towns in a hostile country are posted
upon ground lying beyond the groups of houses,
and, if possible, commanding both the town itself
and the country in its immediate neighbourhood.
As chance had it, we were directed to occupy the
position which had been the object of the Boer
attack upon the previous Sunday. Here we picketed
our horses, made our evening meal, posted our
guards, and slept the night.
Two long, four-wheeled trek-waggons, each drawn by ten mules, a number made necessary by the roughness of the country—roads across the veldt are the work of waggon-wheels alone—had accompanied us upon our march from Bloemfontein, in order to carry forage for our horses and rations for the men. Two Kaffirs who took turns at holding the reins and at wielding the ever-necessary whip of twenty-foot raw hide, sufficed for each team.

The next morning, Sunday, May 20, was a day of rest for men and horses; and the only duty beyond tending our mounts fell to the lot of a fatigue-party, which was despatched with the wagons into the town for the purpose of replenishing our supply of forage and rations at the commissariat depot. Our party reached the centre of the village, where all supplies were stored, at an hour when those of the garrison who could be spared from duty were on Church parade; and we were accordingly permitted to ‘fall out’ until service should be over, and until the quartermaster in charge of the supplies should be at liberty to attend to our requirements.

There was a large store close at hand, and thither we made our way in order to carry out the commissions for purchases, should opportunity occur, which were always entrusted on these occasions
to members of the town fatigue-party, by their comrades who were left at the camping ground. The article in chief request on these occasions was always—golden syrup. Few economists would have foretold what is termed a brisk demand for food of such a nature on the part of a body of troops; but the unaltering diet of canned meat and hard biscuit had brought with it a taste for ‘something sweet,’ which almost amounted to a craving. Golden syrup purchased at seven times its English price supplied this need, and was eaten off biscuits when we had them, and, when these were lacking, from off the fingers which we dipped into the tins.

Hard by the store was a large compound closely guarded, in which two hundred Boer prisoners were interned. There they stood, a picturesque group, of which some members wore their ‘Sunday best,’ such as a well-to-do small farmer wears for church or chapel in the British Isles; these were the Boers who, as happened in many a case, had hied them off to war as to a Divine Service, and thereto prepared in body as in mind; other members of the group were clad in cloth more suited to the life of the laager and the trek, stout corduroys and leather. All now stood motionless on this hot Sunday fore-
noon, their slouch hats just raised from off their heads, while a tall, white-bearded Boer preached to them in Dutch. A few yards distant, the British garrison drawn up in an open square was singing an English hymn. It was an impressive scene, where men hostile to one another by human law, stood for the nonce in fellowship on common ground. Rumour had it that the Dublin squadron was to form an escort for these prisoners, from Thaba 'Nchu to Bloemfontein. The same evening, however, all who were willing to give their parole not to take up arms again were set at liberty, and we received orders to start next day to rejoin our battalion at the Free State capital.

A start at daybreak on Monday morning brought us without molestation once again to the Bloemfontein Waterworks. Here we were joined by one of the Belfast Yeomanry Squadrons, and in company with it we started on Tuesday back to Bloemfontein.

We reached our camp as night was falling, to learn that the first casualty among our men had taken place during our absence at Thaba 'Nchu. From time to time orders had been read out, 'Troop-horse No. — having died, is struck off the strength of the Company.' These orders had brought home to us the close relation between man
and horse, and now for the first time our turn had come; a poor fellow had been found dead in his tent that morning. He with one or two others had been left behind ailing when the squadron had started on the Thaba 'Nchu march, but we never thought that we should find him dead on our return.

We found that during our absence the rest of our Battalion, the Duke of Cambridge's Own, and the Second Belfast Company, had received orders to proceed to the rail-head: in other words to entrain and travel as far north as the line lay open.

That same evening the Dublin Squadron was put under orders to break camp on the next day at two o'clock, and to follow the rest of the Battalion. At eleven o'clock on Wednesday, May 23, a burying party of eight men carried their dead comrade, wrapped in the British flag, through the lines of our camp, and away to the cemetery of Bloemfontein, a mile distant. At two o'clock we struck our tents, which we were now to leave behind us, saddled up, and marched in to the railway station. Two o'clock to four were the Regulation hours during which burials took place in the cemetery of Bloemfontein, and for the second time that day we had to pass its gates. As we now marched past, 'eyes right,' and with arms at the 'carry,' we realised the scene.
which a daily death-rate seldom less than forty, and at one time reaching a maximum of one hundred, produced at the gates of that cemetery. Eight burying parties, each with its stretcher-burden enveloped in a Union Jack and awaiting its turn to enter the gates, sat along the wall; and on our way to the station we saluted in the streets as many more, all bound upon the same errand.

On arrival at the station, we boxed our horses for the last time, packed ourselves and our accoutrements in the narrow confines of one open truck, and were ready for what eventually proved to be a thirty-six hours journey to the furthest point to which the Imperial Military Railway then lay open—to wit, the Free State town of Kroonstad.
CHAPTER IV

THE FRONT

Our train of trucks and cattle-vans rolled out of Bloemfontein at six o'clock in the evening of Wednesday, May 23.

What a night that was! The occupants of each open truck were packed in two rows, one on each side of the vehicle, tightly as sardines in a box; but, unlike the fortune of these, to lie at full stretch was impossible; the legs of each man interlocked with those of his fellow across the floor of the truck, and even then the only position available was that of sitting bolt upright against its sides. To turn about, or to change one's posture, was to enforce the movement and to court the sleepy maledictions of three others—the men on each side of you and the partner of your pedal lattice-work across the way; while rifles and accoutrements did not fail to add their quota to the difficulties of the situation. Our blankets wrapped round our heads and shoulders...
THE YET RIVER BRIDGE JUST AFTER THE EXPLOSION; WITH THREE MEMBERS OF THE NETHERLANDS RAILWAY DESTRUCTION GANG
lessered to some extent the bitter cold of the night wind which sought out every corner of the truck as the train moved along. Pickets and groups of tents along the line were now passed, it seemed almost every hundred yards, and it was now no longer difficult to understand why two hundred thousand men had been found to be necessary for the purposes of the South African Field Force.

When day broke the train was running through a country which was almost flat, and across which the British advance had been unchecked. It was still early morning when our train reached the place where the rail had crossed the great Zand River bridge. This the Boers had destroyed, and six long iron girders, bent by their own weight and interlocked one with the other, lay forty or fifty feet down in the bed of the Zand River—now a shallow stream—while piled upon them were the hewn stones which had formed their piers. Here, as at Norval's Pont where the Orange River had been crossed, the corps of Royal Engineers had made on each bank a winding deviation united by a trestle bridge, to cross which our train was now to be the first. The rest of the 13th Battalion had reached this spot two days before, to find the bridge still unable to support a train. They had saddled up
their horses and marched on. The engineers at work upon the bridge were having their breakfast when our train arrived upon the southern bank of the Zand Spruit. We borrowed the fires they had lit and on them boiled some tea, ate our breakfast upon the ground—a happy respite from the crowded truck—fed and watered our horses in their vans, and then clambered back into our coop just as the train began the descent down to the water-level.

We crossed the bridge to the accompaniment of a round of cheers for its builders, slowly climbed the northern bank, and after a journey of a few hours ran into Ventersburg Road Station, which was to be our last stopping-place before Kroonstad. The wait was, however, destined to be no short one. The engine-driver, a Britisher who had been until the war a servant of the Free State line, had watered his engine many a time from the tank at Ventersburg Road, for the run of thirty miles from that station to Kroonstad. He had counted upon the same supply on this occasion, but for once in vain. The huge aeromotor, some forty feet high, which had served to pump the water from a deep draw-well into the engine-cistern, had been overthrown by the Boers in their retreat, and now lay at full length upon the ground; while, to make assurance
doubly sure, its vanes had been riddled with shrapnel bullets, and the cistern itself with its stone supports had been blasted with dynamite. A nice position this for an engine with an empty boiler, a journey of thirty miles still to be traversed, and the nearest water eighty feet below the surface of the ground! However, we set to work to cap the Boers' tricks; took off the top of the well, and, with the help of a long rope and five buckets passed from hand to hand of an endless chain of men, filled our engine to the brim in two hours and a-half. Eighty feet is a long way down into a well, and a still longer way up, as those found out who hauled upon that rope. It was dusk before we reached Kroonstad, and we received orders not to leave the railway station. There had been at Ventersburg Road, close by the railway line, a large field of potatoes. We all had 'spuds for tea' that night in Kroonstad, and blessed the Boers who had wrecked that engine-tank at Ventersburg.

The next day was Friday, May 26, and the morning was spent in detraining our horses and stores, and in loading up our waggons for the march, for which orders were hourly expected. We had been joined by the other units, and the 13th Battalion, complete once again, was now nearer
than it supposed to that indefinite locality which is
commonly described as 'the front.' True, we had
spoken to several wounded men who were lying at
the Kroonstad Station waiting for a hospital train
to be made up, and they had told us how they had
been knocked out in an engagement eighteen miles
off the day before yesterday; but otherwise there was
nothing about our surroundings to suggest that our
turn would really come within forty-eight hours.

At one o'clock all was ready, our horses stood
lined up, five mule-waggons were inspanned, and
two Jewish camp-followers—retailers at mammoth
prices of hot coffee, biscuits, and tinned goods—who
had somehow managed to keep with us all the way
from Cape Town, were now finally told that they
could come no further. At three in the afternoon
of Friday, May 26, we moved out of Kroonstad in
column of sections upon the Lindley Road. Rumour
had it that a telegram had been received from
General Colvile that the 13th Battalion was to join
him and the Highland Brigade at Lindley, by dawn
on Sunday, May 27.

We marched the rest of this Friday afternoon
till dark, bivouacked by a stagnant vlei, and were
stirring again before any sign of day appeared on
Saturday morning. Half a biscuit was a breakfast
which in no way interfered with an early start, and on this menu we marched from four in the morning till midday; aye, and we then thought we knew what hunger was! At midday we halted for an hour to 'off-saddle' and graze our horses, each man relieving another in the care of his mount in order to revel in a half tin of bully beef, and the prospect of another half biscuit, and possibly of a quarter mess-tin of tea at supper-time. During this midday halt on Saturday, May 26, the only mistake—as it appears to the writer—on the part of our leader, Colonel Spragge, from the start to the finish of his command, was made. We had been halted for about ten minutes when a line of five Cape carts appeared upon the road in front of us driving towards the Battalion from the direction of Lindley. The Cape cart is a light two-wheeled vehicle not unlike a dog-cart, except that it is entered only from the front, and is covered by a collapsible hood, which is usually white in order to resist the heat of the sun. The cart is in most cases arranged to carry two persons on one seat, but in some instances it is capable of seating four. One horse suffices to draw them, as the vehicles are lightly though strongly built; but when a Boer meditates a long journey, or a tour upon commando, he invariably
drives alongside the wheeler a second 'relief' horse, trained for the purpose, and attached to the cart by a single trace. The fact that in the present instance, apart from other considerations, each cart was thus provided with a trace-horse should have appeared in itself suspicious. The drivers of the carts, on being challenged by our outposts, explained that they were Boers who had had enough of fighting and who were bringing in their arms to our commander in order to receive passes and obtain permission to remain upon their farms, in accordance with Lord Roberts's proclamation to the Orange Free State. The carts were allowed to pass into our lines, and drew up at a spot where our officers were having their midday meal. Eight Boers in all jumped out, and handed over a like number of rifles, which included those of the Snider, Martini, and Steyr makes, but only one Mauser. This fact also should have aroused suspicion. Our colonel ordered the names of our visitors to be taken, and then directed them to be given a good meal, after which they were permitted to return whence they came. One of the Boers, who spoke English well, acted as interpreter for his fellows, and the colonel himself superintended the registration of their names and addresses. On learning that one of the Dutchmen came from a
place called Paradise, 'Tell him,' said Colonel Spragge to the interpreter, 'that if he doesn't go home and stay quietly upon his farm, he'll find himself in the real Paradise sooner than he expects.' Not long afterwards the five Cape carts passed through our lines, and retraced their steps at a quick pace towards Lindley. The next time we had a close view of our friend from Paradise he was mounted guard upon the 13th Battalion after its five days engagement at Lindley—with Colonel Spragge's pass in his pocket.

To put the matter shortly, the scouts of the Boer commandoes at Lindley had been permitted to enter our lines, to find out our numbers, our armaments, and the amount of our supplies, had even had lunch with us, and all this information and hospitality at the expense of a few out-of-date rifles, and of a few perjured oaths.

When bivouacked that night, still, in spite of forced marching, eighteen miles from Lindley, we saw the sky in front of us lit up by the camp-fires of the Highland Brigade, which was at the time occupying the outskirts of this treacherous town.

Sunday morning, before the dawn, found us again in the saddle, advancing at the trot and anon at the gallop to effect, as we hoped, our junction
with General Colvile and his Highlanders. At three in the afternoon our advance guard, consisting, as it happened to be their turn to lead, of the Duke of Cambridge's Squadron, entered the town of Lindley, which, lying in a hollow and surrounded on all sides by tall boulder-strewn kopjes, had come suddenly into our view.

About a mile from the town we had passed the spot which overnight had been the camping-ground of General Colvile's forces; they had marched on without us at daybreak on this Sunday morning, and must by now have placed some fifteen miles between themselves and Lindley. Colonel Spragge with the advance guard of our Battalion had entered the town, while the Dublin Squadron was ordered to halt at a river half a mile upon the Kroonstad side, and there to await the colonel's orders.

We had dismounted in order to ease our horses, and were standing talking to one another when, all of a sudden, four ducks were seen paddling along the river some hundred yards away. We had started before dawn on the customary ration of half a biscuit for each man; it was now three in the afternoon and no midday meal had as yet been ordered. Some of us determined that there should at all events be fowl for supper, and needless to say
those four ducks were doomed. A small party armed with stones made deadly practice, and never before had I seen such accurate marksmanship with nature's own missiles. Scarcely had we secured and awarded the last duck, when the crack of a rifle reached our ears, then another, and another. 'By George, that's firing,' were the first words I heard spoken: 'Hurrah! we're in it at last.' There was no mistake about it, for the shots now rapidly following one another from the hills beyond the town gave out the 'pick-pock' of the Mauser rifle, a sound then, indeed, new to our ears, but one of which we were to hear enough during the four days to come. There was as yet no reply from our advance guard, but ere long we heard the British volleys in answer to the independent crackle of the Boer rifles. As soon as the fire of our side was heard, Lord Longford had called to us to stand to our horses; the fowling party at once came in, but we did not leave the ducks behind us; they were quickly strapped up to the saddles of their captors, we mounted our horses and fell into our places. We had not long to wait; an orderly came galloping down from the town to the hollow in which the Dublin Squadron was grouped, rode up to Lord Longford and said, 'The colonel wishes you, sir, to
join him with your men in the town.' We galloped in open order up the incline which led from the river to the village, the Boer bullets singing over our heads as we reached the first group of houses; the enemy were firing at a distance of about half a mile, but fortunately they had not time to find the range, and we reached the town with only one horse hit. The circumstances in which we were now placed, as we afterwards learned them, were as follows. During the days of our march from Kroonstad to Lindley, the brothers Christiaan and Piet De Wet with the Smithfield, Heilbron, and Senekal commandoes, amounting in all to some five thousand men, together with the seven guns which had been captured from the British at Sanna's Post, were hanging on the flanks of General Colvile's division, which consisted of four thousand Highlanders, a small party of fifty mounted men, and two lyddite naval guns. The eight Boers who had lunched with us the previous day some thirty miles from Lindley, had informed De Wet of the approach of our body, composed as it was of four hundred and fifty mounted men. When General Colvile marched from Lindley at dawn on Sunday morning, the Boer commandant had detached from his own commandoes a force of eight hundred men to bar our way at this town; the
remainder of the Boer army continued its running fight with the Highlanders, who were now fifteen miles off and marching upon the Free State town of Heilbron. The Boers who were in wait for us at Lindley had not expected our arrival at the town till three hours later than the time at which our advance guard came upon them; our early appearance upon the track of Colvile's Highlanders had forestalled a reception even hotter than that which we now received. Our rapid marching had, however, resulted in our transport with its guard being left some miles in the rear, and steps had now to be taken in order to prevent the Boers who barred our advance from outflanking us and cutting off our supplies and ammunition.

