FIELD-MARSHAL
LORD KITCHENER

LORD KITCHENER AND GENERAL CRONJE'S MESSENGER:
PAARDEBERG, FEBRUARY 19, 1900

From a drawing by Wal. Paget

FIELD-MARSHAL LORD KITCHENER

His Life and Work for the Empire

BY

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AND OTHERS

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NOTE

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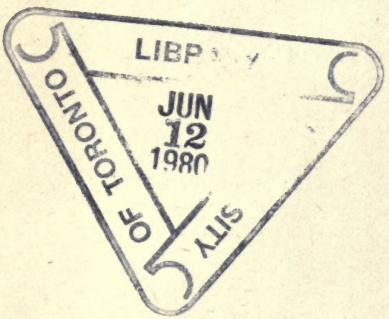

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KITCHENER'S victory at Omdurman was the decisive but not the finishing stroke in the campaign he had so brilliantly and forcefully conducted. The main body of the Khalifa's army had been annihilated, and as the result of that battle the greater part of the Soudan was restored to peace. But the Khalifa Abdullah was still at large, and considerable parties of Dervishes held out in the remoter districts. It was imperative to follow up the victory vigilantly until the last spark of revolt should be extinguished.

One of the most powerful supporters of the Khalifa, the Emir Ahmed Fedil, was stationed in the district of Gedaref,

between the Blue Nile and the Atbara. Ahmed Fedil had reached Rufa'a with his army of 8000 men, on the way to assist the Khalifa, when news of the capture of Omdurman brought him to a halt. He was uncertain now what to do. At this stage Colonel Parsons, R.A., who was in command of the garrison at Kassala, enters upon the scene. He too had heard of the Sirdar's victory. He planned a *coup de main*, his objective being the village of Suk Abu Sin. Organizing a flying column of 1400 men, Colonel Parsons started from Kassala on 7th September, 1898. His force comprised, in addition to 450 Egyptian soldiers, a local Arab battalion which had been taken over from the Italians in 1897, and a body of Arab irregulars under the command of Major H. M. Lawson, R.E. They reached the Atbara at El Fasher, and found the river in flood. As it was 400 yards wide, the crossing presented considerable difficulty. But boats and rafts were cleverly improvised, and the whole force passed over. On 21st September the Dervish outposts were sighted, and it was then discovered that Ahmed Fedil had left a surprisingly large garrison, namely 3500 men. Colonel Parsons, however, decided to attack without delay. The result of a severe action was the complete defeat of the Dervishes and the capture of Suk Abu Sin, the principal place in the Gedaref district.

Hearing news of the approach of Colonel Parsons, Ahmed Fedil hurried back with his main army. In anticipation of his attack the village was rapidly put into a state of defence. The attack was delivered on 28th September, and was successfully repulsed. From Khartoum a relieving force under Colonel Collinson was sent to reinforce Colonel Parsons, and Ahmed Fedil discreetly withdrew. His first intention was apparently to cross the White Nile and join the Khalifa in southern Kordofan. But he tarried a few weeks and then attempted to cross the Blue Nile at Rosaires on his westward journey. At this place, 426 miles south of Khartoum, Ahmed Fedil's

army was routed by a British force under Colonel Lewis on 26th December. More than 500 Dervishes were killed and over 1500 taken prisoners. Three weeks later the remainder of his force surrendered to the gunboat *Metammeh* on the Blue Nile. Ahmed Fedil himself, escaping to the south, lived to fight another day. The engagement at Rosaires was, however, the last fighting in Kitchener's 1898 campaign against the Mahdists.

Meanwhile Kitchener himself had been making an excursion to Fashoda, which was destined to result in one of the most delicate international situations in the history of Great Britain and France. That it did not eventuate in war was due in large measure to Kitchener's tact, restraint, and presence of mind. For some time past France had been credited with designs to establish herself in the eastern Soudan. So serious was the news regarded which reached this country of projected French expeditions into the Nile valley that Sir E. Grey, Under Foreign Secretary in the Rosebery Government at that time, announced in the House of Commons, in March, 1895, that Britain would regard such an expedition as "an unfriendly act". But while the Sirdar was engaged in conquering the Soudan, a small French expedition, commanded by Major Marchand, left the French Congo in 1896 with the object of marching across Africa towards Abyssinia. After a long and difficult journey it arrived at Fashoda, the port of southern Kordofan on the White Nile, in July, 1898. The Sirdar heard the unexpected tidings in dramatic circumstances. It was the Wednesday after the occupation of Khartoum. A steamer called the *Tewfikieh*, which had been sent up the White Nile by the Khalifa to collect grain, returned to Omdurman that day (7th September) and surrendered to the Sirdar. The captain brought exciting news. He had gone up the river in company with another of the Khalifa's steamers, the *Safia*, and they had found Fashoda occupied by a white

force and been fired upon by white men. The steamers had escaped out of range; then, landing some men near a village to make enquiries, they learnt that a party of eight Europeans, accompanied by black troops and assisted by the Shilluks, had driven out the Dervish garrison and installed themselves at Fashoda.

No one knew at this time that Marchand was at Fashoda. The Dervish captain did not recognize the strange flag he had seen flying on the fort at Fashoda, and although several small-bore bullets impinged in the timbers of the *Tewfikieh* were thought to be of the pattern used with the French Lebel rifle, no hasty conclusion was drawn. But the Sirdar did not lose a moment in putting his plans into execution. His first step was to ensure secrecy for the movement he was about to make. So he sent all the newspaper correspondents back to Cairo. At six o'clock on the morning of 10th September he started off to investigate. He and his staff were in the postal steamer *Dal*. A formidable force accompanied him, consisting of the gunboats *Sultan* (Commander Keppel's flagship), *Nazir*, *Fatteh*, and, later, the *Abu Klea;* an Egyptian field-battery, a company of the Camerons, and the 11th and 13th Soudanese battalions. All the steamers flew the British and the Egyptian flags, and they steamed as fast as current and weed would allow. Four days after leaving Khartoum the flotilla encountered a number of deserters, who were taken on board the *Dal* to be interrogated by the Sirdar and Colonel Wingate. They revealed the presence higher up the river of a large camp of Mahdists under the Emir Said Sogheir, accompanied by the gunboat *Safia*. This was interesting news for Commander Keppel, since the *Safia* was the steamer sent down by Gordon in 1885 on which he had distinguished himself under Lord Charles Beresford. The *Safia* was sighted next morning near the village of Renkh. Keppel steamed on ahead and engaged her. She returned the fire, and from the Dervish camp also came

artillery- and rifle-fire. A shell through her boiler caused an explosion on the *Safia*, and the *Sultan*, together with the other gunboats which had now come up, battered the Dervish guns on shore. This enabled a landing to be made from the *Nazir* by the 11th Soudanese, under Major Jackson, who soon dispersed the Dervish riflemen in the bushes. Said Sogheir surrendered. He told how he had been sent by the Khalifa with 500 men and two steamers—the *Safia* and the *Tewfikieh* —to collect grain in the Shilluk country, and on approaching Fashoda had a fight with some Europeans. Consequently he had withdrawn to this camp at Dem Zeki and sent the *Tewfikieh* down to Omdurman for reinforcements.

The Sirdar went on his way with increased curiosity. On 18th September he got further news of the European visitors. The flotilla reached the village of Babiu, twelve miles north of Fashoda.

"Here", reported the Sirdar afterwards, "we were met by a large number of Shilluks, including the uncle, brother, and son of the Irek (chief). In answer to my enquiries regarding Europeans at Fashoda, they informed me that they believed them to be a small body of our Government troops that had come from the west, but as they had no Shilluk interpreter, and did not go outside the old Egyptian Government buildings, they knew very little about them. They were utterly astonished when told they were not Government officials, and reiterated their great desire that we should stay and administer the country. They expressed great delight at the destruction of the Khalifa's army."

Kitchener now decided that it was time to warn the Europeans of his approach. He sent by runner from Babiu a letter written in French and directed to whoever might be the chief of the party. Besides heralding his approach, the letter announced also the victory of Omdurman and the little fight at Renkh. Next morning a small boat, flying a French flag and propelled by black men dressed in red caps and jerseys and blue knickerbockers, came out and met the Sirdar's expedition,

then steaming towards Fashoda. The *Dal* stopped, the little boat came alongside, and a black sergeant of Senegalese sharpshooters proffered a letter which proved to be a reply to the Sirdar from the chief of the party at Fashoda—the French officer Jean Baptiste Marchand.

"I have heard", he wrote to Kitchener, "with the greatest satisfaction of the occupation of Omdurman by the Anglo-Egyptian army, the destruction of the forces of the Khalifa, and final disappearance of Mahdism from the valley of the Nile. I shall no doubt be the first to offer the very sincere congratulations of a Frenchman to General Kitchener, whose name has for so many years embodied the struggle of civilization, to-day victorious, against the savage fanaticism of the partisans of the Mahdi."

The letter then informed the Sirdar that, by orders of the French Government, the writer had occupied the Bahr-el-Ghazal, the Shilluk country, and the left, or west, bank of the Nile as far as Fashoda, which his expedition had entered on 10th July.[1] He described how he had been attacked on 25th August at Fashoda by a Dervish expedition, consisting of two steamers with about 1200 men on board, and artillery, the engagement lasting from 6.40 a.m. to 5 p.m., and ending in the flight of the steamers.

"As a sequel to this engagement, the first result of which was the liberation of the Shilluk country, I signed on Sept. 3 a treaty with the Sultan Kour Abd-el-Fadil, the principal chief, placing the Shilluk country on the left bank of the White Nile under the Protectorate of France, subject to ratification by my Government. I sent copies of the treaty to Europe, first by way of the Sobat and Abyssinia, and then by the Bahr-el-Ghazal and Meshra-er-Rek, where my steamer, the *Faidherbe*, is at present, with orders to bring me reinforcements. These I considered necessary for the defence of Fashoda against a second attack, stronger than the first, which I expected the Dervishes to make about Sept. 25. Your arrival has prevented it."

[1] A Franco-Abyssinian expedition had reached the junction of the Nile and Sobat on June 22, but owing to sickness and want of provisions had to withdraw without effecting the contemplated junction with Marchand.

In conclusion, Captain Marchand wrote that he would be happy to welcome the Sirdar at Fashoda "in the name of France".

Both parties were now prepared for the meeting which took place as soon as the Sirdar's flotilla reached Fashoda. A boat flying the tricolour and containing Major Marchand and his staff officer, Captain Germain, put off from the shore. The Frenchmen, who wore white uniform, were received by the Sirdar on the *Dal*. British and French were perfectly polite to each other through all the discussion that followed. During these somewhat delicate proceedings, Kitchener wrote in a dispatch, "nothing could have exceeded the politeness and courtesy of the French officers". Looking back to-day we are inclined to say that one thing perhaps did exceed the politeness and courtesy of Marchand, and that was the firmness and the wisdom of Kitchener. There could be no possible misapprehension about each other's point of view in a conversation which was at once plain and polished, and the Marchand version of it is related with true French verve:

"'I have come to resume possession of the Khedive's dominions,' Kitchener opened.

"'General, I am here by order of the French Government,' said Marchand. 'I must wait here for instructions.'

"'Do you not wish to retire, after your magnificent explorations?'

"'No, General. I wait for orders.'

"'It is some time since you had news from France?'

"'Some months; but my orders are to wait here.'

"'I will put my boats at your disposal to return to Europe by the Nile.'

"'I thank you, but I cannot accept your offer. I await orders from my Government.'

"'Many things have happened since you started on your journey.'

"'General, whatever may have happened, France, who is not in the habit of abandoning her officers, will send me orders.'

"'I must hoist the Egyptian flag here,' said Kitchener then.

"'Why, I myself will help you to hoist it, over the village.'

"'Over your fort.'

"'No, that I shall resist,' rejoined Marchand.

"'Do you realize, Major, that this affair may set France and England at war?'

"Marchand bowed, without replying. Kitchener rose. He was very pale. Marchand rose. Kitchener gazed at his 2000; then at Marchand's fort, on the ramparts of which the bayonets were gleaming.

"'We are the stronger,' Kitchener observed after his leisurely survey.

"'Only a fight can settle that,' answered Marchand.

"'Right you are,' said Kitchener; 'come along, let's have a whisky and soda.'"

A few days later Lord Salisbury was wiring from the Foreign Office to the British representative at Cairo to inform Kitchener that "his proceedings and language are entirely approved by Her Majesty's Government". How thoroughly this approval was merited may be seen by a closer examination of his discussions with the gallant French officer. In the first place, Kitchener told Marchand quite emphatically that the presence of a French party at Fashoda must be considered as a direct infringement of the rights of Egypt and of the British Government. He protested in the strongest terms against the occupation by Marchand and the hoisting of the French flag in the dominions of the Khedive. Marchand replied that he had received precise orders for the occupation of the country and the hoisting of the French flag over the Government buildings at Fashoda, and that if Kitchener felt obliged to use force against him, he could only submit to the inevitable, which would mean that he and his companions would die at their posts. He begged, therefore, that Kitchener would allow the question of his remaining at Fashoda to be referred to Paris, as without the orders of his Government he could not retire from the position nor haul down his flag. At the same time, he said, he felt sure that in the circumstances the order for his retirement would not be delayed by his Government, and that then he hoped to be able to

HOISTING THE EGYPTIAN FLAG AT FASHODA

From a drawing by Wal. Paget

avail himself of Kitchener's offer to place a gunboat at his disposal to convey him and his expedition north. Kitchener asked point-blank:

"Do I understand that you are authorized by the French Government to resist Egypt in putting up its flag and re-asserting its authority in its former possessions—such as the Mudirieh of Fashoda?"

Marchand hesitated, and then replied that he could not resist. Kitchener added that his instructions were to hoist the flag, and that he intended to do so. So Colonel Wingate and Captain Germain landed together and selected a spot about 500 yards south of the French flag. There the Egyptian flag was hoisted on a ruined bastion of the old Egyptian fortifications, commanding the only route which led into the interior from the French possessions. The troops drawn up in line saluted the flag, and the Soudanese regimental bands played the Khedival March.

Before leaving for the south, Kitchener handed to Marchand a formal written protest in the name of the British and Egyptian Governments against any occupation of any part of the Nile valley by France. He stated that he could not recognize the occupation by France of any part of the Nile valley. Other measures Kitchener took were the establishing of a post at Sobat, where he himself proceeded on 20th September; the detailing of a gunboat to patrol up the Bahr-el-Ghazal in the direction of Meshra-er-Rek—precautions which were probably not unconnected with certain rumours that had been current of the presence of an Abyssinian force in the neighbourhood. At Fashoda he left a garrison of one Soudanese battalion, four guns, and a gunboat under the charge of Major Jackson, whom he appointed commandant of the Fashoda district. The British force was so posted as to bar the retreat of Marchand and his 8 officers and 120 men.

Of course the truth is that the position of this small

French force had been untenable from the first. Kitchener brought this fact out clearly in the course of a dispatch to Lord Cromer.

"It is impossible", he wrote, "not to entertain the highest admiration for the courage, devotion, and indomitable spirit displayed by M. Marchand's expedition, but our general impression was one of astonishment that an attempt should have been made to carry out a project of such magnitude and danger by the dispatch of so small and ill-equipped a force, which—as their commander remarked to me—was neither in a position to resist a second Dervish attack, nor to retire; indeed, had our destruction of the Khalifa's power at Omdurman been delayed for a fortnight, in all probability he and his companions would have been massacred. The claims of M. Marchand to have occupied the Bahr-el-Ghazal and Fashoda provinces with the force at his disposal would be ludicrous did not the sufferings and privations his expedition endured during their two years' arduous journey render the futility of their efforts pathetic."

Some preserved provisions were presented to Major Marchand from Kitchener's store. As the Sirdar passed Fashoda on the return journey from Sobat, he notified Marchand by letter that all transport of war material on the Nile was absolutely prohibited, the country being under martial law. He also discovered that Marchand had been under a misapprehension in the matter of the supposed treaty with the Shilluks. The chief of that tribe, accompanied by a large number of followers, went to Major Jackson's camp and entirely denied having made any treaty with the French. They welcomed the British effusively, and expressed the greatest delight at the defeat of the Khalifa.

With the remainder of his force Kitchener returned to Omdurman on 25th September. From Cairo the same day a telegram received from him was transmitted by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Rennell Rodd to the Foreign Office in London:

"If telegraphic instructions can be at once given by the French Government for the explorer M. Marchand and his expedition to quit

Fashoda and come down the Nile, a special steamer can now be sent with these orders and with instructions to bring down the whole party. In view of the unpleasant position in which M. Marchand and his officers are at present placed, I am quite sure that no one would be more pleased at this arrangement for their release than they would themselves be."

The Sirdar further suggested that M. Marchand's boats and launch should be taken over at a valuation.

All this time the public at home were very imperfectly acquainted with the affair—Kitchener had barred the door on the correspondents, of whom he was at no time fond. But enough was known to create a feeling of tension concerning the outcome of the discussions between Great Britain and France. The Foreign Office suddenly took the unusual course of publishing a White Paper containing the correspondence up to date, although the diplomatic exchanges were still going on. This appeared in all the newspapers next morning (10th October), and the result was twofold. First, the already high reputation of Kitchener was enhanced among the people. Secondly, the country was seen to be solid behind the Government in the firm attitude it had taken up. Lord Salisbury moved not one jot in these or the subsequent discussions from his demand that Marchand should evacuate Fashoda unconditionally. To the French suggestion that his withdrawal should be part of a general transaction on African questions between the two Governments he instructed Sir Edmund Monson to offer an uncompromising refusal. The French Government were in an awkward predicament. M. Delcassé affirmed that there was "no Marchand mission"—that Marchand was an "emissary of civilization". In 1892 and 1893, he said, M. Liotard was sent to the Upper Ubangi with instructions to secure French interests in the north-east, and M. Marchand, who got all his orders from M. Liotard, had been appointed one of his subordinates. M. Delcassé's statement, however, could not be reconciled with the reiterated

theory of "precise orders" which Major Marchand himself declared he had received from the French Government. Baron de Courcel, the French Ambassador in London, stated that Lord Salisbury had pressed him to make proposals on behalf of the French Government, and that thereupon the Baron had claimed the valley of the Bahr-el-Ghazal for France, giving her access to the Nile. Lord Salisbury, however, followed with a different version of the conversation in question, asserting that he had declined to discuss the claims of France to an outlet on the Nile for the Ubangi province. Early in these diplomatic exchanges Britain pointed out that all the territories which had been subject to the Khalifa had passed by right of conquest to the British and Egyptian Governments, and that the British Government did not consider this right open to discussion. To which France replied that she had never recognized the British sphere of influence in the Upper Nile region, and had protested at the time against Sir Edward Grey's declaration in the House of Commons in 1895.[1]

In speeches by Lord Rosebery and Mr. Asquith, members of the Government who had made the 1895 declaration, and from every section of public opinion, Lord Salisbury's Government were assured of united support in the stand they were making. Lord Rosebery, speaking at Epsom in this sense on 11th October, imported an even larger warning—namely, that Great Britain, not merely on this question but on others that preceded it, had been treated "rather too much as what the French call 'a negligible quantity'. Great Britain has been conciliatory," said Lord Rosebery, "and her conciliatory disposition has been widely misunderstood. If the nations of the world are under the impression that the ancient spirit

[1] On 10th December, 1897, Sir Edmund Monson was authorized to state to M. Hanotaux, then Foreign Minister of the Republic, that Her Majesty's Government "must not be understood to admit that any other Power than Great Britain has any claim to occupy any part of the valley of the Nile".

of Great Britain is dead, or that her resources are weakened or her population less determined than it was to maintain the rights and honour of its flag, they make a mistake which can only end in a disastrous conflagration." Such was the temper of the British people, and their predilections in the Dreyfus case, which was then rendering the situation in France more complex, did not tend to improve the prospects of peace. Then an interesting thing occurred — Major Marchand left Fashoda. It was semi-officially stated in Paris that he had come away on his own responsibility, leaving Captain Germain in command, and that his action therefore did not involve his Government. But, on the other hand, obviously Marchand could only return to Fashoda by the grace of the British Government. What had happened was that his chief staff officer, Captain Baratier, had been sent as his emissary to Paris, and Marchand left Fashoda on 23rd October, arrived at Khartoum five days later, and at Cairo on 3rd November, to await Captain Baratier's return. On the following day, in London, at a banquet to Lord Kitchener, the Prime Minister, in terms which are quoted further on in this chapter, announced that France had decided to evacuate Fashoda. The crisis was passed. Marchand spent a week in Cairo. He then went back to Fashoda with Captain Baratier to arrange for the evacuation. On 11th December he evacuated Fashoda and hauled down the French flag. Then resuming and completing his journey from the Atlantic to the Red Sea coast, he finally arrived in Paris on 1st June, 1899, and was received with immense enthusiasm.

On the same steamer which bore Kitchener from Egypt in the midst of the Fashoda crisis travelled also Captain Baratier, Marchand's chief officer. They arrived at Marseilles together (26th October, 1898). Many years after, on 17th August, 1915, those two met again and greeted each other warmly, within sound of the guns in north-eastern

France—Baratier now a general, Kitchener a field-marshal, allies in the fight against a common enemy.

On disembarking at Marseilles on that October morning in 1898 the Sirdar was gracefully included in congratulations which the local branch of the French Geographical Society had come down to offer as scientific men to Captain Baratier. The latter, bearing Major Marchand's dispatches to the French Government, travelled by the same express to Paris, where Kitchener spent the night. A friend told him of the receptions awaiting him at home. "I would rather face another Omdurman," was his comment. Crossing from Calais in the steamer *Empress*, on 27th October, he was amused on board at having his attention drawn to the first prisoner captured at Omdurman—a monkey which had been found by an officer of the 21st Lancers in the first hut entered in the Dervish capital, and which had come into the possession of a representative of the London, Chatham, and Dover Railway. Dover gave the returning Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian army a great reception. Among those awaiting him were the Mayor, Sir William Crundall, who presented an address; General Sir William Butler, commanding the South-Eastern Military District; the American naval and military attachés[1]; Mr. George Wyndham, and Mr. Winston Churchill. A guard of honour of the Seaforths was on the pier. Over the Lord Warden Hotel, where he was entertained at luncheon, the Union Jack and the Egyptian flag waved side by side. Almost the first words of his speech were a tribute to the troops which he had commanded in the reconquest of the Soudan. "I sincerely hope", he added, "that by means of education and good government

[1] It is worthy of note as a further sign of American appreciation of Lord Kitchener's achievement that on the occasion of the Mansion House banquet the one foreign diplomatist present was Mr. White, the United States Chargé d'Affaires. The American Colonel G. E. Gouraud, who was presented to Lord Kitchener at Dover, subsequently published an open letter on the hero of Khartoum. In acknowledging this, Lord Kitchener wrote on 14th November: "I have received with great pleasure your kind letter of congratulation, which coming from such a distinguished soldier as yourself is all the more gratifying".

we shall be able to raise the tone and conditions of life of the inhabitants of those countries, and that in the place of oppressive tyranny and fanaticism we may establish a reign of prosperity and peace." London was reached by special train at seven o'clock. The occasion was unceremonial, so that Lord Roberts and Lord Wolseley, who came to Victoria to meet him, were in private clothes. So dense was the crowd in Wilton Road that exit from the station had to be sought on the other side. The hero of the hour drove through streets of cheering people to the residence of Mr. Pandeli Ralli in Belgrave Square.

The Sirdar had found, upon his return to Khartoum after the expedition to Fashoda, Queen Victoria's announcement that a peerage was to be conferred on him. One of his earliest journeys, therefore—after visits to the War Office, the Prince of Wales, the Foreign Office, and to the Prime Minister at Hatfield—was taken in response to a summons from Balmoral. On the way thither he met in Aberdeen the Empress Frederick, returning from the castle. In the next issue of the *London Gazette* appeared the following:—

"WHITEHALL, *Oct.* 31, 1898.

"The Queen has been pleased to direct Letters Patent to be passed under the Great Seal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland granting the dignity of a baron of the said United Kingdom unto Major-General Sir Horatio Herbert Kitchener, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., R.E., Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, and the heirs male of his body lawfully begotten by the name, style, and title of Baron Kitchener of Khartoum and of Aspall, in the county of Suffolk."

During his six weeks' sojourn in this country Lord Kitchener received ample testimony of his popularity. "Not Wellington returning from the Battle of Waterloo", wrote Mr. W. T. Stead in the *Review of Reviews*, "could have been accorded more triumphal honours." As Wellington was the Iron Duke, so Mr. Stead named Kitchener the Lord of

Chilled Steel. Yet the bronzed and sunburnt soldier had a ready smile wherever he went. All classes paid him the homage due to the victor. The first signal expression of it was found in the City of London, where 3000 people assembled in the Guildhall when he went to receive the freedom on 4th November. A superb sword of honour, sparkling with jewels, and bearing among its emblems a figure of Britannia and a figure of Justice, was handed to him by the Lord Mayor. The same evening a brilliant banquet was held at the Mansion House. The speeches bore equally upon the campaign and upon the Fashoda affair. Regarding the outcome of the latter, Great Britain had been taking no chances; Mr. Goschen, First Lord of the Admiralty, had cancelled his engagement to attend the Master Cutlers' Feast at Sheffield on account of the quiet preparations that were going forward for possible hostilities. The announcement of an amicable arrangement was made at the Mansion House by the Prime Minister in proposing the Sirdar's health.

"The Sirdar recently", said Lord Salisbury, "expressed the hope that the difficulties which might have arisen from the presence of Major Marchand would not transcend the powers of diplomacy to adjust. I am glad to say that up to a certain point he has proved a true prophet. I received from the French Ambassador this afternoon the information that the French Government had come to the conclusion that the occupation of Fashoda was of no sort of value to the French Republic, and they thought that, under those circumstances, to persist in an occupation which only cost them money and did them harm, merely because some bad advisers thought it might be disagreeable to an unwelcome neighbour, would not show the wisdom with which, I think, the French Republic has been uniformly guided, and they have done what I believe many other Governments would have done in the same position—they have resolved that the occupation must cease."

The sequel, in the shape of an African understanding with France, came a few months later, when an agreement was signed (21st March, 1899) delimiting the French and British

possessions in Central Africa. The Bahr-el-Ghazal and Darfur were recognized as being reserved to Great Britain, France keeping Wadai, Bagirmi, and Kanem. From the Nile to Lake Chad and between the 5th and 15th parallels of latitude the two Powers mutually conceded equality of commercial treatment, France thus obtaining the right to establish commercial relations on the Nile and its affluents. With this agreement (which was an additional declaration to the Franco-British Convention of 14th June, 1898) both nations were satisfied. At least a semi-official Note issued in Paris explained that though France renounced that part of Bahr-el-Ghazal which they occupied, the conditions "enable us to attain the essential object of our policy in those regions—that is to say, access to the Nile".

The Prime Minister's glowing eulogy of the Sirdar at the Mansion House echoed the thoughts of all British subjects:

"Alike in his patient and quiet forethought, lasting over three years, in his brilliant strategy on the field of battle, in his fearless undertaking of responsibility and his contempt of danger, and last but not least in the kindness and consideration which he displayed for men who were for a moment in a position of antagonism to himself, he has shown a combination of the noblest qualities which distinguish the race to which he belongs, and by the exercise of which the high position of England in this generation, in the world, and in her great Empire has been won."

Though it was a hazardous thing to say, Lord Salisbury was almost inclined to believe that the Sirdar was the only General who had fought a campaign for £300,000 less than he originally promised to do it. On another occasion the Prime Minister described him as "a singular master in desert warfare", and gave more permanent shape to the British estimate of his place in history:

"He will remain a striking figure, not only adorned by the valour and patriotism which all successful generals can show, but with the most extraordinary combination of calculation, of strategy, of statesmanship,

which it ever fell to any general in these circumstances to display. He took exactly the time necessary for his work; he made precisely the preparations which that work required; he expended upon it the time, the resource, and the military strength precisely which it demanded, and his victory came out with absolute accuracy, like the answer to a scientific calculation."

A statesman by temperament less given to the Imperial outlook, Sir William Harcourt, while humorously expressing a fear lest the success of the Sirdar's campaign might make war popular, characterized his interview with Marchand as worthy of the knightly chivalry of ancient times. "If I were to sum up all that I could say in praise of the Sirdar himself, it would be this," said Lord Rosebery, "that he has written a new page of British history and that he has blotted out an old one."

Cambridge delighted to honour him (24th November). He received the freedom of the borough, and from the University the honorary degree of LL.D. A new fulfilment had been given, said Dr. Sandys in his Latin oration, to the ancient Oracle of Jupiter Ammon declaring that all the land watered by the Nile was Egypt; and by the unanimous voice of Britain the world had once more realized that the valley of the Nile was synonymous with Egypt, and ought not to be exposed to the incursions of foreign nations. Off the mouth of the Nile, just a century ago, a new glory had been added to the well-omened name of Horatio Nelson, and now from the banks of the same river fame had shone forth once more on another Horatio—and as before an East Anglian too—and all that bore the British name.

From the end gallery, where the last wooden spoon is wont to dangle, the Cambridge undergraduates had suspended an effigy of the Khalifa. The Union made Lord Kitchener an honorary member. He enjoyed the spirit of gaiety of the young bloods.

Scott & Wilkinson

LORD KITCHENER IN THE ROBES OF AN LL.D.
OF CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

November 24, 1898

"I thank the members of this society for the great honour they have done me", he said, "in electing me an honorary member of this society. I am sorry that owing to want of University training, and therefore not having had a chance of exercising my eloquence in a society such as this in my early years, I am not very good at speaking. (Laughter.) This is the first house of the kind in which I have spoken, but I have now been graciously placed in another House where I hope I may meet some of you. (Laughter.) All I can say, gentlemen, is this: that this very warm and enthusiastic welcome which you have given me shows that a soldierly spirit and enthusiastic patriotism still exist in the young generation that is growing up to hold the old country together. I only wish I had had some of you with me in the Soudan. (Great cheering.) I again express my very sincere thanks to you all for the very kind reception you have given me and the honour you have done me."

When the Sirdar's carriage horses were taken out, and he was drawn in triumph to Christ's College, the hind part of the carriage collapsed, as a result of reckless "driving". His Cambridge host, Dr. John Peile, Master of Christ's College, was a cousin by marriage, his wife being a Kitchener.

On the occasion of his visit to Edinburgh, on 29th November, he was the guest of Lord Rosebery. Snow was falling as they drove into the Scottish capital—in a carriage-and-four with outriders—but large crowds lined the streets to cheer the hero of Khartoum. The first ceremony was the conferring of the university degree of LL.D. Principal Sir William Muir said that the Soudan regained was not merely an epic which appealed to our Imperial instincts, but rather a drama whose final act was the triumph of civilization over barbarism, the vindication of order in place of chaos, the gift of light to them that sit in darkness. On leaving the Library Hall he was presented with an address from the students. In the fine M'Ewan Hall, where the company around Lord Provost Mitchell Thomson included the Duke of Montrose, the Marquess of Lothian, the Earl of Rosebery, and Generals Wauchope, Gatacre, and Chapman, the freedom of the city

was bestowed on the Sirdar and the Marquess of Dufferin, "noble examples of empire-makers and empire-keepers". Here, as everywhere, Kitchener accepted the honours paid to him as honours to his soldiers. "It is a special gratification to me", he acknowledged, "to be elected a freeman of the capital of the great country which has provided me with so many brave soldiers during the recent campaign. It is greatly due to the gallant deeds of those men of the Camerons and the Seaforths that were with me at Atbara and Omdurman that I have the honour to-day to receive this gratification at your hands."

Cardiff vied with Edinburgh in the same worthy cause. The presence of twenty-two Welsh Mayors in their robes gave to the gathering in that city on 2nd December a national significance. In his capacity of begging for £100,000 for the Gordon College, Lord Kitchener told his hosts that he had more right to be in Cardiff than in any other place, because of the many hundreds and thousands of pounds he had paid them for Welsh coal for the Soudan railway. After the luncheon Lord Kitchener, having heard that a number of veterans who served in India and elsewhere were being regaled in an adjoining room, determined to visit them. His arrival gave rise to a scene of great enthusiasm among the old fellows. "Bedad," shouted one admirer, "did ye iver say a foiner Irishman?" The presentation of the freedom followed; and Lord Kitchener, on leaving Alderman Morel, the Mayor, said that nowhere had Cardiff's reception of him been excelled.

He bore all the lionizing cheerfully and with a good grace. His engagements were manifold. He was the guest of the Prince and Princess of Wales and of Prince and Princess Christian; he received the freedom of the Fishmongers' Company; he was entertained at a banquet by the London Society of East Anglians, who appropriately decorated the menu with a picture of Aspall Hall, the home of his mother; he was greeted

by the city of Bath; the Royal Artillery at Woolwich, the Royal Engineers at Chatham, and the Army and Navy Club separately welcomed him; arriving at midnight at a Savage Club "smoker" he was received with "war-whoops"; and he attended his brother Arthur's wedding as best man. One function exhibited Lord Kitchener as a Freemason. The Drury Lane Lodge, No. 2127, entertained him on 1st December at a luncheon at Freemasons' Tavern on his way back from the Stock Exchange and the Mansion House, where he had been appealing for the £100,000 for the Gordon College at Khartoum. Lord Kitchener was a founder of the lodge when it was warranted in 1885, and he had continued a member ever since. The Worshipful Master, Mr. Gerald Maxwell (son of "Miss Braddon", the novelist), handed to Lord Kitchener the jewel of a founder, and said that Lord Kitchener had told them it was his intention to carry the influence of Masonry into the very heart of the realm which he had reconquered for civilization—and when he said the influence of Masonry he meant light. In the intervals between such social duties as dining with Lord Lister and the Royal Society, witnessing a performance of "A Runaway Girl" at the Gaiety Theatre (where the audience rose at him), and acting as steward of the Cabdrivers' Benevolent Association dinner, Lord Kitchener was busy advancing the arrangements for the extension of the Soudan railway to Khartoum, the construction of the additional 180 miles having been decided upon.

Among the last duties of this memorable home-coming was a visit to Netley Hospital, on the same day that Queen Victoria went there (4th December). The Sirdar distributed Soudan medals to 180 wounded men who had fought at Atbara and Omdurman. On 7th December he left London and sailed in the steamer *Dover* from Folkestone, amid torrents of rain, *en route* for Egypt to resume his work in the Soudan.

G. T.

CHAPTER II

Regenerating the Soudan

Lord Kitchener's Plan for the Khartoum College—Subscriptions and the Public Response—Description of the College and its Work—Khartoum and Omdurman—The New Government of the Soudan—Clearing the Land of the Dervishes—Colonel Parsons and the Actions at Gedaref and Rosaires—Colonel Walter Kitchener's Expedition—The Last Stand of the Khalifa—Osman Digna's Fate—The Sirdar's Completed Work.

IN the few weeks that he was in England Lord Kitchener disclosed a project which only those who knew him well would have associated with him. The conqueror of the Soudan did not wear his principles on his sleeve, but the desire for reform, the hatred of wanton disorder or destruction, were deeply embedded in his nature. "Those who have conquered", he said in one of his rare moments of self-revelation, "are called upon to civilize." The Soudan, which had been wrested from the degradation of the Khalifa, must be uplifted as Gordon meant that it should be. Before Mahdism devastated the Soudan it had a population of 8,000,000 people: when the Khalifa was cast out of it by the Sirdar the numbers were fewer than 3,500,000. It was the regeneration of these provinces that Kitchener believed to be the duty and the mission of the British, and he knew no firmer way than by giving their people the spur of education. It was his dream to make Khartoum, where Gordon's work had been cut short by death, the centre from which civilization and regeneration should spread. His plan for sowing the germ of progress bespoke the scholar and the statesman

rather than the soldier. His own words are his best interpreters:

"If Khartoum could be made forthwith the centre of an education supported by British funds, and organized from Britain, there would be secured to this country indisputably the first place in Africa as a civilizing power, and an effect would be created which would be felt for good throughout the central regions of that continent. I accordingly propose that at Khartoum there should be founded and maintained with British money a college bearing the name of the Gordon Memorial College, to be a pledge that the memory of Gordon is still alive among us, and that his aspirations are at length to be realized."

It was a project which, endorsed by Kitchener's name, commanded the sympathies, and even the enthusiasm, of every class of the community. Exeter Hall and the Stock Exchange alike subscribed to it. In his zeal for his scheme Lord Kitchener actually paid a visit to the Stock Exchange, to be received there with an enthusiasm which can easily be guessed. He responded to the loud calls for a "speech" by making one. It was brief, even for him; for he merely said that he wanted a lot of money, and expected to get it—as he immediately did. Yet, according to Mr. G. W. Smalley, for so long the New York correspondent of the *Times*, he was only with difficulty persuaded to ask the public for the money. Mr. Smalley tells the tale of his persuasion,[1] and reports Lord Kitchener as saying that nothing less than £100,000 would be of any use; and that was a large sum: he should not like to appeal for it and to fail.

The conversation took place at a dinner table at which Lord Glenesk was present, and that shrewd and generous nobleman urged that then was the precise and favourable moment for such an appeal; delay would spoil the chance. Lord Glenesk backed up his opinion by offering £1000 across the dinner table; and other sums were as instantly offered.

[1] *Anglo-American Memories*, by G. W. Smalley.

Still Lord Kitchener hesitated, and still repeated: "I should not like to fail." At last one of the company said: "Well, Lord Kitchener, if you had doubted about your campaigns as you do about this, you would never have got to Khartoum." To which Lord Kitchener responded rather grimly: "Perhaps not; but then I depended on myself: now I have to depend on the public." But he was at last persuaded, and he received the sympathetic help of the Press. He was determined not to fail, and in the most enterprising of London newspapers, which at once contributed £1000 to the fund, he wrote an article about what his college should be and what it should do. The system, he wrote, would need to be gradually built up. It would begin by teaching the sons of the leading men, the heads of villages, and the heads of districts, for these belonged to a race very capable of learning, and very willing to learn. The teaching in its early stages would be devoted to purely elementary subjects, such as reading, writing, geography, and the English language. Later, and after these preliminary stages had been passed, a more advanced course would be instituted, including a training in technical subjects specially adapted to the requirements of those who inhabit the valley of the Upper Nile. The principal teachers in the college would be British, and the supervision of the arrangements would be vested in the Governor-General of the Soudan. Lord Kitchener added—and this was a pledge to which he adhered in the spirit as well as the letter—that there would be no interference with the religion of the people.

The appeal was overwhelmingly successful. In a short time £120,000 was raised, and after Lord Kitchener's return to the Soudan the foundation-stone of the college was laid by Lord Cromer on 5th January, 1899. The college stands to-day one of the greatest monuments to Kitchener's practical idealism. It is a handsome structure of red brick, built in the Moorish

STATUE, IN BRONZE, OF GENERAL CHARLES GORDON
BY ONSLOW FORD, R.A.

Erected in front of the Governor-General's Palace, Khartoum (see page 223)

style, forming two sides of a square, one of which faces on the Nile with a tower above the entrance. Along the inside runs a cool and airy cloister, with winding stairs leading to the upper story. The classrooms are spaciously designed. Its commanding position at the east end of Khartoum makes it a conspicuous landmark for many miles around. From no point is this so remarkable as from the hill of Sorgham, which overlooks the battle-field of Omdurman. The college now contains a higher elementary school, a higher school for technical education (surveying and engineering), a training college for schoolmasters and cadis, and a military cadet school. Associated with it are instructional workshops and a museum, one of the treasures of which is the manuscript journal kept by General Gordon during the Taeping rebellion. There are about 150 pupils at the college, as well as the older men, so that it is evident that the "Hubshee"[1], which is the Indian name for the Soudanese, has taken the advice of Kipling's Bengali schoolmaster and gone with eagerness to "Kitchener's School"[2] (Madrissa).

"Knowing that ye are forfeit by battle and have no right to live
He begs for money to give you learning—and all that the English give.
It is their treasure—it is their pleasure—thus are their hearts inclined,
For Allah created the English mad, the maddest of all mankind.

. . . . . .

"Certainly also is Kitchener mad. But one sure thing I know—
If he who broke you be minded to teach you, to his Madrissa go!
Go and carry your shoes in your hand, and bow your head on your breast,
For he who did not slay you in sport, he will not teach you in jest."

Never was a country more absolutely and wholly illiterate than the Soudan when Kitchener was "minded to teach it". Writing was practically an unknown art, and reading hardly less so. It was useless to post a Government proclamation

[1] From Habashi (Abyssinian). [2] *The Five Nations*, by Rudyard Kipling (Methuen).

unless a competent person was stationed by it to read it out to the passers-by; yet there flourished the most exaggerated respect for the written document, which was regarded as a kind of magic book. Consequently, education had to be on very humble lines at first; but it has progressed wonderfully. The college has been the parent of schools; there are two of these now at Khartoum and Omdurman, and that at Omdurman was the direct offspring of the Gordon College. It numbers over 200 pupils, and plays fierce football matches —in the mosque square at Khartoum and in the Soudan sun! —with the Khartoum school. In Omdurman, too, a small training college for native sheikhs was opened at the beginning of 1901, and though the experiment was not at first successful —perhaps because the Arab students all belonged to the best Arab families—it is now doing splendidly. Thus the schools and college at Omdurman and Khartoum are turning out yearly, men of wisdom and understanding, learned men, artificers for the dockyard works at Wady Halfa, carpenters, fitters, riveters—and good citizens. All that Kitchener hoped of it has come to pass.