The Dublin Squadron under Lord Longford now reined up in the presence of Colonel Spragge, and under partial cover of a huge galvanised iron storehouse in the heart of the town. The Duke of Cambridge's Squadron was already in action with the main body of the Boers immediately in front of us beyond the town, and it had been reported to Colonel Spragge, who was at present directing operations (carrying the while under his arm a huge pan loaf which he had purchased in the town just before the attack began), that a considerable number of the enemy had been seen making to our right
flank, in order no doubt to take us in the rear. In a few short words the colonel's plan was explained to us; we were ordered to leave the town again by the way we had come, to extend in the same direction as the Boers who were trying to outflank us; it was our task to forestall them in the race for the southern kopjes. All this time bullets were rattling upon the galvanised shed in lee of which we were drawn up, others were dropping with a 'phitt' into the ground about us, but everyone from the colonel, with his two-foot pan loaf, down to the youngest trooper, was to all appearance cool as a cucumber. I have been asked many a time what it seemed like to be under fire for the first time; it simply recalled to me the beginning of a thunderstorm in summer time, when one sees and hears the first big drops of rain falling all around upon the dust before any of them lights upon oneself: beyond this we looked to one thing only—'What's the order?' and under such circumstances the only untoward position, as it seemed to me, is that of him who has to give the command.

The order for the Dublin Squadron came in the colonel's words:—'Longford, you will take your men to the right flank, and see that the enemy don't get round you.'
THE FRONT

'Sections about. Follow me,' and Lord Longford led us at the gallop in the direction of the spruit where we had been halted when the action began. As soon as we were clear of the last group of houses, we were at once exposed to the Boer fire coming from the kopjes to the west beyond the town. The enemy had now got the range more accurately than before, and almost immediately Lord Longford's horse was shot beneath him, while one of our leading troop fell from his saddle mortally wounded. Two of his comrades carried him under cover of a small outlying shed, where he was left in charge of the surgeon; our captain mounted a spare horse, and without further loss, we gained the spruit. Once across the river which skirted the eastern side of the town, we raced for a long line of kopjes lying to the right flank of the Battalion's position, and succeeded in reaching the base of these hills before the flanking party of the enemy had come up. Here we dismounted, left our horses in charge of the numbers three of each section, scaled the sides of the hills, took cover upon the top, and were just in time to show, by means of a couple of volleys directed at the advancing Boers, that we were there before them. Half a mile in front of our position there was a long line of broken ground strewn with
large boulders. This was now occupied by the enemy, and for two hours, until night fell, the independent 'pick-pock' firing of the Mausers was answered by our volleys. Three men of the Dublin Squadron had their helmets pierced by Boer bullets, but from this time until night fell no further loss befell us, on that first day of our engagement. We had prevented the enemy from cutting off our transport, and just at dusk the waggons with their escort arrived at the spruit in our rear. The fight was over for that day, and we were called in by the colonel, in order to join him and the rest of the Battalion on the Kroonstad side of Lindley. It was now plain that we were for the time cut off from General Colvile and his division; that the attack upon us would be renewed next day by, in all probability, an increased number of the enemy, and that we must be prepared to meet it. To retire, even had such a course been consistent with orders, was impossible: our horses and waggon-mules, which had been neither rested nor fed since early dawn, were now dead beat; we ourselves had been marching and fighting for sixteen hours on half a biscuit. Just before darkness came on, our colonel had chosen a position from which we were to withstand the attack of the morrow, and to place this in
a condition for defence was now to occupy us until the small hours of the morning.

The main position was a steep flat-topped hill, lying some three miles from Lindley, and hard by the Kroonstad Road. To this we now moved off under cover of night; but, in order to reach the foot of the hill, it was necessary to leave the road, to bring our waggons a mile and a half across rough and broken ground, and then to drag them in the darkness over a shallow but rocky stream, which, needless to say, formed a most important item of our new position. After their long day's march our mules were quite unequal to the task of drawing the heavily laden waggons across the rocky ground, and we had there and then to turn to ourselves, and to spoke the wheels across the obstacles which intervened between the road and the base of our future laager—a journey of barely a mile and a half which now occupied two hours of arduous labour on the part of man and beast.

When our waggons had at last been drawn up at the foot of the main position, two of the squadrons set to work to build upon the top of this hill a circular breastwork of stones some four feet high, enclosing a space the diameter of which was about thirty yards; a third squadron was divided up
A. Main laager of the Battalion.
   a.a. Valley at foot of this, where our waggons stood, and to which our horses were brought each night.
   b. Where our horses grazed during the daytime, on bank of stream.

B.B'. Two kopjes forming post of Duke of Cambridge's Own.

C.C'. Low ridge, the post of the Belfast Squadron.

D.D'. High ridge, occupied by Dublin Squadron.

E. Kopje held by No. 1 troop of the Dublin Squadron: the scene of the last surrender.

F. Farmhouse lying outside our position, occupied by Boers, but rushed by Belfast troop.

G. Farmhouse lying within our lines.

H. Group of derelict Kaffir kraals, cleared of Boer sharpshooters by Dublin Squadron.

into pickets in order to guard against a night attack, and these were posted in a ring upon the kopjes which surrounded, at distances varying from half to three-quarters of a mile, the position we had chosen.

Here is given a rough outline of the ground which we occupied from nightfall of Sunday, May 27, until the afternoon of the Thursday following; and to hold which for that time cost us one-fifth of our strength in killed and wounded.

To the Dublin Squadron fell the duty of unloading the waggons, and of carrying the boxes of stores and ammunition up the steep and boulder-strewn side of the main hill, in order to place them under cover of the wide stone schantz which was now being erected upon its top. Our horses were meanwhile linked in a ring, and stood in charge of a picket close by the waggons. Up and down the rough side of that hill we struggled in the darkness from nine o'clock till long after midnight, staggering under twelve-hundred-round boxes of ammunition, and heavy cases of all kinds of stores. A line of non-commissioned officers was posted up the side of the hill from top to bottom, in order to keep those who sat down for a moment's rest from falling off asleep in sheer exhaustion. One man, who, in order to snatch a little longer respite than the non-com-
missioned officers allowed, had struggled with his load out of the track which the other men were following, awoke next day: his head was still upon the case of ammunition which he had been carrying the night before, and the sun was blazing down upon the scene. It was an hour and a half past midnight before we had finished the work of placing the stores and ammunition within the laager on top of the hill; we were now standing at its foot, drawn up and awaiting further orders, when, on a sudden, there came sweeping past us, on the run and tightly squeezed together, a great flock of sheep. 'Hullo! boys,' said our troop-leader, Lord Ennismore, 'this looks like supper at last.' It was now twenty-two hours since we had eaten food—the half biscuit which had made our breakfast—and no sooner had our troop-leader spoken than five of our number hurled themselves upon the top of the flock, which now rushed by still faster than before; but, when it had passed, it left five men upon the ground each hanging on for dear life to the trotter of a sheep. Then and there those sheep were killed, but we were far too worn out with toil to set about a meal; the remainder of the flock was pursued, headed off, and driven into the yard of a farmhouse which lay within the circuit of the ground which we were now
to hold. Four hours still remained before the dawn and the renewal of the Boer attack; we were told that half an hour before dawn we should be led to the post of defence assigned to the keeping of the Dublin Squadron; meanwhile to lie down and sleep. Never was order more readily obeyed; we flung ourselves upon the ground at the foot of the hill and slept.

An hour before the dawn of Monday, May 28, while it was still dark, we were aroused and ordered to go up to the laager, and here we each were given a mess-tin half-full of tea, a piece of biscuit, and a portion of the mutton we had made in the early hours of the morning—a table d’hôte breakfast of which no course was missed. We then cleaned our rifles, and marched out in single file to relieve the picket which had been posted upon a long ridge lying half a mile to the north of our central laager. The whole of this ridge, together with a kopje lying at its eastern extremity, guarded one quadrant of the circle of ground now occupied by the Battalion, and to hold this ridge and kopje was the duty assigned to the Dublin Squadron. On our left was a long extent of lower rising ground, on which the two Belfast Squadrons were posted; while beyond this again, and on the south-west face of the Battalion’s
position, were two high kopjes close together, the
defence of which was entrusted to the Duke of
Cambridge's Own. A stream running in a narrow
gorge intervened between the position held by the
Belfast men and the Duke of Cambridge's Own;
a farmhouse flying a white flag lay some half-mile
distant, outside the circle of our defence. The
southern face of our position was commanded by the
main laager, by the right extremity of the Dublin
Squadron's post, and by the left body of the Duke
of Cambridge's Own.
CHAPTER V

AT BAY FOR FOUR DAYS

Such was the disposition of the Thirteenth Battalion as firing began at dawn on Monday, May 28, when we found ourselves attacked from all points of the compass at the same time. Two Colonial scouts, who had acted as our guides to Lindley, had been despatched under cover of the previous night to inform General Colvile of our situation; the outcome of their mission to that officer is now well known, and it is here unnecessary to say more than that the Thirteenth Battalion supposed that neither scout had ever succeeded in reaching his destination.

We marched out from the laager through the long veldt grass, and had hardly got into our post, relieving the picket upon the northern face of the Battalion’s position, when the sun arose. From darkness to broad daylight had been but a space of a quarter of an hour, and now that the sun was up the firing began. Away to our left, in the direction of the kopjes held by the Duke of Cambridge’s Own—
'pick-pock,' 'pick-pock,' 'pick-pock,' there fell upon our ears the same sound which we had heard for the first time upon the previous evening, followed soon afterwards by the volleys from our men. 'Pick-pock,'—this time in front of us, and a bullet went sighing overhead. 'Take off those black cloaks now,' said our leader, 'before these fellows get our range, or you'll all be the best of bull's-eyes.' We wriggled out of our cloaks; as we did so—'pick-pock,' 'pick-pock,' 'pick-pock,' and a covey of bullets went away over our heads, the fire coming from some low hills about half a mile in front of us. Each side had now located the other, and we settled down to return the fire of the group of Boers who were opposed to us. Our cover was very poor; the picket which had been on the post the night before had been, perhaps, too tired to think of putting up any breastworks; nor had time been left us that morning to collect stones for this purpose. We accordingly lay out at full stretch behind such boulders and anthills as we could find, and we and our troop-leader then scanned with our glasses the ground from which a continuous fusilade was now being poured upon us. The bullets were, however, passing over our heads, how high up we could not tell; some made a sound like a telegraph wire in a high wind, others seemed to sing
right past our ears. At last one came along which struck a stone just in front of us, and then went away aloft literally warbling to itself. That was a ricochet; they were beginning to get the range. Soon, with the aid of our glasses, we began to pick out boulders in the distance, behind which, from time to time, we could see heads of men raised to aim. There were ten or a dozen of us on a knoll in charge of our troop-leader, and we agreed among ourselves, under his direction, to refer to each of these distant boulders by number, much as targets are designated upon a rifle range. As soon then as number eight or number twenty, as the case might be, was reported by any of us to be up and aiming, the attention of all was turned upon him and his stone, and, at the word of our leader, he duly received, as he aimed, a volley from our rifles. Our leader meanwhile kept his glasses fixed upon the mark, and either reported our success or enabled us to change our sighting. The same methods were employed all round the circle of the Battalion's operations; and throughout that day the incessant 'pick-pock' of the Mauser rifles formed an *obbligato* accompaniment to the volleys which came from each small party of defenders. Here and there, where the Boer fire was most marked, one or the other of the two little
mountain guns which were attached to the Duke of Cambridge's Own Squadron, was moved into action. These guns were known as Colt tape-guns: they carried the same cartridge as our rifles, but, owing to their greater calibre, possessed a range a thousand yards longer. They were fed by a long tape containing at a time five hundred rounds of cartridge, and were capable of discharging automatically a rapid hail of bullets, one after another, upon the same objective. Each gun was served by a hand brought out from Colt’s Gun Factory, and the rapid 'pop-pop-pop-pop-pop' of these little machines did much to strengthen our defence, lending as it did to our side a support as moral as it was effective.

All through that day we lay out upon our post; and here we had brought home to us one disadvantage under which we Europeans laboured when face to face with the Boer born and bred in Africa. Such is the clearness of the air in that high-lying country, that objects which seemed near at hand to us, coming as we did from under cloudy skies, lay in reality four or five times further off than we supposed. The rarity of the atmosphere, at a level equal to the crests of the highest mountains in the British Isles, accounted in part for this deception; during the earlier days of our march, a wager which had placed
a far-off hill as two miles distant had been lost to the man who judged the same interval at five miles and a half. The eye-sight of our enemy was upon the same scale. The details of the landscape at eight hundred yards were, for the naked eyes of the Boers, accustomed all their lives to these surroundings, as distinct as they were for us with our long-range glasses. We were thus opposed to men who could see us at least twice as clearly as we could see them. It was, however, late in the afternoon before the first man of our small group was hit: of the fortunes in other parts of the ring of defence we knew nothing. The sun had passed over our heads, and was now shining full upon our faces and from behind our foes, to whom there was thereby a danger of offering a still easier mark. One of our number, on each occasion when he raised his head to aim, was seen to bring his face into the full rays of the declining sun. His fellow nearest to him warned him of his danger, urging him to place the boulder behind which he was lying, between himself and the setting sun. He either did not hear or did not heed, and a few moments afterwards, when his head was raised again, it was raised for the last time; a bullet struck him full in the forehead and killed him instantly. When the sun had set, firing ceased on both sides, and soon
afterwards a picket came out from the laager to relieve us at our post. We carried our dead comrade into the laager, and on our arrival here we heard for the first time how matters had fared with the rest of the defence. The captain of the Duke of Cambridge's Own had been killed, early in the day, upon the top of one of the kopjes to which his squadron had been assigned: a corporal of the same group of defenders had been shot soon after his captain, and upon the same post. A trooper of one of the Belfast squadrons had been killed as he lay, in one of two breastworks which had been thrown up at the base of the main position with the object of replying to a long-range fire coming over the heads of the defenders who were holding the low ridge on the western quadrant of our circle; this fire was directed at our waggons and horses, which were grouped, throughout this first day, at the foot of the main laager. A sergeant of one of the Belfast squadrons had been placed in charge of the party which was lying in one of these breastworks; a corporal under his command had been assigned to direct the fire from the other. Early in the day the sergeant heard a cry, 'Oh, God! I'm shot,' arise from the schantz commanded by his corporal. He looked out from his own breastwork in the direction from which the cry had come, and
saw his corporal lying quite motionless, and with his head hanging out across the stone screen in front. Thinking that the corporal was dead, the sergeant left his cover in order to place another man in command of the party in the second schantz; he found, however, a different reason for providing a substitute for the corporal. The last night's work had been too much for him; he was not dead but sleeping, his head hanging out of the schantz and exposed to the fire of the enemy: a bullet aimed at this mark, though it had missed its immediate object, had killed the trooper nearest to it. Such an incident may serve to show the state of exhaustion to which our men were reduced upon this first morning of our siege. Besides the four men killed outright, six others had been wounded in different degrees, at various points upon the ring of defence; two had been struck within the central laager itself, from which position our colonel and his staff directed the Battalion's operations. It should here be pointed out that this responsibility, apart from the other difficulties of the situation, was entirely unlooked for. Yeomanry had never been intended, at the stage in which the war then was, to act as an independent force, but solely as scouts and outlying mobile wings in concert with a main body composed of infantry and
artillery. The Thirteenth Battalion of this branch of the service was now called upon, alone, to resist the attack of three commandoes, comprising five thousand men, the flower of the Free State Army, and commanded by the most resourceful leader whom either of the Republics had produced; the chances of war had, to draw an analogy from the game of chess, demanded of a pawn the moves which were only possible for some larger piece.

On returning that evening to the central position, our first duty was to bury the dead; a duty which was none the easier from the fact that only one spade could be obtained. Each troop, however, on which this work was now entailed, took its turn in performing, under cover of night, the last labour necessary for their fallen comrades. Stock had been taken of our supply of provisions, and the calculation arrived at that, with the following arrangement of rations, the Battalion would be able to hold out for eight days: For breakfast, one-eighth ration of bully beef and one spoonful of jam per man; for dinner, a quarter-ration of mutton, derived from the sheep we had fortunately captured on the Sunday night; for evening meal, a quarter-ration of biscuit. This last would, however, hold out for two days only; and, against the time when the biscuits should be exhausted,
the Kaffir boys who had driven our waggons were set to work to mill the oats which we had brought for our horses, in order that from it porridge might be made, and thus supply a necessary article of diet. To this end a small mill had luckily been found at the farmhouse which lay within the radius of our ground. Monday night was spent by every man either on picket or on guard. Throughout that day our horses, in their position at the foot of the main laager, had been exposed to the long range fire of the Boers, and on Monday night our colonel decided that, upon the following morning, all the horses should be moved down to the bank of our stream, to a spot where they would gain partial cover from the two high kopjes which formed the post of the Duke of Cambridge's Own.

Accordingly, a few of us were detailed on Tuesday morning before dawn to lead the horses to their new position, and there to keep watch upon them, and guard against the stampede, to cause which was one of the Boers' chief objects. In proof of this, we made prisoners that very day two Kaffirs who, sent by the enemy, had crept up the gorge of the stream, and whom we caught setting fire to the grass on which our mounts were grazing. It speaks well for our commander's moderation that he merely ordered these miscreants to be placed under a guard within
the laager. The problem arising out of the disposal of our horses had now been solved in the best manner which could be devised. Each morning before dawn they were led down into the partial cover afforded by the Duke of Cambridge's Own's kopjes; here they remained all day in charge of a picket, and in the evening were led back to their old position at the foot of the main hill, for fear lest, under cover of night, a second attempt by way of the river gorge should be made to stampede them. Horse picket was no sinecure; the Boers made the horses a most important mark, and throughout that Tuesday we were kept busy at the work of confining the animals, tied in groups of eight, to such parts of the ground as offered most protection from a continuous long-range fire. Two of our own men while thus engaged were hit: a bullet passed through the jaw of one; the other had a marvellous escape. He was lying on his right side, eating some food which had been brought down at midday from the laager. He had in his breeches-pocket a shilling—the last money in his possession. A spent bullet struck the coin, knocking the man upon his back, and enveloping itself in the metal, but barely breaking the skin of his thigh. The man belonged to one of the Belfast squadrons, and one of his comrades, ready even then to do a deal, at once.
offered him a half-crown for the bent shilling as a curio. The offer was, however, refused.

It was amid such surroundings on Tuesday, May 29, that I occupied myself, during a relief of one hour, in writing the following letter. It is before me now, scribbled in blue pencil on a piece of paper smudged with Free State clay. However incorrect in phrase or grammar, it may possibly be of interest, as having been written under Boer fire:

'Tuesday, 29. V. 1900.

'On the top of a kopje about two miles from Lindley. Orange Free State.

'Here we are—ourselves, the two Belfast Companies, and the Duke of Cambridge's Own—under fire since the day before yesterday! Our forces are divided up into parties occupying all kopjes round this, which is a fairly high one, with the object of repelling four or five hundred Boers [afterwards found to have been eight hundred on this first day] who have surrounded us, and kept us under a hot fire since yesterday morning at daybreak. We lost yesterday: Killed—Captain Keith, and a trooper called Galpin of the Duke of Cambridge's Own; Trooper Power of our Squadron (and my section), and Trooper McClure of the 54th Belfast Company—all shot through the head, poor fellows.
Badly wounded—Sir John Power of the Belfast Company, shot through the head while looking through his field glass. Wounded—about five [really seven] including Hickey of our Squadron, who got a bullet in his shin just below the knee. The way it all happened was this. We left Bloemfontein on May 24, all in open trucks, for Kroonstad, passing by way of Zand River, the bridge of which was blown down in just the same way and repaired similarly (by means of a deviation) to that over the Orange River. By reason of delays, we had two nights and a day in the trucks. We left Kroonstad an hour or two after arrival, for a route march of between fifty and sixty miles to Lindley, which had been declared the capital of the Orange Free State after Kroonstad, and where we were to join General Colvile's Column. We marched with all speed on no rations, and, with one bivouac (after the first night) on the way, got to the very entrance of Lindley without any molestation. We were all standing outside the town waiting for orders, when firing began on the advance party who were in the town with the colonel. In a minute or two we galloped in after him, and found him and his party under cover of a big tin shanty which acts as a Town Hall. The bullets were spitting about all over the place, and after a
few minutes we got orders to retire at a gallop in order to protect our transport which had to cross a spruit about a mile in our rear. The enemy evidently only had the range of the town, but they had it well, for Longford's horse was shot under him as we galloped away, and one of our men named Robinson was shot in the thigh. Soon after we got out of the town it began to get dark, and of course darkness falls very quickly. We had had no meal since breakfast before dawn, and for that only half a biscuit per man. In spite of this we set to work under cover of night, watered our horses, and wheeled the waggons off the road and up to the base of a kopje which the colonel had selected on which to form a laager. We worked hard all night—still on the half biscuit—building a stone breastwork to protect our stores and ammunition, which had all to be carted on our shoulders up the kopje over the boulders. Parties were sent out to occupy all the lower kopjes round our position, and in the morning the siege began. Fortunately the Boers had no guns, and all their fire was from Mausers. It was on this day that the above casualties occurred. Fortunately a nice stream full of springs is well under our protection, and we are well off in that respect. We have also commandeered a flock of sheep. I
have told you most things up to the hour of going to press, but there are some uncanny details best left alone. We are set here until relief comes—goodness knows when. Two scouts were sent out last night after Colvile, but we cannot tell if they got through—probably not.'

It was July 8 before that letter left my hands to start upon its journey home: I wrote it, as I have said, during an hour's relief while engaged upon the duty of horse picket on the second day of our defence. A picket of eight men were told off each day in order to look after the mounts of each squadron: their duties consisted in keeping the animals under the best cover available, and in taking care that those of them which were hit from time to time should not stampede the remainder.

He who volunteered to go up to the laager from the hollow to which the horses were confined, in order to bring down the midday rations for the men on horse-picket, had a journey before him which involved some incident. The distance, from the place where the horses were grouped to the top of the laager where the rations were issued to those who could come for them during daylight, was nearly half a mile. The middle part of the route lay completely exposed to the Boer sharpshooters, and
on the return journey the two camp-kettles, black as smoke could make them, offered a splendid target against the yellow veldt. To double across this danger area, with a heavy camp-kettle in each hand, was out of the question: meat and broth were scarce enough already without running the risk of spilling them, and the eyes of those who were waiting your arrival were upon you; full twenty bullets went 'phitt' into the ground round about you as you dragged your precious burden along to those in front; you had no cover to take and no rifle with which to make reply; it was an eerie journey, where nothing was to be done but to step forward with a prayer upon your lips until you gained the partial shelter of the hill.

Such, in its various degrees of peril, was our situation from Monday morning until Thursday afternoon. No spot secured to us certain cover. If protection was afforded from fire coming from the east, so surely was the spot exposed to one at least, if not to all three, of the remaining points of the compass. Until the last fatal day, the positions of least danger were the outlying kopjes on the circumference of our circle; for there, at least, the ranges up to their exposed side, that is to say their rear, were longest.

I have perhaps dwelt unduly upon the subject of our food, scant as it was from the beginning: how
important food becomes to those on active service only those who have been on active service know. True, while one is in action or on duty, all thought of eating vanishes at once, however long a time may have passed since one has tried to satisfy the cravings of hunger. It is when the time comes—that short four hours—when one is at liberty to lie down and sleep, that a man on quarter rations casts about to find some 'extra' with which to blunt the edge of appetite. I have told elsewhere how some of us had commandeered—convey the wise it call—four ducks upon the afternoon on which we entered Lindley. On this Tuesday night, four men were snatching a space from their hours of sleep in which to cook and eat their duck: it was the first time that an opportunity for such a festival had offered itself. I had no share in this repast, but I had assisted in collecting fuel—sun-dried cattle droppings gathered in the yard of our Boer farmhouse were the only sort available—on the understanding that myself and a comrade were to have the reversion of the fire whereon to cook two sheep's kidneys which we had purchased that night from the Battalion butcher. The duck was plucked and cleaned, but its owners discarded in the process the liver and the gizzard. These morsels we had at once secured;
and, with the two kidneys and a piece of bread which we had picked up upon the ground near the officers quarters, an olla podrida of flesh, fowl, and bread was now simmering upon the unsavoury fire in front of us. 'I'll give you two a half-sovereign for that,' said a voice behind us. Hungry and all as we were it seemed a piteous request, which had burst from a man who was watching us prepare our meal. We could only reply, 'If we did not want it ourselves as much as you, we'd give it to you without your money.' We finished our food, and were walking along our lines before lying down to sleep for the three hours which still remained to us against the time when we should be once more on duty. Suddenly we came upon a group of five men gathered round a small fire on which two mess tins were cooking; a smell of cocoa rose from them, we looked down, and saw lying upon the ground three empty tins of the 'Emergency Ration.' These rations of cocoa, specially prepared as a last extremity, are only permitted to be opened by express order of the senior surviving officer; they had been stored upon a waggon over which the colonel kept, as he supposed, inviolable guard; and he had issued an order that any man detected in pilfering stores was to be shot forthwith. In spite of this order here
were four troopers sitting over a brew of this same Emergency Ration. We asked them when and how they got it. The reply was characteristic of the time. 'By God,' said one, 'if Spragge won't feed us we'll feed ourselves,' and the speaker's eyes moodily returned to his fire.

All day on Tuesday the attack upon our outlying position slackened considerably; parties of Boers had, however, been descried riding from kopje to kopje just beyond effective range, and it was plain that though their fire had for the time abated, the numbers of the attacking force were receiving hourly reinforcements from the country round. The Boer leaves his farm and joins the nearest commando for much the same reason that the casual British sportsman rides to a neighbouring meet of hounds, to wit, the prospect of a good day; and, doubtless, the Boers of the Lindley district now regarded the Thirteenth Battalion as fair and certain game. As for Colonel Spragge, he had informed General Colvile of our predicament, and was now bound to await relief.

Early on Wednesday morning, soon after firing had begun, it was found that five kraals, lying to the east and outside our ground, had been occupied overnight by a party of the enemy, and from this point an accurate long-range fire was now being directed
both upon the east side of the laager, and also upon our horses which lay exposed to attack from this quarter. To our troop was assigned the duty of clearing the enemy out of the buildings in which they had ensconced themselves. We left the laager, twenty-six of us in all, in charge of our captain, Lord Longford. He at once deputed four of us, under the direction of Lord Ennismore, to act as an advance party for the rest, gave us orders to extend widely, and to make straight for the kraals. We advanced in open order to within six hundred yards of our object; the tenants of the kraals had shown some time before, by the bullets which at first came dropping singly into the veldt round about us, that they had already caught sight of our advance; we were soon close up and played upon by a steady fusilade. A donga, that is to say, a shallow cleft in the ground cut out by the torrents of the rainy season, lay five hundred yards in front of us; to this we doubled through the bullets, and into it we dropped hot-foot. The rest of our party, in advance of which we were, had by this time extended and wheeled round upon our left; one of them had been hit, but we were all now within two hundred yards of our goal; our bayonets were out, when one of our number shouted 'By George! they're off,' and
sure enough we saw the Boers mount their horses and gallop helter-skelter from the kraals. We were too late to get in a volley, as the enemy had dropped behind the hill; we had, however, cleared the kraals, and the Boer fire which had been directed from this point at our horses and at the laager, was at an end. The enemy now moved back to a line of boulders out of range of the latter; we occupied the kraals which they had vacated, and engaged them until night fell, in their new position.

Tuesday had added to the list of casualties a number of wounded; no more of the defenders were killed outright upon this day. A space in the central laager was set apart as a hospital, rendered as safe from bullets as a low stone fence and barricade of stones could make it, and here the wounded were disposed under the care of the Battalion surgeon's orderly. I have said that our force was never intended to act as an independent unit, and it may have been for this reason that only one surgeon had been assigned to it; he had remained behind in Lindley upon the Sunday afternoon, in order to attend to our first casualty which had then taken place; nor would the Boers permit him to return to us until Wednesday morning. With a waggon under a Red Cross flag he was then permitted to enter our lines for half an
hour, in order to bring back into the town two of our wounded who had been struck in a vital part. The surgeon was at the same time charged with a message calling upon us to surrender, and from him we learned that De Wet and three Free State commandoes, returned from their attack on Colvile's division, had joined in the siege; and that their guns, now ten miles off, would be turned upon our kopjes at daybreak on Thursday morning.