Stress should be laid on the work done at Omdurman. Khartoum was the chosen capital of the new order of things, set apart to mark the end of the misrule and slavery which had existed in Omdurman, and Khartoum is now a great town of 60,000 inhabitants, with its railway station, its Governor's residence, its great mosque, its finely planned streets. But Omdurman, which some expected to see submerged in its own squalor, has changed indeed from the wretchedness which George Steevens described with such vigorous invective. Omdurman has been purified of its foul labyrinth of streets; it has grown to be a real Central African city without the African drawbacks. It was proposed to remove its inhabitants. Instead of that, the town has grown till it now has 45,000 inhabitants, a medley of the most

diverse races and stocks. Bantus and grotesque dwarfs from the West Soudan, Semitic and Hamitic tribes from the desert, such as Nubâ, Baggara, Katbabish, Gowameh, and Kowahleh Arabs, Shilluks, Nubians, and Jaalin, as well as Egyptians, Syrians, and Greeks. There is an Egyptian garrison, and the inspector's house; the repaired great mosque; the Government school; the great market; the bazaar of the silversmiths; the polo ground; and the golf course! It is thoroughly cleaned, and purified, and rebuilt, one of the wonderful cities of the world, where ancient Africa barters and trades and lives at peace with its neighbours. To some ways of thinking it is a greater monument to the rule of Kitchener and his countrymen than Khartoum itself.

Of Khartoum there is little to say, except in recognition of the completeness of Kitchener's work. It is a city beautifully set on the Nile, planned first, according to Kitchener's suggestion, with streets radiating in the lines of the Union Jack, but since then supplemented by many additions, each of them conforming to the first plan, and each preserving the wide, broad, shaded avenues of his design. The White Palace, the Governor-General's official residence, is set where Gordon's Palace was, and the old garden is now restored and beautiful. On either side of it stretch Government offices, the courts of justice, and neat residences, and the town is sweet with gardens and groves of palm-trees, acacias, limes. A well-made road runs all along the river front; the town has its tramways, its street-lighting, its river-front embankment, and in the Wellcome Research Laboratories the best equipped school for the study of tropical diseases in the world. The great mosque, with its lofty minarets, is one of the finest buildings in Khartoum; it was by Kitchener's wish, and at his initiative, that it was placed there, for he recognized, none better, that Khartoum would be but an empty husk unless it had a shrine of pilgrimage for the Arab. In the grounds behind the Sirdar's Palace

is Onslow Ford's statue of Gordon on his camel. One may believe that in due course Khartoum will have its statue of Lord Kitchener as well; but the city is his monument. He stamped out the tyranny that had defiled the Soudan and brought it to ruin; he raised the oppressed from the dust; he made the wheat grow again and the water-wheels turn; he secured the weak from the strong; he made a new kingdom from the old.

In January, 1899, an arrangement was made between the British and Egyptian Governments that the Soudan was to be ruled jointly by the two Powers, and that the chief of the executive authority was to be a governor-general appointed by the Khedive on the recommendation of the British Government. The first governor-general under the new regime was Lord Kitchener, who at the same time continued to occupy the position of Sirdar of the Egyptian army. There was a great deal for the new Sirdar-Governor-General to do in both of his official capacities. The work of pushing on the railway to Khartoum had gone on in his absence; by August, 1899, the iron railway bridge which crossed the Atbara was opened by him. The work of reconstructing Khartoum and clearing up Omdurman went on at high pressure; but there was another kind of clearing up to be done.

When the Khalifa fled from Omdurman he had travelled, almost without halting, 300 miles to Lake Sherkeleh. Here the remnant of his forces had joined him, together with a small band of the faithful emirs, among them Ali Wad Helu, who had led the Green Flags with Sheikh-ed-Din, and had been carried wounded from the field. The Sirdar established the 2nd Egyptian battalion, under Colonel Pink, at the half-way house of Ed Duem to keep a watch on him. The Khalifa's chief means of subsistence was that of raiding villages, and the villagers who brought in reports to Colonel Pink sought his powerful assistance; but, with the tortuous ingenuity of the

Arab mind, thought they would best get it by putting the emirs' forces at the lowest possible figure. They reported that he had only 700 men. These reports were sent on to the Sirdar, as well as the news of the demolition of Ahmed Fedil at Rosaires, and putting them together he decided on making quick work of what was left of the Khalifa's armies. On the 29th of December, therefore, he sent for his brother, Colonel Walter Kitchener, and entrusted him with the task of taking a small mixed force into Kordofan, where he was to reconnoitre the enemy's positions, and, if possible, to attack and capture the Khalifa. Colonel Walter Kitchener was given 450 of the 14th Soudanese battalion under Lieutenant-Colonel Shekleton, 450 of the 2nd Egyptian battalion under Lieutenant-Colonel Pink, and two squadrons of cavalry under Lieutenant-Colonel Mitford and Major Williams. Lieutenant-Colonel Tudway went with the column. The column had a very difficult march in front of them, for the Khalifa's position was 125 miles from the river, and the march was therefore bound to be harassed by want of water. It was thought, however, that by making use of the camel's powers of endurance—as Mr. Hilaire Belloc says: "the camel excels in various ways: it can go without drink for several days"—and by carrying water in skins, it might be just possible for a force of about 1200 men to strike out 120 odd miles into the desert, and to have three days in which to fight the Khalifa before setting out on the return journey. The march and the expedition are the record of a heart-breaking struggle against the want of water. Once the column had to turn back and start again on a new route, because the sparse wells on the early stages of the journey had dried up. They set out again, cutting down the horses and mules to the lowest possible figure, and marching only by night to reduce the thirst. They marched through a land that was half desert, half thicket, and only once did they find a well that was of any use. After this desperate march they

arrived within a short distance of the Khalifa's position at Sherkeleh. They had expected to find him at Aigala, but he had moved, having used up all the water there, to the very spot where they had hoped to refill their skins. The Khalifa stood between them and water. But that was only half the disaster. Deserted Aigala had been no mere encampment of 700 men: it had evidently contained more than twenty times that number of men, women, and children. It was probable that the Khalifa had 7000 men with him rather than 700. However, Colonel Kitchener's orders from his brother were to reconnoitre and obtain accurate information. Accordingly he moved on to within three miles of the Khalifa. Here he formed a zareba and sent forward Lieutenant-Colonel Mitford and Major Williams. The two officers, creeping forward, in advance of the horsemen with them, to the crest of a convenient hill, found the enemy drawn up for a fight, and estimated that there were no fewer than 4000 men with rifles and about 3000 spearmen. The position was, moreover, of great strength, being surrounded by ravines and pools of precious water.

Colonel Kitchener decided, quite properly, that it would be madness to engage the enemy. If he had won, which was most improbable, it would only have been half a victory: the Khalifa would still have escaped. If he had lost, he would have been wiped out and a new flame lit in the Soudan. Accordingly he retired, to the bitter disappointment of his soldiers; and their disappointment was not mitigated by the horrors and privations of the march back through the waterless land. The Khalifa started in pursuit, and his emirs begged him to follow up the retreating force. Fortunately he would not, being convinced that an ambush was prepared for him, and that Colonel Kitchener's force was but an advanced guard. The Anglo-Egyptian column, therefore, reached Kohi on 5th February in safety, and no doubt in the deepest disgust. They had done nothing but encourage the Khalifa,

The story of the dispersal of the Khalifa's forces almost overlaps a new departure in the career of Lord Kitchener; but since it was due to his incentive, and was made possible only by his preliminary preparations, it may be briefly told. In the autumn of 1899 the Khalifa was at Jebel Gidir, a hill in southern Kordofan, about eighty miles from the White Nile. Encouraged by the absence of interference with his movements, he was contemplating an advance, or was being urged to it by his restless emirs. Unfortunately for these plans, they coincided with others formed by Lord Kitchener, who, having established good order in the Soudan, and swept Khartoum and Omdurman clean, and being also on the point of joining up the last stretches of the railway line from the Atbara to Khartoum, had decided that now it was the turn of Kordofan. He therefore concentrated 8000 men at Kaka, on the Nile, 380 miles south of Khartoum, an undertaking recalling in its organization and forethought the concentrations at Wady Halfa of previous years. The force moved inland on the 20th October. When it arrived at Fongor it found that the Khalifa had struck north, and, the cavalry and Camel Corps having reconnoitred Jebel Gidir, there was nothing for the expedition to do but to return to its proper base, the Nile. Ahmed Fedil, taking courage from immunity, made an attempt to cross the Nile at El Alub, but he found Colonel Lewis in waiting there with gunboats, and a force only too eager to come to grips with him. So Ahmed, for almost the last time in his life, preferred discretion to valour, and retired to the bush again.

Troops and transport were then concentrated at Faki Kohi, with the object of forking the Khalifa, and Colonel Wingate was sent with reinforcements from Khartoum to undertake the command of the entire expedition. He was to march to Gedid, where it was expected that the Khalifa's northern trek would have to come to an end. By the Sirdar's directions

a flying column to intercept him and drive him into accepting a pitched battle was organized, and Wingate himself went with it. It comprised a squadron of cavalry, a field-battery, machine-guns, six companies of the Camel Corps, and a brigade of infantry. The flying column left Faki Kohi on the 21st of November, and on the first day out it fell in with the Khalifa's flying column under Ahmed Fedil. Ahmed was driven out of Abu Badel with considerable loss in men, and, with what was of even greater importance, the loss of a convoy of grain which he was escorting to the Khalifa. Wingate went into Gedid, which he reached on 23rd November. The Khalifa, still elusive, but now almost at the end of the passage, was found to be at Om Debreikat. Wingate made a night march on the 24th, and at dawn was on high ground overlooking the Khalifa's position.

The end had come. The Khalifa's emirs called on their men, and, without waiting for Wingate to attack, drove in his pickets. Then they came on in their last charge—their ammunition by this time had run very low. Their assault was broken against the Soudanese fire, and then the Soudanese in their turn charged the Dervish camp. They carried it, and the last stronghold of the Mahdi's successor fell in ruins on its supporters. The Khalifa, bearing himself bravely, tried to rally his men, but in vain. Then he gathered his chief emirs about him, Ali Wad Helu and Ahmed Fedil, and Sheik-ed-Din, his eldest son and his elected successor, and with them met death without flinching. A thousand men, and all the remnant of the fighting chiefs of Darfur, Kordofan, and of the lost empire of the Soudan fell that day, and others to the number of 3000 surrendered.

The end, indeed, had come; the Sirdar's task in the Soudan was over; the slate wiped clean. It was only left for others to polish the rough edges. But hardly had the last shot been fired, and before the first train could run into

Khartoum,[1] than other work had been found for him to do—work 3000 miles away, at the other end of Africa, where a little war had developed into a great one which, because of the want of foresight and preparation at the beginning, was to last for more than two years, and call all Lord Kitchener's resolution and perseverance into play to finish it.

Two things remain to be added. Osman Digna survived the Khalifa, but was caught at last, captured at Jebel Warriba, on 19th January, 1900, while wandering a fugitive among the hills beyond Tokar. The other fact is as to the cost of conquest. The reconquest of Dongola and Soudan and Kordofan cost £3,354,000, which was considerably less than one day's cost of the last war in which Lord Kitchener had a directing hand. That covered the cost from March, 1896, to December, 1898, and it left the Soudan in possession of £1,100,000 worth of railways, £21,000 worth of telegraphs, £154,000 worth of gunboats, all included in the bill. Kitchener's war, for purely military expenses, cost less than £1,000,000.

[1] The first train ran through to Khartoum on 10th January, 1900.

E. S. G.

CHAPTER III

The Struggle between Briton and Boer

Racial Incompatibility—Cecil Rhodes's Dream—The Rand and the Uitlanders —The Jameson Raid—Sir Alfred Milner's Dispatch—Fighting Qualities of the Boers—Their Forces in the Field.

IN one of the great crises which Lord Kitchener shared with the nation he said that he spoke as a soldier, not as a politician, and it is desirable, in dealing with his share in the conduct of the war against the Boer Republics, to neglect the vexed questions in which that war took its origin, remembering only that when the end came Lord Kitchener's detachment from partisanship enabled him to share in laying the foundations of a settlement based on statesmanship. The war in South Africa was by more than one man declared to be inevitable; and that, indeed, is no more than the truth, because in Cape Colony and in the Transvaal and in the Orange Free State dwelt two races, each stubborn, proud, and self-sufficient, who had not learnt to respect one another. Sooner or later a conflict was bound to come. It had come in the struggle which terminated in an unfortunate and unsatisfying truce at Majuba; and because neither Boer nor Briton could forget Majuba, the struggle was sure to be renewed. From the Dutch point of view, South Africa was a Dutch colony; it might some day be a Dutch republic with Dutchmen content to live and die there unbound by ties with any European country. To British people the Cape was a British possession, no less inviolate or secure because British people at home knew little about it or about its politics. The Cape British,

however much they might resent the Mother Country's principle of alternating neglect of them with attempts to keep them in leading-strings, were too confident of their inheritance and too proud of their parentage to abate anything of their claim to be the ruling race. Here were all the materials for that good fight which Lord Kitchener grimly observed after the war that both races had had.

The grounds of quarrel were enlarged during the last decade of the nineteenth century by several considerations. The partition of Africa fired many imaginations, none more than that of Mr. Cecil Rhodes, who saw a great and greater South Africa spreading and stretching northwards till it was linked through Central Africa with the Soudan, and so with the Mediterranean. He saw also the Cape to Cairo railway fertilizing, subduing, and civilizing the interior of the vast and waste continent. Neither he nor those who dreamed with him and thought like him could endure to see the great plan spoilt by a strong and hostile neighbour on the flank of the route of expansion. If the Cape Dutch would have worked with Cecil Rhodes to make secure the great road, broad at its base and endued with prosperity, then he would have joined with them to make a Union of South African States truly democratic and impartially representative of Dutch and British interests. He would never have forgone his allegiance to Britain, being before all things a great Imperialist, and knowing that under Britain's flag is a freedom greater than under most republics.

Intruding on the dreams of an extending African dominion, however, came a consideration which at first promised to add only to the dominion's prosperity, but afterwards was one of the chief sources of its disturbance. It was the discovery of the wealth of the Rand. The pioneers from Great Britain who had come to the Cape had sought a prosperity which coincided with the enlargement and development of new lands. The Boers who formed part of the Dutch population of the Cape

were even more identified with a process of separating themselves from industrialism and in widening or discovering new areas of pasture and agriculture. Whatever the impulses, political or racial, which drove the Boer farmers northwards, they were in the real sense pioneers and cultivators of new lands. But the new population which swept into South Africa in the wake of the discoveries of gold and diamonds was neither agricultural nor pastoral; its members were neither nomads nor settlers. They were there to make money. It would be wide of the truth to say that the Johannesburg Rand was the fount of the conflict which broke out between Briton and Boer, but it is fair to say that it watered the source.

From the point of view of the Boers who had trekked far beyond the boundaries of their homes in Cape Colony to find solitude and to establish a country of their own, who had endured many perils and fought bravely, who had suffered hardships in order to become a nation, the influx of strangers on the Rand was a thing hard to bear. The Rand was growing; it had a population which despised the Boers as much for their ignorance as the Boers despised the Johannesburgers for not being Boers. But the Johannesburgers were making money, and they were largely of the class which believes that money can buy anything, and will certainly buy power. They intended to buy out the Boers, and the Boers, who numbered some very shrewd men, and who had added to their number some clever young men from Holland, were quite able to see that if the Johannesburgers were given complete electoral and citizen rights the end of the Boer rule would be in sight, because the Boer would be outnumbered at the ballot-box. Consequently they maintained the position that, since the gold-seekers had come into the country without invitation, they must remain aliens, content with the money they could make, and without power of any kind to alter the character of the administration under which they lived. That is a logical way

of reasoning; but it never holds good, and never will, unless the administration is tolerable. The Boer administration was bad: it was tyrannical and corrupt. Men will endure the first and make terms with the other, but they will not tolerate both. Consequently the Uitlanders, as the Boers called the Johannesburgers, began to complain, and then to take steps to alter the things of which they complained. The British Uitlanders were more numerous than all the others combined. It was natural that they should rebel against the injustice and corruption vigorously; and the grievance was emphasized because many of the British were British South Africans, who knew that the Boers in other parts of South Africa suffered no such disabilities as they sought to impose in the Transvaal. They knew also that Great Britain claimed to be the paramount power in South Africa. In short, every fibre of what the Briton calls his notions of fair play was wrung, and the efforts of the British Uitlander and his friends to get Great Britain to intervene were persistent. They culminated in the Jameson Raid of 1896.

The Jameson Raid was a melancholy blunder which was ill-organized and ill-conducted, and which, by affording the Boers the opportunity of an easy victory, confirmed them in their intention to assert themselves and to consolidate their position. The raid inflicted a serious blow on the prestige of Great Britain as well as on that of Mr. Rhodes; it enabled the Transvaal to accumulate arms "in self-defence"; it put an end to the Reform movement, and won for the Boers the sympathy of the world. The one redeeming feature of its failure was that it evoked from the German Emperor a telegram of congratulation to President Kruger which awakened the British people to a comprehension of German feelings towards themselves, and contributed lastingly—though the effect was but slowly perceived—to the knowledge of native-born South Africans, both Dutch and British, of the aims and possibilities

of German intervention in South African affairs. It was the full comprehension in later years of these aims which enlisted the greatest of Boer generals and statesmen, General Louis Botha, on the side of Great Britain against Germany.

But the immediate consequence of the Jameson Raid and its punishment was to exacerbate the relations between Briton and Boer, and finally between the British Government and President Kruger as chief of the Boer Government; and the seriousness of the situation was at length brought home to the British public by the dispatch of Sir Alfred Milner, the British Commissioner in South Africa, who perceived and who said that unless Great Britain asserted herself there could never be any improvement of the conditions under which British subjects lived under Boer rule. He also perceived that the Boers and President Kruger had prepared themselves for war, and that they were prepared not to admit British paramountcy in South Africa, but to dispute it. They believed that though the fight might be long and severe, they could overthrow the British power and expel the British flag.

It is not necessary to follow the course of the fruitless negotiations. It is of importance to examine the qualities and characteristics of the Boer forces which led them to believe in their ability to beat the British, and enabled them to prolong the fighting over nearly three years. The Boer farmer, by tradition and inheritance, had worked out his powers of resistance to the perils of the wilderness, into which he had wandered, by dependence on himself in the presence of danger. This, and the other qualities which accrue to men living in solitary places, gave to the Boer as a fighter great self-reliance and individuality. These are factors of great military value under any conditions, but especially under circumstances involving such dispersion of combatants, such distances between commander and commanded, as were brought about by the conjunction of long-range arms, an open terrain, and the clearest

atmosphere in the world. The Mauser, which could kill at 2000 yards, enabled the Boer to strike at the extreme limit of vision, and so to keep his enemies at a distance while securing his own line of retreat. It was all a born guerrilla, such as he was, asked for. He was adept at taking cover; the burghers' first care was to conceal themselves quickly and cunningly, and every Boer, whether commander or commanded, had an eye for position. Add to this that the Boer had good nerves and was not to be disturbed by the shock of shells so long as he was entrenched, and it will be seen how well fitted he was for fighting defensive actions against forces which had neither his scouting ability nor his individuality, and neither his ability to take cover nor his marksmanship. To beat him as a guerrilla, men of his own type and ability were needed, not our patient, marching infantry; and the consequence was that we had to evolve the right kind of soldier as the war was in progress. But with all these fine qualities the Boer army had within it the germs of weakness, for neither battles nor campaigns are won by defence, but only by attack. The motto of war is sacrifice: the procedure of war is the attack pushed home regardless of sacrifice; and this the Boer army, as an army, never learnt. So that in the end it was the stolid, patient British soldier who wore the Boer down, not the elusive, mobile Boer guerrilla who tired the organized army out. It is none the less an unending tribute to the Boer pertinacity, stubbornness, and courage that the commandos were able to keep the field against the British forces for two years after the Boer regular armies had disappeared, and that at the end they emerged with honour and credit.

The Boer forces which took the field in 1899 were composed of two divisions: (1) The burgher commandos, (2) the regular forces. Of the commandos the whole male population between the ages of sixteen and sixty formed the material. The material was good, but the system had serious

defects, of which the inequality in numbers of the commandos was an obvious one, since no general was ever quite sure of the number of men he commanded. Another defect, equally evident, was an absence of discipline for which no incentive of patriotism or enthusiasm could ever compensate. If such were the faults of the machine, those of the motive power were not less glaring. No provision had been made in peace for the training of men for the duties of the staff. The chain of authority between commander-in-chief and private soldier was not forged on to the Boers till war was on them, and then so hurriedly that it could not bear the strain.

The regular forces of the Transvaal consisted of: (1) the State Artillery, (2) the South African Republican Police (the Z.A.R.P., shortened to "the Zarps" as a nickname), and (3) the Swaziland Police. The State Artillery was as complete and efficient a unit as any of its kind in existence. It was divided into field-artillery, fortress-artillery, and field-telegraph. Its modern armament at the outbreak of war was: 6 Creusot 75-mm. quick-firers (the predecessors of the French 75's), 4 Krupp howitzers (120 mm.), 8 Krupp quick-firers, 21 Vickers-Maxim pom-poms, 4 Vickers mountain-guns, 4 Nordenfeldts, 2 Armstrongs, and 22 Maxims. There were consequently 49 modern pieces as well as the Maxims, and this was supplemented by fortress artillery, including 4 Creusot 6-inch guns. The Orange Free State had 14 Krupp 3-inch and 9 other guns, besides Maxims; and the total number of rifles at the disposal of the Boer forces was over 108,000. During the war about 26,000 projectiles of various kinds were manufactured in Johannesburg, and repairs were done there and at Pretoria. Although this armament and supply of ammunition seem so trifling when compared with those with which the Great War has now made everyone familiar, they endued the Boer forces with a power of effective resistance and an ability to strike hard such as were encountered for the

first time by any British army. It is customary to speak of the South African War as a guerrilla war, and even Lord Halsbury referred to it at one point as a "sort of war". It was, in fact, the first of the modern wars, and the lessons of it were certainly not lost by any of the foreign military attachés, notably the Japanese and German attachés, who followed it. It did not bring about any change in the principles of military strategy or of effective training, but it pointed to the necessity of new fire tactics, and it paved the way to the adoption by all armies of heavy artillery in the field. In a week of the Great War more shells were fired than in the whole of the South African War, and problems in transport were solved daily which confounded divisional staffs there for months together; but in essentials the lessons enforced by the Boer war were an integral canon of all military science, namely, that it is organization which wins battles.

It is difficult to arrive at an estimate of the Boer forces, because these differed at many times during the progress of the war. The estimate, however, of 87,365 has been arrived at after the collection of much independent testimony, and may be taken as fairly accurate. It is a grand total of the numbers of all who bore arms against the British troops at any time whatever during the campaign. The Boer army, regarded as such, was, numerically, the most unstable in history, varying in strength as it varied with fortune in the field—varying even with the weather. At its greatest it numbered 55,000, at its least 15,000. But a burgher, whether with the forces or on his farm, was always ready to fight again when the opportunity offered. He was nominally a peaceful farmer; but always under the farmer's skin was a man of war. The Boers, despite themselves, are a military race. They are good men to go hunting lions with, and Great Britain was fortunate in that, having fought with them, she afterwards had them to fight with her—side by side. E. S. G.

CHAPTER IV

Why Roberts and Kitchener were sent to South Africa

Opening Acts of the South African War—With Sir George White at Ladysmith —General French's War Record—First Phase of the Siege of Ladysmith—Winston Churchill's Adventures—Sir Redvers Buller and his Task—The "Black Week" of December, 1899—The Disastrous Battle of Colenso—Sir George White and the Suggestions of Surrender—General Gatacre and Stormberg—Lord Methuen and Magersfontein—Lessons of the "Black Week"—Lord Roberts sent to South Africa with Lord Kitchener as Chief of Staff.

ON the morning of the 11th October, 1899, the Boers of the Orange Free State seized the Natal train which had left Ladysmith for Harrismith, and in the afternoon also stopped the train going the other way—the first act of war. On the next day President Kruger sent to an American paper the famous telegram, which contained the words: "The British Agent has been recalled; war is certain; the Republics are determined that if they must belong to England a price will have to be paid which will stagger humanity". And on the same day an armoured train, under Lieutenant Nesbitt, with fifteen men of the Protectorate Regiment, escorting two 7-pounder guns and ammunition, on their way from Cape Town to Mafeking, was derailed and attacked at Kraaipan, about forty miles south of Mafeking, by a Boer raiding-party. Lieutenant Nesbitt was wounded, and all on the train were captured except the engine-driver, Flowerday, who was also wounded. These were the first shots fired in the war.

South-eastward, more than 300 miles away across the High Veldt of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, the Boer commandos had already begun to gather round the towns in the northern part of the British colony of Natal—Newcastle, Dundee, and Ladysmith. "Talana Hill" was fought, Sir Penn Symons killed. The Natal Field Force, after two more efforts to stem the invasion at Elandslaagte and Lombard's Kop, retired upon Ladysmith, and with the garrison of that town, under Sir George White, was there besieged. So that when Sir Redvers Buller arrived at Durban on the last day of the month he found that Ladysmith was cut off from the outer world. Sir George White telegraphed to him that he could "hold the Boers, but reinforcements should be sent to Natal at once", and General Hunter reported to Buller that "Ladysmith, lying in a hollow, was commanded by heights too distant for the garrison to hold and possessed by the enemy, superior in numbers, mobility, and long-range artillery".

With Sir George White in Ladysmith was a man who had arrived there on the day that Talana Hill battle was fought, a cavalry general, destined to find in the South African War the opportunity to gain the renown which in years to come placed him in command of a British army engaged in the greatest war in the world's history—Major-General John Denton Pinkstone French. He had made his mark as a man of strong will as a squadron officer of the 19th Hussars in the Gordon Relief Expedition of 1884–5, and he had come now to Natal to command the cavalry from Aldershot, where he had commanded the First Cavalry Brigade. Those who knew French best knew him to be a born leader of cavalry, but some even of them feared he was too reckless, too enterprising. In the manœuvres of 1898, for instance, his tactics, though strikingly successful, were considered decidedly risky; but when in the following year he received the Brigade command

at Aldershot he showed himself to be, as Sir Evelyn Wood said: "the driving force of tactical instruction in the British army".[1] General Buller, who was now Commander-in-Chief of the army in South Africa, had seen what French could do, for after the retirement from Abu Klea in 1885 he mentioned French in the dispatch he sent home: "I wish expressly to remark on the excellent work that has been done by the small detachment of the 19th Hussars both during our occupation of Abu Klea and during our retirement. Each man has done the work of ten, and it is not too much to say that the force owes much to Major French and his thirteen troopers." And in fact, when Major-General French came to apply his knowledge to operations in the field as a leader of cavalry in South Africa, the upshot was that he was the one leader who went right through the campaign without making a mistake, in a campaign of many and disastrous blunders.

Sir George White, who was in command in Natal, had been Commander-in-Chief in India from 1893 to 1898, and at the very end of his term of office there had broken his leg in a bad fall from his horse. When he arrived in England he went to the War Office as Quartermaster-General, having been offered that position by Lord Lansdowne, then Secretary of State for War. After forty-five years of service in India it was not a congenial appointment to such a man. "He was now to exchange the large open life of India for a house in London, which he had always detested, and the command of 300,000 men for an office chair. He knew soldiers and their needs, having been a regimental officer most of his life, and he took up his new work without serious doubts as to his capacity to do it, but he told a friend: 'It is not congenial work to me or what I am well up in.' Being for the time a cripple did not make the prospect more attractive."[2] He soon formed his own opinion of the War Office as it then

[1] *Sir John French.* C. Chisholm. [2] *Life of Sir George White.* Sir H. M. Durand.

BRITISH LEADERS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

LIEUT.-GEN. SIR JOHN FRENCH — LIEUT.-GEN. SIR GEORGE WHITE

GENERAL THE RT. HON. SIR REDVERS H. BULLER

LIEUT.-GEN. LORD METHUEN — MAJ.-GEN. SIR W. F. GATACRE

From photographs by Russell, Window & Grove, Knight (Aldershot), and Elliott & Fry

was. "There is too great independence", he said, "in the several branches, and the soldiers are not sufficiently controllers of military action and are not very united or strong."

In July of 1899 Lord Wolseley, then Commander-in-Chief, offered Sir George the Governorship of Gibraltar when it should be vacant. The offer was at once accepted, but a whole year was to pass—an eventful year—before he was sworn in as Governor of the Rock. In September Lord Wolseley asked him to be ready to start almost immediately for Natal, as it had been decided to hold that colony and the Cape Colony against the threatened invasion of the Boers, and to send out an army corps and a division of cavalry to South Africa under Sir Redvers Buller. Meantime White was to protect Natal. Lord Wolseley had doubts as to whether, owing to his lame leg, White would be fit for this service, and, on his so expressing himself to White, received the answer: "My leg is good enough for anything except running away." Wolseley doubted no longer. On 16th September White sailed for Natal, having previously been summoned to Osborne by the Queen with a message that she could not let him go without saying good-bye to him.

On the 11th October White was at Pietermaritzburg, whence he wrote: "The Boers are certain to declare war to-night and I am far from being confident in the military position. . . . I think it possible that with their great numbers and mobility the Boers may isolate us even at Ladysmith."

White went on to Ladysmith the same day. He was soon to realize that his words were prophetic, but before the isolation was complete the "reckless" cavalry brigadier from Aldershot had a chance to display in the open field the tactics which had so perturbed the minds of his opponents in the manœuvres at home. He had to deal with an enemy worthy of him, a mounted enemy, enterprising and mobile and swift enough to cut off the British force at Dundee from White's

force at Ladysmith, for on the very day that Talana Hill was fought, 20th October, a Boer column had pushed on to Elandslaagte, a station on the railway fifteen miles north-east of Ladysmith, right on the line of communications, and seized the coal-fields and railway station and a supply train which was on its way to Dundee. The Boer leader Kock took up a strong position on some heights near the station, and in the evening his commando gave a smoking-concert in the hotel, inviting to it the British prisoners captured in the train or at the station. The "Transvaal Folk Song" and "God Save the Queen" were sung with complete impartiality. The moment the news reached White in Ladysmith, Major-General French, who had arrived there that same morning (20th October), moved out to reconnoitre the position. He had with him the 5th Lancers, the Natal Mounted Rifles, the Natal Carbineers, and a battery of field-artillery. An infantry brigade under Colonel Ian Hamilton was in support. The reconnaissance was checked before it was completed by orders from White recalling the force, as an attack from the Free Staters at Bester's (a station on the rail between Ladysmith and Harrismith in the Free State, only ten miles or so distant) was feared. Thus the enemy was already astride both the railways to the north and north-west of Ladysmith. White concentrated all his forces in the town, and rode round the fortified lines to see that all was in order for a siege. He had to consider how his field force might be turned into a garrison and Ladysmith into a fortress.

Before sunrise on 21st October Major-General French was in the saddle again, with orders to clear the neighbourhood of Elandslaagte of the enemy and cover the reconstruction of the railway and telegraph lines. He had with him 338 men of the Imperial Light Horse and Natal Field-artillery. A half-battalion (338 men) of the 1st Manchester Regiment with detachments of Royal Engineers and railway detachments followed by rail,

piloted by an armoured train manned by one company of the Manchesters. At seven o'clock the advance-guard of cavalry sighted the Boers, who at once retired to some kopjes about a mile from the station. The Natal Field-battery sent a shot from a 7-pounder gun into the outbuildings of the station, and a crowd of Boers and British prisoners rushed out, the Boers making for the kopjes and the British for the battery. A squadron of Imperial Light Horse now captured the station and its Boer guard. The Boer guns on the kopjes opened fire on the Natal battery, which found itself outclassed and outranged. French fell back and sent for reinforcements. White sent them at once, with the message that the Boers must be beaten and driven off, and that time was of great importance. French advanced upon the Boer position in the kopjes before the whole of the reinforcements had arrived, so as to hold the enemy. When the reinforcements came up, French swiftly developed his plan of attack. White himself rode out from Ladysmith while the advance was in progress, recognized at once that French's plans were good, and, being an unselfish man, was content to remain a looker-on, leaving to his subordinate the entire control of the operations. "A jealous or fussy man", says Sir Mortimer Durand in his *Life of Sir George White*, "would have taken command. He had the pleasure of seeing an admirably-planned attack carried out with entire success, and the enemy driven away to the northward in headlong rout with the loss of nearly half their numbers." The Boers lost also their two guns and their commander, and their flight opened up the line of communications and enabled General Yule to retire upon Ladysmith from Dundee.

Soon after Elandslaagte two more battles were fought, Rietfontein and Lombard's Kop—Rietfontein in order to cover Yule's retreat, and Lombard's Kop to stave off, if possible, the complete investment of Ladysmith by the Boer commandos now converging upon it on every side. Major-

General French, incessantly reconnoitring with his cavalry, had warned his chief that if he intended to strike before their ring about the town was complete he must do so quickly. The army corps coming from Britain was on the sea, and would be at Durban in a fortnight, but White determined to strike at the Boers, with the force he had, on the north and east of Ladysmith. And so, on what came to be known as "Mournful Monday", the 30th October, were fought the actions of Lombard's Kop and Nicholson's Nek, called collectively the "Battle of Ladysmith". The army was divided into two bodies; one, consisting of the 1st Gloucester Regiment and the 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers and a mountain battery under Lieutenant-Colonel Carleton, was to occupy the high ground to the north of Ladysmith named Kainguba and Nicholson's Nek. The cavalry brigade under French was to be on the ridges beyond Gun Hill, south-east of the town, and between these two wings the main infantry attack was to be delivered by five battalions under Colonel Grimwood on Pepworth Hill, a strongly occupied position where the Boers had already planted their artillery—what sort of artillery was soon to be made manifest, for when the British guns opened fire upon Long Hill there was no reply from there; the reply came in the shape of a 96-pound shell from Pepworth Hill, and from six long-range 3-inch Creusot guns. Early in the morning Grimwood and French were fiercely attacked, and obliged to fight a defensive instead of an offensive battle. Right away round from Nicholson's Nek, where Carleton's force was supposed to be, to Lombard's Kop, where French's cavalry protected the British right, was one long-drawn semicircle of Boers. During the fight bad news came from Carleton's force. The mules of his mountain battery had been stampeded; the whole force had been surrounded and compelled to surrender. And from the town itself came word from Colonel Knox, who was in charge of it, that the Boers on the west might at any time

rush the town from that side. White had to withdraw—and it was done with difficulty—into Ladysmith.

The Boers had given us a great surprise when their big Creusot 96-pounder gun opened fire on our troops and on the town from Pepworth Hill; but before the day was over they had themselves had a great surprise, for suddenly, at about noon, two big guns opened fire on them—two naval 4.7 guns! A week before, White had asked Admiral Harris, in naval command at the Cape, to send him a heavy-gun detachment, in view of the heavy guns which the Boer general, Joubert, was bringing down from the Transvaal. The admiral disembarked two 4.7 guns from the cruiser *Powerful* at Durban, and, with some smaller quick-firing guns, sent them, with 16 officers and 270 men under Captain Hedworth Lambton, to Ladysmith. The big guns were mounted on special carriages designed by Sir Percy Scott. The guns and men detrained at Ladysmith at the very time when the shells of the big Boer Creusot gun —"Long Tom" it came to be called—were bursting over the town. As Sir Arthur Conan Doyle picturesquely puts it (in *The Great Boer War*):—

"That terrible Boer 96-pounder, serenely safe and out of range, was plumping its great projectiles into the masses of retiring troops. It was with some misgivings that the officers saw their men quicken their pace and glance back, at the whine and screech of the shell. They were still some miles from home and the plain was open. What could be done to give them some relief? And at that very moment came the unexpected answer. That plume of engine smoke, observed in the morning, had drawn nearer and nearer as the heavy train came puffing up the steep inclines. Then, almost before it had drawn up at the Ladysmith siding, there had sprung from it a crowd of merry, bearded fellows, with ready hands and strange sea-cries, pulling and hauling to get out the long slim guns lashed on the trucks. . . . And so it was that the weary and dispirited British troops heard a crash, which was louder and sharper than that of their field-guns, and saw far away upon the distant hill a great spurt of smoke and flame to show where the shell had struck.

Captain Hedworth Lambton and his men had saved the situation. The masterful gun had met its own master and sank into silence."

And so, somewhat cheered by the dramatic advent of the bluejackets and their big guns, the Lombard's Kop force, from which such great things had been hoped, found itself back in the town; by sunset of that "Mournful Monday" all the tents in the camp were full once more, save only the tents of Carleton's two battalions. They, after the loss of their mule battery and a hopeless fight among the rocks and boulders of Kainguba against an encircling host of Boers, had surrendered and gone into captivity. Sir George White sent home an official dispatch which became famous—for it revealed the chivalrous soul of the man—and a letter to his wife, made public since his death by his biographer, Sir Mortimer Durand. The official message was as follows:—

"30 *October.*

"I have to report a disaster to a column sent by me to take a position in the hills to guard the left flank of the troops in their operations to-day. The Royal Irish Fusiliers, the Gloucestershire Regiment, and No. 10 Mountain Battery were surrounded in the hills, and, after heavy losses, had to capitulate. Losses not yet ascertained in detail. A man of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, employed as hospital orderly, came in under flag of truce with letter from the medical officer of the column and asked for assistance to bury dead. I fear there is no doubt of the truth of report. I framed the plan, in carrying out which this disaster occurred, and am alone responsible for that plan. No blame whatever attaches to the troops, as the position was untenable."

To his wife he wrote:

"It is doubly sad that the blow of my life has fallen upon me this day [the eve of their wedding day]. . . . The newspaper boys are now calling in London the terrible disaster that I have only heard of two hours ago. . . . It has been a knock-down blow to me, but I felt I had to make an effort, and thought this plan afforded a fair chance of military success. It was my plan, and I am responsible, and I have said so to the Secretary of State, and I must bear the consequences. I could have shut

myself up, or even dealt half-hearted blows, with perfect safety, but I played a bold game, too bold a game, and I have lost. I believe every move I made was reported to the Boers. They are brave and very intelligent, and very hard to give a decided beating to. I think after this venture the men will lose confidence in me and that I ought to be superseded. It is hard luck, but I have no right to complain. I have had a very difficult time of it. I don't think I can go on soldiering. My mind is too full of this to write about anything else. It is far into the night, but I don't expect to sleep, though I have been up since 3 a.m."[1]

Three days after the battle of Lombard's Kop and the disaster of Kainguba (Nicholson's Nek) the Boer commandos had seized the ring of hills—thirty miles in circumference—around Ladysmith, and the investment of the town was complete. On the 2nd November Major-General French went out to the southward with cavalry and artillery to reconnoitre, shelled one of the Boer camps, and then, unable to do more, went back to the town. A telegram from Sir Redvers Buller, the Commander-in-Chief, was awaiting him. In it Sir Redvers desired that French and his staff should be sent to the Cape. The cavalry leader started at midday. His train was heavily fired on all the way to Colenso, on the Tugela River, thirteen miles south of Ladysmith, but got through safely. It was the last train out, and immediately afterwards the rail and the wires were cut. Next day the Boers mounted new guns on their heights and began a heavy bombardment. The siege of Ladysmith had begun.

It was on the day following "Mournful Monday" that Sir Redvers Buller, the Commander-in-Chief, arrived at Cape Town. His army corps was following in a stream of transports. Before the wires were cut outside Ladysmith a telegram from Buller got through to White, suggesting that he should entrench and wait for events, if not at Ladysmith behind the Tugela at Colenso. White replied that Ladysmith

[1] *Life of Sir George White.* Sir H. M. Durand.

was strongly entrenched, but that the lines were not continuous, and the perimeter was so large that the Boers could exercise their usual tactics. "I have the greatest confidence in holding Ladysmith for as long as necessary. I could not now withdraw from it. . . . I intend to contain as many Boers as possible round Ladysmith, and I believe they will not go south without making an attempt on the town." To this Buller replied: "I agree that you do best to remain at Ladysmith, though Colenso and the line of Tugela River look tempting. It will be at least three solid weeks before I can attempt to reinforce you, and at present I fancy that the best help I can then give you will be to take Bloemfontein. Good luck to you! You must have had some merry fights."

Buller was destined to realize at no distant date what "Colenso and the line of the Tugela" meant. He was to find to his cost that White could not have held the line of the river from the south side against the Boers on the north, for the reason that the northern bank commands the southern. His idea of helping White in Natal by taking Bloemfontein in the Orange Free State was in accordance with his original plan of assembling his army corps at the Cape, and of advancing with it upon the Free State capital; but after consultation with Major-General French he felt that White could not protect Natal without assistance; and so, finding that the army corps could not be got ready before the end of December, Buller decided to go to Natal. It was well he did so, even though he had to divide up his force, partly for the relief of Kimberley and partly for the rescue of White, for, as Sir Mortimer Durand has pointed out in his *Life of Sir George White*, "If Buller, in December, 1899, had advanced with a single army corps into the Free State there is little room to doubt that he would very soon have found himself in desperate difficulties. The advance proved no easy task even for Lord Roberts, with his greatly increased forces, months later."