Throughout that Wednesday, a continuous roar of Mausers was heard all round our position, and our outlying posts were now more hardly pressed than ever. On this day the volleys of the defenders could hardly be distinguished above the continuous rattle of the Boer rifles, and a ceaseless 'whirr' of bullets greeted, in the laager, the ears of the reserves, who were there awaiting orders to go to the support of any post which should find itself in danger of being overborne. The enemy, now confident in the accession of strength which De Wet and his commandoes had brought with them, drew still closer to us; one party of Boers had seized upon the farmhouse which lay beyond the stream, and outside the western limit of our ground. From here they poured a well-directed fire upon the laager itself, upon the right extremity of the Duke of Cambridge's Own's
position, and against the left face of the ridge held by the Belfast Squadron. This condition of affairs led up to the first bayonet charge put in by the defenders. A small party of twenty Belfast troopers, in charge of their captain, crept outwards along the river gorge and under cover of its southern bank, in the direction of this farmhouse. They kept in shelter till within three hundred yards of their goal, then fixed bayonets, jumped out of the spruit, and charged across the ground which separated them from the building. The Boers, who had taken up their position during the previous night, would not abide the issue, quitted the house, leaped upon their horses, and retreated at a gallop. They were now exposed to the fire of the Belfast men, and of one of the Colt guns which had been trained upon the spot from our laager above. Before the late garrison of the farmhouse, consisting of eighteen or twenty Boers, could get away, three of them fell from their saddles, and a fourth who stayed behind to help his wounded comrade was made a prisoner; on seeing the latter stop to help the man upon the ground, our colonel ordered the machine gun in the laager to cease fire, an order which had at least the merit of magnanimity. The farmhouse had been cleared successfully, and could not be reoccupied by the
enemy until nightfall; it lay, however, too far beyond the Battalion's lines for us meanwhile to hold it.

During this Wednesday morning our troop, relieved of duty for the time, had been awaiting orders in the central position; these came in the afternoon, when we were ordered to prepare for a twenty-four hours post, to begin at nightfall, upon the eastern extremity of the ridge which had been assigned to the keeping of the Dublin Squadron. At sundown we were given a meal of mutton (our four hundred and fifty men were at this time eating sheep at the rate of fourteen a day), and we carried out with us to our post a one-eighth ration of bully beef per man, on which it was intended that we should support existence till nightfall of Thursday. We marched out to the eastern ridge in single file through the long veldt grass, just as darkness was closing in. The enemy had now tried a new device; the whole line of long veldt grass to the east, and, as it happened, to windward of our position, was in a blaze; rolls of smoke were passing high up into the air above our heads, and low flames were creeping in towards the ridge which formed the limit of our ground in this direction. What was the game now? To let the fire spread down to us and set alight the grass within our circle, and thus at last to stampede our horses; to
signal our location to the force of Boer artillery which was then upon its way towards us; or to clear the ground for a night attack upon this side of our position? Whichever was the truth, an order came round that outposts for that night were to be doubled along the line of the approaching fire, and all vigilance was to be exercised in order to guard against surprise.

Fortunately the night turned bitterly cold as soon as the sun had set; the heaviest frost we had yet experienced came down, encrusted with rime the tall stalks of the grass, and thereby within three hours extinguished the fire. Hardly had our first outposts been told off than we heard a challenge: this was answered, however, by a voice in which the North of Ireland accent was plain to all, and two Belfast troopers stumbled into the schantz which had been thrown up to guard this end of our ridge. They told us that they were the sole remnant of sixteen men of the 46th Squadron, who, early that morning, had been cut off by the Boers upon an outlying kopje away round to westward of the laager, and on which fifty Boers had been lying in ambush. These had leaped up, and three or four Boer rifles had covered each trooper as he gained the summit of his post. Three had been shot down, and the officer in charge of the party, seeing that resistance was hopeless, had
ordered the others to surrender; these two men had, however, lain low in the long grass and escaped notice; their comrades had been marched off to Lindley. All day long they lay close in their cover without stirring hand or foot, and at nightfall slipped off their boots, tied these around their necks and crept away on hands and knees towards our lines: they had come in the darkness half way round the circle of the position, and ours was the first schantz which they had recognised. The kopje on which these men had been surprised was fortunately not a key to the Battalion’s position; it had been occupied at the first in order to command the farmhouse which its capture had enabled the Boers to retain so long, but from which they had been once driven by the bayonet rush of the troopers of the second Belfast Squadron. We made up from our own supply a half ration for each of our unexpected visitors, who had eaten nothing since the previous night; one of them was then taken by his own request upon the strength of our picket: the other was directed to the main laager, in order there to make his report to the colonel. Two hours later, at nine o’clock, I had my first experience of night outpost-duty in face of the enemy. At the time when he was posted for this work, a man
was permitted to choose one of two positions, sitting or lying: whichever he selected, in that he had to remain, without a budge, until his spell of two hours had elapsed; he was then relieved and was off duty for four hours, when his turn came round once more. Two outposts at a time were furnished from our picket, and these were placed at points upon the ridge distant from each other some fifty yards. Our orders were—if we saw one or two men approach from the direction of the enemy, to challenge—if more than two, to fire upon them forthwith. There we remained, our rifles across our knees, with bayonets fixed and magazines charged, and with the knowledge that during those two hours the safety of the Battalion might depend upon our vigilance. Behind us, and within the schantz, the rest of the picket lay, each man with his rifle and bayonet at his head; and all asleep, save one whose duty it was to rouse the others in case of an alarm. The night—as events proved the last night of our defence—passed quickly enough; but, just before the dawn, an event new to such an hour occurred. Away to our left we heard a wild Irish cheer followed by rapid Boer fire; a couple of British volleys, another Irish cheer, and all was once more silent, until broad daylight appeared, and our last day's action began.
This was what had happened. Half an hour before dawn, Lord Longford, with the three remaining troops of the Dublin Squadron, had made his way from the laager, as on each other morning, in order before daylight to take up his post—a long ridge lying to the left of where we lay. This same ridge had overnight been chosen by Christiaan De Wet—this he himself afterwards told us—as the point from which to deliver his first attack as soon as day should dawn upon our laager. For this purpose five hundred Boers were now in wait behind it, their outposts on its crest, when Lord Longford with sixty men of the Dublin Squadron came out to take up the ground they had already held throughout three days. Our men had moved, as usual, in strict silence, and well it was they did so: Boers and British were now, in the grey dawn, within two hundred yards of one another, but meanwhile ignorant of each other’s presence. Our side was the first to learn that the ridge was already occupied; a quiet order to fix bayonets was passed along from mouth to mouth, and then, with a cheer and a yell, the second third and fourth troops of the Dublin Squadron, now formed in line, and led by their captain, the Earl of Longford, made for the summit of the ridge. It was still too dark for any weapon but
the bayonet; the Boers however fired a few shots at haphazard and then fled down the far side of the ridge, leaving their bedding and even some of their rifles behind them. The whole successful charge had been the work of but a minute, but two of the Boer bullets had found their mark; one of our side was down, and Lord Longford at the head of his men received a bullet in the wrist. In spite of his wound he soon caught up his men, but shortly afterwards our captain was again struck, this time through the neck. He thought for a moment that his captaincy was ended, dropped down upon an antheap, and called out to his troopers, 'Never mind, boys! Let the best man lead you; and fight like Irishmen.' Meanwhile the ridge was won; and soon after, when the first shock of the bullet, which had passed clean through his neck, was over, our captain, finding he was not yet done with, rejoined his men, directed a couple of volleys at the retreating Boers, and then another cheer was ordered, to let all know the victory was ours. A quarter of an hour later it was broad day; and, as the sun rose, the first sound which fell upon our ears was the 'Boom' of a big gun, followed by the bursting of a shell not fifty yards from our schantz. It was a sighting shot, which had been directed at the low ridge held by the Belfast Squadrons on the western front of our circle. The gun had been trained too
high, and the shell had thus passed above its mark and reached to our side of the Battalion’s position. From dawn on Thursday till two o’clock in the afternoon our two little Colts kept those Boer fifteen-pounder guns ever on the move. During eight hours, each kopje on the circle of defence had to bear, in its turn, the full force of Boer rifles and artillery, but it was not till two o’clock that the enemy found a position out of range of our Colts, from which their big guns could launch their shells of shrapnel and escape meanwhile the hail of bullets from our Colts. That position, when found at last, commanded one of the two kopjes held upon our southern face by the Duke of Cambridge’s Own Squadron; this post was first to fall, but it fell in face of a concentrated fire from over four thousand rifles, whose roar well-nigh drowned the booming of two fifteen-pounder guns which hurled meanwhile their shrapnel upon a bare hundred of defenders. Can it be wondered at that in such a case a white flag was raised at last? Amid this hail of lead, a corporal of the Duke of Cambridge’s Own Squadron lost his own wits and the Battalion its position. Two of his fellows shot their comrade down, but the mischief had been done: to the other half of the same Squadron, which was in equal plight hard by upon the second kopje, the order
to cease fire had been given as soon as the white flag had been shown upon their comrades' post, and a handkerchief raised aloft upon a bayonet now waved from the top of either hill. The Boers were quick to take advantage of this mistake—to follow the usual form of mild expression in such cases—they mounted their horses and advanced at a hand-gallop to the bottom of the kopjes, up the sides of which they now literally swarmed. The troopers of the Duke of Cambridge’s Own were of course in honour bound by the signal of those two white handkerchiefs: they laid down their rifles and became prisoners of war. During all this time a general attack was being delivered upon each point of the Battalion's position, the fate of which, now that the key was lost, was sealed at last. There was indeed an attacking force sufficient to have assailed a ground five times its extent. The enemy now dragged their guns to a position which commanded our central laager; upon the latter there was now concentrated all the fire which had previously been directed upon the posts held by the Duke of Cambridge’s Own, and these two kopjes were now the firing points of thousands of Boer marksmen. It was not long before one of our number, who had been sent from our eastern schantz to reconnoitre the general position, returned to our
troop with the news that a white flag was flying above the laager, and that the Boers were now in possession of our stronghold. A short while afterwards the Belfast men were overwhelmed, and then came the turn of the Dublin Squadron. We were now the sole survivors of the Battalion, still holding possession of a hill, to which, some time before, and by Colonel Spragge's directions, Lord Longford had led his men and, near to this, of the short saddle-back which formed the post of Lord Ennismore and the No. 1 Troop of the Squadron. Each position had been all along assailed in front by its own attacking force, but we were soon taken in the rear as well. Surrounded at last on all sides by the on-rushing tide of victorious Boers, bullets hailed in upon us from all directions at once. To complete the attack, already hot enough, one of the Boer fifteen-pounder guns was trained upon our schantz from a low hill about a mile distant. During the two preceding days a second schantz had been erected upon our post to be used in case of emergency: that emergency was now to arise. Lord Longford, although he found his present position too wide a ground to hold with sixty men against the whole Boer force, which was now arrayed in its thousands against our one squadron, would not surrender, but gave the
orders for a retirement upon the smaller area still held by our troop. Half his force kept up the fire as the other half retreated upon us: and these in turn covered the retreat of the others, until the remnant of the second, third, and fourth troops of the Dublin Company found themselves at last behind the walls of our second schantz. These two stone kraals now became targets for the fire of the entire Boer force; and, as one who came to view the scene two days later described them, 'Their walls, inside and out, were grey with lead.' Lord Longford ordered the volleys in one kraal, Lord Ennismore those in the other. For ten minutes the unequal battle of one squadron against three commandoes lasted: and then, when one side of our schantz had been hurled down by a shell from the Boer gun, 'I say, old boy,' called out Lord Ennismore to his captain, 'It's no good. We must not sacrifice more lives.' 'Go on,' replied Lord Longford from the second kraal, 'until I give the order to cease fire.' Five minutes passed, in which two more men went down: then the order came, and the last of the Thirteenth Battalion surrendered. Handkerchiefs which had once been white were raised on bayonets, and the Boer commandant called out to us, 'Lay down your rifles and come out. Any man seen with a rifle will be shot.' We came out of our schantzes beaten, but our
foes did not consider us disgraced. Hundreds of Boers leaped to their feet all round us, hurled their slouch hats into the air; many of them, too, I remember well, were binding up their wounds. A few came up to us and to our wonderment seized us by the hand saying, 'Well done! you fought well, right well.' 'By George,' one of us replied, 'you're sportsmen, anyhow.' And so we mingled with our captors, each of us trying to find a man who could speak English, and of such there were many. The first question on all our lips was, 'Do any of you belong to the Irish Brigade?' Had such been the case, it would have been to us a crushing blow; but, as luck would have it, all our late foes proved to be Free-Staters. Their leader now came forward and spoke to our captain. On the occasion of a visit which he paid that evening to the wounded in the hospital at Lindley, Christiaan De Wet complimented us upon our five days stand; told us quietly that we had proved ourselves the best marksmen he had met up to this, with the single exception of Brabant's Horse; and, in proof of this, he was magnanimous enough to let us know that we had provided his commandoes with the most expensive engagement in which they had yet been. He also told us that he had found out, at a very early stage of the engagement, that most of us were Irish; and that there was no mistaking the
men who had made the two bayonet charges—the one on the farmhouse by the Belfast troopers, the other by the Dublin Squadron under Lord Longford that very morning. This was the only definite information we ever gained as to the concrete results of our resistance, beyond the fact that, during the succeeding days, there died of wounds in Lindley seven more Boers than died of our men from the same cause: we also saw that same afternoon several Boer dead driven in carts from the scene of action.

These, however, are morbid details on which one does not care to dwell: suffice it to say we had done our best in the face of heavy odds. We were now prisoners of war; let him who will add to the tale of our capture—*relictā non bene parmula*.

I shall here bring to an end this part of my narrative with two letters which have appeared elsewhere in print.

**LETTER No. I**

**THE THIRTEENTH BATTALION OF IMPERIAL YEOMANRY**

*To the Editor of the 'Pall Mall Gazette'*

Sir,—In the course of your remarks upon the case of General Sir Henry Colvile, published in your
issue of December 29, you quoted Dr. Conan Doyle's 'account' of the action at Lindley, where, after five days' fighting, our Battalion was given the order to cease fire. Will you grant me the opportunity to correct two statements which occur in that account, and which concerned our action very nearly?

In the first place, as regards the suggested construction of trenches. Our Battalion had not got with them a single spade or other implement by which such a measure could have been carried out. I was one of the fatigue party which loaded up the train in which we left Matjesfontein previous to our journey to Kroonstad, and no spades were then put in. During our four weeks stay at Matjesfontein we had no spades, and even stable operations were carried out there by means of the 'soldier's basket' —to wit, one's own pair of hands. Apart from this, anyone who knows the Lindley district—which Dr. Doyle admits in his book he does not—is aware that the rocky nature of the kopjes there would render the making of trenches impossible, except by a process of blasting.

In the second place, Dr. Doyle says we had a convoy of twenty-six waggons, and therefore abundance of provisions. As a matter of fact we had in
all six waggons, and these only carried one day's rations—all that could be spared at Kroonstad when we left that town—the rest of the 'convoy' being forage for horses, a few kits, and ammunition.

Finally, may I say that our five days action at Lindley was not as ineffective as might be supposed? In a conversation which Christiaan De Wet had with the wounded in Lindley hospital after the action, he stated that he had been marching on Kroonstad when he fell in with us. Kroonstad was at the time the railhead—ours was the third train into it—and an attack from De Wet would have given considerable trouble at that juncture. The delay which our action with De Wet caused to that general and his commandoes at this time undoubtedly furthered the interests of the British Army, leaving out of consideration the number of Boers 'knocked off the strength of the commandoes' during the five days at Lindley. De Wet also said we were the best set of marksmen he had come across with the exception of Brabant's Horse, and that from our two bayonet charges he had diagnosed the presence of Irishmen. Three of the four squadrons were Irish.

I leave it to you and to your readers whether in face of this 'it must be confessed that the action is
a disappointing one to those who believe in quality of troops as against quantity [450 men without artillery against at least 5,000 with guns]—the most disappointing of the whole war.'

I am, your obedient servant,

TROOPER 45TH (DUBLIN) Co. I.Y.

January 4, 1901.

LETTER II

THE THIRTEENTH BATTALION OF IMPERIAL YEOMANRY

To the Editor of the 'Pall Mall Gazette'

Sir,—I can assure your correspondent, 'Trooper 45th (Dublin) Company Imperial Yeomanry,' that nothing can be further from my wish than to hurt the feelings of himself or any of his comrades in my account of the Lindley surrender. I have given them every credit for individual gallantry. As to the general result, I have recorded my impression, which is formed after reading a considerable amount of evidence. I have seen at least ten accounts, two of which were written especially for my own information. Without going into matters of opinion, I should like to check 'Trooper' upon one or two matters of fact, because, if he is quite correct, I have been misin-
formed. He says, 'Our Battalion had not got with them a single spade.' One account which I have says that the bodies of those who fell were buried with the help of 'the only spade.' Another says 'picks and shovels were to be had: the ground on the top of the kopjes was in places workable.' In any case a bayonet at a pinch can in time throw up some cover. I am informed that the Bushmen and Rhodesians, who made the defence at Elands River, were also short of trenching tools. 'A willing man goaded by pom-poms can burrow very deeply into rock,' says one of their officers. 'Trooper' misquotes me when he says that I stated there were twenty-six waggons. I mentioned no number. I may, however, have given a false impression by using the word 'convoy' instead of 'transport.' The latter has been substituted in the late edition of my book. The waggons contained, as I stated, supplies of ammunition, but they only had one day's rations. On the other hand, I have reason to believe that on Monday, May 28, two hundred sheep and lambs came into the possession of the defenders, and there were always the horses. 'Trooper' says there were five thousand Boers round Lindley. If so, the odds were certainly more disproportionate. I should be glad, however, to
verify those figures before finally adopting them. The numbers of the enemy have been most difficult to gauge in the various actions of this war, and in none more so than in this one. I know, however, fairly exactly how many men De Wet had with him when he cut the line only a few days later. He had about twelve hundred. Witnesses of the final assault on the small kopjes at Lindley describe the assailants as not being more than a few hundred in number. We know also that Colvile was being worried all the way to Heilbron during a large part of the Lindley investment. The evidence, therefore, is rather against the presence of the very large force which 'Trooper' mentioned. I have no doubt that 'Trooper' is perfectly right in his estimate of the effect which the stand at Lindley had upon the general operations. If it were not for the resistance of the Yeomanry, De Wet would certainly have cut the line several days earlier.

Yours faithfully,

A. CONAN DOYLE.

Undershaw, Hindhead, Haslemere.

Jan. 9, 1901.
CHAPTER VI

PRISONERS OF DE WET

After the final act of surrender on the part of the last Squadron of the Thirteenth Battalion of Imperial Yeomanry had taken place, those of us who still survived had an opportunity of observing for the first time, at close quarters, the personality of the Boer as he appears upon commando. There had leaped from the ground on all sides of us a motley crowd of men shouting hurriedly and jabbering—so it seemed—to one another in Dutch as they came towards us, and every now and then giving vent to their feelings by hurling into the air the black slouch hats which formed the headgear for nine out of every ten. The same proportion wore long, dark, grizzled beards; and almost all were clothed in coarse broadcloth coats and long loose trousers, of a decidedly home-made cut. All, of course, carried rifles in their hands, or slung across their shoulders, on which were also hung leathern bandoliers such as the Boer always uses: some had
hung about them articles of accoutrement which we could see at a glance had once been worn by British soldiers, while a few had buckled round their waists belts and bayonets taken on the occasion of some earlier reverse to our arms. One Boer, whom I now saw, carried a waterbottle stamped with the letters R.I.F. I asked him where he got it. 'Ah,' he answered, 'that was Stormberg.'

Most of the Boers were unmounted; they had left their horses at our main laager, well out of range of the rifles on our kopjes. Now, however, that the firing had ceased and our resistance was at an end, many mounted men came riding up, leading in twos and threes the horses of their comrades: we could see upon them more than one saddle from which hung, in its scabbard, a sword once the property of some British officer. Such was the scene of the last surrender, with here and there on each side a group kneeling on the veldt and binding up the wounds of some unlucky comrade. We mingled freely with our foes, seeking out those among them who could speak English; pipes came out, and for a few minutes the incidents of the last five days were openly discussed between ourselves and our captors. It was during this time that the leaders of each side stood in conversation one with the other;
the former with his neck bound up in a handkerchief soaked through with blood, the latter smoking his pipe—now the pipe of peace. Our captain had had an escape which was truly providential. The Boer bullet had passed through his neck, leaving untouched on one side the great blood vessels and on the other his cervical vertebrae. Each commander was, to all outward appearance, unconcerned, and taking in the one case fortune's buffets, in the other her rewards, with equal thanks. Christiaan De Wet, as he was pointed out to me by one of hisburghers, was a thick-set man of medium height, with a frame such as the Etruscans describe, 'moulded with the fist and polished with the adze'; broad shoulders surmounting a deep chest; hands the largest and heaviest I have ever seen. A pair of dark piercing eyes, which seemed to be ever on the move, glittered above a broad flat nose; a short grizzled beard and moustache complete, a face as hard as it was cunning. An instance of the control which this man could exercise over even the roughest members of his undisciplined commandoes, had been witnessed by those of our Battalion who were lying in our main laager at the time when it was first entered by the victorious Boers. After the white flag had been raised, Colonel Spragge and
his second in command, Major Holland, had stood up and walked to the entrance of the laager, in order to hand over their weapons to the Boer commandant. The first, however, of the enemy to arrive upon the spot were some burghers belonging to the Smithfield Commando, which was notoriously the roughest and most brutal unit of the Free State Army. These men, before the arrival of their leader, ran up to our officers, and attempted with scant ceremony to pull off their accoutrements. Our colonel resisted, saying that he would hand over his weapons to no one but the Boer commandant. The Dutchmen did not of course understand his speech, and they were now showing signs of having recourse to still greater violence when De Wet rode up to the laager. One of our number at once ran to him, and told him that our colonel was being maltreated by some of the burghers. De Wet looked in the direction where the struggle was taking place, rose to his full height in his stirrups, and shouted a few words in Dutch. The men instantly released their hold upon our colonel and upon his second in command, fell back, and slunk away like beaten curs. De Wet then came forward, and his first address to our commander was one of apology for the treatment he had just received at
the hands of the Smithfield burghers. These events had taken place before the final assault upon such of the outlying kopjes as still remained in the possession of our Battalion. The Duke of Cambridge's Own Squadron had been brought in, and were now left prisoners of war in our central laager together with the colonel and its other occupants. De Wet then ordered a general attack upon the posts held by the Belfast Squadrons, which lay, as I have said, upon a lower level than either the Duke of Cambridge's Own's position or the main stronghold itself. Now that the latter were in the hands of the enemy, the Belfast men found themselves in a case which was hopeless: they had no choice left but to surrender. One incident of that surrender is worth recalling. A small body of defenders had been captured on a kopje lying some distance apart from the low ridge upon which the rest of their Squadron had been stationed. Before capitulation our men, in almost every case, were careful to destroy the sights of their rifles. The officer, however, in charge of these Belfast troopers, was in possession of a brand-new Mauser carbine, his own purchase, and he improved upon the ordinary method of rendering his rifle useless to the enemy; for when he saw that surrender must ensue, he bent the barrel between two rocks. On
handing over the carbine, now crooked as a ram's horn, to the Boer who came to take it from him, he was asked in broken English, 'How happened this?' 'Like that!' replied the Irishman; and, as he spoke, he whirled the weapon round his head and shivered it, lock stock and barrel, upon the nearest boulder. The Boer himself was at first too astonished to decide in what spirit to receive this action: he frowned and gripped his rifle; then his face relaxed, he turned round to his followers, said a word or two in Dutch, and laughed aloud.

After the capture, some half-hour later, of the position held by the Dublin Squadron, I, too, had occasion to learn of what mind a Boer may, in some cases, show himself to be. I had left my cloak behind me when we quitted our schantz, and I now asked leave of a Free State field-cornet to go back and fetch it. This he permitted me to do, and on my return to our late entrenchment I found a motley crowd of Boers inside its walls, busied in gathering up the rifles and accoutrements which we had left behind, and these—rifles, bandoliers, belts, and bayonets—now lay heaped together against one side of the schantz. I was just in time to save my cloak from being looted, and in the pocket of it I found a single Lee-Metford cartridge. This I took out
and handed to one of the Boers standing by, and said, not knowing whether he would understand my words, 'Here! You want this, I suppose.' He answered quietly in broken English, as he took the round from my hand, 'Ah, no! I not want it: I not like it.' Here, then, was a man, one of the winning side, and in a case where ninety-nine out of a hundred victors would have been exultant in success, who, so far from showing any despite of his prisoner, actually affected to contemn the circumstances under which his own victory had been gained.

The same large-hearted spirit I met with later on, in the case of one of the guards upon the march. This man could speak English well, and on one occasion as he rode along beside us, 'You and we,' said he, 'don't really hate each other in the least degree: we're only out here fighting, and making ourselves uncomfortable, to please a gang of politicians who live at home in palaces all the time.' Such were his words, conveying, as they did, a novel view of war, and of the relative positions of the combatants: who shall say that the view was altogether an unenlightened one?

The Dublin Squadron, now prisoners of war, were directed to move in to the central laager, and
PRISONERS OF DE WET

here we found the rest of the Battalion. They had been granted a quarter of an hour in which to get together such necessaries for the march as each man could find. The choice was a restricted one: most of our late possessions had been looted, and any effects on which we could now lay hands must henceforth be carried upon our own backs. Rich was he who could now claim as his own a blanket, coat, and mess-tin, for in front there lay for most of us a month-long march on foot, to the furthest limit of the Transvaal. Our money had been left to us, save in the case of one small party of eight men who had been surrounded in an outlying kraal just before the final capture of the Dublin Squadron. These eight had been marched off by their captors to the back of a low hill, where a Boer field-cornet lined them up and demanded of them their money. The sergeant who had been in command was first ordered to stand and deliver. This man was an old soldier, and mentally reflected that the enemy would not expect under the circumstances to find him in possession of any very great sum of money. In one pocket he carried at the time twelve sovereigns; in the other a shilling, a sixpence, and a halfpenny. Plunging his hand into the latter he pulled it inside out; the three coins fell upon the
ground, and these he handed to the Boer leader. The man was satisfied and turned to the rest of the party; from these he collected sixty pounds in all before they were marched off to join the main body of the Squadron.

It was five o'clock on Thursday afternoon before we left the laager, and the month-long march, as it proved for most of us, began forthwith. Those whose wounds made marching for them impossible were left behind, under the care of our surgeon, in the town of Lindley. As we now moved along on foot towards the village, a weary straggling herd of unkempt prisoners, Boer carts came driving past, carrying in their dead and wounded off the scene of our four days engagement: the British dead, aye! and wounded too, were left unheeded; and one poor fellow was found next day in the posture of binding up a wound from which he had bled to death. We were now led through the town of Lindley, and four miles beyond it we laagered for the night upon the veldt; most of us had succeeded in picking up, before we left our late quarters, some morsel of food; this, as events proved, had to serve for sustenance until midday on Friday, by which time we had put twelve more miles between ourselves and Lindley. An hour before the dawn, our guards came through the
scattered groups of prisoners and gave us the order to march on at once: they knew that a British column under Lord Methuen was now fourteen miles from Lindley, and that they must hurry off their prisoners, if prisoners they were to remain. Till twelve o'clock that day we trudged along, dragging our steps in spite of all our mounted guards, and listening with hopeful hearts to the guns which were now booming a few miles in our rear. No rescue came, however: the Boer commandoes which had captured our four hundred and fifty men proved strong enough to bar the way at Lindley of the British column—infantry, mounted men and guns—which had come too late to our relief. At midday the guns were silent, the pursuit had been given up; we knew that we were prisoners now beyond recall. We were halted at a large farm-house, to which news of our coming had been sent on by one of the mounted guards. These to the number of forty—their number had gradually diminished as we marched further and further from relief—now entered the house, and sat down to a meal which the Boer vrouw, her daughters, and servants had made ready. Meanwhile, ten men for each of our squadrons were told off, and directed to a cattle-kraal into which had been herded six or
eight sheep and bullocks. 'You will be allowed,' said the chief of the escort, a Boer field-cornet, 'an hour and a half for dinner; there it is, eat what you want now, and carry on with you as much as you require. You will get the same this time to-morrow.' He turned on his heel and walked away to the farmhouse. We had thus a space of an hour and a half in which to play the several parts of butcher, cook, and diner. Ox or sheep, as the case might be, soon became, by the united efforts of each party of ten men, beef or mutton, the carcases were skinned and then cut up, and the meat was carried off to where our comrades were in waiting. Fires, of the same fuel to which I have elsewhere referred, were hastily kindled; and, in the last year of the nineteenth century, we enacted, in all its many details, a scene which has been described by Homer. The incidents of each day were almost unvarying: from dawn till dusk of Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, we trudged along, halting for an hour and a half about midday near to some wayside farmhouse; here we killed and ate our dinner, which was ever presented to us in the same rude shape. Farms, at intervals of five or six miles, formed the only breaks in the monotony of our route, which lay among the interminable kopjes of the yellow veldt. Two bullock waggons had been found
at our first halting-place, and these accompanied us for the purpose of picking up those of our number who should faint by the way. On reaching the town of Lindley after the surrender, several men who had been wounded about the head or shoulders had disguised these wounds in order not to be left behind: after two or three days marching under the conditions in which we now found ourselves, and where wounds had of course to go undressed, these men fell into a state of high fever, and the waggons were in a few days filled to the teamster’s seat. Each morning just at daybreak, the bullocks were inspanned, and the Boer guards came through the scattered groups of prisoners, cracking their whips and shouting, ‘March on, March on!’—the only English known to most of them, and in their case, of course, knowledge acquired for the occasion. Up we jumped in the grey dawn, flapped our arms in order to get some warmth into bodies well-nigh frozen by the chill African night, slung our few remaining possessions about us, and started breakfastless upon a six or eight hours march to the scene of our daily meal. Once or twice a day our route would lie through a Boer farm; that is to say—on each side of the veldt-track, for which a wheel-worn space was left, a mile or two of barbed
wire ran along, bounding the cattle pasture, or the mealie field, which in this part of the country was the only kind of tillage we ever saw. At the entrance to these avenues of wire fencing, two of the leading Boer guards would halt in order to count their prisoners: this was done by the dozen—a number beyond which no member of our escort was able to compute. The fencing was in itself remarkable: trees or wood of any kind are rarely met with in that arid soil, the former only grow round farmhouses where they have been planted in for shade; and so it happens that in this part of the country the strands of wire are all supported upon rough-hewn supports of stone sunk in the surface of the veldt. To look upon these fences made one feel as if the stone age had come again on earth.