White now organized the defences of Ladysmith. To the north, Colonel W. G. Knox and Major-General F. Howard; to the south, Colonel Ian Hamilton and Colonel Royston held the lines. Outside the British lines, by permission of the Boer leader, Joubert, the non-combatants of the garrison were allowed to camp at Intombi; others who remained in the town dug caves in the river bank and lived there, sheltered from the attentions of "Long Tom" on Bulwana. South of Ladysmith is a ridge the extremities of which were named Wagon Hill and Cæsar's Camp; and here on the 7th and 9th November the Boers attacked the Manchester Regiment and the 60th Rifles, who held that position. The attack failed, and thenceforth for some time the Boers did not venture another, though they continued to bombard the town from their gun positions. In the interval between the first week of the siege and the arrival of Buller on the 25th November the Boers had their chance for the conquest of Natal—and missed it. Had they been content to mask Ladysmith and advance in force into the southern part of the colony there was nothing to prevent their capture of Durban. Almost immediately after the battle of Lombard's Kop the Boers held a council of war to decide whether the town should be attacked with their full strength, or whether, leaving a detachment to contain it, the Boer army should advance upon Maritzburg, the capital, and Durban, the port of the colony. Louis Botha, who was at that time only a commandant, advised the latter course. The majority came to the conclusion that as there were 12,000 British troops in Ladysmith their army was not strong enough to do both, but that Ladysmith would fall to an assault. The unsuccessful attacks of 7th and 9th November were the result of this decision. After a delay of a fortnight, however, Joubert and Botha, with 4200 men, did seize Colenso and the north bank of the Tugela River, and thence pushed on farther south to Estcourt.

It was during this Boer raid into the southern part of Natal that the other "armoured-train incident" occurred. On 15th November, 1899, the train, carrying a 7-pounder gun, manned by five sailors, one company of the Dublin Fusiliers, and one of the Durban Light Infantry, was reconnoitring along the rail northwards from Estcourt towards Colenso. At Chieveley some Boer horsemen were seen riding southwards. The train started to move back, but at a turn in the line came under fire from two field-guns and a "pom-pom". The driver went full speed down an incline and dashed into an obstruction; three trucks were derailed, and a stiff fight began between the train party and a force of 300 Boers. Captain Haldane, of the Gordon Highlanders, who was in command, set the Durban Light Infantry company to clear the line, and they were assisted by Mr. Winston Churchill, who had been allowed to accompany the train as war correspondent, while the Dublin Fusiliers fought the Boers. The 7-pounder gun was destroyed, but the British held out for an hour under heavy fire. The train was wrecked, but the engine, with its cab full of wounded, was able to move back to Frere station. The troops now made an effort to cross the veldt to some houses, but someone without orders had raised a white handkerchief. The Boers thereupon ceased fire, galloped in on the retiring men, and summoned them to surrender. Captain Haldane, another officer, Mr. Churchill, and 53 men were thus captured, but one officer and 69 men made their way back to Estcourt. Mr. Churchill described the affair in complete detail in his interesting book, published in 1900, *London to Ladysmith, via Pretoria*. After speaking of the attempts which he and a little band of volunteers made to link up what remained of the shattered train, he says:

"I have had in the last four years the advantage, if it be an advantage, of many strange and varied experiences from which the student of realities might draw profit and instruction. But nothing was so thrilling as

this: to wait and struggle among these clanging, rending iron boxes, with the repeated explosions of the shells, the hiss as they passed in the air, the grunting and puffing of the engine, the expectation of destruction as a matter of course, the realization of powerlessness, and the alternations of hope and despair—all this for seventy minutes by the clock."

And after his capture and arrival at Colenso:

"I could not sleep. Vexation of spirit, a cold night, and wet clothes withheld sweet oblivion. The rights and wrongs of the quarrel, the fortunes and chances of the war forced themselves on the mind. What men they were, these Boers! I thought of them as I had seen them in the morning, riding forward through the rain—thousands of independent riflemen, thinking for themselves, possessed of beautiful weapons, led with skill, living as they rode without commissariat or transport or ammunition column, moving like the wind and supported by iron constitutions and a stern hard Old Testament God, who should surely smite the Amalekites hip and thigh."

Encouraged by this armoured-train incident, Joubert advanced farther south in two columns, 3000 men under himself on the west of the railway, and 1200 under his son David on the east. Passing round Estcourt, the two commandos met on the railway between the stations of Willow Grange and Highlands. The strategic situation was now a strange one, for as there was a British force at Mooi River, still farther south, the Boers, although on the line of communications of the Estcourt force, were themselves in between that and the Mooi River force. Mobile as they were—a lesson in that respect to all the armies of Europe—it was not a position in which even Boer commandos could feel comfortable. "Although therefore the Boers had cut the rail and telegraph between the two stations, Joubert's situation, halted between two British forces, each equal in strength to his two commandos, was audacious if not dangerous. Moreover, in rear of Mooi River, further British reinforcements were disembarking at Durban and being pushed up to the front in a continuous stream."[1] With their customary

[1] *Official History of the War in South Africa.* Sir J. F. Maurice.

"slimness" the Boers, therefore, proceeded to extricate themselves from a position of danger, but not before they had been compelled to put up a fight. General Hildyard, who was in command at Estcourt, sent out a force against them under Colonel Walter Kitchener. The Boers under Louis Botha had, as usual, seized a good position on a commanding height. A night attack upon it was a failure, and the Boer counter-attack at daylight next day (23rd November) caused the retirement of Kitchener's brigade. The Boers were able to get away across the Tugela, destroying the railway bridge behind them. Thus ended the great Boer raid into southern Natal, the result of which for them was the capture of many cattle and horses, and the loss of the services of their leader, Joubert, who was hurt through his horse stumbling, and returned to Pretoria, leaving Botha in command on the Tugela.

Sir Redvers Buller, the Commander-in-Chief, arrived at Durban on 25th November, and on 6th December was at Frere station, on the railway, a little over ten miles south of Colenso and the Tugela. Here he concentrated the forces intended for the relief of Ladysmith, and by 9th December was in command of a well-equipped army of all three arms amounting to over 19,000 officers and men, with 2 naval 4.7 guns, 12 naval 12-pounders, 30 15-pounder field-pieces, and 18 machine-guns. According to an estimate made by Buller's staff, there were 6000 to 7000 Boers concentrated under Louis Botha on the Tugela at and about Colenso, in a position which is thus described in the *Official History of the War*:

"The task which the British Commander-in-Chief had decided to undertake was not an easy one. From Potgieter's Drift, 16 miles west of Colenso, to the junction of the Tugela with Sunday's River, 30 miles east of Colenso, a ridge of hills, broken only by narrow kloofs and dongas, line like a continuous parapet the northern bank of the Tugela. Westward the ridge is connected by the Brakfontein Nek with the spur of the Drakensberg called the Tabanyama Range. This was destined a month later to bar the advance of the relieving army on that side. The

BOER LEADERS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

GENERAL PIET JOUBERT — GENERAL PIET A. CRONJE

PRESIDENT KRUGER

GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA — GENERAL J. H. DE LA REY

From photographs by C. F. Robertson, Grant (St. Helena), Elliott & Fry, and Duffus Bros. (Capetown)

eastern flank was guarded by the lower slopes of the Biggarsberg parallel to Sunday's River. The approaches to the beleaguered town from the south were thus defended by an immense natural redoubt. Opposite to the very centre of the front face of this redoubt lay Colenso. . . . Behind this centre, and at right angles to the parapet, a cluster of hills ran back to the ridge of 'Cæsar's Camp' immediately to the south of Ladysmith. Through this confused mass of broken ground so favourable to the fighting methods of its defenders, ran the three roads which connect Colenso and Ladysmith. . . . Along the face of this strategic fort ran the Tugela, an admirable moat, as completely commanded by the heights on its left bank as is the ditch of a permanent work by its parapet. West of Colenso this moat could be crossed by guns and wagons at only five 'drifts', of which four were difficult for loaded wagons. Eastward of Colenso the only practicable drift was that by which the Weenen road crosses the river. Other fords, through which single horsemen or men on foot breast-high could wade, existed both east and west, but, with the exception of a bridle-drift near Colenso, they were not marked on the maps in possession of the troops and could only be discovered by enquiry and reconnaissance. The commandos assigned to Botha for the defence of the line of the Tugela were insufficient to man the whole of this immense position, but he was able to rely upon the mobility of his burghers, and he was so situated that his assailant, in order to attack him anywhere, would have to cover greater distances than he need cover to reinforce either flank from the centre. Moreover, not only did the heights he held afford a perfect view for miles over the country to the south, but the Tugela hills are precipitous and rocky on their southern faces, while the approaches to them from the north present as a rule easy slopes and gentle gradients."

Such then was the enemy and such their fortress—for so it was, a natural fortress—which the British army for the relief of Ladysmith and its general, Sir Redvers Buller, V.C., had to face. The quality of his army Buller himself vouched for in his historic phrase: "The men are splendid!" His own character as a soldier is described by the man who perhaps knew him best, his chief in many campaigns, Lord Wolseley. In his *Story of a Soldier's Life*, Wolseley, when describing the Red River Expedition of 1870, says:

"All the officers with the Expeditionary force soon became expert in making portages and in mending their boats, no one more so than my very able friend and valued comrade, Redvers Buller. It was here I first made his acquaintance, and I am proud to feel that we have been firm friends ever since. He was a first-rate axe-man, and I think he was the only man with us of any rank who could carry a 100-pound barrel of pork over a portage on his back. He could mend a boat and have her back in the water with her crew and all her stores on board while many would have been still making up their minds what to do. Full of resource and personally absolutely fearless, those serving under him always trusted him fully. He afterwards served as my Chief of the Staff in the expedition sent too late to relieve the hero and martyr Charles Gordon in Khartoum, and no man ever deserved better of his country than he did upon that occasion."

And later, writing of the Ashanti War, he says:

"I felt that ordinary men could not be good enough for the work I had undertaken. I had taken care to surround myself with those whom I could trust and whom I felt had a similar confidence in me. Redvers Buller, of the Royal Rifles, was first and foremost among them, one whose stern determination of character nothing could ruffle, whose resource in difficulty was not surpassed by anyone I ever knew. Endowed with a mind fruitful in expedients, cool and calm in the face of every danger, he inspired general confidence and thoroughly deserved it. Had a thunderbolt burst at his feet he would merely have brushed from his rifle-jacket the earth it had thrown upon him without any break in the sentence he happened to be uttering at the moment. He was a thorough soldier, a practised woodman, a skilful boatman in the most terrifying of rapids, and a man of great physical strength and endurance."

Buller's first commission in the army was dated 23rd May, 1858, and when he finally retired from the service he had seen forty-seven and a half years of soldiering in eleven campaigns It was in the Zulu War that he won the Victoria Cross for his gallant conduct at the retreat at Inhlobane on 28th March, 1879, when he saved the lives of two officers and a trooper, who, on separate occasions, had their horses shot under them.

What the Boers thought of Buller was expressed by the Boer general, Joubert, and is quoted by Lewis Butler in his life of Sir Redvers: "I have to tell you", he said to his commandos, "that we now have to face the bravest and finest general in the world, who is accompanied by an army of men who would go through fire and water for him. To those of you who fought in the previous struggle with the English I need not say that I speak of General Buller."

While Sir Redvers was organizing his intended attack on the Boer position on the Tugela, the garrison of Ladysmith was not idle, and it was cheered and encouraged by seeing on the clouds one evening in November flashing-signals from Estcourt, where Buller's troops were then assembling. Later, regular heliographic communication was established, and Buller and White were able to talk over their plans with the aid of the sun. One of White's greatest difficulties was the presence of Boer spies within his lines. He himself reported that every movement or preparation for movement in Ladysmith was at once communicated to the Boers. On two occasions, early in December, when detachments of infantry were sent out to surprise outlying farms which were being used by the enemy, the farms were found empty. A night sortie against the Boer guns on Gun Hill was more fortunate, and a Long Tom and a 4.7-inch howitzer were destroyed by the Imperial Light Horse and Natal Volunteers. Again, on the 10th December, by another night surprise, a 4.7-inch howitzer was destroyed, and the Boers, who had closed in to cut off the party, were attacked with the bayonet. Bold reconnaissances were also made, and thus the besieging Boers were kept busy while Buller was preparing to break through. This he proposed to do by way of Potgieter's Drift, sixteen miles west of Colenso, and on the extreme right flank of the Boer position. White, for his part, arranged to sally out and meet the relieving force. On the 12th December Buller telegraphed to the Secretary of State

in London, that, having made careful inspection by telescope of the Boer position, he had come to the conclusion that a direct assault upon it at Colenso would be too costly, and that he had therefore decided to force the passage of Potgieter's Drift.

On that same day Buller received news of the disasters to Methuen at Magersfontein, and to Gatacre at Stormberg, both in the Cape Colony, and was so impressed by them that he no longer considered the flank attack on Potgieter's Drift advisable. That operation, he telegraphed to the Secretary of State, would involve the complete abandonment of his communications in Natal with Maritzburg and Durban, and, should it be unsuccessful, he might share the fate of Sir George White and be isolated and cut off from Natal. "From my point of view", he said, "it will be better to lose Ladysmith altogether than to throw open Natal to the enemy." He decided, therefore, to make that direct assault which he had feared to make before, and he heliographed to White: "Have been forced to change my plans; am coming through via Colenso and Onderbrook Spruit" (the valley through which one of the two roads ran from Colenso to Ladysmith), and he further informed White, in answer to White's enquiry, that he would make the attempt "probably on the 17th December". Had he known "what was going on on the other side of the hill", he would have hesitated to make the attempt to "go through via Colenso", and would have tried Potgieter's Drift, even at the risk of sharing the fate of Sir George White.

For Botha, Erasmus, and Prinsloo had fortified the whole of the natural fortress, which they were about to defend, with elaborate care. For three weeks before the battle, and up to the very eve of battle, trenches had been made with such ingenuity that they were with difficulty seen, and then only in part, from the other side of the river. The gun emplacements were more numerous than the guns, so that the guns

could be shifted about. From Robinson's Farm, five miles to the west of Colenso, to the Hill of Hlangwane, two miles to the east, the commandos were skilfully ranged all along the lower slopes of the position, every man of them a crack shot with the rifle and every man having a full view of the smooth, long slope, like the glacis of a fortress—as indeed it was—stretching away southward beyond the river, which was as a moat, deep, swift, and only to be crossed by the railway bridge, a road bridge, and a ford of uncertain practicability known as the Bridle Drift. "The details of the Boers' line of battle", says Sir F. Maurice in the *Official History of the War*, "would have been difficult to discover even by the fullest reconnaissance and by the best-trained Intelligence Department."

Buller spent the morning of the 14th December in examining the position through a telescope, but the instrument did not reveal to him the one weak spot in it—that Hill of Hlangwane, on the left and on his own side of the river. Ever since the first of the month Hlangwane, known to the Boers as the Boschkop, had been held by a commando under Dirksen; but two days before the battle this commando, not liking the idea of being on the other side of the river, away from the main position, recrossed the river in spite of Dirksen's commands. Dirksen telegraphed to Kruger at Pretoria: "If we give this kop over to the enemy then will the battle expected at Colenso end in disaster". Kruger replied: "The kop on the other side of the river must not be given up, for then all hope is over. Fear not the enemy but trust in God." A Boer war council was held, and it was decided that a new garrison of 800 men chosen by lot should reoccupy Hlangwane. The new garrison did not like their job, but they went. Hlangwane, as the Boer leaders well knew, was the dangerous spot for them, for from it their whole line of defences could be enfiladed.

Sir Redvers Buller, gazing through his telescope, saw that

the slopes of Hlangwane were covered with thick scrub, and decided in his plan of attack to send against it a force of 1000 mounted men and a battery of artillery to "cover the right flank of the general movement" and "to endeavour to take up a position on the hill and enfilade the kopjes north of the iron bridge". And as he turned the glass on to the main position—the wide loop of the river at Colenso and the other loop westward—it revealed hardly a sign of life. Those hill-sides in front of him had remained silent all through the bombardment by the naval guns on the 13th and 14th; not a shot had been fired in reply. "So little did the Boers betray their presence that in the British army the suspicion already began to lurk in some men's minds that the position had been evacuated. Even the general, who spent a good part of the day near the naval guns, examining the enemy's positions, was apparently, to judge by his dispositions, affected by the peaceful silence of those harmless-looking hillocks and bare mountain-sides."[1] Bitter disillusion was to come on the morrow!

Four brigades of infantry under Hildyard, Hart, Lyttelton, and Barton; a cavalry brigade under Lord Dundonald; five batteries of field-artillery and sixteen naval guns—21,000 men and forty-six guns in all—were set in motion in the early morning of the 15th December, 1899, and at 5.20 a.m. the Naval Brigade opened fire with two 4.7 and four 12-pounder guns upon the Boer kopjes. At six o'clock Colonel Long, commanding the artillery, took two field-batteries to within 700 yards of the river, right into the loop of the river in which was the village of Colenso, and had but just unlimbered and given the order to open fire when a single signal shot from a Boer big gun was heard. Instantly a fierce storm of rifle-fire burst forth from the kopjes upon the doomed batteries; officers, men, and horses went down before it. The survivors

[1] *The "Times" History of the War in South Africa*, Vol. II, p. 433.

took refuge in a donga about 100 yards to the rear. Attempts to save the guns failed with heavy loss—young Roberts, only son of his famous father, was among the victims. The guns were abandoned, all save two, saved by the heroism of those who volunteered for the service and received the Victoria Cross—Captains Congreve, Reed, Schofield, and Roberts (after death), Corporal Nurse and Private Ravenhill; and, for devoted bravery in attending to the wounded under the murderous fire, Major Baptie of the Royal Army Medical Corps. Meantime Dundonald's demonstration (for it was and could be no more than that) against Hlangwane failed under the heavy fire from the hidden and completely protected enemy. Hart's brigade had failed to find the ford at the Bridle Drift, and came under the same murderous fire that had destroyed Long's batteries and checked Dundonald. The river remained uncrossed. By eleven o'clock, the position of the British army being absolutely hopeless, Buller gave the order to abandon the guns and withdrew the whole force. Until four o'clock that afternoon the ten guns stood unprotected on the open veldt, and behind them in the donga crouched the few gunners and some of the Devons and Scots Fusiliers who had formed their supporting escort. The Boers feared a trap, and could not at first realize their good fortune; but when the naval battery had gone they ventured across the river, captured the guns, and made prisoners of the party in the donga. The ten guns, with limbers and ammunition-wagons and 600 rounds of shells, were taken leisurely over the river by the Boers. This was the final scene of the battle of Colenso and of the first attempt to relieve Ladysmith. Buller sent off to London the report of his serious reverse, and to White a message also telling of his failure, and asking how many days White could hold out. He suggested that White should fire away as much ammunition as possible, and make the best terms he could with the Boers. Happily Sir George was able to take a more optimistic view of the situation,

and was in a position to disregard this undoubtedly well-meant advice. He replied: "I can make food last for much longer than a month, and will not think of making terms till I am forced to. . . . Things may look brighter. The loss of 12,000 men here would be a heavy blow to England."

Stormberg, in the Cape Colony, lies 150 miles due south of Bloemfontein, and 43 miles from the Orange River, which is the boundary between Cape Colony and the Orange Free State. It is a junction station on the railway lines from East London and Port Elizabeth connecting with the Central Railway of the Free State, and was therefore an important point in the military operations in Cape Colony. It was essential to the British to cover both the railway lines which run from East London and Port Elizabeth and cross the Orange River into the Free State at Bethulie and Norval's Pont respectively, as well as the great trunk line which runs from Cape Town to Kimberley. The three points on these lines protected by British forces were De Aar junction on the trunk line, Colesberg on the Port Elizabeth line, and Stormberg on the East London line. The Free State Boers invaded Cape Colony in the first week of November, 1899, along the lines of the two railways, and enlisted in their ranks many of the disaffected Boers of the colony. The British, at Colesberg on the Port Elizabeth line, and at Stormberg on the East London line, fell back before the invasion. Major-General French was in charge of the operations in the Colesberg district; Lieutenant-General W. F. Gatacre, who had landed at East London on the 16th November, was entrusted with those in the direction of Stormberg.

Since 1862, when Gatacre received his commission in the 77th Regiment, his military career had been a brilliant one, personal gallantry being one of its chief characteristics. In 1881 he was military secretary to the Commander-in-Chief in India; he was chief of staff to General M'Queen in the Hazara Expedition in 1888; next year he was a brigadier in command

at Mandalay, fighting the Dacoits and restoring tranquillity to the Burmese districts which they had long troubled; in 1895 he was in command of a brigade in Chitral, and shared the hardships of that campaign with his men. In 1898 he was under Kitchener at the Atbara, and in the attack on the Dervish zareba was the first to reach it and drag down part of the fence, narrowly escaping death from a Dervish spear. Kitchener, in his official dispatch after the battle, said of Gatacre: "During the recent engagement General Gatacre showed a fine example of gallant leading. The cordiality and good fellowship existing between the British and Egyptian troops, who have fought shoulder to shoulder, is to a great extent due to the hearty co-operation of General Gatacre, and I cannot speak too highly of the services rendered by him and the troops under his command during the recent operations." Some years afterwards a writer in *Blackwood's Magazine*[1] told the following anecdote:—

"Kitchener was dictating his dispatch (on the Atbara battle) when there passed in front of us a pony led by a syce (groom) and laden with spoils selected with the praiseworthy discrimination of an art connoisseur. Kitchener hailed the man, and, selecting the finest coat of mail and the most beautifully finished spear, bade me take them to General Gatacre with his warmest thanks for the splendid gallantry and good judgment with which he had led his fine brigade. I seem now to see the pleasant light that shone in that brave soldier's eyes as I gave him the message word for word. What a splendid fellow! and how willingly any of us would have given our right hands to save him from the fate that befell him—at the hands of his own chiefs—in South Africa."

One of the features of Gatacre's character was a stern sense of discipline. Being a man of extraordinary energy, with an unbounded capacity for hard work, he exacted the last ounce of work and energy from those under his command—just the kind of man who would appeal to Kitchener!

[1] December, 1902: "Campaigning with Kitchener".

Nominally General Gatacre was in command of a division when he arrived in South Africa, but the division had been split up; some of it went to Buller in Natal, some to Methuen, before Kimberley, and there was left a bare brigade—the 2nd Irish Rifles, 2nd Northumberland Fusiliers, 250 mounted infantry, and two batteries of field-artillery—under 3000 effectives all told. On the 2nd December Gatacre telegraphed to Buller that the military situation there required handling with extreme care; that the Boers were advancing south along the railway line; that he had only two British regiments. Buller replied: "We have to make the best of the situation. You have a force considerably stronger than the enemy can now bring against you. Cannot you close with him, or else occupy a defensive position which will obstruct his advance? You have an absolutely free hand to do what you think best." Given a free hand and a suggestion to close with the enemy—this suited a man of Gatacre's temperament exactly, and he had already come to the opinion that a further defensive attitude would be hurtful. "The whole of this country", he wrote on 8th December, "is seething with rebels, and as they are all mounted and I have only a few mounted infantry on half-fed ponies it is very difficult to cope with them. I am hoping to move on a bit to-morrow or next day to recover some of the country given up prior to my arrival, as I think occupation of a position in advance of this may tend to awe the Dutch behind me."[1]

General Gatacre decided to make a night march on Stormberg, to seize the Rooi Kop Mountain, which rises immediately south and east of Stormberg Junction and the nek over which the railway ran, and so to drive the Boers back northward. He concentrated his force at Molteno station, about ten miles from Stormberg, on the 9th December, a day later than intended, owing to difficulties in the supply of rolling-stock.

[1] *General Gatacre, his Life and Services.* Lady Gatacre.

The Intelligence Staff had ascertained that the Boer strength was about 1700, and that the southern face of the nek between Rooi Kop and the Kissieberg Mountain, which enclosed the Stormberg valley on the west, was entrenched. General Gatacre thereupon decided to advance by a road which ran west of the railway to a point (Van Zyl's house) which would bring him directly opposite the western face of the Kissieberg, which he would rush with the bayonet before daybreak, and thus command with his guns the whole Stormberg valley.

The force set out on the night of 9th December at nine o'clock, led by guides who were considered to be efficient and trustworthy. It was one of the most unfortunate night marches on record, as may be gathered from the following facts, stated in the *Official History of the War*. The road taken had not been previously reconnoitred by a staff officer; the machine-guns, Royal Engineer detachment, and field-hospital, owing to lack of staff supervision, took the direct road to Stormberg junction instead of the one farther west which had been selected, and, finding that there were no troops ahead of them, halted where they were until daylight, having been told by the officer left in command at Molteno that he did not know by which road the main column was advancing; the guides leading the main infantry column missed the direct road which led to Van Zyl's house beneath the Kissieberg, went miles to the left, and then struck another road which did indeed lead to it, but over rough and stony ground; the men were wearied; they had been engaged in heavy fatigue-work on the very morning of the day; doubt as to the manner in which the column was being guided had spread discouragement. Finally, at the first streak of dawn, Van Zyl's house appeared in sight, and, according to the *Official History*, if the assault had been delivered at once the ridge might have been carried and command over the Stormberg valley secured; for all the Boer accounts of the fight agree in stating that Gatacre's night march was a complete

surprise to them. But either the chief guide did not fully understand the General's intentions, or he had lost his bearings, for he pointed out a kopje two miles farther on and said that that was the real place.

The column went wearily on, along a road which skirted the western face of the Kissieberg ridge, marching in fours, with no flanking-parties out, and only eight men as an advance-guard. They were marching in this formation right along the front of the Boer commando ranged up along the ridge above them! Taken by surprise as they were when they first saw the British column, the Boers manned the ridge while the column was plodding along beneath it. A shot rang out from the heights, a corporal of the leading company of the Royal Irish Rifles fell dead, and a rapid fire burst out upon the column, which at once formed front to the right, extended, and attacked the ridge—a direct frontal attack by almost worn-out men on a steep, terraced, boulder-strewn mountain-side, but undertaken with such gallantry that three companies of the Royal Irish struggled up close to the crest-line, and with them three companies of the Northumberland Fusiliers. If supported they would have gained the summit, but the other five companies of the Fusiliers had been ordered by their commanding officer to retire. The field-batteries, seeing this movement, thought that the whole attacking force was retiring, and began shelling the ridge to cover the retreat, thus by a fatal mischance shelling their own men. Retreat was now inevitable, and the whole force retired down the fatal slopes, followed by the exultant Boers. The material effect of the pursuit was not great, as the Boer shooting throughout the day had been indifferent, but it drove a large number of the troops into a deep donga beneath the ridge. This donga, an eye-witness says, was too deep to be used as a line of defence, and it was here that the trouble in the retirement commenced.

"The men rushed to this donga for cover, and on getting into it lay down and went to sleep; the greatest difficulty was experienced to get them on the move again. Many were thoroughly done up and did not appear to care what happened to them. Many still remained on the hill, some because they had not heard the order to retire; some, utterly weary, had sunk down asleep in the dead angle at the foot of the height." —*Official History of the War.*

Towards midday the British force, having lost all formation, struggled into Molteno; "the fatigue of the men had reached its climax, and most of them could hardly keep their feet; not a few fell down asleep before they reached the ground". Heart-broken, General Gatacre wrote home: "The fault was mine, as I was responsible, of course. I went rather against my better judgment in not resting the night at Molteno, but I was tempted by the shortness of the distance and the certainty of success. It was so near being a brilliant success." In the following April Gatacre was relieved of his command. In 1906 his broken life came to an end. His body was laid to rest in a far-off grave in Abyssinia. Such was the disaster of Stormberg—the first of the three which made the "Black Week" of the South African War.

As already stated, when Buller decided to break up the army corps which had followed him to Cape Town he assigned a portion of it to Lord Methuen for the relief of Kimberley. Methuen left Cape Town by the great trunk railway for Orange River station on the 10th November, 1899, and arrived there on the 12th. The Boers, fully alive to the fact that a serious attempt was to be made to relieve Kimberley, prepared defensive positions along the railway at Belmont and Graspan. Those at Belmont were upon a fortress-like group of hills and kopjes, strewn with immense iron-stone boulders, to the south-east of Belmont station. Shortly after three o'clock on the morning of the 23rd November Methuen's troops moved out to the attack of the Belmont position. It

was a "soldiers' battle" in the good old primeval British style, as Conan Doyle calls it in his history of the war, a sort of Battle of Inkerman on a small scale, but against deadlier weapons. The Guards Brigade and the 9th Infantry Brigade rushed the rough, craggy hills and drove the Boers off them, but with a loss of 3 officers and 51 non-commissioned officers killed, and 23 officers and 220 non-commissioned officers and men wounded. The Boer loss was 80 killed and 70 prisoners.

Lord Methuen's next fight was on the 25th November, at Graspan, seven and a half miles farther along the railway. Here the Boers were astride the railway upon a line of isolated kopjes, and, as at Belmont, the kopjes were carried by direct assault. The total British loss was under 300, that of the Boers about 100. As at Belmont, the want of cavalry and horse artillery enabled the defeated Boers to escape without heavy loss.

"Not only were the mounted troops at Lord Methuen's disposal insufficient, but their horses were already worn out by heavy reconnaissance duty and great scarcity of water. The results of this deficiency in mounted men were far-reaching. Not only did the enemy avoid paying the material penalties of successive failures on the battle-field, but his *moral* was stiffened by the immunity from disaster conferred by his superior mobility."—*Official History of the War.*

The Boers, defeated at Graspan, retired still farther along the line to a point where the Modder and Riet Rivers unite. With their usual intelligence and "slimness" they had realized that their practice hitherto of entrenching themselves upon kopjes was not quite satisfactory, as the hills were good targets for artillery, and had at their bases dead ground which served to protect assaulting columns. To be completely under cover, to have a clear field in front for shooting, and to have every facility in the rear for rapid withdrawal—that was the ideal Boer battle-line. And De la Rey and Cronje, the Boer leaders who opposed Methuen, found such a line on the Riet

River. They decided to fight from the banks and the bed of the river on each side of its junction with the Modder. The channels of both these streams are wide and deep, a thick growth of trees and shrubs lines their sides and hardly shows above the level of the plain. Thus the Riet and the Modder together formed not only a gigantic moat across the approaches to Kimberley on the south, but a covered way by which the Boers could move unseen to any part of the position taken up in their bed. The railway crosses the Riet River just below the junction of the Modder; at the bridge is the village known as Modder River Village, and a mile down stream another settlement called Rosmead. In both are farms and cottages with strongly-built mud walls and fences of wire and prickly cactus. These two settlements, with the river in front, formed the Boer position, the strength of which was unknown to Lord Methuen until after he had come up against it. He was under the impression that the Boers at Modder River were merely an advanced post to cover their main position at Spitfontein, some twelve miles farther along the railway towards Kimberley.

Lord Methuen's scheme was to mask this advanced-guard position of the Boers, and to march round by Jacobsdal and thence northward towards Spitfontein, where he was convinced that the Boers intended to give battle. However, the advanced position at Modder River must be captured first, and on the 28th November he attacked it. Lord Methuen was with the mounted troops when at 5.30 a.m. they came under fire, and word was sent in by the reconnoitring squadron that the river was strongly held "from the railway bridge eastward to a clump of high poplars". So indeed it was, but no one knew that ingeniously concealed entrenchments had been made all along the river-bed from Rosmead, a mile west of the bridge, and beyond the high poplars on the east. All the farms and houses in the two villages were prepared for defence; six field-guns were in epaulements behind the river, and several

pom-poms were cunningly hidden in the trees near those high poplars. On the right was the commando of Prinsloo; in the centre, through which ran the railway, was De la Rey with Transvaal commandos; on the left more Transvaalers under Cronje—between 3000 and 4000 Boers in all. The ambush was laid; De la Rey and Cronje did not trouble themselves about their undefended flanks, for they were quite sure that Lord Methuen would walk straight into the trap, as indeed he did, with his entire army. Sir H. E. Colvile, who was in command of the Guards Brigade, tells us in his book, *The Work of the Ninth Division*, how—

"We advanced in two columns, the Guards Brigade on the right and Pole-Carew's Ninth Brigade on the left. At 8 o'clock I found Lord Methuen and his Staff looking at a clump of trees some 1500 yards to our front which he said was on the Modder River. It had been reported that this was held by the enemy, but he thought they had gone. He, however, ordered me to extend for the attack. After all our tough work on the kopjes, in which every Boer was behind a stone ready to slate us as we climbed up painful slopes, it seemed as if we should make short work of the enemy over this nice level ground. 'Thank God we've done with those damned kopjes!' or 'They'll never stand against us here,' was said more than once in my hearing, and these were, I think, fair samples of the general feeling. As we watched Arthur Paget and his Scots Guards moving ahead to the right, Lord Methuen said to me: 'They are not here.' 'They are sitting uncommonly tight if they are, sir,' I answered. And as if they had heard him the Boers answered too with a roar of musketry and a shower of lead which swept away the Scots Guards' machine-gun detachment and did a good deal of damage generally. Before Lord Methuen and I went off to our own business we had time to remark the surprise of the Staff officers who had cantered ahead to choose a camping-ground. All day long the Guards Brigade lay flat on the ground. Any attempt to move brought a hail of bullets; not a Boer could be seen. There was nothing to shoot at; there was just the bare plain, and 800 yards away a line of trees. The artillery, suffering considerably from the gusts of bullets that swept the plain, bombarded the Modder River village and engaged the Boer guns beyond it. And thus the battle might have gone on all day—an artillery

duel and an infantry stalemate—had not Pole-Carew on the left of his brigade (most of it lying flat and immovable also) sent the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders down a donga into the river-bed and so eventually across the river. The Free Staters in that part of the Boer line gave way, and two field-guns, brought up by Forestier-Walker, completed their discomfiture. Led by Pole-Carew and Colonel Barter more troops of the Ninth Brigade—Lancashires, Yorkshires, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders—crossed the river and captured the village of Rosmead, coming thus right on to the flank of the whole Boer position. Thus it was that when night fell the whole brigade was able to cross at the same place. Next morning it was discovered that the Boers had disappeared with all their guns and pom-poms. Lord Methuen and his Staff, wondering, may be, where they would make their next stand and gazing towards Kimberley, saw a group of hills about seven miles away rising stark and stern out of the plain—the hills of Magersfontein."

Lord Methuen had now fought three battles in a week—Belmont, Graspan, Modder River—at the cost of about 1000 men, one-tenth of his force, with the result that, although Modder River was a Pyrrhic victory, he had certainly advanced successfully along the trunk line towards Kimberley, and was now about twenty-three miles distant from the besieged town. Between Lord Methuen and that goal lay the Boers whom he had just fought at Modder River, still full of fight, as he was informed, strongly reinforced by several commandos, and in a strong defensive position, not at Spitfontein, as he had made sure they would be, but at those grim hills of Magersfontein, only six miles away. Kimberley was in no immediate danger; it was necessary to safeguard his long line of communications, and, above all, to await reinforcements. Lord Methuen therefore waited until 12th December before renewing his advance. Reinforcements duly arrived: the Highland Brigade—2nd Black Watch, 1st Gordons, 2nd Seaforths, 1st Highland Light Infantry, under General Wauchope—the 12th Lancers, a battery of horse artillery, and four heavy howitzers—enough, one would say, with the men he had already, to brush aside any

Boer force and to raise the siege of Kimberley within twenty-four hours.

As the time approached for another advance, Lord Methuen sent out a reconnaissance to ascertain what was going on at Magersfontein. Horse artillery, one 4.7 naval gun, and the 9th Lancers went forth into the veldt to see. They bombarded Magersfontein Hill without eliciting any reply from gun or rifle. The force returned without having solved the mystery of the Boer position; no one could tell Lord Methuen what he really had to attack. He knew that the Boers, much more numerous than when he fought them a few days before at Modder River, had taken up an extended position right across the railway from Langeberg Farm past Magersfontein to the Modder River at Moss Drift, a defensive line at least eight miles long. Yes; but what kind of a line? It was a question anxiously asked by Lord Methuen and his staff. In a little book, published in 1910, entitled *A Handbook of the Boer War*, intended for military students and based upon official documents, there is, at p. 58, a paragraph, tinged with a gentle sarcasm, which answers the question: "With an unerring instinct which was more useful to him than most of the knowledge he could have acquired in a European Staff College, and with an originality which, if it had been displayed by a young British officer in an examination for promotion, would probably have injured that officer's prospects, De la Rey dug his trenches, not at the foot of the hill, but in sinuous lines some little way in advance of it, by which he gained the power of meeting an attack with grazing or skimming fire, and which also removed the firing-line from physical features on which the British guns could be laid." The trenches were three to four feet deep, very narrow, and with perpendicular sides, dug along the waving foot-line of the hills, 150 yards away from them; the parapets, slightly raised above the ground, were well concealed by bushes and stones. Such

was the position against which Methuen was about to hurl his army and clear the road to Kimberley.

Ever since Lord Wolseley surprised Arabi's lines at Tel-el-Kebir, in 1882, by a night march and an attack at dawn, this method of attacking an enemy's position had become a sort of obsession with British commanders, a classic method of frontal attack at the War Office and at Aldershot. Lord Methuen determined to try it on Cronje's Boers at Magersfontein, but, strangely enough, he began by a daylight bombardment the day before, a bombardment with the whole of his artillery, the big naval gun, the howitzers, and the three field-batteries. Under the hail of bursting lyddite, Magersfontein Hill looked like a volcano; its red earth was torn and scattered, its iron-stone boulders rent and hurled into the air. It was the heaviest bombardment ever known in Africa. Lord Methuen must have believed that it inflicted heavy loss and caused demoralization among the Boers, thus helping his proposed night attack. What *was* the effect of the bombardment? There were three Boers wounded; the whole Boer army gained confidence; they gained information, namely, that the British had not discovered the trenches 150 yards away from the hill; and that after such a bombardment they would certainly make an infantry attack.

Lord Methuen selected the Highland Brigade, led by Major-General Wauchope, for the night attack. It is well known that Wauchope did not approve of the plan. But he obeyed, and at half an hour after midnight on the 11th December—an intensely dark night and a tempest of rain and thunder and lightning raging—the brigade set forth from its bivouac over the three miles of veldt which lay between it and the south-eastern point of Magersfontein Hill. The brigade under such conditions marched in the only possible formation, mass of quarter columns, that is, company behind company in close order. Even with the precaution of

guide-ropes it was difficult to keep formation, but it was kept.

"When the column had been for over three hours on the march an occasional lightning-flash showed the outline of Magersfontein Hill. But with the experience of Tel-el-Kebir probably present to his mind, Wauchope decided to gain a few more yards before deploying. He was still 700 yards from the foot of the hill, and the existence of the trenches in the plain was quite unknown to him."[1]

When within 400 yards of the trenches Wauchope gave the order to deploy. The change of formation had begun when suddenly from front and right and left jets of fire darted out into the darkness; amid the roar of continuous volleys of rifle-fire gusts of bullets swept through the close ranks of the Highlanders, caught thus in the most fatal of all formations under fire. Wauchope was shot dead; hundreds of the men threw themselves flat on the ground; others recoiled to the rear; others, again, dashed forward yet nearer the trenches and there lay prone. They lay there, unable to advance or retire, for eight hours, saved from complete destruction only by the artillery, which kept down the Boer fire to some extent. It was the Modder River fight over again, but even in more humiliating form. The battle was hopelessly lost, and in the evening the whole force was withdrawn to its bivouac on the veldt, and next day to the Modder River camp. Lord Methuen hoped that the Boers, too, would withdraw in the night. They did not. They were reinforced, and held the whole Magersfontein position more strongly than ever. Many a weary week was to pass before they were turned out of it. The British loss in this disastrous affair was 948 killed, wounded, and missing, and of this total 747 belonged to the Highland Brigade.

Stormberg was fought and lost on 10th December, 1899;

[1] *Life of Major-General A. G. Wauchope.* Sir George Douglas.

Magersfontein was fought and lost on the 11th; Colenso was fought and lost on the 15th—three defeats of the main British army within six days. The effect of the battle of Magersfontein in Britain is best summarized, perhaps, in the "*Times*" *History of the War:*—

"The news was received with a poignant sense of anguish and disappointment. Stormberg had been accepted, like Nicholson's Nek, as one of those unfortunate incidents inseparable from warfare with a mobile enemy. But this was very different. A British force of 13,000 men beaten on the open field with a loss of nearly 1000—small figures, really, but how great they seemed to a generation that had not known serious war! Nowhere was the feeling more intense than in Scotland, where General Wauchope's death was felt as a personal bereavement by the whole nation. But profound as was the national sorrow and sense of defeat, another lesson yet was required before Britain even began to realize the task that faced her."

That lesson came swiftly with the appalling news of Colenso, which completed the series of disasters. Those dark days of December, 1899, were "The Black Week", a week which demanded all the courage and fortitude of the British people and swift decision in its rulers. The enemies of the Empire, especially the Germans, rejoiced at its discomfiture, and joyfully anticipated further defeats; not a ray of hope could be derived from any of the dispatches that came from South Africa except from Sir George White, who kept the flag flying at Ladysmith. Dark hours, indeed, but—

"There is a budding morrow in midnight".