At one of the farmhouses where we made our midday halt, we found a Boer vrouw well-disposed enough towards us as to sell, to those who could afford to buy, the bread—aye and butter too!—of which we stood so much in need. 'Two slices of bread and butter for a shilling'—such was her tariff: a single slice she would not sell, you must buy two or none at all. A typical example this, as will be seen, of what has been termed the Boer 'slimness.' The bargain was concluded in the
doorway of the house; the two slices of bread and butter were brought to the purchaser from an inside room. Round to the window of this we crept, peeped in through the glass, and soon solved the riddle of the lady's bargain. In came the vrouw, a shilling in her hand: upon the table stood a loaf; the top of this she buttered thinly, cut the slice and laid it aside; she then cut a dry slice, turned this down upon the one already buttered, and carried both together out to the door, where they were delivered according to her contract as 'two slices of bread and butter for a shilling': and yet there is something in that much-read Boer Bible anent extortioners.

On Sunday morning, June 3, we crossed a river; it was the first running water we had seen since the stream at Lindley. The Boers had, in the case of many of our men after they had been captured, removed their water-bottles: mad with thirst, the men dropped down on hands and knees to drink at every stagnant pool and vlei as we marched along. Dieted thus on raw meat and stagnant water, following upon the five days siege at Lindley, can it be wondered at that dysentery and enteric fever were rampant among us now?

A welcome sight that Sunday afternoon was a
group of about a hundred tin-roofed granite houses, which formed the little Free State town of Reitz—named after the last State Secretary of that Republic. The town boasted of a church, a school, a town-hall or Landdrost's court, and, most important of all for us, four or five dry-goods stores: here we were promised freedom to equip ourselves with the bare necessaries for our new life. In all such villages, these stores trade with the natives and the farmers round about for dried skins of sheep; these could now be purchased, wherewith to form at night a protection from the frost: here, too, hopes were held out to us of doles of flour or mealie meal—the flour of maize—in order to eke out the daily portion of newly slaughtered flesh, which, as our sole article of food, was by now well-nigh intolerable.

We entered the town: the two Belfast Squadrons were conducted to the school-house, and here they were quartered for the night under a guard; to the Dublin Squadron and the Duke of Cambridge's Own, the town-hall and its precincts were assigned, but most of us elected to sleep, as heretofore, under the air of heaven. Next day was Monday, June 4; our party, escort and prisoners as well, was now under the jurisdiction of the Landdrost or Vrederegter of Reitz—a tall, long-bearded Boer, Rossouw by name.
It was well-known that many of us were possessed of money; and, in response to a request from the storekeepers of the town, Landdrost Rossouw now ordained that the prisoners were to remain in Reitz until the following morning, Tuesday, at daybreak. Monday was to be a day of rest, during which we were to be permitted to spend as much money as we could afford in the stores of his village. Biscuits at two shillings a pound, jam at a half-crown a tin, candles at ninepence apiece, articles of clothing on corresponding scales of profit, were sold to those of us who could afford to buy at these famine prices.

I have told above how, upon the march, a Dutch vrouw had dealt with us in the sale of bread and butter. Here, in Reitz, we learned again how close an inmate of the Boer home the gift of charity may be. Landdrost Rossouw had made arrangements for the distribution from the Free State Stores at Reitz of doles of flour to the British prisoners: cakes of dough fried in mutton fat were luxuries to us beyond compare. To the Landdrost there now came a burgher and his wife, who lived within the town and owned in it a bakery; they promised, if a sack of the flour belonging to the Orange Free State Government were handed over to them, that they would bake therefrom a supply of loaves for the prisoners. The pair were
given half a sack of meal, and from this they baked
that night no less than seventy loaves of bread—
the size of which may well be judged. These they
carried next morning to where the British prisoners
were interned, and here demanded for each small loaf
three shillings from a soldier's purse.

Meanwhile it had become plain, both to our
colonel and to the Landdrost of the town, that a con-
siderable number of the prisoners, some from the con-
dition of their wounds which had now gone undressed
for several days, others from illness, chiefly dysentery
and enteric fever, were quite unable to march
further. We had now no surgeon left: surgeon and
orderly both had been left in charge of the other
casualties at Lindley. Colonel Spragge had some-
how learned that I was a student of medicine of
three years standing. He sent for me, and he asked
me to select such of the prisoners as I deemed unfit
to march: to remain behind with them at Reitz,
and there to do my best to treat their various ail-
ments. He told me that the Landdrost had given
his consent to this course, and that an empty house
would be placed at my disposal as a temporary
hospital. It was a responsible position to which I
was now called, and one which I hesitated to accept:
but the colonel was urgent in his request, our sick
waggons were full to overflowing, several of the men were in a desperate plight, and at last, with mis-givings which I was careful to conceal, I consented to take up for the time the duties of a surgeon.

In my new rôle, as medical officer to the Battalion, I now held a sick-parade of those who deemed themselves unfit to march beyond the town—a goodly number these, including some in whose case the wish to remain behind was father to their physical indisposition. The diagnosis of inability to march due to wounds or dysentery was easy enough; and, for the separation of the fever cases, I succeeded in obtaining from the Landdrost a clinical thermometer. It was with a heavy heart that next day I watched the Battalion march out of Reitz, leaving me behind in charge of twenty-four patients whom I had marked unfit to travel further. The house which was now to play the part of temporary military hospital was a single-storey, four-roomed, newly-erected building, covered with a galvanised iron roof; it contained three bedsteads with mattresses, and these I assigned forthwith to my three worst cases of enteric fever: the remaining twenty-one patients 'dossed down,' as the saying went, upon the floors. I had now to make arrangements for a supply of food for my hospital: I went to the Land-
drost's house, was ushered in by his vrouw, and explained to him the needs of my patients. He had apparently forgotten the existence of my men, but he consented to do what he could to feed them, and together we started on a round of visits to several houses in the town. The Landdrost could speak English well, and acted as my interpreter to the many Dutch vrouws on whom we called as prospective caterers to the hospital. These ladies, in almost every case, seemed to pay but little regard to the offers which the Landdrost made, on behalf of the Free State Government, to pay them for supplying food to sick and wounded British soldiers; upon me they looked with ill-disguised suspicion. Struggling against this inimical disposition on the part of phlegmatic Boer vrouws in my effort to secure food for the hospital; rummaging for medicines and dressings in a small surgery, owned by an English doctor who had left the town on the outbreak of the war; discharging between whiles the duties of surgeon, nurse, and orderly for the sick and wounded; I found during the next few days that my position was by no means an enviable one: nor would the Landdrost permit me, even at the expense of my own pocket, to hire a Kaffir boy to discharge the menial duties of the house. 'Some of your men,' said he,
'might send him with information to the British.' In a hospital consisting of nothing but four bare rooms, I was now fated to discharge unaided the several rôles of surgeon, nurse, orderly, and sanitary engineer, until such time as some of my men should be well enough to help me. Never had surgeon better cause for unremitting care of patients. With drugs and dressings I was well supplied; an English doctor had hurriedly left the town upon the outbreak of the war; to his house I had been directed, and here I found many familiar preparations of which I understood the use. Food, such as I required for the sick and wounded, was brought by Kaffir servants three times a day from a Boer farmhouse near at hand, and under these circumstances we settled down to await the time when the British forces should stretch out an arm to this far corner of the Orange Free State.

Upon the first night of our prison life, I had chosen to sleep outside the hospital upon the ground, for fear lest I myself should contract some illness from those within. I was awakened in the morning by a British bugle call most accurately sounded on a hill above the town: I leaped up in joyful wonderment, 'By heaven! that's Methuen! we're relieved already.' I ran forward to where the Boer guard was standing: to my surprise
the man turned about to see that no one was observing him, and then shook me warmly by the hand. He told me he was a Yorkshireman, that all the property he owned was in Reitz, and that in order to retain it he had been compelled to become a burgher of the Orange Free State. 'Here I am,' he said, 'an Englishman and guard over my own countrymen in an enemy's land: but, prisoners and all as you were, I and my wife—she came out with me to Africa fifteen years ago from England—were heart-glad to see you. We've been now for eight months shut up among these Dutchmen, and never a letter or paper from home all the time.' I was, however, thinking of that bugle-call, with visions of Methuen's column in possession of the town; so I asked my friend the Yorkshireman if he had not heard just now a British bugle-call on yonder hill. 'Oh, yes,' he said, 'that's young De Langer, who got the Suffolks into the trap by blowing his false "retire" call at Colesberg; however, thank God, the British got two bullets into him since, and he's been here at home curing his wounds for the last two months: but he keeps practising those bugle-calls every day.'

So this was our relief! I turned on my heel, and went off in search of milk for my fever patients'
breakfast. No supplies had been brought into the village for many months; Reitz lay fifty miles by road from the nearest railway-town, Heilbron, and even there no trains had been running for more than half a year. Sugar was at Reitz three shillings a pound, a small loaf of bread sold for a shilling, and matches cost a penny a-piece. Fortunately for the men suffering from fever, there was a good supply of milk, and of this we could obtain a pint for sixpence; eggs also were easily procurable. Boer tea, made from a leaf grown chiefly in Natal, was now the only drink, a bitter but wholesome beverage.

That Wednesday evening a Cape cart drove into the town, carrying two men sent back to Reitz from the Battalion: the one had fainted away with dysentery, the right foot of the other had been run over by one of the heavy bullock-waggons. But the roll of my patients was not yet half completed. Almost every day following, one or more prisoners, usually wounded, were brought in to my house at Reitz: and this soon became not only a hospital but a prison also. Typical of the manner in which these 'details' fell into Boer hands was the case of two members of the Imperial Yeomanry Corps of Scouts, both of whom were captured near Lindley and sent on by their captors to me at Reitz. Three of this
corps had been scouting in advance of a convoy, consisting of two traction engines and many waggons en route from Kroonstad to Lindley, by the same road over which our Battalion had marched some days previously. The convoy was protected by an escort of 1,500 men and four shrapnel-firing guns. All went well till within eight miles of Lindley; when, on a sudden, the scouts observed a crowd of mounted Boers upon the kopjes just in front. They wheeled about their horses in order to return and warn the convoy, now a mile or two in rear, of the presence of the enemy; but as they did so, the Boers opened fire from the nearest hill. One of the scouts fell from his saddle, wounded through the head; a second had his horse shot under him; the third, as he dismounted in order to help his wounded and now dying comrade, had a portion of his cheek carried away by a Mauser bullet. The men had fulfilled their duty as scouts; they had drawn the Boer fire, and thereby warned the convoy and its escort of their impending danger. A number of Boers now rode up to the two scouts who remained, ordered them to leave their dying comrade as he lay, and threatened them with instant death should they refuse to mount two spare horses and come away as prisoners of war—and that quickly, before the
British escort should come up. The scouts had no choice but to obey. They mounted the Boer ponies, were brought away at a hand-gallop across four or five miles of veldt, then were stripped of all that they possessed, and were sent on to Reitz upon a waggon. Arriving three days later, they became inmates of my hospital; and, for the first time since his injury, the wounded man was dressed. By such incidents as these my roll of patients was almost daily swelled, so that before Saturday, June 9, there were added to my Yeomanry casualties, a corporal and sapper of the Royal Engineers, a R.A. bombardier, a private of the Highland Light Infantry, a sergeant-major of the C.I.V., a Seaforth Highlander, and, most welcome of all to me, an R.A.M.C. private—a cheery little Welshman, fortunately unwounded, and therefore available for duty as my assistant. The bombardier was one of those men who possess the happy faculty of making themselves at home in whatever company or circumstances they may be found, and at the same time of marking themselves out by ready speech and manner as leading spirits among their companions. I well remember the afternoon upon which this man was brought in a prisoner to my hospital. The newcomer jumped off the bullock waggon on which he had been carried,
deposited his small bundle of kit upon the ground, and became at once the centre of a group formed by the other prisoners. I then overheard a cockney voice recounting the experiences of its owner, in a vein which plainly showed the nature of this latest addition to our number. 'Wot cheer, soldiers?' he began at once. 'Ow goes it? I've just come in from three days lyin' about in that there laager of Christiaan De Wet's. Aye, and they had two of the guns belonging to my own battery there; those wot they took from us at Sanna's Post. I spent my three days watching for a chance to get at them 'ere guns, to see if I could just take out one screw—I knew exactly where to find it. If I could 'ave got out that 'ere screw, the next charge in that 'ere gun it would n't 'ave gone out of the muzzle, it would 'ave come out of the breech. 'Owever the Boers kept too close an eye on me, and 'ere I ham.'

The man was an unwounded prisoner, and some days later I assigned to him and the R. E. corporal the duty of apportioning the rations for the hospital. A small supply of butter was sent down to us twice a day from the farmhouse, for those who from weakness stood in need of this article of diet. Such are the careless and uncleanly methods of the Boer women that the butter which they make is almost
always sour and unpalatable, and that which came each day to the Reitz hospital smelt in every degree of rancidness. Bad as the butter was, it seemed to us a luxury, and to the bombardier the duty fell of making out the butter rations for the patients. This work formed a standing joke between himself and the corporal. 'Well, Sam,' the latter would say to the bombardier as he wielded his knife above the unsavoury mess, 'Wot rank 's the butter this morn-ing?' 'It 's a full sergeant to-day, Jim,' the gunner would reply; or at times he might assign to it some lower grade. The climax was, however, reached on one particular morning, when, without replying to the corporal's usual query, our friend carried the butter to a tall wooden post which stood close by, set the plate thereon, and gravely gave it the salute he might have offered to his colonel.

I have said that Reitz boasted of a church; and on the afternoon of Saturday, June 9, my hospital was visited by the parson, or, as he is styled in that country, the Predicant of the town. He was a fat, well-to-do looking Dutchman, who spoke English well: he entered the hospital with an air of proprietorship over it and its inhabitants, and his was the first example of an overbearing spirit I had yet met with among our enemies. The Dutch predicants
had made themselves notorious for bitter hostility to the British at the outset of the war; and, as we afterwards learned from one or two English residents in the town, our friend Predicant Viljoen of Reitz had proved himself no exception to the rule. Previous to the war he had been in the habit, each Sunday, of conducting a service in English for the British residents in Reitz and neighbourhood; but, on the outbreak of hostilities, these services had been abruptly broken off. The predicant had preached to his Dutch congregation the destruction of the British, and had added to his sermon a weekly prayer that every soldier landed in South Africa might perish either by disease or by Boer bullets; while, in order to hasten the accomplishment of this unhallowed invocation, the predicant had himself applied for a Free State Government rifle, and made diligent practice with the same in his own back-garden.

Whatever may have been his motive upon this Saturday afternoon, he so far relented as to invite any of my men, who might be willing and able, to attend a service which he offered to hold for them in the village school-house upon the following evening. That night it was arranged that fourteen men, out of a total of about thirty-one now in the house, should form upon the next day the Hospital Church
Parade. On Sunday morning the utmost care was spent in making old and ragged tunics look as new as possible, boots were freshly greased, and upon those who needed such adornments I applied new bandages. I then marched off the parade in double files, and headed by a Boer guard, to the village school-house: we were not, as I have said, dignified by admission to the church.

The predicant brought with him his wife, and she led the voices in the hymns which formed the greater part of the service. Just as the service began, the door of the school-house opened, and a long line of men and women entered the building, much to the surprise of the predicant, who turned upon the newcomers a decidedly ill-favoured glance. News of the service for the British prisoners had spread through the village, and the long-neglected English residents had now come uninvited to take part in it. The lesson chosen for the occasion by Predicant Viljoen, was that part of the New Testament which deals with the fortunes of 'a certain nobleman who went into a far country to get himself a kingdom': the appropriateness of these words startled us, and we wondered what the sermon would unfold. The latter was, however, preached without a text, and was at once temperate, impersonal, and short.
That same Sunday evening, June 10, President Steyn, or, as we called him, the Fliegende Holländer, arrived with his suite at Reitz. He drove into the town in a Cape cart drawn by six grey Boer ponies, and went straight to Landdrost Rossouw’s house, where he stayed the night. The President was a tall, broad-shouldered man, well over six feet in height, the appearance of unusual size being increased in effect by a long black beard. His proportions were, however, at this time, too portly to give one the idea of a man who had been actively engaged on military service. He was, moreover, clad in a long frock coat of quite an English cut, and a tall hat gave him an appearance which was at once peaceable, European, and civilian. ‘Surely,’ we said to one another, ‘he must be getting ready to be captured!’ That these habiliments were not merely the President’s ‘Sunday best’ was proved next day when he visited my hospital in the same tenue. He entered the house in company with the ‘Hoofdambulance,’ or principal medical officer of the Armies of the two Republics, a surgeon, Ramsbotham by name, who had been until the war in practice at Johannesburg. The world is a small place: this man had taken his diploma at the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin. Steyn
immediately asked to see the list of my patients: he looked through it, and said at once, 'I see, doctor, that you have written down a number of your men as suffering from dysentery.' 'Now,' he added, 'I have just returned from a tour round all the Boer laagers, and none of our burghers suffer from that disease at this time of year. How do you explain so many cases in a small force such as yours?' I was in doubt how to address this august personage, whom my men had all been careful to salute upon his arrival at the hospital. Should he be 'Your Majesty,' 'Your Excellency,' or simply 'Sir'? I fell back upon the form of address which is racy of the Irish soil, and by which in that country prince and peasant are alike invoked. 'Your Honour!' I replied, standing to attention, 'My explanation is this. When your burghers made us prisoners at Lindley, you took away from us all our water-bottles, with the result that we were prevented from carrying with us upon the march any supply of pure water. Our men got mad with thirst upon the march, and drank on hands and knees from every stagnant pool and puddle between this and Lindley: Your Honour doubtless is aware that there is only one running stream between the two towns. This is, I think,
a ready explanation of my men's condition.' The Boer President bit his lip, and changed the subject. He asked me to dress the hand of his printer, who, he told me, had had the misfortune to lacerate two of his fingers in the Free State printing press at Vrede three days before. This I promised to do, if the man would come down to me, and with that the visit of President Steyn to my hospital was ended. That day and the next I dressed the hand of the Orange Free State printer: the man told me that he had sustained this injury while printing off copies of a proclamation by which President Steyn declared the town of Vrede to be his capital and seat of government: and that, upon the following day, he and his master were to start for the town of Bethlehem. Here was an opportunity not to be missed. I told the man, after the operation of dressing his hand was finished, to wait a minute while I should write a note. I sat down and wrote upon a slip of paper:—

'To Surgical Attendance upon M. Douwes, Printer to the Orange Free State Government:—
One Guinea (1l. 1s. 0d.)

Maurice FitzGibbon,
Acting-Surgeon, 13th Battalion I.Y.
This I put into an envelope addressed to the President himself, placed it in the printer's uninjured hand, and requested him to be the bearer of it to the Landdrost's house. Little did I expect to see the man again; but in half an hour he returned, and handed me with thanks a British sovereign and a Paul Kruger shilling.

The photograph of my hospital, in this little out-of-the-way town of the Orange Free State, was being taken on the afternoon when Steyn made his entry into Reitz. The road by which he came lay past the door of the house, and the President saw us British prisoners of war standing between our guards in order to be photographed by an English storekeeper, a resident in the town. Steyn stopped his carriage, spoke angrily to the Boer guards, and ended by ordering the photographer to destroy his plate. The latter had fortunately already taken two negatives: he satisfied the irate President's wishes by destroying one of these; from the other the photograph which I still possess was reproduced. The following day a number of waggons composing a German ambulance (one of the many which had assisted the Boer armies throughout the war) arrived at Reitz, upon its way to join De Wet, who was now at Bethlehem. Two of the German doctors attached
to it entered my hospital just as I was engaged in dressing my patients' wounds. The Germans were splendidly accoutred, in corduroy pea-jackets, breeches, and black shining gaiters; they were fat and well-liking, and their red faces and fair beards were surmounted by flat, pork-pie-shaped German caps, the peaks of which glistened with the embroidered arms and lettering of the Z.A.R. They made themselves at home at once, and one of them who spoke English well asked permission for himself and his companion to watch me at my work, in order that they might have an opportunity of seeing my patients' wounds. I willingly assented; they seated themselves in my surgery, and the one who had already spoken again addressed me.

'You belong, do you not,' he said, 'to England's Imperial Yeomanry?'

'To that part of it,' I answered, 'which comes from Ireland.'

'How did England raise her Yeomanry?' the German asked me next.

I happened at the moment to be dressing a trooper of the Duke of Cambridge's Squadron: he had a shell wound on his scalp. This man provided me with a ready answer to the German's question.

'Oh!' I replied, 'it was not at all a difficult
matter. Here is one of the Yeomen; this man volunteered for service, paid one hundred and thirty pounds down, to find his own horse, outfit, and passage to South Africa, and refused to take his pay.'

The German stood up from his chair in astonishment. 'All I can say,' he answered, 'is, that you are the only nation in the world who could have found such men.'

On June 19, being the only doctor within fifty miles, I was called upon at an early hour in the morning to assist at the birth of what proved to be a Boer son and heir. All went well, but unfortunately there was now nothing left in the town wherein to drink health, wealth, and prosperity to the new arrival. My fee, the only one which I would accept, was an unusual one, to wit—the promise of a home-made tallow candle to be sent each evening to the hospital during the remainder of my stay in Reitz, a remuneration not to be despised, now that all other candles were exhausted, when paraffin oil cost fifteen shillings a gallon, and at a time of year when the nights were twelve hours long.

Two days later, my roll of patients reached its maximum: Christiaan De Wet had captured a whole battalion of Derbyshire Militia upon their post, a bridge where the main railway crosses the Rhenoster
River. True it was, that their wounded had been left for treatment by the staff of a hospital train which had arrived at the spot soon after the line was cut; but the rest of the Battalion had been robbed of all that they possessed, coats as well as blankets, marched for three days and nights across the veldt without a screed, and finally were herded upon a farm two miles from Reitz. Needless to say, dysentery and enteric once again told their tale, and filled the cup of my anxiety to the brim—forty more cases were now placed under my care in the village school-house.

The story of their capture as told by one of their officers, who also came to me for treatment, was a strange one indeed, and it gives some idea of the difficulties and dangers with which the Imperial Military Railway was at this time beset.

The 4th Battalion of the Derbyshire Regiment had arrived late on an afternoon in the beginning of June at Roodewal Station, there to take over the duties of guard and picket upon the station itself, and also upon a bridge by which, at a distance of one mile and a half from Roodewal siding, the Rhenoster river was crossed by the line of railway. The men arrived, to find that the Battalion which they had come to relieve of this duty had already
travelled north: night was just about to fall, and
the colonel of the Derbys had no person from whom
to gain information about his new post, save the
railway station-master. This man, a Dutchman,
was at the time in the pay of De Wet. The latter
had given the official full directions as to what he
was to tell the British colonel, that there were no
Boers within a hundred miles, and that the entire
district was now completely pacified; the real truth
being that Christiaan De Wet himself, with three
Free State commandoes and several guns, was at
the time preparing to effect at this very spot one of
the most serious ruptures which the British lines of
communication sustained during the whole course
of the war.

Acting upon the information supplied to him
by the station-master at Roodewal, the colonel of
the Derbys left one of his companies posted at
the siding; with the remainder he proceeded
along the line of railway to take up the more
important position guarding the bridge across
Rhenostert Spruit. There was a large kop standing
about half a mile to westward of the railway, and to
this a picket—the only outpost deemed to be neces-
sary—was despatched. That picket went out never
to return: it was surprised and captured without
firing a shot. Meanwhile the Battalion pitched their tents hard by the bridge, the ordinary guards were posted, and the men turned in. Next morning, as soon as the ‘Reveille’ call was sounded, and when the men began to come out of their tents, the whole place, as my informant now described it, became at once ‘a sheet of lead,’ and the colonel himself was one of the first to fall a victim to the Boer fire, which chiefly came from the very kop whither the British picket had overnight been sent. All was now confusion in the Battalion’s lines; no orders were given, and the men huddled together under the scanty cover afforded by the line of railway. From behind this low embankment an irregular and unorganised reply was made to the Boers upon the westward kop; some men, indeed, lay down inside their tents, thinking thus to escape the fire of the enemy. Meanwhile, a second commando took in rear those of the Battalion who were lying in the railway cutting; and, in order to still further expedite the issue, De Wet now brought into play upon them two quick-firing shrapnel guns. Thirty-six men were killed, many more were wounded, and within an hour and a half of the time when the first shot was fired, the 4th (Militia) Battalion of the Derbyshire Regiment found themselves prisoners
of war. The railway line was then blown up with dynamite, over a distance extending for a mile on either side of Rhenoster bridge; Roodewal Station fell into the hands of the Boers, who now succeeded in capturing, as they arrived one after the other at the siding, three trains laden with British stores. Needless to say, the stationmaster had been careful to prevent any news of De Wet's arrival from passing along the wire to the nearest British post. Fortunately for the wounded, there soon arrived upon the scene a Red Cross train, the staff of which now found an unexpected task awaiting them. The rest of the Battalion was hurried off upon a three days march across the veldt to Reitz, which town had now become, as I have shown, the Free State 'dumping ground' for prisoners. They fared upon their march as we had fared before them; and, on arrival at my hospital, they contributed to its roll of patients a quota of over forty men; among them one who was destined to be my first and only death. The poor fellow came in to me with a temperature of 105°; that night I found him crawling about upon the floor of the room in which he lay, looking, as he told me, for the British lines. Two days later we buried him at the northern side
of the cemetery at Reitz; one of his comrades so advised, 'the side nearest to Pretoria.'

During the whole period of our life at Reitz we were in complete ignorance of the events of the war, hearing only such fabrications as were published in the official telegrams of the Free State Government, which were issued with one object only—pour encourager les autres. Almost every day the village bell clanged out to announce to the burghers that one of these statements had been posted at the door of the Landdrost's court, to which building the telegraph wire of the Free State ran. The following were some of the public notices actually posted in the names of the Presidents of the two Republics, and round which eager groups of villagers used to congregate at the summons of the bell:

'The British have reached Pretoria, but their soldiers are falling dead from starvation in the streets, as Commandant De Wet has succeeded in cutting the British lines of communication at Roodewal.'

Another ran as follows:

'A great war has broken out between Russia and Japan. England is now withdrawing her troops from Africa in order to save her possessions in the East.'
Another message, which we really feared might be true, from the colour given to it by its latter part, was posted towards the end of June:

' The Queen of England is dead. A British train was seen leaving Kroonstad yesterday draped in black from the guard's van to the engine.'

In spite of all, upon July 2, well-defined reports began to circulate in Reitz that a large British force was approaching the town from the direction of the town of Frankfort; but, in order to counteract these, the last telegram which arrived from the latter town, before the British occupation of Frankfort cut off communication with our village, was publicly announced as follows:—

'The last body of rooineks was yesterday driven back across the Vaal River. The Z.A.R. is now once more in the hands of the burghers.'

Such were the means devised, in a country where all tidings, bad as well as good, travel slowly, to encourage the Boers of the Free State to remain upon commando; but from time to time news reached us from De Wet's laager, which lay midway between our town and Bethlehem, that, in spite of telegraphic triumphs, the sjambok had there fallen upon the shoulders of many a burgher who had tried to escape from the Boer lines; and from day
to day we heard from British friends how our convoys had safely reached their destinations at Lindley, Heilbron, and other towns, in spite of Boer commandants and their commandos.

In the photograph of my hospital at Reitz, there is seen seated in the centre of the group, the wife of a storekeeper in the village, an Englishwoman by name, Mrs. Latter. Her house stood hard by the hospital, and many a cup of chicken broth, and many a dish of custard she carried over for my patients; and so it was that when this photograph was taken, I induced her to make for herself a red-cross badge and to sit among us in the character of a nursing sister.
CHAPTER VII

RELIEF

All day long on Thursday, July 5, and throughout the following day, parties of mounted Boers were seen riding at hand-gallop through our village and across the surrounding veldt. They hurried off upon the road which led to Bethlehem. Something was in the air. On Friday afternoon one of the British residents came to us with the news that Ian Hamilton's division, forty-three thousand strong, would bivouac that night six hours march from Reitz: that relief would come to us next day.

The Landdrost came down that Friday night to look upon his prisoners for the last time. We betrayed no knowledge of our coming fortunes, nor did he speak directly of the British advance; but one remark which he let fall assured us that he no longer regarded us as prisoners of war. He was standing outside the hospital just as the sun was setting in
all the glory of the African evening, the veldt glistening beneath a clear and cloudless sky. Our minds were full of the relief which we awaited on the morrow, but we conversed on other subjects with the man who represented for us the nation whose prisoners we still remained. The talk had turned upon the Free State climate. 'Ah, yes,' said Landdrost Rossouw, with the first note of sadness in his voice, 'that is the one thing now you cannot take from us.' It was the first admission we had heard from Boer lips in Reitz that ours was the conquering side. Another was yet to come. Next morning before daybreak I was aroused from sleep by a hand laid upon my shoulder as I lay wrapped in my blanket outside the hospital. I looked up and saw the face of Predicant Viljoen leaning over me. I jumped up to greet him, and saw that he had come down from his house still wearing upon his feet a pair of bedroom slippers. 'Doctor,' he said, in hurried speech, 'I want your advice. Your people will take this town to-day before twelve o'clock. My ponies stand now at my house ready inspanned: shall I go or shall I stay? I am in fear that the British will send me from my land.'