The nation rose to the occasion, and a wave of enthusiasm for the unflinching prosecution of the war swept over the country. Lord Lansdowne, Lord Salisbury, Mr. Balfour and such other Ministers as were in London met at once. A message was sent to Sir Redvers Buller bidding him persevere in his attempts to relieve Ladysmith, or, if unwilling to do so, to

hand over his command to one of his subordinates and return home; and it was decided that same day to offer the supreme command in South Africa to Lord Roberts, with Lord Kitchener as his Chief of Staff.

Lord Kitchener, who was still serving as Sirdar of that famous Anglo-Egyptian army with which, but little more than a year ago, he had shattered the power of the Khalifa and regained the Soudan, was to meet Lord Roberts at Gibraltar. Lord Roberts attended a meeting of the Ministers at Lansdowne House early on Sunday the 17th December, and was informed of the reason of his having been thus hurriedly summoned. He accepted the appointment, which was published that evening by the War Office. On the previous day the Government had sent the following telegram to General Buller :—

"Her Majesty's Government would regard the abandonment of White's force and its consequent surrender as a national disaster of the greatest magnitude. We would urge you to devise another attempt to carry out its relief, not necessarily via Colenso, making use of the additional men now arriving if you think fit."

On this Sunday, 17th December, 1899, Buller was informed of the decision of the Government in the following message :—

"In Natal and in Cape Colony distinct operations of very great importance are now in progress. The prosecution of the campaign in Natal is being carried on under quite unexpected difficulties, and in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government it will require your presence and whole attention. It has been decided by Her Majesty's Government, under these circumstances, to appoint Field-Marshal Lord Roberts as Commanding-in-Chief, South Africa, his Chief of Staff being Lord Kitchener."

W. H.

CHAPTER V

Under Roberts in South Africa

A German General Staff Appreciation of Lord Kitchener—The First Aim of the Commander-in-Chief's Strategy—Reorganization of Transport—The Business Manager of the Campaign—Work of the Intelligence Department—Lord Roberts's Plan—Feint at Koodoos Drift—Cronje outflanked by French—Diversion to the Eastwards—Lord Kitchener's Action—Loss of the Supply Convoy at Waterval Drift—French holds up Cronje before Paardeberg—Lord Kitchener sights Cronje's Laager—The Alternatives—Lord Kitchener decides to Attack—The Assault on Cronje's Positions at Paardeberg—De Wet's Surprise Attack—Failure of the Action to rush Cronje—Lord Kitchener's Report to Lord Roberts—Arrival of the Commander-in-Chief—Cronje's Surrender—Complete Change in the Military Situation—Operations in Natal—Lord Roberts presses on to Bloemfontein—Lord Kitchener's Control of the Lines of Communication—Poplar Grove and Abraham's Kraal—Lord Roberts's Proclamation at Bloemfontein—Disasters at Sannah's Post and Reddersburg—Wepener and the Colonials—The General Advance Resumed—Occupation of Pretoria—De Wet's Attacks on the Railway Line and Communications—Lord Kitchener's Counter Moves—Junction with Buller—The Orange Free State Operations—Lord Kitchener takes the Chief Command.

LORD ROBERTS and Lord Kitchener deemed themselves fortunate in their opportunity. Lord Roberts, in spite of his services in India, and though he was regarded by foreign military critics as the only great English strategist, was, during the years immediately before the South African War, chafing under the belief that his work was over and that he would never have an important share in that remodelling of the British army which he thought to be so necessary. Lord Kitchener was in something of the same situation. He had just finished a successful war in which organization and hard work had made victory possible, yet in a campaign in which the application of these sinews of

success would be more than ever necessary he found himself relegated to the civilian task of governing a province. It was a task which none could do better than he; but there were higher tasks which none could do so well. That fact was perceived only when the British forces in South Africa were on the brink of disaster.

The first task which confronted Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener in South Africa was that of remodelling the machine. It was Lord Roberts's intention to use the military machine in an entirely new way, and to drive it in an entirely new direction. To Lord Kitchener he entrusted the work of so altering, repairing, and adding to the machine that it would be fitted for the effort. To that work Lord Kitchener brought the highest mental equipment.

"The Commander-in-Chief", wrote the historian of the German Great General Staff at Berlin, which compiled an account of the operations, "was fortunate in having the assistance of Major-General Lord Kitchener, who although only forty-nine years old had attracted universal attention during his Egyptian campaigns,[1] and had proved himself a soldier of rare ability under extremely difficult conditions. He had held the command in the Soudan Campaign, 1896–8, when he crushed the Khalifa by his decisive victory at Omdurman and recovered the Soudan from the Dervishes. He had then shown himself to be not only a very capable general, but also an organizer of extraordinary ability. . . . He was at this time one of the most remarkable officers in the British army. His personality was extremely soldier-like; he was very independent and reserved, and disliked asking advice of others. Nevertheless he has a deep appreciation for that which is great and lofty, and although deliberate as a rule he can on occasion act with impulsive energy."

To this military estimate the German critic adds an appreciation of Lord Roberts and of Lord Kitchener which is confirmation from an unexpected quarter of that which their countrymen knew of them.

[1] Baron von Tiedemann, of the German General Staff, accompanied the Omdurman campaign.

Heath, Plymouth

FIELD-MARSHAL LORD ROBERTS

Commander-in-Chief, South Africa

1899–1900

"Both men", he writes, "share the feeling of high enthusiasm for the might and greatness of their country, for which they would sacrifice anything. They have but one military ambition, namely to see England progress along the path of glory and power. . . . The army was in high spirits on learning that these two men were placed at its head: the knowledge that the future operations had been confided to their proved and skilful hands strengthened to a most remarkable extent the self-confidence of officers and men."

The "proved and skilful hands" had to alter on their arrival a state of things in which the British forces, separated into four groups on a front of nearly 500 miles, were everywhere condemned to the defensive. The one aim and object of the Commander-in-Chief was to enable his army to take the offensive on a large scale, and to carry the war as soon as possible into the enemy's country in order to regain the initiative; until that was done no improvement in the military situation could be hoped for.

To take the offensive with any prospect of success it was necessary to organize an entirely new transport. Before Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener arrived at the Cape the system of transport was nominally regimental, though the regimental transport was only about one-eighth of the whole. That is to say, transport was allotted to regiments or battalions, and in addition to this there was an Army Service Corps supply column carrying additional supplies, an auxiliary system of transport, and a technical transport. The ramifications of this system or systems, though familiar to staff and regimental officers, and, in short, sanctioned by usage, was extremely wasteful and extravagant. It might be helpful in carrying up the heavy baggage of the officers' mess, but it was not ample enough to carry up the food, munitions, and forage for an army of some 40,000 men and 15,000 horses which the Commander-in-Chief intended to cut loose from the railway at an early stage in his operations. The system which

was therefore substituted under the supervision of Lord Kitchener, aided by Major-General Sir William Nicholson, was that of concentrating the transport under one management and direction, and of redistributing it according to the needs of the situation as they arose. Broadly, the transport was placed under the Army Service Corps.

It was a change which did not make Lord Kitchener popular. Every brigadier and colonel saw the conduct of his transport shifted to what he regarded as a subordinate part of the service. Regimental "comforts" were rigidly curtailed; the campaign was to be conducted on sparing principles throughout; but they were the only ones by which the transport, short of wagons, short of teams, short of mules, could be made to do what the Commander-in-Chief wanted of it, and so his Chief of Staff pursued his way undeviatingly. One who went to see Lord Kitchener at that time found him in the inner room of a large office where everyone was slaving as hard as any clerk. The Chief of Staff, Lord Roberts's "business manager", was working as hard as any of them. He was carrying out his chief's orders with pen, ink, and paper, and the result of his calculations was presently to be seen on the plains of the Orange Free State. Gradually all the supplies that were wanted were accumulated at Orange River, De Aar, and at depots between the Orange and Modder Rivers; gradually, also, Kitchener assembled his mules, his oxen, and his wagons at the points of concentration. He had also to get the best he could out of the Cape railways in order to bring up supplies, and on his recommendation Colonel Sir Percy Girouard, who had built the Soudan Desert Railway, was given the post of director of the Cape railways in exchange for those of Egypt. In one week in January the Western Railway took up to Orange River 7650 men, 3535 animals, 11 guns with 799 tons of ammunition, and 1184 tons of supplies.

The first stage in the realization of Lord Roberts's plan of campaign was necessarily the transfer to the neighbourhood of Lord Methuen's camp of the army with which it was his purpose to manœuvre Cronje out of Magersfontein, to relieve Kimberley, and to strike for Bloemfontein.

From Orange River to Kimberley the boundary of the Orange State, with the railway following it, runs in a straight line for seventy miles. It does not run due north, but inclines north-north-east at the angle of a coachman's whip. Fifty miles up the shaft of the whip the Modder River and the Riet join at Modder River station and hang from the whip like two lashes which the coachman has shaken out. The Riet is the lower lash hanging down, the Modder the upper lash, flying up, and the tongue of land which lies between the two rivers and comes to a point at Modder River station broadens and broadens towards the east till it is sixty miles wide, where the Orange State Railway cuts it. Bloemfontein is on the Orange State Railway line, fifteen miles south of Glen siding, where the railway crosses the Modder, and forty-five miles north of Edenburg, where it crosses the Riet. At Jacobsdal, on the Riet, ten miles east of the two river stations, the tongue of land is about fifteen miles across. For two months Kitchener collected horse and foot artillery and transport along the railway shaft of the whip, short of the junction of the two rivers, spreading them out laterally at other places to the east. It was one of the purposes of the Commander-in-Chief to conceal his intentions from Cronje, and this, in spite of the multiplicity of spies at Cape Town, was very skilfully done by himself and his Chief of Staff, to whom alone Lord Roberts's intentions were known.[1] Lord Kitchener, who had served an apprenticeship to one of the most complex of Intelligence Departments, was fertile in expedients. The rumours that a simultaneous sweeping movement through the Orange

[1] Lord Roberts's plans were concealed even from generals of division till the last moment.

Free State along the lines of railway was to be made by French and Gatacre were spread with great ingenuity; and when these had been allowed to have their effect, another rumour, strongly supported by corroborative fact, was circulated that Lord Roberts intended to outflank Cronje on the opposite side to that which he actually took. Lord Kitchener even stage-managed the departure of his chief and himself to the front by sending a guard to a train by which they did not travel, while unostentatiously setting out at another date. The subtlety of these methods was made manifest by the fact that Cronje was entirely surprised by the swiftness with which Lord Roberts struck, and did not at first believe that he had been outmanœuvred.

Cronje was prepared for, and expected, an outflanking move on his right by way of Jacobsdal, and to support this belief the Highland Brigade, under Major-General Hector Macdonald, was sent to Koodoos Drift as a feinting prelude. But Lord Roberts had a far more comprehensive and masterful plan than that. It was a plan so complete, so resourceful, that persistent failures in detail were powerless to wreck it. The plan was in two parts. The first carried the army in a great wheel rearwards from Modder River village across the Riet and up to the Modder at Paardevaal Drift, sucking Cronje, as through the draught of a whirlwind, out of his Magersfontein trenches, and leaving Kimberley without assailants. Cronje's retreat to Bloemfontein by the direct eastwards route would be barred as the British infantry came up in support of the cavalry. He would presumably either have to stay bound to his Magersfontein and Spytfontein trenches or to retreat northwards and north-westwards round Kimberley—a path beset with difficulties and dangers for him. If he took that path the way to Bloemfontein would be clear for Lord Roberts's army, which would be unopposed by any considerable force.

The plan suffered in details by want of co-ordination, by delays at the fords of the rivers, by imperfect reconnaissance —which in its turn led to failure of supplies—and by the prodigious strain on the cavalry. The turning movement was entrusted to General French's cavalry, and was magnificently performed. But the delay in crossing the fords did not permit the movement to take place with uninterrupted smoothness, and a wide gap was left between French's cavalry, when it had reached the Kimberley side of Cronje, and the infantry divisions following in its wake. Cronje had been incredulous of the effectiveness of the advance, though warned of its impending nature by a messenger from De Wet, and had exclaimed, with an oath: "Are you again possessed of this damnable fear of the English? Come on! Shoot them dead and capture the others when they run away!" De Wet could do nothing with such truculent folly, and contented himself at first with watching the fords of the rivers, about which he hovered like a mosquito, returning when driven off. But Cronje's obstinacy was not proof against the indisputable fact that French, by the greatest cavalry charge of the war, had burst through his communications both east and north, and he arrived at a correct decision of the course to take at once. He immediately abandoned his trenches and marched eastwards towards Bloemfontein through the open gap. He was thus marching across the front of the oncoming British infantry, but he trusted to his mobility —and to the British immobility—to get away.

The decision was forced on him, and might have been successful but for two things. The first was that he did not shed his wagons and his cumbrous train of women and children; the second was that Lord Kitchener divined his intentions. Lord Kitchener had gone with the advanced troops, and was actually in command from 15th February, 1900, to 19th February, Lord Roberts being unfortunately confined to his bed

at Jacobsdal, and having arranged that all orders coming from Lord Kitchener should be regarded as coming from himself, "so that no delay to the operations may arise". Consequently, when at sunrise on the 16th vast clouds of dust leading in an easterly direction were discerned by the outposts of Lieutenant-General Kelly-Kenny's Sixth Division, where Lord Kitchener was, the Chief of Staff saw at once that the situation had completely altered. The army must now be diverted to the right in order to pursue the Boers. Lord Kitchener's surmise was immediately afterwards confirmed by intelligence from the mounted infantry, which had captured some Boers who had remained behind, and exact information as to Cronje's departure was obtained.

Lord Kitchener at once diverted the infantry to the pursuit of Cronje's force. The mounted infantry (Knox's brigade) and the artillery of the division which was holding the easterly drift were sent after the Boers to attack them and bring them to action. He himself followed with Kelly-Kenny's Sixth Division, and telegraphed the news of the Boer retreat to Lord Roberts, suggesting that the Ninth Division (Colvile's) should be at once stopped from its northward march and sent on to the Klip Kraal Drift at a tangent to the original course, while French's cavalry should be turned back to close the pincers from the north. There was some delay in complying with both of these recommendations, but they were put into execution, and thus the two movements, cavalry riding east by south, and infantry marching east, converged from the base angles of a triangle to an apex at Paardeberg on the Modder. Thus reviewing Lord Roberts's plan as a whole, it will be seen that though the first part of it miscarried—in that no opening should have been left for the Boers to slip through—yet so supple was its strategical construction that its errors in execution were unable to render it inoperative and enabled it to withstand the crucial test of modification.

Kitchener, besides notifying head-quarters, had informed General French of the change in the situation by means of an officers' patrol, and requested him to march that night with the cavalry division in order to place himself in front of the retreating Boers at Koodoos Rand Drift, and it was fortunate that he did so, for the telegram sent from head-quarters to French with the same orders miscarried. Had it not been for Lord Kitchener's duplication of the information, French's cavalry division could not have taken part in the pursuit of Cronje, who would then probably have succeeded in escaping.

Cronje pursued his eastwards flight along the Modder, clinging to the river for the sake of the water. French was hurrying on the north of the Modder to catch him up and pass him; Kitchener and Kelly-Kenny, followed by the Ninth and the Seventh Divisions, were hurrying on the south of the Modder through the almost waterless veldt to reduce the lead which Cronje had taken. Knox's brigade, with the mounted infantry, managed to come up to Cronje's heels first; but the Boers fought a very fine rear-guard action, and Knox, though hampering them, could not hold them, and suffered what were, in the circumstances, considerable losses, especially among the horses. The question of the horses was now becoming a very serious one, as, indeed, it continued to be for very many months of the war. French's cavalry, after reaching Kimberley, were as much reduced in horses as if their charge had been a Balaclava instead of one of the least costly operations of the war in men; and a new misfortune was threatening both horses and men. This was the loss of a supply column, escorted by troops from the Ninth Division, at Waterval Drift. The column was captured by the same party of Boers, under the leadership of De Wet, which had harassed the crossing some days before, and had been driven off. The forces which had driven them off had neglected to keep in touch with them, and, owing to this bad blunder, they were able to return and

to do what was most serious damage, though the effect of it was spoken lightly of at the time. The capture resulted in the loss of 200,000 rations and 48,000 portions of forage, besides invaluable transport; and the loss, which the German military attaché[1] bluntly attributes to neglect on the part of the staff of the Ninth Division, reacted in a very marked manner on the subsequent operations. Lord Roberts's plan was not spoilt by this misfortune, and he himself received it with an equanimity which merits the highest admiration. But apart from the hardships inflicted on infantry put on half-rations, the delay to operations may be gauged from the fact that the horses received only little more than half their allowance of oats, in spite of the exceptional exertions required of them. This point is worthy of attention because of the extent to which the success of the operation is thereby shown to be dependent on the organization of supply.

The skilful rear-guard action which the Boers fought retarded but could not stop the steam roller which Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener had set in motion against them. As night fell on the delaying action one of the brigades (Stephenson's) recrossed the river at Klip Drift, and was directed to march off at three o'clock on Saturday (17th February) on the south side of the river, in order, if possible, to head off Cronje at Paardeberg or Koodoos Rand Drift, which is farther east. They were joined by Knox's brigade, and the mounted-infantry sections were pushed forward. As soon as the day cooled the remainder of the joint brigades set out for a night march to Paardeberg. By a lucky accident they missed their direction slightly and overshot Paardeberg Drift, encamping on rising ground two miles beyond it. The effect of this accident was to bring the infantry almost to the place where Cronje intended to cross the river from the north to the south bank. He had been pushing along the north bank all day, shedding

[1] *German Official Account of the War in South Africa*, Vol. I, p. 152. (John Murray.)

wagons as he went, and had passed Paardeberg Drift. Then he learnt that French, turned back from Kimberley, had outraced him, and was nearer than himself to Bloemfontein. To General French fell the chief share, and the most daring action, in stopping Cronje. With a force greatly depleted, owing to the exhaustion of his horses, French left Kimberley before dawn on the 17th, ignored a Boer column under Ferreira, which sniped his troopers but did not attack them, as it ought to have done, and he first caught sight of Cronje's dust at eight in the morning. At ten French had a clear idea of Cronje's situation. Cronje was on the north bank at Vendutie Drift, and was preparing to cross. He sent forward an advance-guard to seize protecting positions at Koodoos Rand Drift, and French found himself in rather a serious situation, for he had but 1300 men,[1] and was outnumbered four to one by Cronje. He did not hesitate; he knew that the column from Kimberley was coming up behind him, and, riding forward himself to reconnoitre, he discovered a good artillery position commanding Vendutie Drift, and at once sent forward Colonel Davidson with the artillery to occupy it. Fire was at once opened on the Boers, and Cronje, unable at first to believe that it was French's cavalry, concluded that it was Kelly-Kenny's infantry division which had outstripped him. He never seriously attempted, as he might have done, to break through French, who sent Colonel Broadwood forward to seize the kopjes by Koodoos Rand Drift, and by this bold front held up Cronje for a day.

Cronje might have broken away to the south-east, and appeared to have had some such intention; but in the night he learned that mounted infantry had reached Paardeberg, and next morning that a force of infantry—two brigades under Knox and Stephenson—had reached a point two miles south of his premeditated crossing-place. Cronje should have marched

[1] *British Official History of the War*, Vol. II, p. 100. (Hurst & Blackett.)

in the night, and was begged to do so by some of those with him, as well as by Ferreira, who sent a message urging him to break away north. But the habits of a lifetime were too strong for him and for his burghers, who could not abandon their belongings, and the opportunity, not seized, had vanished by next day.

Lord Kitchener bivouacked with the mounted infantry on the south bank near Paardeberg Drift. Before sunrise he rode with General Kelly-Kenny to a hill situated to the left front of the division, which afforded a view towards Modder River. When day began to break he suddenly perceived, to his astonishment, first indistinctly and then more clearly as the light became brighter, a large Boer laager gleaming in the sunlight a few thousand yards in front of him. The great exertions which he had demanded from the troops had been rewarded; he had succeeded in overtaking Cronje, and his division was to the south, and not far from the laager.

The Modder, between Paardeberg and Koodoos Rand Drift, flows along the bottom of a deep cutting, thirty feet from the river level to the top of the banks, and from thirty to a hundred yards wide. The sides and edges are thickly grown with willow and mimosa. On both sides of the river, but especially on the south side, are many deep and long cuts in the banks (dongas), which give excellent shelter against an enemy advancing towards the river or along it. On the south bank these dongas serrate a smooth grassy plain, about a mile and a half wide, running down the river, and on either side of the plain the ground rises, and is studded with kopjes. On the north bank of the river there is a plain like that on the south, but rather more shelving and broken by bumps. Several kopjes are scattered along the edge of the plain two or three miles back from the river. Into this position Cronje sank, and began to dig himself in. In the words of one of his burghers, "they dug themselves in with their cleaning-rods and their fingers". By the morning

they were well protected from fire by pits sunk into the soft earth of the river bank, and had made trenches running all along the top of the right bank, the higher of the two for about a mile and a half. The dongas and the brush were lined with riflemen. Thus the Boer position, though encircled and commanded by higher ground, formed a closed redoubt of considerable strength.

Two courses were open to Lord Kitchener. He could invest the enemy's position closely and shell him into surrender. Or he could assault the river fortress at once. Lord Kitchener decided to attack, and there is no military critic to-day who does not admit that he was right. Quite apart from the knowledge that was gained afterwards of the value which a few days saved would have been, and of the lamentable cost in sickness which the loss of them actually caused, there was the immediate danger that a resolute relieving-force might break through the thin cordon and join Cronje. Moreover, an immediate attack, even if it failed to carry the laager, would cripple its mobility and chain it to the river-bed; if it succeeded, a blow would be struck which would be the nearest approach to a decision that the war had reached. Unfortunately for the carrying out of Lord Kitchener's design much was wanting. He was nominally the acting Commander-in-Chief; Lord Roberts's letter to Lieutenant-General Kelly-Kenny had placed him in that position. But though General Kelly-Kenny obeyed Lord Roberts's instructions in the letter and the spirit, the machinery for carrying out the movements of the forces as a whole were lacking to Lord Kitchener. An attacking army is a living organism which can carry out the orders of the commanding brain only if all the nerve communications are co-ordinated and instinctively obedient. The nerve communications were here lacking. Lord Kitchener had only his aide-de-camp with him. Thus, though Generals Kelly-Kenny and Colvile had the necessary staff for working their own commands,

Lord Kitchener, in charge of the whole force, was unsupplied with the staff machinery necessary for the organization and direction of combined movements. Therefore, though the chief commander, with a most prompt grasp of the situation, had realized that it was worth any risk to capture Cronje's force without delay, he could not skilfully drive his forces into action because he had not the proper reins.

His orders were given at once, and Kelly-Kenny's division was ordered to attack immediately. The batteries opened fire at half-past six. The infantry deployed under cover of this fire, and at seven o'clock five battalions advanced to make a frontal attack on the Boers. We marvel to-day at the thought of a frontal attack after half an hour's artillery preparation; and it would be futile to deny that the advance was made, and was most erroneously made, before the proper steps had been taken to subdue the enemy's fire. The Boers opened fire at a range of about 2200 yards, and the men by successive rushes got up to within 750 yards. The West Ridings and Yorkshires succeeded in getting within less than a quarter of a mile of the Boers, who, well hidden and well entrenched, poured in a devastating rifle-fire on the attackers. The attack could not get on, though the Highland Brigade of the Ninth Division came into action to reinforce it, and the artillery support increased. The artillery silenced the few Boer guns; it could not keep down the Boer rifle-fire. The determined efforts of the Argyll and Sutherlands and the Seaforths were wasted, and General Macdonald, calling for reinforcements, could not get enough. An accident of negligence in the afternoon contributed to the confusion of Kelly-Kenny's Sixth Division. While under the impression that a kopje to its right flank and rear was held by some mounted infantry (Kitchener's Horse) it suddenly found a hot fire poured in on it from the kopje. The detachment of Kitchener's Horse had ridden off without orders to water their horses at the moment that De Wet with

his mosquito burghers appeared on the scene. The kopjes and the detachment of horse were both captured, and this incident, which allowed De Wet to continue to assail the right of the division with a galling fire, completed the dislocation of the attack on this side. At the moment when the whole attention of Lord Kitchener and Lieutenant-General Kelly-Kenny and the staff was necessary for the development of an increasing attack on Cronje, this interruption occurred. But for De Wet's swoop the whole history of the battle might have been altered.

On the other bank of the river things had gone no better. The 19th Brigade, belonging to the Ninth Division, accompanied by the 82nd Field Battery, had crossed the river, and by a skilful turning movement, unnoticed by the Boers, had got into a good position for attack. But, owing to precisely the same causes as on the southern bank, namely, that the fire support of the brigade was neither heavy enough nor continuous enough to subdue the fire of the Boers, this attack also came to a complete standstill about half-past two in the afternoon. It was then about 700 yards away. Lord Kitchener, from his post with the artillery on the south bank, had gained the impression that a resolute bayonet charge would be sufficient to drive the enemy from their positions, and sent orders to Colvile that it should be made. Colvile thought that a charge might succeed, but that the loss would be heavy. He therefore informed Lord Kitchener that in his view it was not necessary to storm the Boer position on that day, but merely to surround Cronje. Kitchener insisted that his order should be obeyed, but his determination met with an obedience that was rather in the letter than in the spirit. Only a half-battalion of the 2nd Cornwalls was sent by Colvile to reinforce the attack, and it came into action very slowly. It made a very gallant effort, and in its charge lost its commanding officer, Colonel Aldworth, and a fifth of its men. After

that the attempt weakened, and no further attempt could be made to rush the Boer trenches. There was yet another indecisive sectional action—that of the mounted infantry and of the 18th Brigade in the river valley to the east of the Boer laager. The mounted infantry, under Colonel Hannay, responded to an urgent order from Lord Kitchener to attempt to rush the laager between 1.30 and 2, at the time when the attack of the Sixth Division was being held up. The two battalions of the 18th Brigade (Welsh and Essex) which ought to have been there to support the mounted infantry became entangled in the action which resulted from the occupation by De Wet of the kopjes vacated by Kitchener's Horse.

The foregoing statement of what happened at Paardeberg, in which the British official account is correlated with that published by the German Head-quarters Staff, shows quite clearly why the action at Paardeberg failed. It failed because Lord Kitchener had no staff of his own, and because, with the exception of the staff of General Kelly-Kenny, he had no staff on which he could depend. General Colvile of the Ninth Division was at no pains to second Lord Kitchener's determination, or even to comply readily with his orders. The staff work of the Sixth Division must either have been very bad, or the commander of Kitchener's Horse extremely irresponsible, and it is indisputable that the reconnaissance work of the division was as bad as it could be. The intervention of De Wet (with guns as well as rifles) should have been impossible. It was allowed to occur, and it spoilt the last chance of success on the southern bank. On the northern bank it cannot escape attention that General French, usually so alert, retired completely into the background. The position from the official point of view was anomalous. Lord Kitchener was junior in rank to the divisional generals over whom he was placed, and, with one exception, they did not respond to his orders with alacrity or generosity. But the causes of failure

were deeper than that. There was nobody in the British army of the home command who had any experience of handling troops in larger bodies than a division. Paardeberg was one of the bills which had to be paid for the absence of adequate army manœuvres, added to the incurable habit of not treating manœuvres as a test of general commanders who took part in them. While on the one hand the divisional generals at Paardeberg were without enthusiasm in carrying out Lord Kitchener's orders, the conduct of their own functions was hesitating and faulty, both as regards artillery and reconnaissance.

The cost of Paardeberg was spoken of as heavy, but it does not seem so by comparison with the battles which have taken place since. The total British losses were 1270, of whom 24 officers and 279 men were killed. It would have been a very small price to pay had the attack been successful. Victory would have been purchased cheaply at a very much higher cost, for it would have saved the delay of days, it would have prevented a great deal of loss of life through enteric fever, and it would have disorganized to the point of destruction the cohesion of the other Boer forces hurrying through the Orange Free State. Lord Kitchener's final report to Lord Roberts was:

"We did not succeed in getting into the enemy's convoy, though we drove back the Boers a considerable distance along the river-bed. The troops are maintaining their position, and I hope to-morrow we shall be able to do something more definite. Late this afternoon the Boers developed an attack on our right which is still going on, but is kept under control by our artillery. Our casualties have, I fear, been severe."

Lord Roberts replied that "we must not let Cronje escape now or be able to hold out until reinforcements reach him", and added that he was bringing up reinforcements. He sent Lieutenant-General Tucker with the Seventh Division and the

naval guns up with all speed, and himself arrived at ten o'clock on Monday morning. It was then believed that Cronje was about to surrender, a belief induced by the mistaken reading of the Boer leader's request for an armistice. Cronje sullenly dissipated these expectations, and Lord Roberts took immediate steps to invest him closely. He decided to make no further attack, but to shell Cronje into submission. At this period of the war, and subsequently, there was a desire to conduct operations with as little bloodshed as possible, and to-day one may perhaps rejoice in that desire and the decisions to which it gave rise, because the relations between Briton and Boer were never embittered by ruthlessness of warfare. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that the policy contributed to the prolongation of the war, it led to many indecisive actions, and it swelled the loss of life through disease. In the South African War from beginning to end there were twice as many deaths from sickness and disease as from the bullet.[1] The action against Cronje does not, however, come under the category of indecisive results, for it was on the whole quickly decided, and it had a very great moral effect. Lord Roberts's first step, after bringing the guns to bear on the laager at midday, was to deal with the Boers who had occupied Kitchener's Kopje. An immediate demonstration was made against them, but they were not dislodged until the morning of 21st February, when General French was sent to encircle them with the cavalry. But as soon as the encirclement began the Boers evacuated the position without allowing themselves to be drawn into a fight, and the Yorkshires occupied the hill. With that occupation Cronje's retreat from his position by breaking through became finally impossible. The bombardment continued, and the line of investment began to creep nearer with the help of the spade.

The evacuation of Kitchener's Kopje by the Boers holding

[1] The figures were approximately 14,000 deaths from sickness, of which 8000 were enteric, and 7000 from shell- and bullet-fire.

THE MEETING OF LORD ROBERTS AND GENERAL CRONJE, FEBRUARY 27, 1900

From a photograph by Mr. Perceval Landon

it had been a grave tactical mistake, and De Wet, aided by Philip Botha, made an attempt to recapture it. When the attempt failed, the surrender of Cronje was only a question of days. On the 27th—the anniversary of Majuba—an assault by the Ninth Division was projected, and the Canadians led it gallantly. The action had scarcely begun when, in the firing-line of the Canadians, somebody, whose identity has never been discovered, shouted out the command that the line was to retire, and this retirement was actually begun. It was, however, arrested before much damage was done, and at six o'clock in the morning the Boers opposite the Canadians threw down their rifles and threw up their hands. Shortly afterwards a large white flag appeared over the Boer laager, and under cover of a flag of truce General Cronje sent in his surrender. He would himself have held out to the last cartridge, but his authority could not compel the burghers to his wishes, and the conditions in the pestiferous laager had grown intolerable. The number of prisoners who surrendered totalled 3919 fighting-men, of whom 2592 were Transvaalers. To this must be added the number of the men who had dribbled into the British lines during the investment. During the ten days' fighting Cronje's Boers lost 74 men killed and 195 wounded. Cronje's surrender had been inevitable after his hesitation at the drift on the 17th; but his grim determination, and not least the way in which he had enforced his will on his yielding burghers, merited to the full Lord Roberts's first greeting to him: "You have made a gallant defence, sir".

The Commander-in-Chief had ample reason to be generous. Sound strategy and remarkable organization, combined with the energy and endurance of the troops, had in less than three weeks completely changed the whole aspect of the campaign. Cronje's capture was followed by the relief of Ladysmith within a week. The whole of the enemy's plan of campaign was destroyed, and the prizes for which the Boers had fought

for five months were wrested from their grasp. A few days later not only was Cape Colony clear of the main body of its invaders, but the southern half of the Orange Free State lay open to Lord Roberts. Though the struggle was to last for another two years, the hoisting of the white flag on Cronje's laager marked the disappearance of the power of President Kruger and President Steyn to take the offensive, and ensured the final triumph, however long it might be delayed, of the British forces. Henceforth the only design open to Boer strategy was that of so prolonging the struggle as to obtain terms of independence; but the idea of a Boer South Africa had vanished.

It is not necessary to follow in detail here the history of the campaign in Natal. The failure at Colenso had been followed by several attempts to outflank the Boer lines, and so to work round to Ladysmith. Of these attempts, that which is known as Spion Kop is the most famous, and came nearest to success; it was also the most exasperating example of the failure of generals educated in British manœuvres at home to grasp the essential; and if this criticism should be deemed too severe, justification for it will be found in the observations made by Lord Roberts in presenting a report to the Secretary for War of the whole course of operations on the Tugela (17th–24th January, 1900). The failure of Spion Kop was followed by that of Vaalkranz. Lord Roberts was convinced, and soundly convinced, that the pressure he was about to bring to bear in the Free State would relieve Ladysmith automatically by the end of February by drawing away the Boers who were investing it. Sir Redvers Buller doubted this anticipation, and believed he had better act for himself.[1] He obtained Lord Roberts's permission to try; at any rate the Commander-in-Chief authorized his proposition; and on the 4th February the Vaalkrantz movement began.

[1] Sir Redvers Buller's message to Sir George White, 28th January, 1900.

The operations did not justify General Buller's optimism. The forward movement was discontinued on 8th February, after casualties amounting to something under 400, sustained chiefly by the Durham Light Infantry. Finally, on the 17th, 18th, and 19th of February, 1900, when the Boer forces on the Tugela were dwindling owing to the imperative call for them to redress the balance upset by Lord Roberts's incursion into the Free State, the third and last attempt of General Buller's troops to force the Tugela line met with more promise of success. The operations were conducted with vigour by individual commanders, notably by General Lyttelton and General Barton, but the want of co-ordination did not disappear, and there was a great deal of hard fighting between the Tugela and Ladysmith. On the 27th, when Barton's troops were crossing the Tugela, they received the news of Cronje's surrender. It put heart into them for the assault on Pieter's Hill, the last tough fight in Natal. Early on the 28th General Botha began to withdraw his troops. But General Joubert had already ordered the siege of Ladysmith to be raised, and what should have been an orderly retreat of Botha's men became something that was like a flight, and ought to have been converted into a rout. The Ladysmith garrison was too exhausted by its privations to pursue; but on the first day of March, 1900, General Buller was able to march triumphantly into the beleaguered town.

Much as had been achieved by the capture of Cronje and by its effect on distant theatres of action, it had not disposed of a tenth of the number of Boers who were in the field. It was urgently necessary to push home the victory, and to derive every possible advantage from it before the other Boer forces should have time to recover. Having taken the offensive, the British commander must keep it. But Lord Roberts was keenly aware of the difficulties in the way. Despite the urgency of pressing on to Bloemfontein, the troops could not

be moved till the communications were safe and till continuous supplies of food and forage could be secured. De Wet's raid on the convoy had not merely cut off from the army supplies the loss of which was very severely felt, but this exploit, added to the attack on Kitchener's Hill by the same raider, had warned Lord Roberts of the dangers to which he was exposed. In Great Britain at that time the masterly way in which Lord Roberts had so quickly turned the tables on the Boers had converted anxiety into exultation, and had set up quite a false estimate of the situation—in which a British steam roller was imagined as trundling without impediment to Bloemfontein, and the loss of a convoy and the capture of Kitchener's Hill were regarded as inexplicable and unfortunate accidents. Only a few understood that to the end of the campaign we never had enough horses, and that at this stage of the operations the artillery were seriously underhorsed and the horses of the cavalry overworked and underfed. While that disadvantage was present the Boer could always raid us. Lord Roberts could not get on to Bloemfontein for a week. He would not have been able to get on then had it not been that he had sent Lord Kitchener back to Naauwpoort and De Aar to make certain that there were no further interruptions. All the troops belonging to the lines of communication which were already there, and were being reinforced by others from home, were placed under Lord Kitchener's orders, and he remained responsible for them and for food and munitions along these avenues of supply till Pretoria was occupied.

It was because this part of the organization was so unfailing that by the beginning of May the army, reinforced and remounted, furnished with abundance of supplies and commissariat, was able to take the field again and march from Bloemfontein and Pretoria. The large movements of the Field-Marshal's army were made possible by the vigour and hard work of his Chief of Staff. Whatever interruptions and

raids took place, Kitchener's supplies came up unfailingly, and the great main line to Kimberley remained working. Kitchener's first step on arriving at De Aar was to arrange with Brigadier-General Settle, commanding the section of the line of communications to the south of Orange River, for the dispatch westwards of three small flying columns (General Settle, Colonel Sir Charles Parsons, and Colonel Adye) to deal with the hostile bands assembling in the direction of Prieska and Van Wyks Vlei. Colonel Adye's column sustained a slight check, and on 8th March Lord Roberts dispatched Lord Kitchener to superintend the operations personally. The dispersion of these bands, which, in the popular estimate, seemed at the time an operation of comparatively small military importance, had the invaluable result of completely protecting at that time and thenceforward the western flank of Lord Roberts's army. It also cleared a region which teemed with waverers whom any Boer success would immediately have converted into enemies.

After the rest and replenishment at Paardeberg the army, reorganized and its brigade units redistributed, resumed the march to Bloemfontein. De Wet had in the meantime not been inactive, and the stupefaction which had overtaken many of the Boers in hearing that Cronje had surrendered had not affected him. He saw quite clearly what a blow to the Boer plans the surrender involved, and had he been in Cronje's place would surely have not suffered the reverse while he had power or time to break through. He had, indeed, pressed Cronje to abandon his wagons and retreat while there was time, though when later he wrote his book on the war he had excuses to offer for Cronje's disastrous tenacity. At the time, however, he was concerned only to utilize the time which had been spent in overcoming Cronje's resistance by organizing, within sight of Lord Roberts's outposts, new defences to bar the British advance. He was seconded in his

efforts by President Steyn, and they collected about 9000 men at Poplar Grove, a position of which the vital point was the river drift of that name. His forces were not animated by his own spirit. Colonel de Villebois Mareuil,[1] a French officer who was then attached to De Wet's staff, wrote that desertion was rife and that demoralization had set in. De Wet's lines had been chosen with his usual eye for position; but it had been very thoroughly surveyed by the British cavalry, and the Intelligence Staff, aided by Mr. F. R. Burnham, an American scout, had presented Lord Roberts with an accurate delineation of the Boer dispositions. Lord Roberts was therefore able to devise a means of manœuvring De Wet out of Poplar Grove with an excellent prospect of cutting off a large portion of his forces. Briefly described, the plan was to hold and hammer De Wet by a frontal attack while General French, making a wide circuit, got round his flank and threatened the Boer communications with Bloemfontein. The plan failed in its principal object, and when afterwards Lord Roberts gave evidence before the War Commission he was at no pains to conceal his disappointment.

The chief cause of the failure was that French, with his emaciated horses, could not get round the enemy in time, and when he should have been driving in their flank was, in fact, only in a position to pursue them—an enterprise which, since the Boers were much better mounted than his troopers, was more fruitless than the outflanking movement, and was akin to throwing good money after bad. But it was also due to the fact that the infantry attack in front was not pressed with sufficient vigour or sufficient disregard of losses. The capture at Paardeberg had not obliterated the memory of the reverses at Magersfontein and in Natal, or the check at Paardeberg itself, and there was a disposition on the part of divisional

[1] Afterwards killed in a skirmish with Lord Methuen's forces. His funeral was a military one, and was attended by Lord Methuen in person.

generals to spare their men and avoid losses. The losses were avoided, but complete victories also eluded us. In this battle the capture of a large portion of De Wet's forces might have ended the war; among the captives might have been President Kruger. Kruger had, in fact, reached the Boer head-quarters at Poplar Grove with a tired team of horses at dawn, about the time that French's cavalry division, after a halt, had resumed the advance that was to arrive too late. Threatening the fugitive Boers with his heavy stick, President Kruger did his utmost to stem the flight; but, fortunately for himself, unfortunately for Lord Roberts's plans, he failed to stay the bulk of the burghers. He at last gave up the attempt in despair and returned to Bloemfontein.

De Wet retired disappointed but not discomfited to a position at Abraham's Kraal; and here, his resolution to stay Lord Roberts's advance if he could, still unaltered, he rallied what burghers he could. Lord Roberts's plan was to move against the position which De Wet was taking up, in three strong parallel columns, so that if the Boers held up, or were held by, any one, the others would automatically outflank them. The manœuvre was effectual in clearing the Boers out of the way; but it was not effectual in capturing any but a very small number of them. The co-operation of the cavalry was again ineffective; but the engagement of Abraham's Kraal, or Driefontein, removed the last obstacle to Lord Roberts's march on Bloemfontein, which was entered by General French on 13th March, 1900. De Wet's burghers had fallen back after Driefontein, in De Wet's own words, "a disorderly crowd of terrified men blindly flying before the enemy"; and French, with right instinct for the feeling of the enemy, had boldly pushed forward to encircle the Free State capital. About midday of the 13th the mayor drove out to make a formal surrender to Lord Roberts, and early in the afternoon the Union Jack was hoisted over the President's house, while

General French threw out a cordon of outposts to protect the town.

To all appearance the military situation at this moment was completely satisfactory. Lord Roberts was half-way across the Orange Free State, Lord Kitchener's columns had the situation in the rebellious west well in hand, and from the southern half of the Free State the Boers were rapidly disappearing. General Clements, General Gatacre, and General Brabant, the South African brigadier whom Lord Roberts had appointed to the command of the troops raised in the colony, were advancing north in three columns, west to east in the order named, with the Boer generals—Olivier, Grobler, and Lemmer—retreating before them. But the appearance of the Boer collapse was illusory. The burghers were taking the oath of allegiance, in response to the proclamation of Lord Roberts inviting them to lay down their arms, but the arms they delivered up were Martinis, not Mausers, and these dubious guarantees of good faith were typical of the attitude of the country. Moreover, Lord Roberts's army as it reached Bloemfontein was urgently in need of rest and recuperation. The dash for Kimberley, the pursuit of Cronje, the vain effort of Poplar Grove, and the final gallop which brought General French to the gates of Bloemfontein had exhausted the cavalry; and the experience had been little less trying to the mounted infantry and transport. Enteric began to appear among the soldiers, and soon an epidemic was filling the hospitals. Enteric was extremely common in the Free State; the conditions of an exhausted army and the absence of proper sanitary precautions were alone needed to convert it into a scourge. It was spread by flies, and soon the disease began to lay a heavy toll on the camps. That was one reason for the long pause at Bloemfontein.

There were others. As Generals Clements, Gatacre, and Brabant pushed up from the south, securing a new main line

of railway communication as they did so, it seemed a feasible and obvious project to catch the Boer commandos retreating before the advancing British by pushing out an arm from Bloemfontein to the Basutoland border. The distance is ninety miles east. Ladybrand, the town of the Orange State nearest to the frontier along this line, is about eighty miles from Bloemfontein, and Thaba N'chu is half-way between them. General French sent General Broadwood's cavalry brigade on to Thaba N'chu, and the district between this place and the Free State capital was supposed to be in effective occupation by us. It was an important district, because it comprised the Bloemfontein Waterworks on the Modder, half-way between the two places. From Thaba N'chu a force under Colonel Pilcher pushed on to Ladybrand, and the leader very quickly realized that he was in a hornets' nest. He fell back promptly and without loss on Thaba N'chu, and Broadwood, in face of the growing numbers of the Boers, began, in his turn, to fall back slowly to Bloemfontein, sending word of his movements to head-quarters. Colonel Martyn's mounted infantry, followed by General Colvile's division, was sent out to the waterworks to meet him. This was the beginning of the movements which ended in the wasted gallantry of the encounter at Koorn Spruit or Sannah's Post, where the daring of De Wet captured 7 guns, 18 officers and 408 men, besides inflicting casualties amounting to some 150 more. The apportionment of blame was difficult; there were so many contributory causes that Lord Roberts spent some weeks in investigating them: but they appeared to be reducible to unsound Intelligence work on the one hand, and to the absence of a proper staff system on the other. The disaster of Reddersburg followed quickly on the heels of Sannah's Post, and here De Wet compelled the surrender of a detached body of 500 men of the Royal Irish Rifles (3rd April). The Irish fought well for twenty-four hours; but they had no guns, whereas De Wet had six, including

some captured at Sannah's Post, and outnumbered by nearly five to one they had no chance. This disaster was due to the military blunder of sending out rifles unsupported by artillery.

These disasters were not unrelieved by successes. The saving of Bethulie Bridge, the seizure of Springfontein (where the main line from Bloemfontein branches into two, reaching Bethulie and Stormberg on the eastern branch, and Norvals Pont and Naauwpoort on the western branch), and the defence of Wepener against De Wet by an advance-guard of General Brabant's Colonial division, which had pushed forward under Colonel Dalgety, were examples of how things might be done and should be done. The Colonial defenders of Wepener stopped the rot which seemed to have set in when Reddersburg followed Sannah's Post, and among the many things which the Empire owed to its younger sons, this check administered to De Wet ranked high. The previous disasters and the unsettled state of the country pointed two lessons which had yet to be learnt at greater cost, that the Boer resistance would last a long time, and that the task of protecting the communications of the main army was one which would tax all the resource and pertinacity of Lord Kitchener.

General Brabant's force quickly moved up to Wepener, and this fine division did some of the most useful work of the war in helping to clear up the south-eastern corner of the Orange Free State in preparation for Lord Roberts's advance from Bloemfontein. General Brabant had with him, in addition to his volunteers from Cape Colony, a backing from every British dominion. It had the New Zealand Roughriders. The Border Horse, which constituted part of it, had Australians, Canadians, Americans, men from India and Ceylon, Englishmen, Scots, and Irishmen who had come out to fight, some working their passage and some in the first-class saloon. It had Rand millionaires and Texas cowboys—with one qualification common to all—that of being first-class fighting-men.

The forces which had been set in motion by Lord Roberts while the Boers were besieging Wepener continued their movements after its relief, and the most northerly of these operations, General Ian Hamilton's march towards Koornspruit, became the first step in the grand advance from Bloemfontein. General Ian Hamilton began by seizing the waterworks again, and, having done so with unexpected swiftness, marched on to Thaba N'chu, where again the British flag was hoisted. General French and General Leslie Rundle followed him, and from this moment the grand advance dated, Ian Hamilton, supported by Bruce Hamilton (with Broadwood and Smith-Dorrien), marching on the right flank.

The general advance of the whole line began on 3rd May. General Pole-Carew on the left, General Tucker in the centre, General Ian Hamilton on the right, General French following and closing round. They pushed the enemy in front of them, and the Boer threat, or promise, to make one great stand and fight to the last seceded with their retirement. The Boers destroyed the bridges as they went, but the army was accompanied by an extremely competent railway engineering staff, commanded by Lord Kitchener's right-hand railwayman, Colonel Percy Girouard, R.E. The record of the army's advance became from this point geographical rather than military, for it rolled northward with hardly a check except that which was caused by the diversion of railway lines past the destroyed bridges. On 10th May, at Smaldeel, the Boers occupied a thinly extended position over twenty miles of the Sand River line. It was turned according to rule by French on one wing and Bruce Hamilton on the other; but the Boer line was so thin that at no point could it offer effective resistance. Nor, on the other hand, could it be disastrously broken, because there was so little to break. But the Sand River was the strongest position the Boers had to defend, and other points on the way to Johannesburg and Pretoria were occupied with

the barest show of resistance. On 12th May Lord Roberts was at Kronstadt, and before he left it on the 20th the consolidation of the conquered territory was being quickly accomplished. In Natal, where Sir Redvers Buller was advancing at last, and having occupied Dundee (15th) and Newcastle (18th) was at Laing's Nek, the consolidation was permanent, but in the west Lord Methuen was at Hoopstad, and in the east General Hunter entered Ladybrand on 21st May. Lord Roberts moved from Kroonstad on the 22nd, his lieutenants, French and Hamilton, keeping wide on his flanks, and on the 26th and 27th the Vaal River was crossed and the semi-subjugated Orange Colony left behind. The advance went on with another long leap, and there was little or no fighting till Doornkop, where the Boers, with memories of a very different occasion in their minds, lay outside Johannesburg. There were various reasons, financial and other, why Johannesburg should be quickly seized, and though the financial reasons did not interest the soldiers, the capture was neatly and expeditiously done by Colonel Henry's prompt capture of the railway on the east of the town. Johannesburg was entered on 31st May, 1900, without loss of life or destruction to property, and as soon as supplies could be brought up the last step to Pretoria was taken.

French went round in a wide sweep to the westward, so as to get behind the railway north from Pretoria, and by 4th June was north of the capital. The main army followed him. General Louis Botha made a stand in front of Pretoria while goods and valuables were removed from the capital, but the engagement he fought was no more than a rear-guard action. On 5th June, 1900, Lord Roberts was established in Pretoria, into which he rode with Lord Kitchener, his Chief of Staff, and the foreign attachés, at the head of the Guards Division.

The military situation at the time of the occupation of

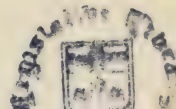
LORD ROBERTS, LORD KITCHENER, AND STAFF RIDING INTO PRETORIA, JUNE 5, 1900

From a drawing by Sidney Paget

Pretoria was brilliant, but it was not without weaknesses. Lord Roberts had launched himself on the enemy's capital with an army of 30,000 men, but had left behind him a long and vulnerable line of communications. On the flank of this line in the eastern Free State was an energetic force of unconquered Free Staters who knew very little of defeat and a good deal of success. They were some 10,000 in number, and had first-rate leaders — De Wet, Prinsloo, and Olivier — for a guerrilla activity. It was held in check by Rundle and Brabant's Colonial Division, both of which did well in the east; but Colvile and Methuen, who had not the right kind of troops, were unable to cope with the commandos when they crossed to the west of the railway line.

Lord Roberts's strategy and his appreciation of the powers of his enemy were faultless. He proved quite right in disregarding the threat to his communications, and his objective was reached before De Wet had time to become ineffective. But Pretoria was a capital, not a stronghold, and though Louis Botha was aware that in the political sense the aims of the Boer Republics could never be attained, and dallied with proposals of surrender, he was aware that in the undefeated commandos the Boers possessed many strongholds. De Wet's blows at Lord Roberts's communications came too late to affect the certainty of the result, but not too late to persuade Louis Botha that the result might be indefinitely postponed. A brief summary of De Wet's successes in attacking the army's communications on the eve of and during the first three weeks of June, 1900 (after the occupation of Pretoria), will show the vulnerability of the lines and the magnitude of the task which Lord Kitchener was instructed to undertake in making them safe.

On 31st May De Wet captured the 13th Battalion of Imperial Yeomanry, under Colonel Spragge. The disaster occurred at Lindley, which the Yeomanry had occupied in the



belief that they would there come into touch with General Colvile. Eighty killed and wounded out of 470.

On 4th June De Wet took a convoy of 55 wagons with an escort of 100 men, who were taking stores to the Highland Brigade at Heilbron.

On 5th June one of his detached parties demolished Roodeval Bridge; and, having decided, after an unsuccessful attack, that a party at railhead under Major Douglas Haig had better be left alone, went on south till, on 7th June, he surprised and captured the post at the Rhenoster, which was guarded by a troop of the Derbyshire Militia. One hundred and forty killed and wounded, after a hopeless fight without artillery, and Rhenoster Bridge destroyed.

Lord Kitchener by this time was on his way south, and on 10th June a force under Methuen from Heilbron converged, together with that of the Chief of Staff, on Roodeval. Lord Methuen arrived first, and at once attacked De Wet. De Wet pursued his usual tactics—moved eastwards, avoided action—and the British force displayed its usual inability to keep in touch with him. Contact having been lost, De Wet doubled back again and made an attack at Rhenoster, where Colonel Girouard with his railway staff was working hard to repair the ruined bridge, and where Lord Kitchener was also present surveying and hastening the work. This time Lord Kitchener's force, which included Shropshires, South Wales Borderers, and a battery, beat the raiders off; but the suddenness of the attack enabled De Wet to do some damage, and had he been able to press the attack home he might even have captured Lord Kitchener himself.

Another attempt at this time was made by a commando, not directly associated with De Wet's raids, on a bridge to the south of Kroonstad, but it was beaten off by the Loyal Lancasters and the Railway Pioneers. The last attempt at this period of De Wet's activity was made at Honing Spruit station

on 21st June, midway between Kroonstad and Roodeval; but Colonel Bullock, of the Devons, held on till reinforcements and guns came up, and the attempt was beaten off. Gradually Lord Kitchener resumed control of the communications, and the first round between him and De Wet ended with the Boer guerrilla's retirement.

The effect of these successes on General Louis Botha was evident. He had withdrawn east of Pretoria, and negotiations for peace had almost been begun, when, on 8th June, he broke them off, and prepared to defend what was left to him of the Transvaal. Henceforth the campaign under Lord Roberts divided itself into two parts. In the Transvaal Botha was gradually pressed back to the border at Komati Poort. South of the Vaal there were the operations ceaselessly zigzagging, radiating, and converging, by which Lord Kitchener and the divisional brigade commanders endeavoured first to break up, and then to capture, the forces still at large under Prinsloo, Olivier, and De Wet. To this was added a new campaign to the west of Pretoria led by De la Rey.

In the north, Buller, coming up through Natal, had at last joined hands with the main army, and so had constricted still further the area in which Louis Botha could operate with a Boer army; and the end to this campaign came after the last considerable battle of Diamond Hill and the last noteworthy engagements at Lydenburg. On 1st September Lord Roberts showed his sense of the decisive nature of the main army's operations by publishing the proclamation (issued as early as 4th July) by which the Transvaal became a portion of the British Empire; and on 11th September, 1900, President Kruger left the Transvaal and arrived a fugitive at Lourenço Marquez. He was no friend to Britain; we think that he was an ill friend to the country from which he had fled; but we need not grudge a backward glance of pity for his ruined hopes and ambitions.

In the eastern Free State the operations in which Lord Kitchener took a directing share, and in which he actively participated, for the dispersion of the Free Staters, resulted in splitting up the enemy's forces into smaller and smaller bands; and finally Prinsloo surrendered near the Basuto border to General Hunter on 29th–30th July. It was the most considerable surrender since Paardeberg, for more than 4000 Boers were taken prisoners. Olivier, who was with Prinsloo, broke away and escaped, and was not captured till some time later (28th August), when he was ambushed by a handful of Queenstown Volunteers near Winburg. De Wet still remained at large, the net always being of too wide a mesh; and in the western Transvaal De la Rey was beginning to emulate his exploits. One of the most determined of his attempts, notable, however, for the resistance which it met, was that in which he besieged a garrison of Australians at Elands River. The garrison was 500 in number—Victorians, New South Wales men, and Queenslanders, with a few Rhodesians, and commanded by Colonel Hore. They were surrounded by 2500 Boers and shelled by six guns. The river was half a mile off. But they dug themselves in, refused to surrender, despite their heavy losses and the jamming of their one gun, and grimly sat it out from the beginning of August till the 16th, when they were relieved by a force under Lord Kitchener. Britain does not forget Elands River, and the Australians did not forget Lord Kitchener.

Though De Wet and De la Rey were still at large, the clearance of the Transvaal as far as the eastern border, the dispersal of all the main Boer armies, and the departure of President Kruger for Europe signalized the end of the main operations of the war. That was the view taken by the Imperial Government and endorsed by Lord Roberts, who returned home in November as Commander-in-Chief of the British army, relinquishing the command in South Africa to

his "right-hand man during the campaign", Lord Kitchener. The words quoted were used by Lord Roberts on his return to Great Britain in a speech at Southampton, in which he took the opportunity to express his appreciation of his lieutenant:

"As Chief of the Staff of the army in South Africa Lord Kitchener has been my right-hand man during the campaign, and I am glad of this opportunity of expressing publicly how much I owe to his wise counsels and ever-ready help. No one could have laboured more incessantly, or in a more self-effacing manner, than Lord Kitchener has done, and no one could have assisted me more loyally, without a thought of self-aggrandizement."

E. S. G.

CHAPTER VI

Kitchener's Task in South Africa

Kitchener in Command—Tactical Position of Botha, De la Rey, and De Wet—Lord Kitchener's First Net for the Capture of De Wet—De la Rey's Attack on Clements at Nooitgedacht—De Wet's Second Attempt to enter Cape Colony—The feeling in the Colony—Kritzinger and Hertzog—Lord Kitchener's Railway Counter-manœuvres—De Wet's Failure—Lord Kitchener's Meeting with Louis Botha at Middelburg—The Middelburg Offer—The Boer Forces in the Field—Botha's Rejection of the Terms—Further Operations in Cape Colony—Lord Kitchener sends General French to the Colony—The Situation in July, 1901.

IN the Army Order in which Lord Roberts took leave of the Army of South Africa, and gave up the command, in his own generous words, "into the able hands of Lord Kitchener of Khartoum", he parted from his soldiers in the clear expectation that the longest part of the task was over. "I should like to remain with the army till it is completely broken up," he said simply, "but I have come to the conclusion that, as Lord Kitchener has consented to take over the command, my presence is no longer required in South Africa." It was true that Lord Roberts had left behind him a campaign of certain issue, but it was of uncertain duration. The cause was in no danger, but we may not doubt that Lord Roberts had a shrewd idea that the task of dealing with the desperate and scattered fragments of the Boer forces would be one which would tax all his successor's perseverance and patience. And so, indeed, it proved. Louis Botha, after the last rally at Bergendal, had retired north of the British cordon, extending from Pretoria to Komati Poort, to rally his discomfited and

discouraged forces; he was supposed to be in the Pietersburg district, and, unmolested there, he succeeded in evolving a scheme of attack and the forces with which to carry it into execution. De la Rey in the west was elaborating the flying column which for many months was to be a harassment and a danger to Lord Methuen, General Clements, and the other commanders there; and in the south De Wet was irrepressible. About him ever rallied those who, encouraged by transitory successes, and blind to the wastefulness and uselessness of resistance, were ready to have one more shot at the enemy. Botha was well aware of the true situation, though he was willing to aid his burghers in prolonging the war in the hope of better terms; but those who followed the star of De Wet placed their hopes high, and were lured by the will o' the wisp of a successful rising in Cape Colony.

In the early months of Lord Kitchener's assumption of the chief command De Wet occupied so large a share of the operations that they almost resolved themselves into a conflict between the British Commander-in-Chief and the Boer guerrilla. Lord Kitchener spread the net, De Wet endeavoured to break through it, and the simile of the retiarius and the Samnite is not so inapt as it seems, for though De Wet rode so light he struck hard at those who endeavoured to hold him.

But his earliest essays against Lord Kitchener were not entirely triumphal marches. In the third week of November, 1900, he had run the gauntlet of the line of blockhouses which Lord Kitchener had established between Bloemfontein and Thaba N'chu and thence to Ladybrand, and with about 1700 men and two guns invested a force of Gloucestershires and Highland Light Infantry under Major W. G. Massy at De Wet's Dorp. He compelled their surrender just in time (23rd November), and marched off with his prisoners, evading Colonel Pilcher and General Knox. With them at his heels he set off with the evident intention of invading Cape Colony,

gathering on his way all the commandos on the Orange River, and impressing or recruiting farmers who had taken the oath. British columns were moved out to stop him from the bridge crossings—from Norval's Pont to Orange River, and from Bethulie to Aliwal North. De Wet was then joined by Hertzog, and it was arranged between them that Hertzog should try to cross on the west while De Wet made a dash through the eastern river crossings. They might have done it, but the weather changed, the Orange River rose, and De Wet's Boers found themselves in an awkward angle between the two flooded rivers, the Orange and the Caledon, and columns under Herbert and Pilcher, with Colonel Long in command, looking for him. On 6th December Lord Kitchener came down to superintend, and sent Colonel Long to bar De Wet's way across the Orange at Odendaal Stroom, where alone the river was fordable. Finding thus his last hope gone, De Wet was forced to abandon this, his first attempt to invade Cape Colony, and bend all his energies to saving his commando.

The columns set moving by Knox and Long combed the country for him, and De Wet, searching the banks of the Caledon for a crossing, left everywhere a trail of dead horses behind him, and, finally, his Krupp gun and ammunition. Then fortune suddenly changed for him. The rain ceased, the Caledon fell, and De Wet was across like a flash. He had failed, but his miraculous escape increased rather than lessened his reputation. Wherever he moved he brought large bodies of British troops after him, and he kept under arms many a burgher whose spirit of resistance was drawn from him. His influence, losing nothing by report of his deeds, spread to the most distant parts, and had its effect not merely on the burghers, who were ready to join him whenever he elected to try again, but on Botha and on De la Rey.

De la Rey was able to derive encouragement from his own

LORD KITCHENER IN SOUTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN UNIFORM

Kitchener served first as Chief of Staff and afterwards as Commander-in-Chief

exploits. He was known to be waiting in the west for suitable opportunities to fall on the convoys that went along the Rustenburg-Pretoria road and had grown careless from immunity. General Clements was sent up to this district to aid General Broadwood in clearing it, but it was not till De la Rey had signified his activity by seizing one of the convoys on its return journey from Rustenburg to Pretoria[1] that combined operations against him in any sense began. The operations were, in truth, lacking in combination at the end of November; the only co-ordination was with the enemy, Beyers being sent by Botha to join De la Rey in making a joint attack on Clements, who was ensconced in a bad tactical position at Nooitgedacht, under the shadow of the Magaliesberg range. The action at Nooitgedacht, where Clements was assailed on 13th December, 1900, by the combined forces of De la Rey's westerners and the northerners from beyond Pretoria and from the Krokodil River, was redeemed by the effort which the British general made to save it from complete disaster. He lost 74 killed, 186 wounded, and 386 prisoners. The disaster ought never to have been incurred; that it was not complete was due to the ability which Clements showed in collecting a broken force and leading it from the very midst of ten times its number. The situation was eventually cleared up by French, who, by the last day of December, 1900, had driven the enemy back and out, and had disposed Clements and Alderson in tactically defensive positions on the Magaliesberg, drawing a line of columns from Olifant's Nek through Ventersdorp to Klerksdorp.

De Wet, after his first failure to enter Cape Colony, prepared to renew the attempt on a larger scale. His reputation and his force had suffered no damage that was not quickly repaired; burghers came to join him as soon as he was over

[1] De la Rey captured 126 wagons and 1862 cattle, besides inflicting 118 casualties on the escort.

the Caledon, and it was not long before he had 5000 men again. He was not allowed to recuperate without hindrance; for though he had escaped the Caledon floods, General C. E. Knox's columns were behind him, pushing him into the midst of another circle of British troops and forts. Farthest behind him were Long, Pilcher, and Grenfell; nearest were Barker, Williams, and W. L. White. Sir C. Parsons was on the left at Reddersburg. Thorneycroft and the Hon. J. Byng had been brought down by Lord Kitchener from the north to shepherd De Wet on the right, the eastern border. General Knox tried first to drive De Wet to the left into the arms of Sir C. Parsons, but De Wet, kept well informed by his scouts, edged away to his right. On 13th December he was only ten miles from the nearest of his pursuers. He was perfectly well aware of the situations of his various opponents, of the line of troops and blockhouses barring his front, and of the exact distance of his pursuers. His haven was only to be gained by good fortune, whereas failure would mean ruin; but he took the risk. Here, as elsewhere, he was, in the words of the sober, official historian of the War Office, the "inspired gambler". For three weeks he dodged and doubled, and, in a series of intricate twists and turnings, evaded all the forces placed on the field against him, as if the pursuit had been a game of reversed blind-man's-buff, in which De Wet was the only player with his eyes open. Lord Kitchener kept in remarkably close touch with his obscure movements during the mid three weeks of December, —in closer touch, indeed, than his subordinates on the spot, who had a less efficient Intelligence service; and, gradually introducing new columns and new dispositions into the field, the Commander-in-Chief made preparations to ensnare De Wet in the new complication of his second projected invasion of Cape Colony.

The pro-Boer feeling had not been quenched in Cape

Colony, though its expression had receded with the downfall of the Boer hopes. Lenient treatment of the Prieska rebels had not been without its mollifying effect; for, though the individual might not be reconciled, public opinion had swung away from an open rising. But disaffection, in spite of all opiates, is a light sleeper, and the Boer leaders, in December, 1900, and January, 1901, had good hopes that their réveillé would wake it. The Colony was lightly garrisoned; pacific "congresses", which were really meetings of conspirators, had been permitted to take place at Graaf Reinet and Worcester. At the same time that hundreds of burghers who had surrendered were finding their rifles again, the contingents of Colonials (who were really the best kind of troops the British forces could have for the work in hand) were being disbanded. With these favouring circumstances, and with the Boer habit of pertinacity, it was not to be expected that the first failure to enter Cape Colony would prevent a second attempt from being made. So it proved.

Two of De Wet's lieutenants, Commandants Kritzinger and Hertzog, less closely watched than their leader, dashed across the Orange River on 15th and 16th December, and provoked a disturbance of the colony which was to extend to its seaboard. Their forces were small. Kritzinger had but 700 men, Hertzog some 1200. They rode light, with neither artillery nor transport, depending for provender on the innumerable friendly farms. They were in a sense merely marauding bands; but their inroad was serious because they were the spark to set the powder-magazine alight, although the powder of the Cape Colony was damp and reluctant to explode. The incursion placed the raiders behind the only regular troops in the colony —part of the Brigade of Guards at Norval's Pont—but there were many small bodies of militia and volunteers dispersed along the railway lines as guards; and none knew better than the Commander-in-Chief how to wage warfare on the rails.

Within a week of the violation of the frontier of Cape Colony no fewer than sixteen bodies of troops had been sent by Lord Kitchener within the border and organized for the field. All these were placed under the general command of Major-General Settle, who delimitated the areas by taking himself the western area (De Aar), giving Inigo Jones the central (Naauwpoort), and Hector Macdonald the eastern (Burghersdorp).

It would be an endless task to describe in detail the efforts to find and engage in a vast territory bands who were bent on nothing so much as avoiding battle. The task of pursuing them was a tedious and trying one because, apart from the danger to Cape Colony, it was becoming evident that Kritzinger and Hertzog were purposely drawing the British troops aside to east and west so as to leave a clear course down the middle of the Colony for the expected rush of De Wet. The problem was of a moral as well as a material seriousness, because, should either the preliminary or the subsequent movements of the raiders succeed in fanning smouldering disaffection into active rebellion, and rouse even temporarily a serious struggle in Cape Colony, the whole campaign might be transformed. But the infection furnished its own antidote. Within three weeks 10,000 loyal volunteers were enrolled in the Colony, and were dispatched in detachments to hold the towns and villages which stood in the way of the commandos. Major-General Settle's columns could not keep pace with Hertzog, but the railway could, and by 21st January Hertzog found himself shut off by an impenetrable fence of columns from Cape Town. He checked his advance on the Doorn River, and Settle, whose chief anxiety up till then had been to save the Colony from being overrun, saw that the raider had reached the end of his rope, and immediately assumed the offensive. But Hertzog also knew that he had gone as far as he could, and began to retire northward again. He had done his

part in preparing the way for De Wet and making the path easier.

Kritzinger on the other side of the Colony had met similar experiences. He was pursued by Colonel Douglas Haig, but on 18th January had outdistanced him, and, dividing his commando into two parts, one of which was entrusted to Scheepers, threatened to reach even Mossel Bay on the coast. That was the limit of Kritzinger's success. From that time henceforward Haig had him in difficulties, and first split him up in the Bavian's Kloof Mountains, and, but for a blunder of some Yeomanry, might have captured Scheepers. But both Kritzinger and Scheepers were turned north, and fled in apprehension. But on 17th February the pursuit eased. Haig called off some of his columns; and Haig himself was wanted elsewhere. Hertzog had known why; Kritzinger and Scheepers could guess. De Wet had crossed the Orange River; he had already been a week within the Colony, and the time had come for the consummation of the campaign in front of which Hertzog, Kritzinger, and Scheepers had scouted down to the seaboard.

The Boers were looking towards De Wet as the new prophet—the Mahdi—the expected. Kritzinger had written to him two months earlier that the Cape farmers were only waiting for the event to rise in a body. General J. C. Smuts had promised to come with 2000 men to aid the enterprise, and in his letter to De Wet looked forward to a general revolution of Cape Colony. But General Smuts, nothing if not a good soldier, would have been less hopeful had he known that De Wet had lost his best weapon—that of surprise. Lord Kitchener had suspected and fully prepared for his design from its earliest initiation in the interior of Orange River Colony. The probability of an effort to wipe out the memory of the rebuff on the Caledon River had always been recognized. The unrest in the Smithfield and Rouxville districts and the bold

perseverance of Hertzog and Kritzinger in Cape Colony tended to confirm the cloud of rumours which invariably arose whenever the invasion of British soil was in the air.

On 22nd January Lord Kitchener was warned that De Wet was on his way to pick up his commandos, which had been "resting" at Doornberg. Next day De Wet and President Steyn crossed the railway and were traced towards the rendezvous. Bruce Hamilton and C. E. Knox were ordered by Lord Kitchener to close on him before he could organize his men and start south. But De Wet was quicker than they. They arranged to attack on the 28th. De Wet slipped between them on the 27th, and moved full speed southward with his 2000 horsemen and 3 guns. Knox turned to pursue him at once. Bruce Hamilton hoped to outrun him by train before he could reach the Orange. De Wet travelled at a great pace, driving before him flocks and herds as his food-supplies. In order to give them a start he turned to fight a rear-guard action with Knox's pursuing columns (Pilcher and Crewe), and his men (and his guns) fought it with their usual ability. He knocked his pursuers about quite as much as they damaged him, and he kept the road open to the south. He outpaced Knox and forestalled Bruce Hamilton on the railway. There was nothing between him and the border; he raced towards it and disappeared.

Lord Kitchener saw that direct pursuit was fruitless, and that De Wet could be outstripped by the railway, and by nothing less speedy. Ordering wellnigh every body of troops in Cape Colony to the strategic points, and summoning Paget and Plumer from the north, he called off Knox and Bruce Hamilton and put them in the train for Cape Colony, with their base at Bethulie. He withdrew all the garrisons in the Smithfield and Rouxville districts, and transferred the troops which had been acting there to the left bank of the

Orange. He concentrated a new mobile force, cavalry, at Naauwpoort (Bethune), and formed a new mounted-infantry column (Colonel Hickman). General Lyttelton had command of all the columns. While all these measures were being prepared against him, De Wet imagined that his chief opponent was asleep. He therefore pulled up short of the Orange, and was in sight of Norval's Pont no earlier than 4th February. He could not cross there, and so turned westwards—the old British fault on the part of our scouting allowing touch to be lost with him when it was most valuable. He cleverly confused Lyttelton as to where he intended to cross, and on 10th February, while Head-quarters were telegraphing to Lyttelton that, "according to information received", De Wet would cross between Bethulie and Aliwal, he took his whole force over the Orange at Sand Drift.

But the British columns were now warming to their work. Pilcher and Bruce Hamilton struck south to intercept him. Plumer came up with his advance-guard, a reconnoitring squadron of Imperial Light Horse (Captain Bridges) first establishing touch. Plumer, ably seconded by Bridges, did exactly the right thing. They stuck to De Wet and deflected him, till, another force coming up, he was obliged to turn from his direct path and move westward. De Wet now began to have misgivings. The preparedness of his adversaries and the quick way they had recovered from the false scent about the Orange River crossing took him by surprise. He had intended to have penetrated the Colony in three separate divisions, but his forced marches had told on him. He was 600 men short; others went on foot; there were hostile columns in front and behind. He could not get south. There might be some advantage, nevertheless, in his enforced westerly march, because Hertzog was pressing forward to meet him with 1500 horses raised from the farms of the west. So westwards he moved, hopefully,

and not less hopefully Plumer followed, sticking to his heels. Heavy rain and thunderstorms now added a new factor to the pursuit. It occasionally put Plumer out of touch, but it was washing away the Boer supplies by bogging their wagons; and meanwhile Knox and Bruce Hamilton were making use of the railway to get closer and closer. De Wet now knew, and his burghers knew, that the invasion was an invasion no longer. It had become reduced to an effort to avoid capture or starvation. On the 17th of February De Wet fled northward, intending to strike for Prieska by one of the lower drifts of the Brak River.

Plumer did not lose touch with him—his Intelligence officer kept on the trail for 300 miles of tortuous riding—and he pursued till De Wet's force began to disintegrate into smaller bands. But meanwhile Plumer ran out of supplies: his men were almost starving when Crabbe and Henniker came up to share biscuits and the pursuit. De Wet gathered a few fresh horses and doubled south-west along the Brak. Here Knox intercepted his movement on the upper waters and forced him lower down, to where the Brak (in flood) was, in De Wet's own words, "roaring like a tempestuous sea". De Wet had only one chance left. It was to double back eastwards and try to get across the Orange. In a black night of rain he made the first move successfully, and got to the Orange to search for a drift. As he went he dropped more and more men, his guns were captured by some Victorian Imperial Bushmen and Dragoon Guards (Henniker and Marker), and for more than a week he and his burghers scoured the river bank looking for a crossing of the flooded river. Bosjesmann's Drift, Visser's Drift, Lemoenfontein Drift were all tried, and tried in vain, and columns under Thorneycroft, Hickman, Byng, Williams, and Lowe were all being put afresh into the hunt. With the Boers every hope rested on Sand Drift, the gateway by which they had entered the Colony. But here, too, the water covered

man and horse, and the two burghers who tested the crossing for the rest nearly lost their lives.

As De Wet, his hopes nearly extinguished, turned again up-stream he was at last joined by Hertzog with burghers and fresh horses, and rejoined by Fourie. The junction, with British columns all round, was a wonderful feat, but it was useless. It might add to what Lord Kitchener in those days was in the habit of calling his "bag", but it could not save the situation. The British rope began to tighten; but imperfect signalling, delays on the railway, marching impeded by the heavy rains, all contributed to the incompleteness of the cordon. On the last night but one of February, 1901, a long night march carried De Wet across the front of the columns and on to the bank of the Orange at Leliefontein close to Colesberg Bridge. Here was a drift; it was the fifteenth he had tried in his efforts to escape, but one which was little known and used. A few men tried it. The stream washed the saddles of the horses, but it was just shallow enough; the horses floundered over, and in a few minutes the Orange was black from bank to bank with thankful burghers. They had got out with their skins, their rifles, and the horses they rode; but their campaign had been a flight and a failure, its track marked by abandoned horses, transport, and guns. De Wet's reputation survived the disaster, and on the Cape side of the Orange his misfortunes were not his fault. But he had misjudged the energy of Lord Kitchener and underrated his penetration. Lord Kitchener had seen in the dispatch in advance of Hertzog and Kritzinger that these two were intended to pave the way for the superior leader and the larger force, and had been quick to take advantage of De Wet's dilatory march to follow them. Not for one moment had Cape Colony been in danger; and if the exertions of the British columns in pursuit of him had been almost superhuman, it was rather in the fervent hope of capturing him than in the necessity of foiling

his campaign, which Lord Kitchener's measures had made futile from the first.

On the very day that De Wet escaped from the personal consequences of his ill-fated invasion of Cape Colony, Lord Kitchener met Commandant-General Louis Botha at Middelburg. The meeting had been brought about largely by the influence of Mrs. Botha, and much was hoped from it. But Botha declared that it was doubtful if he could bring about a cessation of hostilities unless national independence, which was what the Boers were fighting for, was conceded as the first condition. That condition Lord Kitchener declined even to discuss. But the interview was not wholly useless, for the British Government learned through Lord Kitchener what other things the Boers wanted before they would submit; and what terms, if their first condition of national independence could be proved to them to be unattainable, they would perhaps be prepared to accept in substitution. Such terms were: The inauguration of representative government; equal rights for the Dutch language; postponement of the franchise for Kaffirs; integrity of Dutch Church property; the assumption by Great Britain of the debts of the Republics, especially of notes commandeering requisitions and other liabilities incurred during the war; no war-tax to be imposed on the farmers; financial assistance to ruined farmers; amnesty to all at the conclusion of the war; speedy return of prisoners; retention of rifles by those liable to danger from natives.

A week after this interview Lord Kitchener, having cabled to the Government and received their replies, sent the following letter to General Botha:—

"PRETORIA, *March 7th*, 1901.

"YOUR HONOUR,

"With reference to our conversation at Middelburg on the 28th of February. I have the honour to inform you that in the event of a general and complete cessation of hostilities, and the surrender of all rifles, ammunition, cannon, and other munitions of war in the hands

of the burghers, or in Government depots or elsewhere, His Majesty's Government is prepared to adopt the following measures.

"His Majesty's Government will at once grant an amnesty on the Transvaal and Orange River Colony for all *bona fide* acts of war committed during the recent hostilities. British subjects belonging to Cape Colony and Natal, while they will not be compelled to return to these colonies will, if they do so, be liable to be dealt with by the laws of those colonies specially passed to meet the circumstances arising out of the present war. As you are doubtless aware the special law in the Cape Colony has greatly mitigated the ordinary penalties for High Treason in the present case. [The mitigation took the form in some cases of mere deprivation of civil rights for a term of years.]

"All prisoners of war now in St. Helena, Ceylon, or elsewhere, being burghers or colonists, will on the completion of the surrender be brought back to their country as quickly as arrangements can be made for their transport.

"At the earliest practicable date military administration will cease, and will be replaced by civil administration in the form of Crown Colony Government. There will therefore be, in the first instance, in each of the new colonies a Governor and an Executive Council, composed of the principal officials, with a Legislative Council consisting of a certain number of official members to whom a nominated unofficial element will be added. But it is the desire of His Majesty's Government, as soon as circumstances permit, to introduce a representative element, and ultimately to concede to the new colonies the privilege of self-government. Moreover, on the cessation of hostilities, a High Court will be established in each of the new colonies to administer the laws of the land, and this Court will be independent of the Executive.

"Church property, public trusts, and orphan funds will be respected.

"Both the English and the Dutch languages will be used and taught in public schools when the parents of the children desire, and allowed in Courts of Law.

"As regards the debts of the late Republican Governments His Majesty's Government cannot undertake any liability. It is, however, proposed as an act of grace to set aside a sum not exceeding one million pounds sterling to repay inhabitants of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony for goods requisitioned from them by the late Republican Governments, or subsequent to annexation, by Commandants in the field being

in a position to enforce such requisitions. But such claims will have to be established to the satisfaction of a judge or a Judicial Commission appointed by the Government to investigate and assess them, and if exceeding in the aggregate one million pounds they will be liable to reduction *pro rata*.

"I also beg to inform Your Honour that the new Government will take into immediate consideration the possibility of assisting by loan the occupants of farms who will take the oath of allegiance, to repair any injuries sustained by destruction of buildings or loss of stock during the war, and that no special war tax will be imposed on farms to defray the expenses of the war.

"When burghers require the protection of fire-arms, such will be allowed to them by licence, and on due registration, provided they take the oath of allegiance.

"As regards the extension of the franchise to Kaffirs in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony, it is not the intention of His Majesty's Government to give such franchise before representative government is granted to those colonies, and if then given it will be so limited as to secure the just predominance of the white race. The legal position of coloured persons will, however, be similar to that which they hold in Cape Colony.

"In conclusion I might inform Your Honour that if these terms are not accepted after a reasonable delay for consideration they must be regarded as cancelled.

"KITCHENER, General,
Commander-in-Chief, British Forces,
South Africa."

It was too soon for peace. The Boer forces were becoming hardened by war. The hesitating, the pacifists, had been discarded. Those who were left, if they did not love fighting for its own sake, were at any rate engaged in the kind of fighting that appealed to them, both in its conduct and in its aims. The Boer generals were worse off than ever Kitchener had been at Paardeberg for the staff to handle armies; they had neither the complicated organization nor the disciplined machinery, nor yet the time or opportunity to improvise them. A Boer army had been a paradox from the beginning; but a

Boer commando, properly led by men with a supreme aptitude for fighting, was one of the ablest and most efficient units in the world. It was far superior to any equal number of men which a British general could form to meet it. If there had been a way to bring the war to a speedy conclusion it would have been sought in equipping and horsing bodies of men who were individually the equal of the Boers as shots, riders, scouts, and horsemasters. That way was not practicable, because we neither had the horses, nor the men who knew as well as the Boers how to get the best out of them; and we taught and trained the men only in warfare. But at the time when Lord Kitchener sent his letter to General Botha the Boers were our teachers. There were still nearly 50,000 burghers in the field. De la Rey was in the act of organizing the strong "flying commando" of which he wrote to Botha in mid-March, and which was for so long to dominate the western veldt; Kritzinger, Fouché, Scheepers, and Malan, undeterred by De Wet's expulsion, were returning like horse-flies to Cape Colony; and Botha and his burghers knew that General French had not been able to clear them out of the eastern Transvaal. Botha knew quite well the spirit of his burghers; he had himself enough of that unbending pride which will never give way except at the instance of a greater call and need than its own. So he joined himself with his burghers in refusing Lord Kitchener's terms, and sealed his refusal by the following address to his comrades-in-arms:—

"DEAR BROTHERS,

"The spirit of Lord Kitchener's letter makes it very plain to you all that the British Government desires nothing else but the destruction of our Afrikander people; and acceptance of the terms contained therein is absolutely out of the question. Virtually the letter contains nothing more, but rather less, than what the British Government will be obliged to do should our cause go wrong. Notice that they will give us a Legislative Council consisting of their own officials

and members nominated by themselves. The voice of the people is thus totally unrecognized. It is also proposed, and this as a favour, to place only one million pounds disposable for covering our State Debts, whereas, should the cause unexpectedly go wrong with us, the British Government must bear the responsibility of all the State Debts, and not simply walk away with the State's assets.

"Our burghers have fought heavily, but how can it be otherwise when the existence of our nation is unlawfully threatened. The blood and tears that this war has cost us has been hard, but giving up our country will be doubly hard.

"I feel from the bottom of my heart for those burghers whose families have been removed. Do not let this make anyone desperate, because he who becomes desperate and gives up the struggle, does not only an injustice to his people, but also loses all trust in himself.

"The more we are aggrieved by the enemy the more steadfastly we ought to stand for our goods and lawful rights.

"Let us, as Daniel in the lions' den, place our trust in God alone, for in His time and in His way he will certainly give us deliverance."

"Louis Botha,
Commandant General."

"Ermelo, *March 15th*, 1901.