The tables were turned indeed, when I, a prisoner, was thus appealed to for advice by the
man who a few months before had prayed from the pulpit of his church for the destruction of the British Army. I counselled the predicant to remain in Reitz and have no fear: his cloth I told him would protect him, provided, I said—thinking the while of that rifle practice in his back-garden—that none could prove that he had played the part of a combatant. 'You must remain,' I added, 'for, if you go, it will be said that a guilty conscience made you fly: you can prove by staying that you have no fear.' My advice decided the predicant to remain in Reitz, and await the arrival of the British. That day, soon after eleven o'clock, we caught sight of British cavalry advancing across the veldt towards the town. Who can describe our feelings when the first trooper of Ian Hamilton's division, a West Australian scout, rode in at the entrance of the village? Horse and man were well-nigh pulled to pieces, and shouts of 'Hurrah for Ireland' filled the air. Some half-hour earlier we had disarmed our guards; the rifle and bandolier which one of them had carried now hangs upon the wall above me as I write.

Not long after, General Broadwood, with his staff, commanding the Cavalry Brigade of Ian Hamilton's Division, reined up at the door of my hospital.
Many questions were now put to me—Who we were? How fortune had come to leave us in this small Free State town? What had our treatment been? In what direction had the Boers gone; and what appeared to be their strength? All that day, troops guns and bullock waggons, in four or five unbroken streams, kept pouring in: and darkness had fallen before the last of Ian Hamilton's forty-three thousand men, cavalry, infantry, and artillery, with all their stores, were camped in and around the little village. We had seen the last of our life as prisoners in the hands of the Boers.

Along with the ambulances of the Cavalry Brigade, there arrived the Principal Medical Officer of the Division. He came at once to my hospital, inspected all my patients, most of whom were now completely well: for those who had not yet recovered, the relief of that day proved a remedy more potent than could be found in any medicine chest.

The P.M.O. of Ian Hamilton's Division, having completed the examination of my patients, complimented me upon their condition; and, after making a searching enquiry into the treatment which I had adopted, bade me consider myself appointed to the rank and title of Acting-Surgeon. He then told me that he and his staff expected to
remain at Reitz some days: and asked me to direct him to some rooms in the village which he might appropriate as quarters for himself. I knew of a house not far distant, in which lodgings had been let by the owner to Boer farmers, who came from time to time on business to the town: the proprietor of this lodging-house had made no secret of his hatred towards the British, and some days before he had left the town to rejoin De Wet's commandoes. To this house I now conducted the P.M.O.; we entered it without further ceremony, and in a few minutes a card with his name upon it was pinned against the door of a well-furnished sitting room, from which there opened off a bedroom, clean, perfectly equipped, and ready for immediate occupation. 'This,' said the colonel as he removed his coat, 'is all right.' 'Now,' he added, as he pulled out the drawer of a table standing in the room, 'you would not guess what I am going to look for first. I will give you three guesses.' I suggested soap, candles, matches, and other things the need for which had been sorely felt upon my own marches. 'Oh! not at all,' broke in the colonel, 'I'm just going to try to turn up some Free State stamps for my little girl at home.' 'And,' he continued, 'as you've shown me the diggings, you shall go halves with me in anything
we find.' We pulled out several drawers, and many stamps and postcards issued by both Republics came to light; but of still greater interest was a letter, written in German characters, which I found in the course of our search. The letter was a four-page one, in a closely written, pencil, hand: many such I had composed myself during the last few months, and the superscription at its head, 'Laager bei Colesberg,' was unnecessary to tell me that the document now in my hand was a letter written at the Boer front. I give below a translation of this interesting sidelight upon one of the many crucial periods of the South African Campaign—to wit, the crisis during which General French was held for many weeks at bay in Northern Cape Colony.

Laager near Colesberg, December 7, 1899.

DEAR MR. NEIZEL,—I received your kind letter of November 28 yesterday, and enjoyed it very much. Why we had to come to this place from Natal so suddenly is a mystery to me. First we were to have gone to Belmont, now they say instead to De Aar. Yesterday I was fortunate enough to get a Cape 'Argus' of November 31, and found besides others the following list of distinguished people killed and wounded in action:—
Prince Hohenlohe Langenberg, seriously; the Prince of Teck, seriously; Count de Gleichen, dead; and many more.

The English papers are much tamer now, and do not write any more with contempt, as before, of the burghers of the Republics. Magnificent! two small countries which were not known twelve years ago in Europe declare war against the powerful British Empire, and have been so far, you cannot say otherwise, successful. The falling back of the burghers after Belmont is nothing: there were only one thousand against twelve thousand, although according to the Cape Town papers there were, of course, ten thousand burghers.

I wish from the bottom of my heart the whole thing was over. I am sick of this pig's living (schweinleben).

As I hear from people who are getting European papers, all European nations, except of course England, are sympathising with us. In the Grand Opera in Paris they one night interrupted the performance and played the Transvaal Volkslied. What more could you wish? I only wish the Powers would interfere and help us to end this very unfair war.

Kindly remember me to my children, I have not
time to write more to-day. I do not know whether you can read what I have scribbled; you must excuse bad writing here.

With best greetings,

Yours,

P. Kamam.

Best greetings to Brucks; I hope he pays his rent regularly.

The postscript is characteristic. The letter was written by the owner of this lodging-house to the man who, during his absence, was looking after the establishment. Mr. Brucks was a lodger.

It may seem perhaps a strange coincidence that some weeks later the Duchess of Teck, to whom I showed this Boer letter at the Government House in Cape Town, should have read therein her husband's name.

On Sunday morning, July 8, I said goodbye to Reitz. I had been charged with the duty of accompanying, as Acting-Surgeon, a convoy of sick and wounded bound for Heilbron, a town lying fifty miles from Reitz, and situated upon the Imperial Military Railway. I carried with me orders for the transfer of all my Yeomanry patients to the
hospital at Deelfontein—a journey of three more days by rail to Northern Cape Colony.

With a convoy of four hundred empty bullock-waggons, we started that Sunday morning, July 8, on what proved for many of us our journey home. An escort of cavalry, infantry, and guns accompanied the waggons; and three days later we reached Heilbron unopposed. On Saturday, July 14, I entrained my Yeoman patients at the Heilbron station. The train consisted of eighteen coal trucks one covered waggon, and a guard's van. On all such trains the latter was graded as first class for officers; and in company with the railway guard that day there travelled Captain Ainsworth of the D.L.I., and the Acting-Surgeon of the Thirteenth Battalion, Imperial Yeomanry. The one covered waggon had been invaded by a crowd of Kaffir teamsters, and it looked at first as if my patients would have to stow themselves upon the coal trucks. I sought out, however, the railway staff officer, explained to him that of my men some were sick and others were wounded, and I requested him to oust the niggers from the covered van in order that they might give place to the invalided Europeans. I was careful to point out, as a further reason for the change, the fact that upon swarthy skins the coal dust would
not show. This decided the matter, and for the first part of our long journey, the run which was to end at Bloemfontein once more, my men travelled in the luxurious accommodation which the covered cattle van afforded. As for myself and the officer who shared with me the company of the railway guard, we slept that night upon a couch which seemed, to me at all events, the softest bed on which I had ever lain—two dozen sacks of soldiers’ letters. Next day the train ran into Kroonstad. We were once again on ground which we had already trod, and amid scenes in which we moved once more unnoticed units in one great army of occupation. These scenes had lost for us their novelty. They have already been described in countless books.

Our chapter in the history of the Boer war was closed; we were now ‘details’ belonging to a battalion still, indeed, in Boer hands, but to whose relief the British Army was daily passing on unchecked.

Two days later my duty had been discharged, my patients were entered on the roll of the Imperial Yeomanry Hospital at Deelfontein, and I myself was unattached and free. For the first time since I had left Ireland I felt sick—not a serious complaint, however, simply homesickness.
A few more days passed and I left the Cape Town docks, second in charge of three hundred sick and wounded soldiers, on board a hospital transport homeward bound.

On Monday, August 27, the sirens of the shipping in Southampton Water were sounding greetings to our transport as she glided towards the docks; next day I was seated in the carriage of a train for
APPENDIX

SOME EXTRACTS FROM MY DIARY

June 14 at Reitz, O.R.C.—Landdrost Rossouw to-day requested me to treat a small child of a Boer for a glandular swelling in the neck. There is now no medical man within forty miles of this town. The child, the child’s father, mother, and an interpreter all drove up together to my hospital in a Cape cart. In reply to one of my questions, the mother told me that she had been in the habit of giving the child maizena to eat ever since it was four months old. I then asked her if it was her first child. She said she had four others. I asked her if she had given them also solid food at such an early age. She said she had done so. I then asked her if all the Boer ladies acted on similar lines as regards their children. She again said, ‘Ya.’ I told her that in that case it was a wonder that the British had found any Boers at all in the country.

July 2 at Reitz, O.R.C.—Two days ago one of my cases became completely delirious. The poor fellow insisted on trying to crawl about on hands and knees looking, as he said, for the British lines. This necessi-
tated my placing twelve men in charge of him. They were, of course, ill themselves, and each relieved another at intervals of an hour. Next day, however, I succeeded in finding some morphia, and a half-grain dose proved a means of securing a good night's rest for my patient the following evening. I have earned undying fame as a medicine man among the Kaffir population. A native girl was suffering from a very bad toothache. I could not find a forceps or even a pair of pincers anywhere. However, I painted on her gum a small quantity of carbolic acid, which gave her immediate relief, and the first night’s rest for a week. All the Kaffirs immediately wanted me to give them the bottle which, as they said, 'made their teeth young again.'

July 11 at Heilbron, O.R.C.—When the Principal Medical Officer of Hunter’s Division—an Australian surgeon, by the way—saw my signature with ‘Trinity College, Dublin’ following it, he at once cried out to his second-in-command, ‘Hello! here’s another. Why, what on earth size is Trinity College, Dublin? I don’t believe I’ve been in nine hospitals out of ten out here that I haven’t found a Trinity College, Dublin man in it in some capacity or another! ’ I received orders that night to start next day for Heilbron in charge of a sick convoy. A servant and an orderly were now assigned to me, a need of assistance which I could well appreciate after seven weeks of unaided work.

There were more than four hundred empty wagons also in this convoy; these had been unloaded at Beitz, and the sight presented by even this small convoy, as
APPENDIX

Convoys went in Africa at this time, can be imagined, when each waggon was drawn by the Government regulation allowance of sixteen bullocks. On occasions when spruits had to be crossed, one waggon at a time, a period of over two hours was occupied in transit by this convoy, and from this fact can be judged the reason of the apparent slowness of the British advance from Cape Colony to Pretoria.

July 25 at Cape Town.—I arrived at the Imperial Yeomanry Base Hospital, Deelfontein, on Thursday last, with my Yeomanry details of sick and wounded from Beitz. These included a former Rugby Football International fullback for Ireland, Trooper M., of the 54th Belfast Squadron, who is blessed with the finest counter-tenor voice I have ever heard. That evening, after mess, I asked the Commandant's permission to introduce this man to the company. Trooper M. came in, sat down to the piano, and sang for us 'Kathleen Mavourneen,' 'Asthore,' and other songs. Never have I seen singing produce such an effect on any audience as did these songs under the conditions in which they were sung that night. This same evening I obtained my pass for Cape Town, and determined to leave by the next train, which happened to be the Cape Mail, passing Deelfontein at 5.30 a.m. The Commandant very kindly offered me a bed up at the Hospital, which stands about half a mile from the railway. In order, however, to ensure catching the train, and also to obviate the necessity of sleeping between sheets in my ordinary clothes (I had not been out of my riding breeches, save for the purpose of washing
either them or myself, day or night for three months), I elected to sleep down at the railway station under the ægis of the R.S.O., who 'slings his hook' in the erstwhile 'Ladies Waiting Room.'

The station-master who had promised to awaken me forgot to do so, and I missed the mail; however, by good luck, just after I had waked and washed, a supply train came along bound for Cape Town, and better still it had one of the Transvaal second-class carriages attached to it. This vehicle had been used for conveying burghers to the seat of war, and numerous printed notices in the Dutch language were pinned upon its sides. One of these, which I now possess, literally translated runs as follows:—

Earnest Warning.

WHEREAS, notwithstanding it is strictly forbidden by his Excellency the Commandant-General and other officers, it continually happens that burghers going on commando shoot out of the trains, now it is hereby made known that shooting out of trains or upon platforms is strictly forbidden; and that accordingly the guard is hereby ordered to take the names of persons who shoot out of trains and straightway to telegraph them to the next town-station, where the offenders will be arrested and fined five pounds sterling for each shot fired or punished according to the nature of the offence.

By order,

J. S. SMIT,

Governor of Railways, Pretoria.
Boers have themselves told me that it was a common practice among the burghers, when going on commando, to improve their rifle-shooting out of the windows of the train, at the expense of the cattle belonging to their countrymen.

Through having missed the Cape Mail I had the good fortune to pass in daylight through all the places which I had on the former occasion traversed by night; and this was specially fortunate in the case of the Hex River Mountains—the most stupendous piece of railway engineering I have ever seen, and, I am told, in Africa. From the one hundred and fortieth milestone down to the one hundred and eleventh the railway winds in and out and down, with all steam shut off except from the brakes, at an almost regular gradient at one foot in forty. The passenger frequently sees a point upon the line a quarter of a mile distant across a gorge which point he does not actually pass till the train has covered six or more miles; and this is explained by the fact that there is only one tunnel and no bridge in the whole twenty-five miles of magnificent mountain scenery. Arum lilies in full bloom lined the railway on either hand, but halfway up the huge mountain sides, which end up in the clouds as tables or sugar-loaves, all vegetation, including the veldt scrub, ceases. I was mightily glad that I had overslept myself on the bench in the ladies' waiting room at Deelfontein. On arrival at Cape Town I took a bee-line to the Army Post Office. I had received no letter from home for two months. At the Army Post Office I was
permitted to look through eight sacks of mails which were lying there awaiting our company. I secured my own letters after two hours sorting, but it was melancholy work coming here and there upon letters, papers, and parcels addressed months before to men who never would receive them.
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CONTENTS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BADMINTON LIBRARY (THE)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOGRAPHY, PERSONAL MEMOIRS, Etc.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILDREN'S BOOKS</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASSICAL LITERATURE, TRANSLATIONS, Etc.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COOKERY, DOMESTIC MANAGEMENT, Etc.</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVOLUTION, ANTHROPOLOGY, Etc.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FICTION, HUMOUR, Etc.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINE ARTS AND MUSIC (THE)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUR, FEATHER AND FIN SERIES</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HISTORY, POLITICS, POLITY, POLITICAL MEMOIRS, Etc.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LANGUAGE, HISTORY AND SCIENCE OF</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENTAL, MORAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISCELLANEOUS AND CRITICAL WORKS</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISCELLANEOUS THEOLOGICAL WORKS</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POETRY AND THE DRAMA</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLITICAL ECONOMY AND ECONOMICS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POPULAR SCIENCE</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SILVER LIBRARY (THE)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPORT AND PASTIME</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STONYHURST PHILOSOPHICAL SERIES</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE, THE COLONIES, Etc.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS OF REFERENCE</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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