It was certainly not with the burghers in this mood that peace could or would be made; and in their view the prolongation of the war might tire out Great Britain or last till she became involved in some European difficulty. President Kruger's mission in Europe was connected with the formation of such difficulties, and it was because his efforts so forlornly failed that the Boers' confidence in Germany was broken, and that none but the irreconcilable ever again put faith in Germany's good-will or intentions. But General Botha's position at this time was full of difficulties, and the way in which he surmounted them is the all-sufficing explanation of his unshaken power and influence in South Africa long after this war had been almost forgotten in Great Britain, in the presence of trial and stress not unlike that which Botha and his followers endured in 1901.

Hardly had he sent his answer to Lord Kitchener than he learned at Ermelo of the failure of De Wet's descent upon Cape Colony. A month earlier the raid had been reported to him as a triumphal march—a letter from Badenhorst told him that De Wet had got almost to Cape Town. On 29th March Botha rode to Vrede to learn the truth from De Wet.

De Wet, as he had done after his first rebuff from Cape Colony in December, had sought safety in dispersion, splitting his force into no fewer than twenty units, each of which, under its own field-cornet, repaired towards its local rendezvous, exchanging rifle-shots with any enemy it met—a method which was bewildering to the columns driving northward, which continually encountered phantom De Wets in places where that leader by all accounts could not possibly be. Lord Kitchener had a truer idea of what had happened, and gradually called in his columns in order to redistribute them in new commands over the Orange River Colony. The columns, first radiating and then converging, had captured an immense amount of stock, but not very many prisoners. By Lord Kitchener's orders they cleared the country as they marched through it; and often a commander, when in not too promising pursuit of some body of the enemy, found himself in doubt whether he should not turn from the possibly fruitless chase to the certain acquisition of flocks and herds. The failures resulting from the effort to compass both ends were seen too often during the campaign in South Africa to be omitted from its history. The greatest need, however, at this time was that of a definite object, for De Wet's widespread dissemination of his army had paralysed the initiative of the columns, and it became necessary for Lord Kitchener to devise some new implement for combing out the commandos.

Botha's visit to De Wet argued an attempt to arrive at some definite plan on the other side, and his task was one which, from the moral side, was harder than that of his great

opponent. Lord Kitchener could at any rate reckon on the unalterable loyalty of his soldiers. General Botha had to deal with plottings against his own authority, against whispers of mistrust, and against the irresolution of waverers who were inclined to believe that there was no use in fighting further. "All human help", wrote Acting-President Schalk Burger to President Steyn (21st March, 1901), "upon which we have hitherto relied has proved a broken reed. Europe is silent, and the enemy proceeds to destroy our people with his great force. The question is, may we, can we, continue the struggle further?"[1] The dejection which falls on armies had descended on the harried forces of the Transvaal, and the weaker spirits had yielded to it. But General Botha—who might have said to Lord Kitchener in a nobler rendering of the rejoinder which Mahmoud the Khalifa's emir had once made, that he, too, fought for his country and for that alone—had to struggle with an enemy in his own camps as well as against the foe without. None except he could have tided over this most critical period in his country's campaign. For he knew by communion with his own indomitable spirit how fine was the material and the temper of the younger men who had grown up with himself. They and he looked defeat in the face, and were not dismayed, highly resolving to derive from it victory. Be sure that Lord Kitchener recognized and admired his opponent's resolution and tenacity, and that Botha was conscious of his recognition. These two strong men knew one another's strength; and in after years Botha was able to say smilingly to one who knew him that he was "Kitchener's man".

On 1st April Botha returned from the interview with De Wet to his own camp at Rietspruit. Two decisions had resulted from the interview: one, that small-arm ammunition should be husbanded till supplies could be captured, and, therefore, that attacks in the open should be superseded for

[1] *Official History of the War*, Vol. IV, p. 124.

SOME OF LORD KITCHENER'S OPPONENTS

GENERAL CHRISTIAAN DE WET GENERAL KRITZINGER

GENERAL J. C. SMUTS

GENERAL C. F. BEYERS GENERAL BEN VILJOEN

From photographs by Fane (Bloemfontein), Duffus Bros., and Elliott & Fry

the present by attacks on railways; the other, that the representatives of the Orange State and the Transvaal should meet. The meeting took place; the railways were incessantly raided; and the chapter of events of this period was suitably rounded off by the continued efforts of the commandos and commandants who had been left in Cape Colony in the backwash of De Wet's invasion. De Wet's expulsion had left the colony in a condition which, if not alarming, was, at any rate, exasperating and inconvenient. Any minor leader who could raise a following to take the field could stoke the ashes of rebellion. Only trivial outbreaks arose; yet they persisted so long, they spread over so wide a country, that for the rest of the war Cape Colony needed 50,000 troops—British and Colonial—to keep it in order, and was a never-ceasing worry to the Commander-in-Chief. Kritzinger, who had gone in with Hertzog in advance of De Wet, and had temporarily faded away, was for some time the outstanding figure. With him were associated Fouché and Scheepers. Kritzinger was a De Wet on a small scale—equally self-confident, equally ready to allow opponents to surround him as long as they left a possible loophole. De Wet's retreat left him unmoved, and he continued the game of leading the columns of Gorringe and Herbert a chase from Dassiefontein to Twist Kraal (appropriate name!), and thence to Dwars Vlei Siding, all the time that his nominal leader was being chased back and forth along the fords of the Orange River. He was joined by Malan; and meanwhile Scheepers had been similarly dragging Grenfell and Sir Charles Parsons about the Klaarstroom district. When De Wet had gone, with General Lyttelton's command after him, a new team of columns, under the direction of Major-General Settle, took up the pursuit in Cape Colony. The Colony now became the field of kaleidoscopic operations in which Kritzinger, Fouché, Scheepers, and Malan—sometimes united in various combinations, sometimes separate, sometimes joined

by new apparitions—were on the one side; and on the other were some fifteen to twenty British columns, the names of whose leaders are at this time of day more interesting than their movements and a vast deal more comprehensible. Major-General Settle went home before the operations were ended, passing on the command in the midland area to Colonel (afterwards Sir) Douglas Haig, subsequently Commander-in-Chief in France. Major-General Hector Macdonald went home too, but among the leaders of columns in the chase, which lasted well into June before Kritzinger's forces had been whittled into ineffectiveness, were Lieutenant-Colonel G. F. Gorringe (afterwards in Mesopotamia), Lieutenant-Colonel Crabbe, Lieutenant-Colonel Henniker, Lieutenant-Colonel Grenfell, Lieutenant-Colonel Colenbrander, Colonel Sir C. Parsons, Lieutenant-Colonel H. B. De Lisle, Colonel A. E. Codrington, and Colonel S. C. N. Monro.

In the larger and more spectacular operations of the war the difficulty which Lord Kitchener had in bringing to rest the commandos in perpetual motion in Cape Colony has been too often lost sight of. His lieutenants, Lieutenant-General Forestier-Walker, and after him Major-General A. S. Wynne, who were in command in Cape Colony, were hampered by the anomaly that there was no general martial law in a country which was infected with rebellion. Martial law was proclaimed from time to time in many districts, but it stopped short at the seaports. His officers looked on powerless while munitions of war, or what were reported as such, and mail-bags containing matter little less encouraging to the enemy, were landed at the dockyards and delivered at their destinations. His Intelligence Department knew the spies and the agents, but he could not lay them by the heels. It was not till the following October that Lord Kitchener succeeded in reducing this handicap by obtaining the proclamation of martial law in Cape Town and all the other ports, and

thus removed a source of serious weakness in the conduct of the campaign. But in the interval Kritzinger had returned to Cape Colony, and S. G. Maritz and Scheepers had been followed by other leaders. Ultimately they were succeeded by General J. C. Smuts, the one man who, had he been sufficiently supported, could have united the incessant gyrations of the marauding bands into a coherent and effective campaign of offence.

General J. C. Smuts—afterwards commander of the British forces in East Africa—had the patriotism, the keen observation, the tactical opportunism, the mingled daring and caution, of the best of the Boer leaders. But, like General Botha, his observation was enlarged by a certain statesmanship and prescience which marked him out from those whose vision was bounded by the line of kopjes. Sharing the inextinguishable hope and bitter resolve of his fellow-countrymen, his animosity against his country's enemies was ennobled ever by soldier-like chivalry. He was an opponent of whom it is one of the greatest of British triumphs to have made a friend.

E. S. G.

CHAPTER VII

Wearing down the Boer Resistance

French's "Sweeping" Movements—Plumer pursues De Wet—De la Rey's Defeat by Babington—Assault on Dixon's Rear-guard—Boer War Council under Difficulties—Lord Kitchener's Dispatch—Capture of the Orange Free State "Government" at Reitz—Banishment Proclamation—Refugee Camps—Botha on the Natal Border—Capture of Lotter's Commando—Limited Success of Sweeping Movements—Boer Forces still in the Field—Kitchener develops his Blockhouse System.

THE failure of his efforts for peace at Middelburg was accepted by Lord Kitchener as a challenge to redouble his energy in pursuing the military campaign. He went to work with characteristic thoroughness in order to bring home to the Boers the hopelessness of their gallant struggle against the might of the Empire. As it turned out, the British forces had a long task yet to convince the Boers of that fact, but through the whole chapter of varying fortune Lord Kitchener's persistence never flagged, nor did the people at home waver for an instant in their faith in him. The name of Kitchener was a synonym for success. He determined, among other things, to press the advance northwards to Pietersburg and the country to the north of the Delagoa Bay line, which had not so far been visited by British troops. His appeal for mounted men had met with ready response. Reinforcements had arrived, and more were to come. From the Colonies 5000 horsemen were dispatched; from home 20,000 cavalry, mounted infantry, and yeomanry were sent; while Baden-Powell's constabulary force had recruited 10,000 mounted men in Great Britain, South Africa, and Canada. Altogether the reinforcements of horsemen which reached

South Africa before the end of April, 1901, numbered over 35,000, and raised the force of cavalry under Lord Kitchener's command to the prodigious figure of between 50,000 and 60,000.

Before all the fresh troops had arrived, Lord Kitchener was busy weakening the enemy. The chief blow was delivered by the drive down the eastern Transvaal, carried out by eight columns under command of General French. French had moved eastward on 28th January, 1901, with a view to dealing with the Transvaal Boers who were concentrated in the triangle formed by the Delagoa railway, the Natal railway, and the Swaziland and Zululand frontiers. The columns started their drive from different points of the Delagoa and Natal railway lines. The troops endured considerable hardships, enhanced in the case of the four southern columns by the failure of supplies, which obliged them to live on the country for more than a fortnight. Owing to incessant rain, the ground was one great quagmire. But the operations, though rendered slow and difficult, went forward. On 16th March French abandoned the Lüneberg-Utrecht line of communications and trusted to a new line via Volksrust and Wakkerstroom, and to Vryheid, which was well filled with supplies. He arrived at Vryheid on 25th March, and engaged in telegraphic exchanges with Lord Kitchener across 320 miles of wire. Two days later the last beat of the drive was started, and on 4th April French was able to announce the capture of the last piece of artillery in that district. To be completely successful the operations should have included the capture of Commandant-General Louis Botha, who escaped with nearly 3000 of his following. But a blow had been delivered from which the Boers never recovered. Botha's intended invasion of Natal was completely frustrated. Botha, Meyer, and Viljoen had evaded capture, but Boer concentration was broken up. General French entrained at Dundee, and on 20th April was back in Johannesburg.

Meanwhile Lord Kitchener had arranged a similar scheme of operations to be worked out to the northward of the Pretoria-Delagoa Bay railway. Brigadier-General Plumer was brought up from the pursuit of De Wet in Orange River Colony and left Pretoria on 26th March for Pietersburg, which was occupied almost without fighting on 8th April. Plumer had with him a mounted force of 1200 Australian and New Zealand troops and eight guns. Remaining at Pietersburg six days, he left a garrison and proceeded to seize the Oliphant River drifts. Lieutenant-General Sir Bindon Blood operated from the south and east with six columns, moving from Lydenburg, Witklip, Belfast, and Middelburg. Early in May no fewer than thirteen columns were prepared to resume operations in the south-eastern Transvaal, where bands of the enemy were again gathering. Lord Kitchener directed forces under Brigadier-General G. M. Bullock and Colonel M. F. Rimington on Ermelo, where Botha and B. Viljoen were in company.

In the Orange River Colony Plumer had been on the heels of De Wet, but never quite within striking distance of that elusive quarry. Late on the 1st of March, for instance, the British general was in Springfontein, and thence hurried across to Philippolis, only to learn that De Wet had already passed on his way to Fauresmith. By forced marches Plumer arrived at Fauresmith on 5th March, but the mobile De Wet was twenty hours ahead of him. Plumer continued the pursuit as far as Brandfort, where, on 12th March, his progress was halted by torrential rains. Two days earlier a combined movement began to clear the country east of the railway from the Orange River to the Bloemfontein-Thaba N'chu-Basutoland line. This was held by Boer forces under Vice-Chief-Commandant Piet Fourie, but the British columns under Lieutenant-General Lyttelton (afterwards succeeded by Major-General Bruce Hamilton), commanded by

Colonels Thorneycroft, T. E. Hickman, Haig (afterwards Sir Douglas), and Bethune, swept them north and captured large numbers of horses and stock and some prisoners. The country to the east and south-east of Heilbron was cleared by Lieutenant-Colonel Williams's column at the end of March. In April Lord Kitchener ordered Sir Leslie Rundle to conduct a reconnaissance, on the results of which future action would be decided. The town of Fouriesberg, which was entered on 2nd May, was for the next month Sir Leslie Rundle's base for raids in all directions.

Natal in April was continually threatened from Botha's Pass and the west, but the chief irruption of the enemy was in the Nkandhla and Mahlabitini districts of Zululand. A small column under Major A. J. Chapman of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers temporarily dislodged them from the former by a sharp attack at Babanango on 26th April. Two days later the Boers attacked the magistracy at Mahlabitini and were repulsed with loss by the Natal Police. The Police were in very inferior numbers, and lost seven out of the twenty men forming the garrison.

Meanwhile De la Rey's contemplated invasion of Cape Colony was abandoned, owing partly to scarcity of Boer remounts. This Boer leader also had his work cut out in his own country to escape destruction at the hands of General Babington, whose columns were operating in the western Transvaal with great vigour. De la Rey attacked the Lichtenburg garrison on 3rd March, and was beaten off with loss. Babington marched on Lichtenburg from Naauwpoort, and followed De la Rey towards Klerksdorp. On 22nd March De la Rey cut up a British scouting-party, but two days later, when De la Rey was imagining he had surprised the British, he himself was surprised. General Babington, coming upon him to the south-west of Ventersdorp, drove his force before him in disorder after De la Rey had lost no small proportion of

his fighting force. Another smart piece of work resulted in the capture of Smuts's main laager on 14th April by Colonel Sir H. Rawlinson's column.

But if De la Rey had been headed off Cape Colony, there were others. The Cape was kept in a state of uneasiness during April and May by those continued depredations of Scheepers, Kritzinger, Lotta, Fouché, and Smuts, of which mention was made in the preceding chapter. These bands not only captured some British troops in Cape Colony, but interfered with the railways and trade. On 9th June General French took command in Cape Colony, and at once set to work to expel the invaders, but several months were to elapse before the task could be completed.

A regular army in pursuit of skilled guerrilla warriors—that was the condition the campaign more and more presented as time went on. In the eastern Transvaal the month of March, 1901, was marked by a succession of blown-up trains. But if it was guerrilla warfare, the Boers nevertheless became alert to the necessity of discipline. A certain change was observed about this time in their system. Instead of each small commando operating in its own district, they tried to concentrate into larger units, with gradation of ranks and a code of discipline after the British model. Nothing, however, could alter the mode of fighting which the character of the country and their own equipment, and even temperament, imposed upon them. Hence for the British the elementary and yet the great difficulty was to find the enemy, to confront him in a position to offer battle. British generals were delighted when they got this opportunity; but the Boers, riding light, excelled in mobility, and were occasionally able on this account to get in a surprise blow. On 29th May such an attack was delivered by De la Rey's forces. A small column under General Dixon was sent into the Magaliesberg region to search for buried guns and ammunition on farms at Vlak-

hoek and Waterval. The approaches to these places from Vlakfontein consisted of two parallel ridges with a valley between. Dixon himself was in the valley; Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Duff marched along the right-hand ridge and Major H. Chance on the left. After searching the farms in vain—though on Watervaal he found the spot from which the buried guns had been removed—Dixon ordered a general retirement. Throughout the march Boers had been seen to the west. On the return march towards Vlakfontein, Chance was rear-guard, his force consisting of 250 Imperial Yeomanry, 100 Derbyshires, and two guns. Dixon was nearing camp when he became aware that shrapnel from Chance's ridge was bursting among the tents. The Boers were under Kemp, a dashing leader who was now generally placed in charge by De la Rey when there was fighting to be done. When Dixon had made for a camping-ground at Vlakfontein, a few weeks previously, he encountered Kemp's parties, but he never suspected that Kemp had begun collecting a force at Tafel Kop as soon as he disappeared from that place.

Kemp, in fact, had now 3000 men under him. They set fire to the dry veldt grass, and, under cover of the smoke and flame, came to close quarters with the British rear-guard, and for a time succeeded in getting possession of two guns. Chance managed to dispatch a message before the end of the struggle round the guns. Dixon at once delivered a vigorous counter-attack, and the burghers turned the fire of the captured guns upon the British. Our infantry showed desperate courage, which was rewarded. In face of their impetuous rush the Boers mounted hastily and galloped away. A big British disaster was averted, and the two guns were retaken. In his dispatch describing this action Lord Kitchener wrote:

"The rear-guard retired for about a mile along the ridge leading to the camp and formed up again to cover the main body, which had diverged slightly to the north. A large body of the enemy had mean-

while assembled in the valley to the south of the ridge on which the rear-guard was posted. These advanced rapidly against the left of the position, and, appearing suddenly through the smoke of the grass fire, shot down the gunners and gun-teams at short range, and inflicted heavy loss on the infantry and yeomanry. The rear-guard was forced to retire, and as, owing to the loss of the horses, the guns could not be removed, they fell temporarily into the enemy's hands. General Dixon, however, had at once gone to the assistance of his rear-guard, and on his arrival with reinforcements the Boers were driven out of the position they had seized and the guns recaptured."

We now turn to examine a little the comings and goings among the Boer leaders and the political staffs of the late Republican Governments. After his attack on Smith-Dorrien on 6th February, 1901, at the north end of Lake Chrissie, Botha had joined the Transvaal Government at Roos Senekal. His interview with Lord Kitchener, described in the preceding chapter, took place on 28th February at Middelburg, and on 16th March he had refused the terms of peace which Lord Kitchener had offered. At this time he returned from Roos Senekal to Ermelo, establishing his head-quarters outside the town, at Rietspruit. There he had received news of the failure of De Wet's descent upon Cape Colony, and had decided on that renewal of attacks on the British lines of communications to which reference has already been made.

Another result of the interview was seen presently in the holding of a conference between the Governments of the two States. Botha escorted Mr. Schalk Burger to Vrede, and was back at Reitspruit on 16th April. Again there creeps in the suggestion of terminating the fight. "The war must now be brought to an end," declared General B. Viljoen to his colleagues on 28th April. Viljoen had perhaps better reason than some others to realize the hopelessness of the struggle. He had just emerged from a desperately tight place after Colonel Benson's success at Klipspruit. Hemmed in, as it seemed, beyond

escape, he burnt all his transport; about 100 of his burghers surrendered to Benson at Blinkwater; and with his depleted force Viljoen had just managed to evade capture by stealing away in the darkness on the night of 22nd April, crossing the Steelpoort at Lagersdrift, and thence making north-westward towards the banks of the Oliphant, which he reached before dawn.

Mr. Kruger was at The Hague, and several months had passed since the German Emperor, by declining to receive him, had set the seal of doom upon any hopes that may have been entertained of his mission to Europe on behalf of the two republics. On 10th May General Botha asked permission of Lord Kitchener to send two envoys to Mr. Kruger to lay the state of affairs before him. Mrs. Botha was allowed by Lord Kitchener to leave for Europe on what proved to be a futile peace mission to Mr. Kruger, and leave was given to send a private cablegram. The next occurrence of importance in this series was the Council of War held on 20th June. It was not brought off without a good deal of manœuvring and adventure, for all those who took part in it had been and were the objects daily of a relentless hunt on the part of the British army. On 20th June, at Hartebeestspruit, Sir Bindon Blood received news that Botha and the members of the Transvaal Government were close to the westward. He lost no time in sending a flying column under Babington towards Kaffirstad. On the 21st news arrived from Babington that the enemy was moving up the Oliphant River. This intelligence proved to be belated, Botha and the "government" having passed that way escorted by Viljoen two days before. But in order to get westward to the place of meeting from the Amsterdam district the Transvaalers had had to abandon every vehicle. Conducted by Viljoen, they wormed their way successfully almost through the midst of the British columns. Meanwhile Steyn and his companions, on their part, riding from Vrede, had no sooner

escaped from a blockhouse south of Platrand and dashed across the railway than a dynamite mine exploded just behind them. How narrowly they missed being blown up was apparent to the British next morning, when two horses, some burnt clothing, and a rifle were found there. Arriving at Blauw Kop, on the Vaal, Steyn and De Wet spent three days waiting for the Transvaal contingent. The council of war then opened on 20th June at Branddrift, on the Waterval River, and was continued, for reasons of safety, on the following day on the farm Witbank, twenty-six miles east of Heidelberg. Besides those already named, there were present State-Secretary Reitz, Generals Hertzog, Spruyt, De la Rey, Smuts, Muller, Lucas Meyer, and others. In their midst was a silken banner which had been worked by Boer ladies in Pretoria.

The upshot of the deliberations was expressed in the following resolution, in which the hand and mind of Mr. Steyn can be clearly traced:—

"The Governments of the South African Republic and Orange Free State, with the advice of the said chief officers, and taking into consideration the satisfactory report of His Honour State-President Kruger and the Deputation in the foreign country, and considering the good progress of our cause in the Colonies, where our brothers oppose the cruel injustice done to the Republics more and more in depriving them of their independence, considering further the invaluable personal and material sacrifices they have made for our cause, which would all be worthless and vain with a peace whereby the independence of the Republics is given up, and further considering the certainty that the losing of our independence after the destruction already done and losses suffered will drag with it the national and material annihilation of the entire people, and especially considering the spirit of unbending persistence with which the great majority of our men, women, and children are still possessed, and in which we see with thankful acknowledgment the hand of the Almighty Protector, resolve: that no peace will be made and no peace conditions accepted by which our independence and national existence, or the interests of our Colonial brethren, shall be price paid,

LORD KITCHENER ON THE VELDT

shortly before peace was signed on May 31, 1902

From a drawing by H. W. Koekkoek

and that the war will be vigorously prosecuted by taking all measures necessary for maintenance of independence and interests."

Less official accounts of the proceedings, however, attributed to the conference a certain amount of dissatisfaction with Mr. Kruger, and disappointment at the poor results of his European mission. A cablegram from Mr. Kruger was delivered to General Botha through Major-General F. W. Kitchener on 5th July. It ran as follows:—

"Botha, De Wet, De la Rey, Steyn.

"Continue fighting. Alleviation will be sent when needed. Enough for the present."

Lord Kitchener went doggedly on with his task. Slowly but surely he was wearing down the tenacious enemy. A few examples will show the nature of the widespread activities on both sides. As a rule the records of the operations are not very interesting, but every now and then in the tireless pursuit an incident would occur which displayed the initiative of the British soldier at his best. On the other hand, instances are recorded of surprise blows which the Boers were still capable of delivering during these operations.

As another illustration of the work that was going on, a notable feat accomplished by our transport service at this period is cited in proof of British efficiency. Major-General E. L. Elliot's five columns, on reaching Glen in April after prolonged operations, telegraphed to the Staff Officer for Transport at Bloemfontein that their transport required overhauling and repairing. Within forty-eight hours the columns were refitted by the Assistant Adjutant-General for Transport and his repairing staff; 96 unserviceable vehicles were exchanged; 124 were repaired; over 500 unserviceable wheels were replaced; all harness was repaired or exchanged; 300 mules were issued to replace casualties, and 200 mules were exchanged.[1] Finally,

[1] *History of the War in South Africa.* M. H. Grant, 1910.

as typical of the combined military operations, take that which was begun in the eastern Transvaal on 10th June under the direction of Brigadier-General Spens, with the object of thoroughly searching a mountainous region. General Spens and Colonel Park operated northwards from Nelspruit; Colonels Benson and Douglas moved north-east from Machadodorp. By the end of June the area had been thoroughly cleared.

In the South African mid-winter Lord Kitchener penned a long dispatch (8th July) analysing the general effect of all such operations as having been a gradual weakening of the enemy's power of offence. He described the situation that had now been reached in the war. During May and June, he said, the Boer losses had undoubtedly been very heavy, and in the constant small fights and skirmishes there must have been many unreported casualties. He also noted that, while the Boers had an apparently inexhaustible supply of meat and mealies, they were short of ammunition. Though still able, in case of emergency, to concentrate a considerable number of men, they were now, in his opinion, unable to undertake any large scheme of operations.

"I consider", Lord Kitchener added, "that throughout the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, and Cape Colony there are now not more than 13,500 Boers in the field, but with long lines of railway to hold, every yard of which has to be defended, both to secure our own military and civil supplies, and, what is more important, to prevent the enemy from obtaining necessaries by the capture of our trains, the employment of a large number of troops continues to be a necessity. Mobile columns are also required to operate against the scattered bands of the enemy and complete the exhaustion of his resources."

At the very moment of Lord Kitchener's dispatch summing up the crude facts of the situation, a dramatic coup was being prepared against the Orange Free State Government. Elliot on 9th July, 1901, ordered a night raid on Reitz. Broadwood received the order too late to put it into execution that night.

Next night he shared in a general advance as far as Reitgat, and then suddenly wheeled round with 400 mounted men under cover of darkness and passed behind the brigades of the centre. His design was to surround Reitz at dawn on the 11th, but the straying of one of his connecting files delayed this plan, so that daybreak found him still three miles distant from Reitz. At a gallop his men bore down upon the sleeping township. Broadwood had a pleasant surprise. He had expected to find only a small commando, instead of which Steyn and all his military and political staff lay in Reitz. Little opposition was offered. All Steyn's correspondence and his treasury, containing £11,000 in Orange Free State notes, were captured. The whole staff was taken, including Mr. Steyn's brother (Field-Cornet Steyn), also Generals A. P. Cronje and J. B. Wessels, Commandant O. Dowel, T. Brain (the ex-President's private secretary), and twenty-four other officials. Mr. Steyn himself alone escaped. Without coat or boots he galloped off across the veldt before his absence was discovered. An officer and a sergeant saw him go, and, though unaware of his identity, pursued him and gained upon him. Then their horses, which had done a long night ride, stopped dead-beat. The sergeant leapt to the ground and made to fire at the solitary fleeing Boer, who was only eighty yards off, but the night's frost had disabled the action of the bolt of his rifle, so that repeated attempts failed to get a shot. To this lucky chance Steyn owed his escape. Broadwood's exploit earned the commendation of Lord Kitchener, who pronounced it "a fine piece of work, admirably conceived and carried out".

After De Wet had been compelled to recross the Orange River, Lord Milner travelled north to confer with Lord Kitchener, and in May left for England for a rest. His stay at home lasted till 10th August, and during this period an important act of policy was decided upon with a view to

bringing the war to an end. The suggestion for a banishment proclamation was wired to Mr. Chamberlain in London by the Natal Government on 24th July. It was substantially adopted by the Colonial Secretary, who wired instructions to Lord Kitchener on 30th July, but asked him before issuing it to communicate its terms to the governors of Cape Colony and Natal in order to ascertain whether those Governments agreed to them. Mr. Chamberlain stated that in the opinion of His Majesty's Government the terms "seem to be fully warranted by the existing situation, and calculated to have a good effect in bringing about a more rapid termination of hostilities". The proclamation was accordingly issued by Lord Kitchener, on 7th August, in these terms:—

"Whereas the late Orange Free State and the late South African Republic have been annexed to His Majesty's dominions; and whereas His Majesty's forces are, and have for some considerable time been, in complete possession of the seats of government of both the aforesaid territories, with their public offices and the whole machinery of administration, as well as of all the principal towns and the whole of the railway lines; and whereas the great majority of the burghers of the two late Republics, to the number of 35,000, exclusive of those who have fallen in the war, are now either prisoners or have submitted to His Majesty's Government and are living peaceably in towns or camps under the control of His Majesty's forces; and whereas the burghers of the late Republics still in arms against His Majesty are not only few in numbers but have lost almost all their guns and munitions of war, and are devoid of regular military organization, and are therefore unable to carry on regular warfare or to offer any organized resistance to His Majesty's forces in any part of the country; and whereas those burghers who are still in arms, though unable to carry on regular warfare, continue to make isolated attacks upon small posts and detachments of His Majesty's forces, to plunder or destroy property, and to damage the railway and telegraph lines, both in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal and in other portions of His Majesty's South African dominions; and whereas the country is thus kept in a state of disturbance, checking the resumption of agricultural and industrial pursuits; and whereas His

Majesty's Government is determined to put an end to a state of things which is aimlessly prolonging bloodshed and destruction and inflicting ruin upon the great majority of the inhabitants, who are anxious to live in peace and to earn a livelihood for themselves and families; and whereas it is just to proceed against those still resisting, and especially against those persons who, being in a position of authority, are responsible for the continuance of the present state of lawlessness, and are instigating their fellow-burghers to continue their hopeless resistance to His Majesty's Government: Now therefore I, Lord Kitchener, under instructions from His Majesty's Government, proclaim and make known as follows: All commandants, field-cornets, and leaders of armed bands, being burghers of the late Republics, still engaged in resisting His Majesty's forces, whether in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal or in any other portion of His Majesty's South African dominions, and all members of the Governments of the late Orange Free State and the late South African Republic, shall, unless they surrender before the 15th of September next, be permanently banished from South Africa; the cost of the maintenance of the families of all burghers in the field who shall not have surrendered by 15th September shall be recoverable from such burghers and shall be a charge upon their property, movable and immovable, in the two Colonies."

Very soon this proclamation was criticized by a number of Liberals in the House of Commons (25th August), including Sir William Harcourt. His attitude was not on all fours with that of his colleague in the Opposition, Mr. Asquith. Harcourt questioned whether we were justified in depriving the Boers of the privileges of belligerents. Mr. Asquith, on the other hand, held that no question of international law was involved. The persons in arms against us were *de jure* and *de facto* His Majesty's subjects, and the proclamation was a warning to them that unless they surrendered by a particular date they would be liable to banishment and expulsion. But both speakers regarded with scepticism the probable effect of the proclamation. It would exasperate our opponents and would not aid us to subdue them, said Sir William Harcourt. We must bring the war to a conclusion, said Mr. Asquith;

we must take steps to prevent the possibility of a recurrence of the dangers from which it originated, and we must lay the first stones of an enduring fabric of liberty and justice.

The proclamation of 7th August belonged in fact to the class of policies which are only justified by the success that attends them. It was not a success. Lord Kitchener, of course, did his best with it. In sending a copy to Botha he wrote:

"Your Honour is, I am sure, fully aware that I have consistently endeavoured to bring the war to an end with due consideration for your burghers. The continuance of a futile guerrilla warfare, however, has produced an abnormal and unprecedented situation, more than three-quarters of the total Burgher population of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony being now maintained by us in idleness awaiting the termination of hostilities. Besides the 35,000 men mentioned in the proclamation 74,589 women and children are in our camps. I trust that Your Honour will seriously consider the present and prospective condition of the Burghers. As Your Honour is aware from Mr. Kruger's telegram, 'Intervention by a foreign Power is at present hopeless'. Your military resources and ammunition are almost exhausted, and one day an end must come; continued resistance by the Burghers in the present hostilities can therefore lead to no other result save that the people of this country will be in a worse condition both morally and materially by delaying the inevitable termination. There is still time for those leaders who have in all sincerity the welfare of their people at heart to prevent further waste of life and property by acknowledging that the time has now come for a peaceful solution and thus enabling both races to settle down harmoniously together under the new régime, mutually working for the restoration of the prosperity of the country, and towards wiping out the traces of the terrible vicissitudes through which it has recently passed."

Botha acknowledged Lord Kitchener's letter on 17th August, but the gist of his reply was that his commandos were now as well, if not better, organized than in the beginning of the war. He protested against the proclamation, as did Steyn and De Wet, and all declared they would go on

fighting. Steyn argued about the origins of the war, but Lord Kitchener replied to him on 25th August that "although I am always willing to do my utmost to end the present war, I cannot meet your honour to discuss any possible future independence of the late Republics". De la Rey met the proclamation with a counter-proclamation to all burghers of the western district of the South African Republic, warning them "not to allow themselves to be misled". Briefly, the British proclamation of 7th August failed of its intended effect. On the day following it, Commandant De Villiers and two field-cornets surrendered at Warmbaths. Two days later Commandant Wolmarans, ex-chairman of the First Volksraad, was captured. But the totals surrendered were far from enough. The proclamation was followed on 29th September by another providing for the sale of the properties of Boers still in the field. But no real attempt was made to levy upon the recalcitrant burghers' property.

Large refugee camps had been established in the Transvaal, the Orange River Colony, Natal, and Cape Colony. In July, 1901, the number of persons in them was 93,940, apart from 24,457 coloured refugees in camps; and in August the number increased to 110,723, composed of 16,829 men, 38,568 women, and 55,326 children. Owing in great measure to the fact that campaigning and hardships had ruined many constitutions, the death-rate in May was as high as 116.76 per 1000, and in June 109.1 per 1000. There was much criticism in Great Britain of the condition of the concentration camps, especially as the result of a description published by Miss Hobhouse of her visit to them. A commission of ladies, headed by Mrs. Fawcett, which was appointed in July, visited twenty-one of the camps during the next three months, and, working in conjunction with the local authorities, made various recommendations, all of which Lord Kitchener was able to inform the Secretary of State for War had been adopted where the circum-

stances permitted. The refugees included those who entered the camps with their herds for protection, and were self-supporting, those who surrendered but were not self-supporting, and those whose husbands were on commando and who were brought into camp for military reasons or for their own protection against natives. Free intercourse among themselves was allowed to the refugees, and they had permission to visit the town adjacent to the camps. The camp staffs included superintendents, store-keepers, medical officers, dispensers, and assistants. Experts in the treatment of plague and famine conditions in India were brought out in order that no precaution should be neglected. For many of their ills the refugees themselves were responsible. Too often they showed no disposition to follow the doctor's orders, preferring to abide by local habits and remedies. On top of a severe measles epidemic in several camps pneumonia supervened in bitterly cold weather with deplorable results. The brighter side of the picture was the contentment of a large proportion of the refugees. Wherever possible, education was carried on with good results.

The complaints of the inevitable hardships in these concentration camps sound strangely in ears which have listened to the way in which war has been conducted by some of the belligerents in the world conflict of 1914 and the years that followed it. Wood and iron buildings were erected; overcrowding was prevented; clothing was given free; bedding, plates, knives, were supplied if needed at Government expense; baths and washhouses were provided; the food was on a scale of great liberality; there were camp inspectors, hospitals, nurses, clergymen—in short what could be done to make tolerable a measure which Lord Kitchener had described as repugnant to himself was done.

The Colonial Secretary was called upon to answer criticism of the concentration camps by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman

in the House of Commons on 2nd August, 1901. Mr. Chamberlain defended the policy on the ground that it would be inhuman to leave the women and children on the desert veldt. Although there had been a lamentable mortality in some of the camps, the mortality would have been still greater if the camps had not existed. Thousands of Boers came into the camps voluntarily. Regarding the policy of devastation of the country, which was matter of parliamentary controversy at the same time, Mr. Chamberlain urged its necessity where it was carried out in order to prevent supplies from falling into the hands of the Boer forces.

From the desolation of their own veldt the Boers turned once more with longing eyes to the fertile districts of Natal. The British prepared in great strength to render an incursion impossible. On 4th September Lieutenant-General the Hon. N. G. Lyttelton assumed command in Natal; and during the next six weeks there were dispatched by train to repel the threatened invasion of the colony 882 officers, 23,536 men, 45 guns, and 32,836 animals. Correspondence published subsequently went to show that Botha informed Viljoen of his intention to be near Glencoe about the middle of September. The Boer Commandant-General, who was doubtless seeking by a bold stroke to preoccupy those of his followers who were brooding over the Kitchener proclamation, seems indeed to have been confident that he could sweep into Natal. In the second week of September he was in the Ermelo district. On 17th September a force under Colonel H. de la P. Gough was making a reconnaissance from Dundee — three companies of mounted infantry with two guns of the 69th Royal Field Artillery. Finding a small body of the enemy, he engaged them at once, but was led on until two large bodies, each consisting of 500 men, fell upon him from the flank and rear at Scheeper's Nek. The fight lasted only twenty minutes. Surrounded by many hundreds of Botha's riflemen in a difficult country, the

British force was overwhelmed. One officer and 19 men were killed; 5 officers and 19 men wounded; 6 officers and 235 men were taken prisoner; while Gough himself and a few others managed to escape. The Boer tactics on this occasion were the same as they had employed at Vlakfontein—a large number of men riding swiftly in open order among the British and firing from the saddle. A few days after this success Botha moved to the Zulu border. Nine British columns of all arms were ready to block his path to Natal. His plans, however, were completely upset on 26th September as a result of an attack upon two small posts which guarded the British frontier and were part of a chain erected at the time of the old Zulu War. These were Fort Prospect and Itala, situated fifteen miles apart. At the former the garrison, under Captain C. A. Rowley of the 2nd Dorsets, numbered 86 men; while the defender of Itala was Major A. J. Chapman of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, with 300 men and 2 guns. The attack on Fort Prospect was delivered by Grobelaar, with several hundred burghers. Botha's men were beaten off after a long day's severe fighting, which began at 2 a.m. against Chapman, and at 4.30 a.m. against Rowley. The Boers, although in overwhelmingly superior numbers, were disheartened by the extraordinary vigour of the resistance offered by the determined garrisons; and Botha, who directed the attack by signal from a neighbouring height, could not ignore the fact that many British columns were on his flank and rear. The water of the garrison of Itala was cut off early in the attack, and by the evening their ammunition had run low. Chapman, when the Boer fire died away at 7.30, therefore prepared to withdraw his men and his guns to Nkandhla, where the survivors received the special thanks of Lord Kitchener. At Fort Prospect a Durham company of militia artillery distinguished itself, and the garrison greatly admired the arrival of a body of Zululand Native Police, who, having heard the firing, broke through the Boers to help the gallant

defenders. Shortly after 6 p.m. the exhausted attackers retired. A cordon was then drawn round the enemy, and Botha narrowly escaped being cut off by Major-General F. W. Kitchener and Lieutenant-Colonel Colvile, a brisk engagement with his rear-guard taking place on 6th October. Botha blamed bad weather and false information for the failure of his raid on Natal. On 8th October he was heard of at Amsterdam. Colonel M. F. Rimington, making a night march, came so near to success in surrounding the Boer head-quarters that he actually captured some of Botha's papers and personal property.

Cape Colony was still in a disturbed state. The Cape Legislature complained at the continuance of insecurity within their borders. Lord Kitchener's visit to General French at Middelburg on 16th July, about the time that Scheepers was escaping from the cordon in the Camdeboo area, indicated the seriousness of the position. Lord Kitchener had recently been occupied with the question of giving greater mobility to his forces generally, and had formed a small number of special columns. To these he gave a free hand regarding their movements, and they were guided by special intelligence which they themselves collected, in addition to any information that might be sent to them. Under energetic commanders like Rimington and Benson, such columns roamed about the country and made a feature of raids by night. In August Lord Kitchener developed this policy.

"The enemy", he said, "are now so reduced in numbers and dispersed that greater mobility is required to deal with them. Each column should therefore organize within itself well-mounted and lightly-equipped bodies of picked officers and men prepared to go long distances with a minimum of transport. The rate of captures can only be maintained by the more extended action of extremely mobile troops freed of all encumbrances, whilst the remainder of the column clears the country and escorts transport."

Following Lord Kitchener's visit to him in Cape Colony,

General French on 30th July introduced a new departure in tactics. With the object of pushing the Boer commandos across the Orange River, he organized a combined drive, the first stage in which consisted of manœuvring troops to a position southward of the enemy. He disposed eight columns on a line Victoria West-Richmond-Middleburg-Schombie-Sterkstroom, and the columns in marching south left wide gaps between the flanks in order that the Boers should issue through in the way French desired they should go. The movement was partly successful. Early in September the Cape rebel Lotter was captured. Three officers—Colonel H. J. Scobell, Lieutenant-Colonel B. J. C. Doran, and Lieutenant-Colonel J. R. MacAndrew—shared the credit of what Lord Kitchener described as "a brilliant success". Scobell began on 1st September by feigning to march to Bethesda, really moving to Koude Heuvel. MacAndrew and his local force went southward of Water Kloof, where Lotter lay. Doran blocked the eastern exits. Lotter tried in vain to get out in two opposite directions. His commando then re-united, and by fighting a rear-guard action escaped into the country east of Pietersburg. But Scobell, marching without baggage, covered an enormous distance in one night, outmarching Lotter and taking him completely by surprise. Scobell located him in a farm near Groen Kloof, and at 1 a.m. on a cold, wet morning led his men out. Exhausted as they were, the British rallied magnificently for this "one pulse more of firm endeavour". At dawn they got within striking distance of the laager. The Boers offered fierce resistance; but they were at the mercy of the Cape Mounted Riflemen, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Lukin and Captains Purcell and Goldsworthy; and two squadrons of the 9th Lancers under Captains Lord D. Compton and E. Gordon. Five burghers dashed from the farm-house and were killed; eight were killed in the kraals. After half an hour's fighting a white flag went up—Lotter and

his commando (120 men) surrendered. The British casualties were 9 killed and 9 wounded; Boer, 46 wounded. Two hundred ponies and 30,000 rounds of ammunition were among the booty that fell into Scobell's hands. Assistant Commandant-General Smuts, by a remarkable feat, led a force across the Orange River on 3rd September, and, hotly pursued southward, had a success over British cavalry in a severe action at Modderfontein on 17th September, which supplied him with ammunition and remounts. Two days later, in the middle of the night, Kritzinger, with 400 men, successfully attacked the post at Quaggafontein, in defence of which Lieutenant-Colonel the Hon. A. Murray met an heroic end. The same evening Kritzinger was found towards Vecht Kop by Thorneycroft, who recovered the gun he had taken from Murray and scattered his commando. The Boers also suffered greatly in their Cape Colony enterprise by the loss of Scheepers, who, having contracted fever, was found in Wolve Hoek Farm on 11th October by the 10th Hussars. "From my heart I hope it is not true," wrote Steyn on hearing the news, "because he is nearly indispensable to our cause." On the same day that brought disaster to Scheepers, Maritz (who two months before had captured the town of Van Rhyns Dorp and twenty-nine of the Western Province Mounted Rifles) occupied Hopefield, within three days' ride of Cape Town. The capital was now under martial law. In the Boer scheme Maritz was to move on Cape Town and Smuts on Port Elizabeth.

Events elsewhere call for brief mention. Two guns of the 21st Battery Royal Horse Artillery, which went out with 160 mounted infantry, were lost in an affair at Sannah's Post in the Orange River Colony on 19th September, but were recovered shortly afterwards. In the western Transvaal, Colonel Kekewich's column was attacked by De la Rey and Kemp in the half-dark of the morning of 30th September at Moedwil. The Boers were driven off, but both sides suffered heavily.

In spite of its troubles, due to the presence of the raiding-parties, who were aided by sympathetic friends in the rural districts, Cape Colony maintained its trade very well. A great reception was given, alike in Natal and at the Cape, to the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall (the present King and Queen), who were on their Empire tour. Lord Kitchener saw their Royal Highnesses in Maritzburg, when the Prince presented Victoria Crosses and Distinguished Service medals, and Zulu chiefs paid homage to their future Sovereign. He accompanied the royal tourists out on the tender to their yacht, the *Ophir*, where he bade them adieu. On 19th August the Duke and Duchess made a triumphal progress from Simon's Town to Cape Town.

"The fact that during the last two years you have been passing through such troublous times," said the Duke in acknowledging the presentation of addresses, "and that in addition to your other trials the Colony has suffered from an outbreak of plague, from which it is not yet entirely free,[1] might well have detracted from the warmth of your greeting; but in despite of all your trials and sufferings you have offered us a welcome the warmth and cordiality of which we shall never forget."

Lord Kitchener wired to the Cape expressing regret at not having been able to be personally in attendance upon their Royal Highnesses during the visit, and on behalf of the army, wishing them a pleasant voyage and all prosperity, to which the Duke replied, sincerely thanking him and all ranks of the army, stating that "the loyalty and good will displayed towards us here is most gratifying", and adding that "it would have been an additional pleasure to us had your presence here been possible".

In proportion to the expenditure of effort the sweeping movements which went on during the period under review in

[1] Rinderpest made its appearance in July, and rendered necessary the inoculation of all cattle. As the process throws them out of work for a fortnight or more, the efficiency of the ox-transport service was affected.

this chapter met with only limited success. The Boer forces were being subjected to a monthly reduction of 2000 by an army of 200,000 effectives, the largest which Britain had ever brought into the field. Intimate knowledge of the country was an incalculable advantage to the Boers, trained as they had been almost from their childhood to handle a rifle. Speed and craft were the Boer instruments. They fought without guns, which, when they captured them, were by way of being only an encumbrance to them in that swiftness of movement upon which their successful evasion of the British columns depended. And the apparent ease with which, after an area had been cleared, a roving band of Boers would come in, prepared to take advantage of any opportunity that arose, was tantalizing to the British regulars. During September and October, in spite of sixty-four mobile British columns being in the field, the total Boer casualties amounted only to 3851. In other words, each column killed, wounded, took captive, or received the surrender of Boers at an average rate of rather less than one per day over a period of sixty-one days. Such a result clearly pointed to the fact that much of the marching, while it imposed great strain on the British troops, was ineffectual, and that Boer commandos were in large measure merely being pushed from one district to another.

Such a warfare as they carried on was only possible where a country of such vast distances formed the theatre of operations. The tableland of South Africa is some 1,360,000 square miles in extent. The main theatre of war was the central plateau which embraces northern Cape Colony, Basutoland, the Orange River Colony, northern Natal, and the greater part of the Transvaal. Its greatest length from Sutherland in Cape Colony to Lydenburg in the eastern Transvaal was nearly 850 miles, and width, from Pietermaritzburg on the east to Kimberley on the west, over 300 miles. The area of the Transvaal alone is nearly the same as that of

Southern and Central Germany, together with Alsace-Lorraine. In that land of broad distances guerrilla warfare could be maintained indefinitely unless very special measures were taken.

Meantime the system that was to lead to the final triumph of the large British army over the comparatively small force of Boers was being still further developed. Up to June the blockhouse system was confined to railways. One fact alone will suffice to demonstrate the success of the blockhouses, erected at mile intervals or less, in making the railway traffic secure. Whereas there were thirty instances of derailment of trains in the last month of Lord Roberts's command, the months of September and October, 1901, contributed only two such cases. Armoured trains worked in conjunction with the chain of blockhouses. About the middle of this year the idea of throwing blockhouse lines across the country took definite shape. The posts across the Orange River Colony from Jacobsdal to Ladybrand had proved to be a considerable obstacle to the enemy bands. In June a cross-country blockhouse line was constructed from Groot Oliphant's River station on the Komati Poort line to Vaal station on the Natal line. A battalion of infantry was detailed as escort and to assist in the work of erection. In the following month Lord Kitchener ordered the Royal Engineer parties (who built the circular blockhouse with gable roof, of the pattern devised by Major S. R. Rice, for £16) to go west and run a line up the Mooi River to its source, and thence across to Naauwport. This line comprised thirty-seven blockhouses in forty-four miles. Another line, the construction of which was ordered by Lord Kitchener early in October, was to run in the first instance from Heilbron to Frankfort. Those lines of blockhouses in all directions divided the tract of territory to be swept by the columns. They were composed of chains of small forts, each of which held a garrison of from seven to fifteen men, who were connected by telephone with the nearest

point at which a mobile force was stationed. The cross-country blockhouses, which incidentally afforded protection for the mines in the Transvaal, were a necessary part of the drives; they created smaller areas in which the commandos could be dealt with separately, and kept them off the lines of communication and the towns. In some cases the forts were connected for miles by barbed-wire fences, which could not be cut without making a noise and giving the alarm. Since the blockhouse lines invariably followed roads, in the event of the railways being congested the wagon transport could pass along those lines to convey supplies for the civil populations of captured South African towns. Thus the twin functions of Lord Kitchener as great military commander and civil administrator in a difficult country went forward. The system of blockhouses was to be continued until finally they numbered over 8000, covering a total distance of about 3700 miles, and costing, with entanglements, nearly one million sterling.

G. T.

CHAPTER VIII

Last Phase of the Boer War

General J. C. Smuts and the Spring Campaign in Cape Colony—General Botha's Attack on Colonel Benson—Bakenlaagte—De Wet in the Orange River Colony—Western Transvaal—Major-General Bruce Hamilton's Drives in the Eastern Transvaal—The Blockhouse System South of the Vaal—Lord Kitchener's Reversing Pincers for De Wet—Northern Transvaal—De la Rey's Onslaught on Lord Methuen—The Tweebosch Disaster.

WHEN the South African spring succeeded winter, it was soon evident that neither threats nor attrition had yet convinced the Boers that further resistance would be unprofitable. In Cape Colony, despite the continuous work of General French and his columns, a new Boer plan of campaign developed under General Smuts, and owed its origin to his fertile brain. While Smuts himself descended on Port Elizabeth, Maritz, strengthened on his inner flank by Scheepers, Theron, and the other midland-country group, would move upon Cape Town. The idea presupposed that Smuts would fare triumphantly where De Wet had failed, and that the scheme would develop unnoticed by Lord Kitchener and Sir John French. No such good fortune attended the Boers. French repeated his policy of so harrying the commandos that they were but remnants when they coalesced, and Lord Kitchener's demand that his hands should be strengthened by the proclamation of martial law in Cape Town and all the seaport towns was conceded on 9th October, 1901. Martial law ought to have been proclaimed long before; if it had been, some of the detestable necessities of the campaign against treason in Cape Colony would have

been avoided. The first of these was the trial of Scheepers, who had been captured, for several breaches of the laws of war, including the murder of several natives. He was condemned and executed. Much sympathy was felt for him, but our word was pledged to protect the natives, and if he who had killed them had escaped, all confidence would have been lost in our promises and in our justice. In December the trial of a more dangerous enemy than Scheepers was held. This was Kritzinger, who re-entered Cape Colony on 14th December with 110 men, and who was wounded and captured by the Guards of Inigo Jones's brigade in an attempt to cross the railway line. But in the trial it was clearly shown that Kritzinger had done what he could to keep his subordinates within the rules of warfare, and he was acquitted by the military court. Kritzinger's disappearance from the Cape Colony operations was a serious blow to Smuts's plans, even as his delay in appearing had retarded them, and it needed all the Boer general's buoyancy to believe, as he did, that the year 1902 would redress the disappointments of 1901.

In the east of the main theatre of war Commandant-General Botha, in the west De la Rey, and in the Orange River Colony De Wet continued to expend in brilliant but fruitless feats of arms men whose presence in Cape Colony at that time might have kindled a fresh struggle, the end of which no man could have foreseen. Botha's columns had been foiled in an attempt on Natal, but the failure, which the Boer general excused to his government on the score of bad weather and false information, had by no means put a stop to his offensive in the northern section of the eastern Transvaal. Sir Bindon Blood on his side was no less active, and one of his ablest columns was that commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel E. G. Benson, who harried the Boers in a manner flatteringly imitative of De Wet. Commandant General Botha, pausing gloomily at Ermelo with the officials

of the Transvaal Government whom he could not move, sent peremptory orders to Opperman to keep his commandos together and "attack with all their force whenever possible". The veldt must be rid of Benson's "restless column". Benson himself, admirably as he had been informed throughout by his Intelligence Officer, Colonel Wools-Sampson, was fully aware of the increasing number and the changing temper of the enemy in his neighbourhood. His column was alone in the district; it was not of the best material, for while resting at Middelburg he had unwillingly exchanged his well-tried horse and foot for blockhouse soldiers and new mounted infantry. Both he and Wools-Sampson were thoroughly uneasy at the end of October, and rightly suspicious that the Boers were preparing a trap for him. The trap was set at Bakenlaagte Farm in ground of gently rolling veldt, which offered few situations for defence, but good opportunities for attack of a weak column by superior numbers.

The opportunity was seized by Botha, who conducted the attack in person and launched on Benson's rear-guard an attack in crescent form of 1200 horsemen. The rear-guard was driven in and overwhelmed, and the Boer attack, reinforced by other of Botha's units, streamed onwards to where Benson, with the guns and 280 men, faced the catastrophe. Flight was possible, but no man stirred from his place. So fast and steadily did the men shoot, that the Boer charge wavered and drew rein, and the Boers flung themselves from the saddle into a dip 200 yards from Benson's ridge. For a few minutes the attack trembled in the balance. But the Boers on the veldt, with their rifles in their hands, were more dangerous than when charging. Extending rapidly, they began to crawl in, pouring their marksman's fire on the target afforded by Benson's soldiers. The foremost Boers gained ground rapidly, covered by a fire which laid low all the British gunners and mowed half the defenders from the ridge.

Major Guinness, in command of the guns, was shot dead amidst his men and horses; Captain Lloyd, Benson's assistant staff officer, was shot down in bringing up assistance; and resistance was crushed only when there were no more to offer it. Of the 280 officers and men on the ridge, 66 lay dead and 165 were wounded before the Boers finally rushed the position. Benson's last act was to send orders to the other part of his force, which had gone on with guns to the selected camp, that the ridge where he lay wounded should be shelled by our own guns. The order was fulfilled; the men on the ridge sacrificed themselves, and though Benson's last wish that his guns should be saved was not realized, the Boers did not attempt to carry the camp. Bakenlaagte was a day filled with heroic deeds; they were the sole compensation for the loss of brave men and one of the best of our column leaders. "In every capacity", said Lord Kitchener, in writing Colonel Benson's epitaph, "he had shown soldierly qualities of a high order, and had invariably led his column with marked success and judgment." Help was sent to the column, which was extricated from its immediate difficulties by Colonel Wools-Sampson, and regained the Delagoa Bay railway at Brugspruit.

In the Orange River Colony October and November, 1901, were marked chiefly by another faithful failure to round up De Wet. At this period no news was more gladly received by Lord Kitchener than that a tangible enemy had appeared between the Orange and the Vaal, and when his Intelligence Department informed him that De Wet had summoned the commandos of Vrede, Bethlehem, Heilbron, Ladybrand, and Kroonstadt to meet on the Liebensberg River, the Commander-in-Chief at once prepared elaborate measures for taking the opportunity to welcome such an occurrence. On all sides of De Wet's rendezvous Lord Kitchener disposed a cordon of columns. Unlimited ingenuity and thought were lavished

on the scheme. It was to be carried out in six marches. On 6th November the operation began, and the columns advanced from the circumference of a circle of a diameter 150 miles in length. Six days later they drew up face to face at the appointed spot, having neither seen nor heard of De Wet's concentration, and having accumulated no more than 100 prisoners among them. Yet no one was to blame. "The results", observed Lord Kitchener, who was not too disappointed to give credit where it was due, "were less than the excellence of the work performed by officers and men deserved, and this was in a great measure due to accident." The accident was that De Wet had never concentrated, but, finding supplies insufficient, had ordered a dispersal, and the dispersed bodies had simply wandered through the gaps in the cordon without knowing that a cordon was closing in. De Wet did eventually concentrate at the end of November, but his concentration had no such damaging effect on an isolated British column as had resulted from Botha's attack on Benson at Bakenlaagte, though he attempted to close in similarly on Rimington's column. Rimington, however, warned by Benson's fate, decided that for once he would adopt the only portion of De Wet's tactics in which he had not already excelled, namely, that of evasion. He marched all night, not to Lindley as the Boers had expected, but northwards towards Heilbron, leaving De Wet to marvel at his disappearance at dawn on 1st December.

In the western Transvaal Lord Methuen and Kekewich continued to comb the country back and forth, bringing in much gain of material. This method of warfare, dictated by Lord Kitchener, was slowly but surely having its effect, for the time was drawing nigh when the whole Boer nation, though unsubdued in spirit, was to feel the drain of supplies. At the end of 1901 the campaign in this region was in a state of suspended animation. The enemy, shouldered away by

lines of blockhouses, harried out of the best tactical positions by the incessant steam-roller of the columns, was little to be heard of or perceived. He was not mastered. Somewhere in the western veldt were always leaders who might carry the fiery cross again. In spite of the lull, Lord Kitchener was well aware that scarce one of his columns, garrisons, or outposts between Rustenburg and Klerksdorp, Vryburg and Mafeking, but was in daily risk. Though the general situation was safe, the telephone might any day ring him up with an unpleasant surprise: the one surprise that was impossible was that the enemy could achieve a success that would affect the result of the war.

It was, however, in that eastern Transvaal where the mishap to Benson had taken place that by the close of 1901 the end of the war was most clearly in sight. During the first half of November there was a comparative lull while Lord Kitchener pushed his lines of blockhouses along the Wilge River and across the southern angle from Wakkerstroom to the Swazi border. A few small gains were made by the columns, but it was plain that the main hostile bodies had to be sought once more on the high veldt. On that vast tract, and on others like it, the Boers could long fend off utter defeat or starvation. The process of wearing them down seemed likely to prove interminable and enormously expensive. Lord Kitchener had long been occupied, and was now well advanced, in the schemes of which the map and the measure alone can suggest the magnitude; he aimed at nothing less than the fencing in of whole provinces with blockhouses and entrenched posts, which, constantly contracting towards a common centre, would eventually choke each area in their grip, as in Edgar Allan Poe's story, where the walls closed in on the prisoner. His projected lines of blockhouses would gridiron the high veldt into areas of manageable size. To protect the newer lines of posts, as they were pushed forward,

Major-General Bruce Hamilton was given six columns; and when the blockhouses were finished he was sent forward by the Commander-in-Chief on a drive, west to east, along a hundred miles of front from Middelburg to the Vaal. The line steadily pushed forward during the early days of December, and immediately began to meet with success. The Boers quickly perceived the line of khaki stretched against them, and with one accord began to press through the interstices between the columns, threading their way into the country which the columns had just left. But the movement of these was limited by the line of constabulary blockhouses which barred their way westwards; and Bruce Hamilton, with a line more elastic, and scouting and intelligence work sharpened by long experience, was soon aware of the Boer movement, and was quick to strike. Moving in the centre, and aware that a commando had slipped between him and Major-General Spens's column, he made a long and successful night march in pursuit of them. Led by Colonel Wools-Sampson, whom he had taken over from Benson's column, Bruce Hamilton descended on the Boer laager at dawn. Nearly a hundred prisoners were taken, besides ammunition and telegraphing and signalling apparatus. Bruce Hamilton returned to Ermelo to reorganize the drive, which was not half finished. To the east were Boers nervous of being pushed against the Swaziland border; behind were commandos which had slipped through and were beating themselves against the constabulary posts that stretched from Middelburg to Waterval.

At Ermelo he learnt that another considerable body of the enemy had slipped through. Again he turned, calling up four columns to converge on the elusive commando. To these he added two more, and the whole force marched at night towards Trigaardsfontein, a village to which he suspected the Boers were trekking. The surmise was right, and at dawn of the 10th of December another laager was rushed, with a net result

SOME OF LORD KITCHENER'S "LIEUTENANTS"

MAJ.-GEN. SIR C. E. KNOX — MAJ.-GEN. BRUCE HAMILTON

LIEUT.-GEN. IAN HAMILTON

MAJ.-GEN. F. W. KITCHENER — BRIG.-GEN. H. C. O. PLUMER

From photographs by Elliott & Fry, Duffus Bros., Bassano, and Stewart (Poona)

of 130 Boers captured, in addition to a valuable Boer convoy. Bruce Hamilton marched with his booty back to Bethel, there to learn that the commando he had just dispersed and shorn had rallied to Ben Viljoen's command at a point only twenty-five miles north. Instead of continuing his march from Bethel to Ermelo, he, therefore, made another long night march with his column from Bethel and dealt yet another blow in the early dawn on the rallying Boers. He took another seventy prisoners, and recovered one of the guns which had been lost in Benson's fight at Bakenlaagte. After this the victors went into Ermelo to refit, and a week later pursued the eastwards drive towards Swaziland. The effect of these captures on Boers who had hitherto been masters at the game, and were now finding men who played it as well as themselves, was very great; and in the new year (1902) Bruce Hamilton's operations among the Boers, who moved uneasily in the narrowing space between the British columns and the Swaziland border, continued to show that at last we had learnt all that the Boers had to teach us. On the night of the 2nd of January Bruce Hamilton, with Simpson's and Scott's columns, followed by circuitous bridle-paths the tracks of a commando led by General Erasmus. The Boers were hemmed in, fifty prisoners were taken, a remnant of what had once been the Pretoria commando. Again Bruce Hamilton returned to Ermelo; again he left it before the Boers expected him, and his first prize was a laager in which were three of the best Boer artillery officers—the two Wolmarans and Lieutenant Malan of the Staats Artillery—and a large quantity of ammunition.

The district was rapidly becoming untenable for the Boers. Lord Kitchener remarks in his dispatches that the continual night surprises to which they were being subjected made them reluctant to bivouac within even forty miles of our troops—and this naturally added to our difficulty in surprising them. Nor was it easy for them to escape from the district in which

they were being so persistently harried. To the south of Bruce Hamilton's columns, General Plumer, Colonel Pulteney, and Lieutenant-Colonel A. E. W. Colvile barred the way to the south, and eagerly snapped up any commando which exposed itself in the area enclosed by the Vaal, the Swaziland border, and the line of blockhouses running from Wakkerstroom to Piet Retief. A commando was broken in this way by a daybreak surprise on the 25th of January, 1902, and the number of prisoners was increased by others jammed against the blockhouses. To the north of Bruce Hamilton Colonel Mackenzie was echeloned to guard any escape past Lake Chrissie, or to watch any attempt of Viljoen to come south to reinforce Botha's men. Viljoen, as a matter of record, showed little disposition to move south or to stretch out a hand to Botha, and just at the time when he was reported to be meditating some such junction, and to be riding south to make arrangements, he was very cleverly captured. On the night of 25th January he was ambushed near Kruger's Post, Boer fashion, by some men of the Royal Irish Regiment under Major Orr, and after his aide-de-camp had been shot had no alternative but to surrender.

So incessant was the pressure brought to bear on the disintegrated commandos that on the 13th of February General Louis Botha found it necessary to quit the district altogether. He moved south with a considerable following, and, passing through Swaziland, north of the Wakkerstroom line of blockhouses, made straight for Vryheid. His motive for this move was perhaps twofold. It may have been prompted by a desire to rouse fresh unrest in Natal, but was more likely the outcome of an urgent need for temporarily disengaging his harassed men from the close and unceasing pursuit to which they had been for so long subjected. He left some trouble behind him, and some work for Plumer, Pulteney, and Wing to do, in searching for the commandos to the far south-east which had

not been able to join Botha's new trek. But he was himself promptly followed up by Bruce Hamilton with columns under Spens, Mackenzie, Allenby, and Stewart, and by the first week in March the pursuers were again in contact with him.

In the Orange River Colony Kitchener's blockhouse system operated to the discomfiture of the Boers in a way distinct from its effect in the eastern Transvaal. It forced them to fight, and though they fought fiercely and well, action of any kind was bound to lead to the reduction of their numbers to a point where they could not fight at all. De Wet, finding that the wide dispersion of his forces into small parties led to a steady decrease in their numbers as they were hunted out by the mobile columns, and perceiving that evasive tactics could end only in being hemmed in by the increasing reticulations of the spider's-web of blockhouses, decided to concentrate into larger bodies. These Boer "columns", while still avoiding contact with considerable bodies of British troops, would watch for opportunities of falling suddenly on isolated detachments or on the working-parties at the line-heads of the blockhouses in construction. The first indication which Lord Kitchener had of De Wet's change of policy was the comparative failure of a drive which was entrusted to General Elliot, in the second week of December, with columns under Colonels Rimington, Byng, Damant, and Wilson. The hint was presently enlarged. Lord Kitchener received information that Boers were concentrating in large numbers near Kaffir Kop, twenty miles north-west of Bethlehem, and therefore within striking distance of his new line of blockhouses between Harrismith and Bethlehem. He took steps to deal with this concentration. General Elliot was ordered to move from Kroonstad, General Dartnell from Eland's River Bridge, and Colonel Barker from Winburg—each column concealing its movements and intentions, and moving as swiftly as it could. The big commando got wind of the pursuers, and was not caught. It dispersed, but dis-

persed only to meet at another rendezvous. For, as Dartnell turned back to his base at Eland's River Bridge, he was fiercely assailed by a large force of Boers under De Wet. Dartnell's Imperial Light Horse held off the attack a whole day, and heliographed up General Campbell from Bethlehem.

De Wet did not wait for him, but turned swiftly away to seek other game. He found it at the head of the line of blockhouses which was extending between Harrismith and Bethlehem, and which had reached Tweefontein, where four squadrons of Imperial Yeomanry were protecting the engineers. A little distance to the east of them was a small column under Rundle. The proximity of Rundle may have induced a feeling of false security in the temporary commander of the Light Horse squadrons. At any rate, the preparations which had been made on Christmas Eve, 1901, to guard against attack were not elaborate—Lord Kitchener observed in his dispatch that they seemed to be most defective—and at two o'clock on the morning of Christmas Day De Wet's men shot down the sentries and carried the camp with a rush. Its commander and five other officers and fifty men were killed, and De Wet carried off the two guns.

Lord Kitchener responded to the new De Wet method by organizing Elliot's division into two larger columns—one under De Lisle, another under Fanshawe—and these endeavoured to close on the Boer leader at Reitz. But De Wet, who never moved without advance, flanking, and rear-guards thrown out at distances of six to eight miles, easily avoided this trap, though the threat of Elliot's columns edged him towards the south-east, where Rimington and Rankin lay in wait for him. Thus the first move of the Commander-in-Chief led the way to the second, in which Elliot's columns were to put into operation one of the new drives with the lines of blockhouses as blockading forces. By the 1st of February Elliot's columns, still pressing east, had reached the Eland's River line. Another

column (Barker's) was at Bethlehem. Lord Kitchener had devised a twofold plan. Should De Wet continue his march to the south or east, the advancing columns would press him on to one of two lines of blockhouses. But should he break back, as it most likely seemed that he would, then the columns, acting by prearrangement, and having passed him, would swiftly form up behind him and reverse the drive. They hoped thus by maintaining close contact by night and day to drive De Wet into the strongly-held angle formed by two of the western blockhouse lines, one of them a railway line. The second part of Kitchener's plan was, in fact, the main part of it. To make it more complete, a column under Byng remained behind the first or eastward drive to watch for De Wet's anticipated break back.

Lord Kitchener's device succeeded. The detail of Colonel Byng's detachment from the main drive proved to be especially fortunate. On the night of 2nd February Colonel Byng, stationed west of Reitz, learnt that a Boer force was marching rapidly north at no great distance from him. He started promptly in pursuit, and fifteen miles away came upon a convoy not too strongly guarded by a portion of the De Wet commando. Byng's New Zealanders and Queenslanders at once charged the enemy's rear-guard, and the South African Light Horse got home in the centre with equal bravery and resolution. The enemy was forced to retire, leaving in Byng's hands three guns besides ammunition and prisoners. This dashing little success gave the signal for the return westward drive, which was immediately set going. Lord Kitchener's dispatch summarizes the results:—

"At dawn on the 8th of February our line closed into the railway and completed the movement, when it was found that the total loss sustained by the Boers amounted to 285. Large numbers of their tired horses were picked up, and a considerable quantity of cattle were driven in to the line."

The moment when the enemy in Orange River Colony were shaken by this blow was rightly judged by Lord Kitchener to be the one for striking another. In the brief rest of Elliot's columns preparations were made for setting in motion an operation on a yet larger scale to sweep the country where the bigger forces were still uncaptured. The scheme was again divided into two parts. The first part consisted of two parallel and simultaneous movements eastwards. One was to move like a ruler between the Heidelberg to Standerton railway and the Wolvehoek-Tafelkop line of blockhouses. A parallel ruler travelling farther to the south would move on a line from Kroonstad to Doornberg to the Lindley-Bethlehem blockhouses. But the second part of the movement involved a more complex geometrical figure. When the northern ruler stood in the line Standerton-Frankfort it was to wheel clockwise to the right till it came to the line of blockhouses Frankfort-Botha's Pass. The southern ruler was meanwhile to push north-east till it came to the Wilge River line. The two rulers would then be a pair of compasses with an apex at Frankfort. Lastly, with the southern leg of the compasses holding fast to the line of the Wilge River the northern leg of the compasses was to shut down. The Boers could not escape eastwards into Natal because the Drakensberg passes would be held against them. Lord Kitchener's dispatch tells in the briefest possible way how the plan fared:—

"On the night of the 3rd of February, at the close of the first day's march, a most determined effort to break out was made by De Wet, Steyn, and some 700 followers, who had been driven east by Major-General Elliot's advance to the Wilge River into the net of our approaching columns. The attack was made under cover of darkness at the point where the right of one column was in touch with the left of another. Here again, as on the occasion of his previous escape, De Wet adopted the plan of advancing under cover of a large mob of cattle which were rapidly driven up by natives to the point where the rush through was to be attempted. The expedient met with a part of the desired

success, for there is little doubt that De Wet, Steyn, and a number of their men managed to break out of the toils. As a whole, however, the Boer force was very severely punished by the New Zealanders of Lieutenant-Colonel Garratt's column, who displayed great gallantry and resolution at the critical moment in resisting and in part repelling the attack. The conduct of the New Zealanders on this occasion reflects the highest credit on all ranks of the contingent and on the Colony to which it belongs. [Lord Kitchener took the first opportunity of addressing Garratt's column and of complimenting the New Zealanders in person.] . . . Yet another attempt to break through was made on the night of the 26th, when Colonel Nixon successfully repulsed an attack by the enemy on the line of the Cornelius River."

After another three days' rest a new movement was set in motion from the Harrismith line of blockhouses; but its operations disclosed that the big Boer commandos had been disintegrated by the first compass-leg scheme, and only about 145 prisoners were taken. The disintegration was all but final. Elliot's columns were employed on but one more sweep before the peace negotiations rendered captures unnecessary, except to convince irreconcilables.

In the northern Transvaal the operations of columns, though co-ordinated by Lord Kitchener as far as possible, were spread over so great an area, and were so complicated by the freedom with which the Boers could move about in this rugged, roadless country, that they never became reducible to a common plan. Concerted action ceased with Sir Bindon Blood's drives north of the Delagoa Railway line; and after General Plumer had left Pietersburg Colonel Grenfell was left to deal with those of Beyers's[1] men who roamed disjointedly to the west of the railway line between Pretoria and Pietersburg. Few Boers were captured, and the struggle between commanders without sufficient sense of responsibility, and commandos which were irregular, not merely in name, degenerated

[1] Afterwards associated with the rebellion of 1914–5 in conjunction with the Germans in South-West Africa.

and produced more than one deplorable incident. The faults were not confined to one side; but Lord Kitchener sternly punished offences against the rules of war by our side, and, having ordered five officers of the Bushveldt Carbineers to be court martialled, confirmed the sentence of death on two of them. The Boer resistance was gradually worn down in the closing months of 1901, chiefly by the efforts of the column under Colonels Dawkins and Colenbrander, whose crowning achievement was the destruction of Badenhorst's commando. The last pursuit of Badenhorst began on 27th November, 1901. After an exhausting chase through an almost waterless region, Colenbrander burst on the commando on the morning of 3rd December. The Boers scattered, leaving prisoners and their wagons. Some of the flying fragments of the commando were snapped up by Kitchener's Scouts, or fell into the hands of Colonel Dawkins's mounted infantry. The moral effect was valuable, because in this mountainous district Badenhorst had felt himself safe. The final demonstration to him of his mistake took place on 12th December, when, in trying to avoid Colenbrander, he rushed into the ready arms of Dawkins. The useful combination of these two commanders came to an end at Christmas, when Lord Kitchener sent Colonel Dawkins to the Orange River Colony, and Colonel Colenbrander was left to operate alone. The traditions of success remained with him nevertheless, and to the end of the war he continued to harass the enemy with uninterrupted success.

Many districts had been speculatively considered as those in which resistance could last longest, and the western Transvaal had been named among them. It had never been so thoroughly swept as the eastern Transvaal, where the pressure on Botha had been so unceasing; or as the Orange River Colony, where the Kitchener system of blockhouse was so effective. Its supplies had never been so systematically reduced; indeed, one of the Boer leaders (Kemp) declared that though

the eastern Transvaal had been exhausted, there were supplies in the western Transvaal for two years to come. Kemp was himself a capable lieutenant, but he had in De la Rey a leader whose ability was second to that of no Boer general. He had long resisted all attempts of the columns under Colonel Kekewich and Lord Methuen to drive him out; he alternated his successes with theirs; but there was something in the steady drives of the British columns, almost as regular as those of an omnibus route, which appeared to preclude any great surprises, certainly to make any reversal of the conditions impossible.

In October Colonel Hickie's column superintended the construction of a new line of blockhouses. Colonel Kekewich (having captured Klopper's commando) and Methuen resumed their regular patrol along the Rustenburg-Zeerust road, or from Zeerust onwards. The December marches of Methuen and Kekewich were more productive. On his customary circular tour from Zeerust, Lord Methuen sighted a Boer convoy at Kraaipan on the 13th. His mounted infantry captured it after a chase of seven miles, and, three days later, surprised and captured Potgieter's laager. Kekewich's part in these operations had been that of blocking the roads to the north and effectually occupying the attention of commandos who otherwise might have reversed the position and have held on to Methuen till the laager and the convoy could be removed. There were one or two more minor successes before December ended, and at the beginning of the year Kekewich was harrying Potgieter's commando west of the Klerksdorp-Ventersdorp blockhouses, and the new line of blockhouses from Ventersdorp had reached Tafelkop. "The occupation of Tafelkop", remarked Lord Kitchener on the 8th of January, 1902, "marks another step in the effective occupation of this part of the country."

Lord Kitchener's sanguine expectation had not reckoned on De la Rey. For three months De la Rey had done

nothing; the continued succession of small captures of Boers had induced not suspicion, but a belief, that their power of resistance was weakening. It was not weak enough to neglect a good opening. This was provided by Colonel von Donop, temporarily in charge of Methuen's mobile troops. Von Donop sent an empty convoy to Klerksdorp for supplies on 23rd February. Two days after the convoy had started, and when it was only ten miles south of its destination at Klerksdorp, it was attacked.

The most of the convoy was composed of Imperial Yeomanry, three companies of Northumberland Fusiliers, two guns, and a pom-pom. The convoy was moving off from its bivouac at daylight when its advance-guard was attacked. Its guns came into action as soon as could be, but the Kaffir drivers of the wagons stampeded and they broke in on the rear-guard. While the confusion was at its height, another party of Boers opened a heavy fire on the rear and the flank. Colonel Anderson, finding that he was being encircled, gave orders that the convoy was to move on while he collected his forces to fight a rear-guard action. The task was too heavy, the difficulties too many. The force could not be extricated. The rear-guard and his guns were enveloped by a force the numbers of which were sufficient to show that the convoy had been shadowed since it started. Kemp and De la Rey had combined and had waited till enough followers had been called up to assure their success. They pressed on with increasing vigour, and, after cutting off the rear-guard, assailed the advance-guard and the convoy as it laboriously toiled across a spruit. Three officers and about a hundred men fought their way to Klerksdorp; the rest were captured or killed.

When the survivors reached Klerksdorp with this news for Head-quarters, Lord Kitchener called up Colonels Kekewich and Grenfell and sent on Colonel Sir R. Colleton from Bothaville to support Von Donop or to search for the

commandos. The pursuit was taken in hand with vigour, but the Boers were more than a match for it, because they misled it and dispersed, only to concentrate where they were not expected. As Kekewich followed the Boers they retired to the north-west, and, finding pursuit hopeless, he returned to Klerksdorp. While there he was ordered to send Grenfell up to meet Lord Methuen, who was advancing from Vryburg, and would strike across country in a north-easterly direction about twenty miles south of Lichtenburg. Here Grenfell was to meet him about the 8th of March, and the combined forces would be a match for any likely combination of Boer commandos.

Kemp and De la Rey were aware of these movements, through their scouts and spies, perceived the intention, and took steps to defeat it. As they had done with Von Donop's convoy, they shadowed Lord Methuen's march unperceived till the last moment before his column could reach safety, and thus induced a feeling of safety in the pursued, while themselves accumulating numbers. The British force had reached a bivouac between Tweebosch and Palmietknuill, and, as had happened with the convoy under Colonel Anderson, were just moving off at dawn when the Boers poured in a heavy fire on three sides. The force was ill adapted to bear the brunt of such an attack. Numerically it was strong. It had 300 steady infantry, Northumberland Fusiliers and Loyal North Lancashires, and about 200 men of Major Paris's column from Kimberley, with four guns. This force was quite strong enough to deal with any attack such as Lord Methuen's experience of the preceding three or four months could have led him to anticipate. But it was far from being able to deal with the picked force of Boer horsemen which two of the ablest Boer leaders were commanding. The men of Paris's column, for example, were far from being seasoned warriors, and were of very heterogeneous com-

position, comprising men of six separate units, and under stress of a converging attack by 1500 Boers they broke. Some fought to the last, and their bravery shines brighter by contrast.

The first attack of the Boers fell on the rear-guard. Lord Methuen was a mile ahead with the convoy, and as soon as he was aware of the attack sent back guns, mounted supports, and infantry to stem the rush. The moment of disaster came when Paris's rear-guard broke and fell back pell-mell on the infuriated infantry who were trying to help them. Infantry and horsemen were both swept back in that panic-stricken mêlée, and the two guns of the 38th Battery were left alone. Their men stood by them till the last man and the last officer—Lieutenant Nesham, who, refusing to surrender, was killed.

The major portion of the column was thus destroyed. Lord Methuen, with 200 Northumberland Fusiliers and two guns, found himself isolated. He held on for three hours, the casualties growing, the ammunition dwindling to the vanishing-point. Major Paris, with forty faithful of the Cape Mounted Police and what were left of the Loyal North Lancashires, were similarly isolated near the wagons, and also held on, repulsing attack after attack. But about half-past nine, Lord Methuen's thigh having been broken by a bullet, and resistance becoming more hopeless every minute, the officer next in command surrendered the force, and the Boers then turned two guns and a pom-pom on the smaller party in the kraal. There was no way out; half an hour afterwards this little band had to surrender too, and the Boers bore down the resistance of a few other scattered parties of the 5th Imperial Yeomanry and Cape Police, who also had held out to the last. Soon after, De la Rey rode up to the convoy where Lord Methuen lay wounded, and in this manner did the British general meet the Boer leader whom he and others had sought with such

assiduity. De la Rey, ever the most chivalrous of foemen, after treating his prisoner with the utmost kindness, permitted him to be conveyed in his own wagon to Klerksdorp.

Tweebosch was the most complete disaster since guerrilla warfare had been begun in the Transvaal, surpassing the destruction by Botha of Benson's column at Bakenlaagte. The column had been destroyed in a five hours' fight, with nothing left of it except the men who had succeeded in running away. It sent the star of De la Rey, which had been obscured for some months, up to the zenith, and placed the western Transvaal in danger, if not of being reconquered by the Boers, at least of being uninhabitable for the conquerors. Yet, in order that no misapprehension should be entertained of the state of the war at this period, it cannot be too strongly pointed out that De la Rey, with all his successes, had scarcely checked the movements which were flattening out his country. His feats, like those of Botha at Bakenlaagte, or De Wet in Orange River Colony, or those of Smuts in Cape Colony, inflicted nothing more than local damage, capable of immediate repair, prolonging but never altering the inevitable end of the campaign. They resembled what Lord Kitchener once said to a friend in India of the Boer efforts to destroy the railway. "There is nothing", he said, "so indestructible as a railway. In the South African War the Boers had all the dynamite of the Rand at their disposal, and we used to watch them retreating and blowing up the railway as they went, and next day my men would come along and build it up again." The statement might metaphorically describe all the Boer efforts against Lord Kitchener's indestructible lines.

E. S. G.

CHAPTER IX

The End of the South African War

First Boer Advances towards Peace—Situation and Operations against De la Rey in the Western Transvaal—The First Drive—Lieutenant-General Ian Hamilton in the West—The Decisive Action of Roodeval—Baron Gericke's Communication to Lord Lansdowne—Arrival of the Boer Leaders at Klerksdorp—Letter from Schalk Burger and Steyn to Lord Kitchener—Lord Kitchener's Meeting with the Boer Delegates at Pretoria—The First Boer Proposal and the British Reply—Lord Kitchener's Compromise with the Boer Leaders concerning an Armistice—Conferences in the Field—Operations of Ian Hamilton and Bruce Hamilton—Lord Kitchener's Estimate, Military and Political, of the Situation—The Vereeniging Meeting—Views of Botha, Smuts, De la Rey, De Wet—Submission of Proposals to Kitchener and Milner—The Crucial Preamble—A Question of Compensation—The Approved Draft Treaty—Acceptance by the Vereeniging Delegates—Schalk Burger's Epitaph—Lord Kitchener's Last Words: "We are good friends now".

EVEN if General De la Rey's triumph in the western Transvaal had been less in contrast with the tide of affairs in other parts of the wide area of disturbance, it could not have altered, though it might have delayed, the end of the war. But in the eastern Transvaal, in the Orange River Colony, in Cape Colony, the prospect of any renaissance of success was becoming daily more remote; and the most responsible of the Boer leaders, General Louis Botha, was well aware of it. De Wet was not equally convinced, but that was because at the side of De Wet was ex-President Steyn, shattered by illness but irreconcilable to the last. Smuts believed that there was still something to be done with Cape Colony, but at the back of the minds of all these determined fighters was the knowledge that they could not

win, and that the advantages of putting off the evil day of admitting it were diminishing.

The first movement towards peace in 1902 came from the Transvaal. General Botha could not but admit to himself the progressive efficacy of Bruce Hamilton's endeavours to disintegrate the Boer concentration. Botha had removed his own commando, but Bruce Hamilton found plenty of work with the residuum of Boers. His four-column drive in March captured the Boer general Emmett in the Ngothi Basin on the 15th of that month; and this was, it seemed, almost the last straw, for a week later, on the 22nd, the first step was taken towards peace by the Transvaal Government, consisting of Mr. Schalk Burger, Mr. Reitz, and Commandants Lucas Meyer and Krogh, who arrived in Pretoria by appointment and by special train for a conference with Lord Kitchener.

But before this first step towards peace could be followed by more decisive ones not a few operations of war were needed to accelerate the decision. In the eastern Transvaal, for example, Bruce Hamilton swept the country to Standerton during the first half of April; and afterwards, co-operating with new movements in the Orange River Colony, moved south from the Heidelberg-Standerton line across the Vaal. In the Orange River Colony the last drive of Elliot's troops was undertaken less as a compulsory measure of protection than as a means of influencing the peace negotiations by the capture of irreconcilables. In the western Transvaal Lord Kitchener took measures to turn the tables on De la Rey. When these measures proved effectual the reverse had considerable influence on the peace negotiations then in progress.

Tentative warfare and the earlier phases of the peace negotiations were pursued simultaneously; but the operations against De la Rey were the only ones which were of a magnitude to sway the balance of Boer opinion. Lord Kitchener could less now than at any other time allow De la Rey to

remain master of the local situation. Calling Lieutenant-Colonel Wools-Sampson from his work in the eastern Transvaal to act as Intelligence Officer in the west, he ordered General F. W. Kitchener and Colonel Sir H. Rawlinson to bring their columns to Klerksdorp; and Colonel Rochfort's column, which consisted of seven miniature columns, was strung along the line of the Vaal. Under Colonel Kekewich were placed two flying columns commanded by Von Donop and Grenfell; the garrison of Lichtenburg was reinforced; and on 19th March Lord Kitchener himself hurried down to Klerksdorp to superintend an effort on a large scale to come to grips with De la Rey.

On the 22nd Kekewich concentrated his twin forces at Vaalbank, and the next evening the whole of the troops that have just been enumerated moved westwards in light order without guns. De la Rey had not been blind to the preparations: he was aware that the railway was every day bringing the big battalions in line against him, and took his measures accordingly. He distributed his burghers in strong commandos well to the west—too far to be struck at from Klerksdorp—and kept them near enough to one another to concentrate when needful, by connections of small parties of scouts and patrols. There were not many lines of blockhouses in this region, and he could not well be driven against the blockhoused railway line far to the west. How was he to be driven east? Lord Kitchener had hit on the bold plan of marching his westward-pointing columns right past the Boer commandos as if unaware of them; and then, when west of them and behind them, of lengthening out these columns until they touched. Then his extended line could face about and drive the Boers towards the eastern lines of blockhouses. It was an ingenious plan, and under the impulse of a heartening message from Lord Kitchener it was carried out brilliantly—up to a certain point. The columns started on their way

without wheels and with only the provisions each man could carry.

They set out at dusk, on 23rd March, from Commando Drift on the Vaal, from Klerksdorp, and from Vaalburg on the Lichtenburg blockhouse line. Moving swiftly through the night, they reached the assigned position. The northern end of their arc-shaped line was formed by General Kekewich; the southern curve of the arc by Lord Basing and Colonel Rochfort; the middle by Colonel Rawlinson and General F. W. Kitchener. But there was a flaw. The columns were in position, but between F. W. Kitchener's force and that of Rawlinson was a gap left by Colonel Cookson, whose column had not been properly equipped with guides. The Boers were not long in scenting this opening. Dawn had not broken before a band of 300 Boers slipped through the opening and escaped to the west. But this was not the only hole in the net, which, besides being of too wide a mesh, was too short. Other Boers escaped by skirting the extreme right flank of the net; others split up and got through after fighting. Here a hostile band was turned and broken, there another missed and lost. Kemp and Lichtenburg slipped through; De la Rey was never in the net. When the worn-out troops were stopped, after twenty-six hours' incessant movement, on the 24th they had accounted for 170 of the enemy, and had recaptured four of our own guns. It was rather small interest for the capital expenditure of energy.

General F. W. Kitchener and Colonel Cookson had some consolation for the disappointment caused by the gap in the line. On 31st March Lord Kitchener sent Cookson and Keir to reconnoitre towards Hart River. They soon were on the track of guns—which at this period were of more embarrassment to the side which carried them than they were worth—and pursuing the trail for eight miles, carrying on a fight with a Boer rear-guard. When at last they emerged from the bush

on to the plain at Boschbult they came against the not unusual Boer reinforcements, and the parts of attacked and attacker were reversed. But Cookson's and Keir's men were of very different experience and training from the raw levies of Paris's command at Tweebosch. The British force hastily entrenched itself and awaited the Boer attack. The Boers were not slow to make it, and they attacked the position with great bravery and a new impetuosity, coming on at a slow gallop and firing from the saddle. But Cookson's men stood firm, piled up sacks and dead horses to heighten their hastily made parapets, and by the afternoon were safe. The Boers attacked time after time on all sides, but could make no impression, and they finally cleared off towards evening. The Boer losses could not have been much smaller than those they had inflicted, and the resolute conduct of Cookson's men had shown that small columns were not a certain prey even when partially trapped by the strongest and best-led force of Transvaalers still in the field.

That, however, was not the kind of negative lesson which at this juncture Lord Kitchener desired to teach. It was necessary to show that De la Rey was something less than a dangerous adversary, or one who could be met on equal terms. The Commander-in-Chief therefore decided to give unity to the operations by sending his own Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Sir Ian Hamilton,[1] to take charge of them, even as eighteen months before Lord Kitchener himself had been delegated by Lord Roberts to command in the field in his absence. It was almost the sole transition from the system of intense centralization which had hitherto marked Lord Kitchener's administration. Lieutenant-General Ian Hamilton arrived at Klerksdorp with a staff officer and a buggy on 7th April, and at Kekewich's head-quarters next day. In a few

[1] Lieutenant-General Ian Hamilton had returned to South Africa as Lord Kitchener's Chief of Staff, and had occupied the post for some four months.

hours a plan was formed. On the 9th the execution of it was begun, and on the 11th one of the critical actions of the war was fought.

To the columns of Kekewich, F. W. Kitchener, and Rawlinson, which Ian Hamilton was to command, a fourth under Thorneycroft had been added. Ian Hamilton manœuvred these for a drive south from Hartebeestfontein. General Kekewich was to demonstrate far out on the right, Rawlinson and Kitchener to move south, and finally the whole force was to face back, so as to march towards Klerksdorp. Colonel Thorneycroft, with 2000 Australians and New Zealanders, was to emerge from the railway line to prevent a breaking away towards the right as the end of the drive approached.

On the night of the 10th General Kekewich was the last to get into position on the right of the line. The Boer leader Kemp (not De la Rey, who was with his brother leaders in the council-chamber) had marked Kekewich's isolated movement and determined to fall on him in force next morning. They reconnoitred by night, and believed his thin advance screen (under von Donop) to be his force in extended formation. Strong Boer reinforcements made a night march from Wolmaranstad, others came from the north-west, and everything was prepared for his discomfiture. But Kekewich's orders had been to advance, not as a thin, open driving line, but in battle formation of columns, with a protective screen in front; and early on 11th April Rawlinson's column was moving up towards him.

At half-past seven in the morning, von Donop, in charge of the mounted screen, sighted a strong body approaching and supposed it must be the reinforcements. When about a mile away the larger portion of the approaching mass of horsemen, who were 1700 in all, broke into a gentle trot and came on, not in a thin line, but in a compact if slow charge, two, three,

or four deep, firing as they came. Even then the infantry behind the screen, of which the nearest was Grenfell's command, were unaware of the danger, till an officer, galloping in at full speed from the south-west, shouted the news to Grenfell. Grenfell got his companies into position just in time. Hardly had the last of his men rushed into his place than the hostile force had come within 600 yards. The Boers still ambled slowly forward, a ragged wall of horsemen apparently lost to all sense of tactics or fear. In front cantered Kemp in command, Van Zyl von Tonder, and Commandant Potgieter. The volleys and the rounds of case from the guns neither slowed them nor quickened them, and up to 200 yards they pursued their intention of enveloping the force opposed to them by the curving horns of their wings. They came on still farther—to within 100 yards. Then their plans, not their courage, failed. The British mass had not moved, it had not weakened, and to rush it was therefore madness. By a common impulse the Boer line turned and galloped away, and in that moment the spirit which had sustained them snapped under the impulse of flight. They had shot their bolt.

Grenfell could not pursue: his horses had been stampeded, many shot, and while he was collecting them Sir Ian Hamilton came up. The Boers had by that time rallied, and were collecting themselves under the shelter of a hollow. Ian Hamilton seized the moment. Horsemen of Rawlinson's column were coming on the field. Taking the whole conduct of affairs in his own hands, Ian Hamilton immediately ordered a counter-attack down the Hartz River valley by all his available force, at the same time telegraphing to F. W. Kitchener to try to throw his men across the enemy's line of retreat. . . . From Kekewich's lines some 2000 troopers, spread wide, rode out towards the place where Kemp's men had rallied. For a few moments the enemy faced the advancing lines. But Ian Hamilton had been right: their offensive spirit had evaporated

at the failure of their charge, and the only man who could have won it back, De la Rey, was not with them. In his absence the fine instrument which he had constructed broke, and its fragments did not wait for the counter-attack, but galloped away southward. The chase itself brought in few captives—the Boers were better horsemen and better horsed—but the force which had been that of an unbeaten and confident enemy was now scattered and fugitive. Kemp's rash onset at Roodeval, or Rooiwal, had gambled away the last striking force left to De la Rey and to De la Rey's side in the field.

The end of the war was at hand, though there were many who continued to struggle, some out of undying hostility to the British, some in the hope of plucking some advantage out of resistance by imparting to it an aspect of permanence. But the best of the fighting-men knew that the dissolution had come, and sought only to persuade their fellows that peace could be ensued with honour. The defeat in the western Transvaal was the mortal blow, though, true to the last to its yea and nay character, the conflict continued through a great part of the peace negotiations. The official origin of these was not in South Africa, but in Europe, where, towards the end of January, 1902, the Marquess of Lansdowne received from Baron Gericke, the Netherlands ambassador in London, a communication proposing the good offices of the Dutch Government in the cause of peace. The document was in the form of an *aide-mémoire*, and one of its proposals was that the Boer delegates in Europe should be permitted to travel to South Africa to confer with the Boer leaders in the field—the Dutch Government being willing to sound the delegates in Europe with regard to this proposal. To this the Marquess of Lansdowne replied that the British Government could not well assent to a proposition which was not, in fact, before them; and that if negotiations for peace were to be entered upon they must take place in South Africa. But the *aide-mémoire* was

immediately forwarded to Lord Kitchener for distribution to Mr. Schalk Burger, the acting President of the Transvaal, and his colleagues.

Mr. Schalk Burger thereupon wrote to Lord Kitchener (10th March, 1902) expressing himself as "desirous and prepared to make peace proposals" when he should have consulted Mr. Steyn. There was some delay in finding where Mr. Steyn was. He lay ill, in fact, in De la Rey's laager; but at last Mr. Schalk Burger and Mr. Steyn were brought together at Klerksdorp on 9th April,[1] Generals De Wet and De la Rey also coming into the conference. The next two days were spent in discussion: the state of the campaign in every district was reviewed, and a decision to make proposals was arrived at. A letter, signed by Burger and Steyn, was then sent to Lord Kitchener asking for a meeting:—

"His Excellency Lord Kitchener be requested to meet these Governments personally, time and place to be appointed by him, in order to lay directly before him peace proposals which we are prepared to make, by which we shall be enabled to settle all questions which may arise, at once, by direct conversation and parley with him, thereby making certain that this meeting will bear the desired fruit." (April 10th.)

In the morning of 12th April the British Commander-in-Chief received the delegates in a room of his house at Pretoria. Lord Kitchener met them without any political officer. It was a meeting between soldiers alone. Lord Kitchener welcomed his guests sympathetically, and Mr. Schalk Burger solemnly read, article by article, the proposals which the Boers had drafted at Klerksdorp. The Republics wished to lay before the British Government, said Mr. Schalk Burger, that they had an earnest desire for peace, and consequently had decided to ask them to end hostilities "and to enter into an agreement by which in their opinion all future war between them and the British Government in South Africa will be prevented". They

[1] The day on which General Ian Hamilton's drive began its preliminary operations.

considered the object would be attained by providing for the following points: (1) Franchise for all; (2) equal rights for Dutch and English languages in the schools; (3) Customs, Post, Telegraphs, and Railways Union; (4) arbitration in case of future differences; (5) dismantling of forts; (6) mutual amnesty. Mr. Burger sat down; Mr. Steyn, obviously very ill, rose to explain that the proposals were made because the delegates wished to secure a lasting peace. Their one purpose was "to attain the object for which the people had fought".

Lord Kitchener, raising his hand in astonishment, interrupted him: "Must I understand from what you say that you wish to retain your independence?" Steyn replied: "Yes; the people must not lose their self-respect". Kitchener's disappointment was manifest, but he would not let the chance of coming to an understanding slip; he had always regretted that his meeting with Botha a year before had not borne fruit. He urged submission, repeated his promise of future self-government, and entreated the delegates to banish all thought of independence and negotiate in a sensible spirit. But Schalk Burger joined Steyn in declaring that they had no power to make any proposal which sacrificed independence. At last Lord Kitchener agreed, as a matter of form, to cable the Boer proposals to England, though he said plainly that there was no doubt what the answer would be. There was not. The British Government replied five hours later with emphasis that "it could not entertain any proposals based on the continued independence of the former Republics which have been formally annexed to the British Crown".

The Home Government enjoined that Lord Kitchener should be joined by Lord Milner in making this clear to the Boer representatives, and should encourage them to put forward fresh proposals on that understanding. The conference was resumed on 16th April (Roodeval had taken place in the interval). The Home Government's reply was read, upon which the Boer

delegates said that further discussion was impossible. Nevertheless further discussion went on. That was the most encouraging sign of the conference—the leaders did not break it off, but remained to bargain. They reproduced in the council-chamber some of the elusiveness they had shown in the field, and began by proposing that one of the delegates from Europe should be sent for in order that the views of President Kruger might be ascertained. An armistice might also be granted meanwhile. Lord Kitchener promptly and unhesitatingly objected to the armistice. Lord Milner added that the deputation in Europe had resigned its executive power, and with it, he thought, a good deal of its influence over the burghers. Kitchener and Milner both had no doubt that the leaders in Europe would be quite prepared to advise the others to keep on fighting. Lord Kitchener, however, agreed to send a telegram to England stating the Boer leaders' doubts and hesitations about independence and to ask the British Government to state what terms (*if* the Boers would surrender their independence) they were prepared to grant. The Boer leaders did not pledge themselves to give up independence; still, they would like to know what they would receive if they did. Lord Kitchener contrived to compress this dubious situation into a remarkably terse telegram, and while a reply was awaited the conference adjourned. Before it met again on the 17th April the defeat of Roodeval had become known.

The reply of the Government addressed to Lord Kitchener, and preserving the character of a military instruction, authorized him to refer the Boer leaders to the terms which he had offered General Botha at the Middelburg conference a year before. A copy of Kitchener's letter to Botha was, at Botha's request, handed to each of the delegates. On this occasion his fellow-leaders repeated that they could not accept it without reference to the people—could they have an armistice? and could they have a European delegate? Lord Kitchener

patiently rejoined by asking what profit it could be to have with them men who had not fought and who therefore knew nothing of the situation? As for an armistice, his duty to his own soldiers forbade it. Up to that moment there was nothing to show him that the Boer leaders seriously meant peace. A profitless truce would operate to his own disadvantage as a general, and his Government had supported him in not granting it. But, added Lord Kitchener, he would meet them half-way. Without stopping operations, he would give them every opportunity of putting the case to their burghers. Let them meet their commandos, each on a day appointed and protected by a local truce for that day. They could then take votes, and return to the conference with full powers. After Lord Kitchener Lord Milner spoke, urging the leaders to avoid delay.

Finally, Lord Kitchener arranged with them the details of the strange and unprecedented armistice, and they separated for a term of four weeks, during which the talking and the voting in the laagers was to be carried out. On the evening of 18th April the Boer leaders left Pretoria. Mr. Steyn, daily growing worse in health, went to Wolmaranstad, and took no further part in the discussions. The others, furnished with Kitchener's safe-conducts, dispersed all over the theatre of the war.

Never was there in warfare a situation quite like this. Lord Kitchener loyally carried out his undertaking. Commandos were allowed to assemble and confer unmolested; commandants and messengers travelled with free passes over the railways, receiving a good deal of hospitality on their way through our lines, and once or twice being accidentally captured, only to be released on production of their passports. De Wet surpassed his own record for mobility, travelling all over the Orange River Colony, addressing eight meetings, and —it is to be noted—urging them *not* to surrender their independence. The Transvaal leaders were no less active; it is

not likely that their advice was of the same tenor. In theory every leader and every burgher was opposed to the surrender of independence, but the positions in the Transvaal and in the Orange State were not identical. However long the Orange State went on, it could not lose much more than had gone already; peace would restore its property, and could not at the worst do more than take away its independence. But in the Transvaal there was something more to lose. If the recalcitrant fighters stayed in the field too long it was they who would become the Uitlanders, a minority with lessening influence and fewer votes than those who had accepted the terms of the British and had "come in". General Louis Botha was statesman enough to see that this might be the opportunity, and the only opportunity, to return to Pretoria with sufficient prestige to unite a national Boer party strong enough to hold its own and to take a preponderant share in shaping the destinies of the Transvaal of the future. Events have shown that he was right; but there were not many among the Boer fighters at that time with his foresight.

There was another strong man whose prescience saw that future and did not fear it—Lord Kitchener. The Commander-in-Chief did not relax his efforts, though he loyally kept the armistice. Outside his compact he prosecuted the war with ruthless energy, and the two large forces in existence, Bruce Hamilton's in the eastern Transvaal, Ian Hamilton's in the western Transvaal, were supplemented. Following a drive by Elliot in the Orange River Colony, Bruce Hamilton was sent there; and Ian Hamilton undertook a system of driving on a rather different plan towards the Vryburg-Mafeking line. The first of these drives lasted from 1st May to 10th May; the second from 7th May to 11th May; and but for the smouldering activity of Smuts in Cape Colony, and its military consequences, these were the last operations of the war. Lord Kitchener ordered them as a military precaution, and also

because he was certain that any sign of weakening resolution on his part would be misinterpreted. That he was anxious to lead the Boers into peace, and if not to lead them to drive them into it, is certain.

He always had said he was a soldier and not a politician; but he could not help being a statesman, and from that point of view he was eager to clinch a bargain which would give his country what it was fighting for—and not to grudge the Boers the best of terms for conceding it. As a soldier he saw no advantage either to his own country or to the Boers in going on. His military position was immensely strong—he could always reckon that it would become more and more unassailable—but was it worth the lives and the money to continue a war that would be always difficult while the Boers had a cartridge? Kitchener was one of those men who have a born hatred of waste, and his natural bent had been cultivated by the necessity for economy in Egypt and the Soudan. In this campaign, where nothing was grudged, it irked him that such portentous expenditure should be continually and endlessly incurred if there was a possible way of ending it. It revolted his sense of reasonableness and that British common sense of which he had so large a share. There were two personal considerations which moved him. One was that he had, as most British soldiers acquired during the war, a great respect for the courage and fighting qualities of the Boers, and a great esteem for some of their leaders, particularly for Louis Botha. There were many incidents regretted by both sides during the war, but there was little bitterness against the Boers among the British soldiers who went through the campaign. One, at least, of the official historians of the struggle has said that it was the most "good-humoured" war ever fought.

Such bitterness as prevailed was softened with time; it had not disappeared in April and May, 1902, when the Boers were faced with the certainty that, struggle as they might, and vote

as they would, their independence was slipping from them. The majority, especially in the Orange State, stood firm for independence, but this attitude represented their wish rather than their expectation. No other decision was to be expected of brave men still in the field; but with such an electorate the yearning for a return of peace was as inevitable as the vote for continued resistance. Peace meant political subjugation, but war only prolonged that end with hardships and miseries added in the interval. If, then, to the honour of the fighting Boers, the demand still went up for war, there was at the back of it a reluctance that led one of the delegates at the final conference to tell his fellow-burghers: "You may say what you will, resolve what you will, but whatever you do here in this meeting is the end of the war".

At the Vereeniging meeting on the 15th of May sixty delegates from the commandos, as well as the members of the two Governments, met to decide the issue. Influenced by Lord Kitchener's promise of immunity to those commandos who sent their leaders to the conference, the burghers had chosen all their most prominent leaders. With De Wet were his six "assistant chief-commandants". The Transvaal had sent De la Rey, Kemp, Liebenberg, Du Tort, and Celliers from the west; Beyers from the far north; and the leaders from Louis Botha's command; Smuts left the investment of Ookiep in Cape Colony to come; Chris Botha came from the Swaziland border. After a formal meeting in the morning, at which General Beyers was elected chairman, the convention met in the afternoon, and De Wet and his assistant chief-commandants began by declaring that they were bound to vote against any surrender of independence. Louis Botha, having been called upon by Schalk Burger, took the bull by the horns. Were the delegates, he asked, irrevocably pledged by their mandate; if so there could be no united action. It was a critical moment. Hertzog rose to save the situation. It was a principle in law,

he said, that a delegate could not be a mere mouthpiece, but must be a plenipotentiary to vote as he thought best. Smuts concurred. The first step towards considering the terms had been taken.

A melancholy two days followed. Speech after speech was delivered far into the night. The cleavage of opinion was unmistakable, and it soon became apparent that the desire for peace on the part of each speaker was in exact proportion to the damage sustained by his command. General Louis Botha alone gave a wider survey. He drew a most gloomy picture of the east and south-east Transvaal. In the whole of the Transvaal he estimated there were 11,000 burghers in the field, of whom a third had no horses. General Smuts declared that he had 3000 men in arms, but he frankly told the meeting that he had no hope whatever of a general rebellion in Cape Colony. Kemp for the western Transvaal made two bellicose speeches, in the first of which he said there was no scarcity in that part of the Transvaal, and in the second that he was determined to fight on till he died. Towards the end of the second day there was a call that the great leaders should speak again—Botha, De la Rey, and De Wet. General Botha expanded what he had said already, but he added to the military survey the consideration that weighed most with him: "If we continue the war it may be that the Afrikanders against us will outnumber our own men". The fatal thing would be to secure no terms at all and yet be forced to surrender. "We are slipping back—we must save the nation."

At this tense moment De la Rey spoke, and he, the undefeated leader, gave his word for peace. He could fight, he said, but the countries as a whole could not. Starvation and misery faced them; intervention was a dream. Fight to the bitter end? The bitter end had come. . . . The effect of De la Rey's speech was decisive, though De Wet raged against it. De Wet's negative prevented the immediate acceptance of the

terms of surrender which had been offered, but the compromise which was suggested was the half-way house. In this compromise it was proposed that (1) foreign relations and embassies should be given up, (2) a British protectorate accepted, (3) a certain portion of territory surrendered, and (4) that a defensive alliance with Great Britain should be concluded. Smuts and Hertzog drew up the proposal, Botha, De la Rey, and De Wet went to Pretoria to negotiate it: and three of these at any rate were probably aware that it would not do. Nevertheless, when they met Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner in the council-chamber at Pretoria they prepared to argue it with undiminished assurance. There was a long and tedious discussion, but the Boers had before them two men hard to convince that black (or grey) was white. Smuts and Hertzog said that there was no difference between these proposals and the terms Lord Kitchener had offered at Middelburg. Then, said Lord Milner smoothly, if there were no inconsistency between the two it would be better to base the discussion on Lord Kitchener's terms, which were older and clearer and more detailed. Smuts tried hard to escape from that quandary, and urged that at any rate the new proposals might be referred to the Home Government. But here Lord Kitchener put his foot down. It was useless, he said: "Grant your proposals and before a year is over we shall be at war again".

There was an adjournment for two hours. General Smuts was sent across to sound Lord Kitchener informally, and as the result Lord Milner drafted an article which was to be regarded as the necessary preamble to the terms of peace as set forth in Lord Kitchener's Middelburg offer. It read:—

"The burgher forces in the field will forthwith lay down their arms, handing over all guns, rifles, and munitions of war in their possession or under their control, and desist from any further resistance to the authority of His Majesty King Edward VII, *whom they recognize as their lawful sovereign.*

"The manner and details of this surrender will be arranged between Lord Kitchener and Commandant-General Botha, Assistant Commandant-General De la Rey, and Chief Commandant De Wet."

The italicized phrase in this article bespoke the surrender of independence. When it was presented to the Boer Commission, General Botha asked if that was what it meant. Lord Milner said that it was. General Botha made a passionate appeal for better terms. But no better terms were possible; all that could be promised was that some details of the Middelburg document might be altered in favour of the Boers. Lord Kitchener suggested that a sub-committee might be appointed to frame the details of a revised Middelburg offer; the Boer Commission could consider the details before pledging themselves to accept the preamble. By this means, though "absolute surrender" was shelved for the moment, time was gained in which the more obstinate Boers might become familiar with the idea. The second corner was turned. For two days Generals Hertzog and Smuts on the one hand, and Lord Milner and Sir Richard Solomon on the other, wrestled over a satisfactory document, the two Boer lawyers struggling keenly for the best possible terms. More important than that, however, the document was drawn up in a form which made a concession to Boer dignity by the assumption that it was a treaty and not a submission, and that the Boer leaders were acting as representatives of their respective Governments. Thus:—

"General Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, Commanding-in-Chief, and his Excellency Lord Milner, High Commissioner, on behalf of the British Government, and Messrs. S. W. Burger, F. W. Reitz, Louis Botha, J. H. De la Rey, L. J. Meyer, and J. C. Krogh, acting as the Government of the South African Republic; and Messrs. M. T. Steyn, W. J. C. Brebner, C. R. de Wet, J. B. M. Hertzog, and C. H. Olivier, acting as the Government of the Orange Free State, acting on behalf of their respective burghers, desirous to terminate the present hostilities, agree on the following articles."

The form was resolutely conciliatory. The articles, with the preamble quoted above inserted, were rather more generous than those which had been offered by Lord Kitchener a year before. But now a rather curious situation arose. The dominant consideration of the surrender of independence was neglected; all the criticism and objections of the Boer Commissioners were directed against the clause regarding the payment of the debts, receipts, and war losses of the republics. At Middelburg Kitchener and Botha had discussed this question, and Kitchener, though an economist, had been business-like enough to see that a million given was a good deal more than a million gained, if by that means the war could be ended. So, though he was a little staggered by the proposal, he had recommended the British Government to offer a million pounds as compensation for all losses, though commandeer receipts and notes were to be demanded as evidence of such losses. It was a remarkable concession, for evidently the British Government was thus promising to pay the costs of the enemy in fighting us. But Kitchener was not disposed to haggle about the price of a concession if it was what he wanted, and what also he thought was worth the money to the Empire.

The Boer point of view was different; but it was not incomprehensible. Much more than a million pounds had been spent by them in requisitions and commandeered goods. Somebody had to pay. They were giving up their independence, a thing of immeasurably greater value than money; why then should they sacrifice money as well and start the two new colonies under a load of debt? Let those who had annexed the colonies take over the debts. It may also be assumed that the Boer Commissioners, knowing how unpalatable was the pill they were offering to their fellow-burghers, wished to gild it as handsomely as possible. Lord Milner argued that to make the British Government liable for

"notes" given by the Boer commandants in exchange for everything they had seen fit to commandeer (which was in short what the Boer Commissioners asked) was equivalent to making Great Britain pay the full cost of Boer resistance. It was. But Botha, displaying an unexpected reverence for the Middelburg conditions, replied that a withdrawal from what Lord Kitchener had in principle offered then ought not to be permitted now. Lord Milner rejoined that Lord Kitchener had defined the million offered then as "an act of grace"; but that definition could not alter the fact that the Boers did not think a million sufficient. Lord Kitchener bluntly interposed. How much? Would two or three millions be enough? Botha and the other leaders consulted in private, and finally put forward three millions as the price of peace. Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner regarded this proposal from different standpoints. Kitchener did not mind how the Boers arrived at the sum to be paid for compensation so long as they would state definitely what the sum was. Milner was no more disposed to haggle than Kitchener, but he clung to the idea of the "act of grace", because he thought that otherwise there would be endless claims and wrangles to shares in the compensation as a matter of right; and also that to concede payment as a right would be to compensate the republics for having made war upon Great Britain. The difference in outlook between the soldier and the statesman was that Kitchener had been fighting the Boers, while Milner had been fighting sedition.

Lord Kitchener explained to General Botha and the other leaders that the sanction of the British Government must be obtained for the completed proposals, Lord Milner adding a warning that they were now complete and precise and could not again be altered; and the Boers, on their part, agreed that, sanction having been obtained, the proposals should be laid before their people for a direct "yes" or "no".

For a week the British Government considered the proposals, with many interchanges of question and answer with Lords Kitchener and Milner, and with the authorities in Cape Town and in Natal, and on the 28th May the Boer leaders met again at Lord Kitchener's house to hear the draft of the treaty as approved. It ran as follows:—

"General Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, Commander-in-Chief, and his Excellency Lord Milner, High Commissioner, on behalf of the British Government.

"Messrs. S. W. Burger, F. W. Reitz, Louis Botha, J. H. De la Rey, L. J. Meyer, and J. C. Krogh, on behalf of the Government of the South African Republic and its burghers; Messrs. M. T. Steyn, W. J. C. Brebner, C. R. de Wet, J. B. M. Hertzog, and C. H. Olivier, on behalf of the Government of the Orange Free State and its burghers, being anxious to put an end to the existing hostilities, agree on the following points:—

"Firstly, the burgher forces now in the veldt shall at once lay down their arms, and surrender all the guns, small arms, and war stores in their actual possession, or of which they have cognizance, and shall abstain from any further opposition to the authority of His Majesty King Edward VII, whom they acknowledge as their lawful sovereign.

"The manner and details of their surrender shall be arranged by Lord Kitchener, Commandant-General Botha, Assistant Commandant-General De la Rey, and Commandant-in-Chief De Wet.

"Secondly, burghers in the veldt beyond the frontiers of the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony, and all prisoners of war who are out of South Africa, who are burghers, shall, on their declaration that they accept the status of subjects of His Majesty King Edward VII, be brought back to their homes as soon as transport and means of existence can be secured.

"Thirdly, the burghers who thus surrender, or who thus return, shall lose neither their personal freedom nor their property.

"Fourthly, no judicial proceedings, civil or criminal, shall be taken against any of the burghers who thus return for any action in connection with the carrying on of the war. The benefit of this clause shall not, however, extend to certain deeds antagonistic to the usages of warfare, which have been communicated by the Commander-in-Chief to the

Boer generals, and which shall be heard before a court martial immediately after the cessation of hostilities.

"Fifthly, the Dutch language shall be taught in the public schools of the Transvaal and of the Orange River Colony when the parents of the children demand it: and shall be admitted in the Courts of Justice whenever this is required for the better and more effective administration of justice.

"Sixthly, the possession of rifles shall, on taking out a licence in accordance with the law, be permitted in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony to persons who require them for their protection.

"Seventhly, military administration in the Transvaal and in the Orange River Colony shall, as soon as it is possible, be followed by civil government: and, as soon as circumstances permit, a representative principle tending towards autonomy shall be introduced.

"Eighthly, the question of granting a franchise to the natives shall not be decided until a representative constitution has been granted.

"Ninthly, no special tax shall be laid on landed property in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony to meet the expenses of the war.

"Tenthly, as soon as circumstances permit, there shall be appointed in each district in the Transvaal and in the Orange River Colony a Commission, in which the inhabitants of that district shall be represented, under the chairmanship of a magistrate or other official, with a view to assist in the bringing back of the people to their farms, and in procuring for those who, on account of the war, are unable to provide for themselves food, shelter, and such quantities of seed, cattle, implements, &c., as are necessary for the resumption of their previous callings.

"His Majesty's Government shall place at the disposal of these Commissioners the sum of £3,000,000 for the aforementioned purposes, and shall allow that all notes issued in conformity with Law I, 1900, of the Government of the South African Republic, and all receipts given by the officers in the veldt of the late Republics, or by their order, may be presented to the said Commission, and in case such notes and receipts are found by the said Commission to have been duly issued for consideration in value then they shall be accepted by the said Commission as proof of war losses, suffered by the persons to whom they had been originally given. In addition to the above-named free gift of £3,000,000 His Majesty's Government will be prepared to grant advances in the form of loans, for the same ends, free of interest for two years, and after-

wards repayable over a term of years with 3 per cent interest. No foreigners or rebel shall be entitled to benefit by this clause."

It will be perceived that the British Government held fast by the principle that the £3,000,000 was a free gift, "without prejudice", as the lawyers say, but in nearly all other clauses the terms were better than those which Lord Kitchener had offered at Middelburg. In fact, as well as in theory, the Colonies, if they were to become British, would start on a sound financial footing, guaranteed by the British Government even to the length of lending money on easy terms. The vexed question of the Kaffir franchise was evidently to be left to the Boers themselves to decide, and there were clear indications that if the Boer people wanted to become as other British dominions are, "Daughter in my mother's house, mistress in my own"—the opportunity was theirs for the taking. But Lord Milner explained that the document was absolutely final, it could not be altered in any way; and with this knowledge the Boer leaders left Pretoria for Vereeniging to meet the delegates.

The Commissioners first saw Mr. Steyn, who fiercely denounced the treaty, and, resigning the Presidency, nominated De Wet to act for him[1] (29th May). They then went on to the tent where the delegates were assembled, and the treaty was read out. A discussion followed, long drawn out, as it must have been when those who took part in it had to consider the sacrifice of the great thing they had fought for, receiving in exchange conditions and concessions which, at the best, must seem to them no more than the scriptural mess of pottage as the price of their birthright. De Wet and the Free Staters continued to argue against the surrender; Botha and Smuts urged peace for the sake of national existence. When the meeting adjourned late on the evening of 30th May it was

[1] Mr. Steyn was extremely ill, and was taken to a British hospital. He remained irreconcilable even to the outbreak of the war of 1914 and beyond it.

Col. Henderson Van Velden Major Watson H. Fraser Major Maxwell H. De Jager

De Wet Gen. Botha Lord Kitchener Col. Hamilton

LORD KITCHENER AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE THAT ENDED THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

apparent that there was a majority in favour of peace. Nevertheless, on 31st May the morning session revealed that there were still opposed parties. Nieuwhoudt moved the rejection of the British terms, P. R. Viljoen their acceptance. Then, to his great honour, De Wet interposed. Earlier in the morning a strong personal appeal had been made to him by Botha and De la Rey to use his influence in favour of peace. He proposed an adjournment, and held a meeting in his own tent of the hostile minority. He persuaded all but a few to accept the inevitable, and when the meeting was resumed the resolution to do so was taken. It was accepted by the delegates in a statement drawn up by Hertzog and Smuts, which made it clear that the acceptance was under protest, and due to the hopelessness of continuing the struggle. The statement reasserted the belief that the country of those who signed it had a well-founded claim for independence; it recapitulated the reasons which made them yield their claims to superior force; it ended with the hope that, since they had accepted it, their country's present circumstances would be "speedily ameliorated in such a way that our nation will be placed in a position to enjoy the privileges to which they think they have a just claim, on the ground not only of their past sacrifices but also of those made in this war".

The acceptance of the conditions couched in these terms was carried with only six dissentients out of sixty. Mr. Schalk Burger ended the meeting with a few sentences which were a noble epitaph on the fight the Boer people had waged.[1]

"We are standing here at the grave of the two Republics. Much remains to be done, although we shall not be able to do it in the official capacities we have formerly occupied. Let us not draw our hands back from the work which it is our duty to accomplish. Let us ask God to guide us, and to show us how we are enabled to keep our nation

[1] *The "Times" History of the War in South Africa*, quoted from Mr. Kestell, the Boer official historian of the war.

together. We must be ready to forget and forgive whenever we meet our brethren."

General Botha, General Smuts, General De la Rey, General de Wet, Mr. Schalk Burger, and the other commissioners travelled back to Pretoria that evening, and an hour before midnight met Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner, and the treaty was signed. Lord Kitchener gravely shook hands with each of the men who had fought with him. "We are good friends now," he said. It was a prescient saying which the years have shown to be true. Its realization was due to the way in which he had made peace as well as waged war.

E. S. G.

CHAPTER X

Honours to the Commander-in-Chief—Lessons of the South African War

Congratulations of British Government to Lord Kitchener—Thanks of British Parliament and Vote of £50,000—Mr. Balfour's Tribute—Farewell Banquet to Kitchener in South Africa—His Speech on the Lessons of the War—The Last Muster in Pretoria—Kitchener's Home-coming—Honours from King Edward VII—South Africa's Later History and Share in the Great War.

THE feelings of public relief at the ending of the war found natural expression in messages of congratulation and thanks to Lord Kitchener. First to send him "heartiest congratulations" was King Edward. A cablegram from the Secretary of State for War (4th June, 1902) offered him, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, "their most sincere congratulations on the energy, skill, and patience with which you have conducted this prolonged campaign", and wished him to communicate to the troops under his command the Government's "profound sense of the spirit and endurance with which they have met every call made upon them, of their bravery in action, of the excellent discipline preserved, and of the humanity shown by them throughout this trying period". Lord Kitchener replied from Pretoria on the following day: "Sincere thanks for the message of congratulation you have sent me from His Majesty's Government, which I am communicating to troops, and which I am sure they will receive with greatest satisfaction".

From the morning papers early in June the British people

learnt with full appreciation of three marks of honour for the Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's forces in South Africa. The first was that King Edward had been pleased to confer the dignity of a Viscounty upon Lord Kitchener; the second that the King had been pleased to approve the promotion of the Lieutenant-General to the rank of General. The third took the form of an item of Parliamentary intelligence. The House of Lords had met specially to receive a message from the King with reference to a grant to Lord Kitchener in recognition of his services. Here is the message which the Peers came down in large numbers to hear the Marquis of Salisbury read:—

"His Majesty, taking into consideration the eminent services rendered by Lieutenant-General Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's Forces in South Africa, and being desirous in recognition of such services to confer upon him some signal mark of his favour, recommends to the House of Lords that they should concur in granting Lord Kitchener the sum of £50,000."

In the Commons Mr. Balfour announced the receipt of the King's Message. The proceedings in both Houses to give effect to this proposal took place next day (June 5). A series of resolutions was moved, recording grateful appreciation of the gallantry, energy, discipline, and good conduct of all ranks of all the services employed—naval and military, home, Indian and colonial; noting the cordial good feeling by which they had all been animated; expressing admiration for the devoted valour of those who had fallen, and deep sympathy with their relatives and friends; and thanking also the members of all the militia corps which had been embodied in the United Kingdom during the war for their zealous and meritorious services at home and abroad. In the Upper House Lord Salisbury observed, in moving the resolutions, that forces varying from 200,000 to 260,000 had been kept in a distant land, 6000 miles off, in order to repel an attack which was in no way

provoked, and to show that such attacks could not be made with impunity. Our troops had shown even more than usual energy in contending with difficulties of no ordinary kind. In his belief the result of the war was that in the eyes of all the world we were much stronger than ever before. Earl Spencer, in seconding the motion, said that by his skill Lord Kitchener overcame the great difficulties of the campaign, that he had shown a most marvellous power of organization, and that Parliament and the country would bear the greatest gratitude to him for what he had done in bringing about peace.

In moving the grant of £50,000 in the Commons, Mr. Balfour pointed out that had we been fighting a highly-organized industrial community the war would have come to an end with Lord Roberts's success. The difficulties thrown in the way of his successor were of a novel and most formidable character. Lord Kitchener had to deal at the same time with no fewer than ninety small mobile columns scattered over an area greater than that of large European States, and those columns were not hampered by the military necessities of defending great commercial or national interests. One further difference which greatly added to Lord Kitchener's difficulties, and which, so far as he knew, was absolutely new in the history even of guerrilla warfare, was that we were, while fighting our enemies, supporting the whole civil population. In the course of his operations against this mobile foe Lord Kitchener created no less than 4000 miles of lines defended by blockhouses—a distance greater than the whole distance which separated the Atlantic from the Pacific in North America, greater than that which separated Khartoum from Cape Town. The magnitude of this gigantic task showed a fertile brain, and its success showed boundless courage, boundless energy, and boundless resolution. It was to those great qualities we owed the fortunate termination of active hostilities in South Africa. "In the brilliant roll of British generals few indeed have had

greater difficulties to contend with, few have come out of those difficulties in a more absolutely triumphant manner."

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman followed Mr. Balfour in a very cordial tribute to Lord Kitchener. Partial and imperfect as our knowledge of the details of military organization were, he said, we saw enough to be aware that the supreme part was played by that silent, modest, simple, almost stern figure of the Commander-in-Chief himself. In an unusual degree the Vote meant an appreciation of Lord Kitchener's individual character and services. "Lord Kitchener has shown himself a great soldier, but he has shown himself more than that—a great administrator, a master of the art of organization, a tactful negotiator, and a large-minded man. He is of the very best type of character which, with our pardonable partiality, we are wont to attribute to the British name. He is strenuous and pertinacious. He is straight and direct in his action, and he thinks of his duty and never thinks of himself."

The only jarring note in the Commons was the attitude of the Nationalists. Two Radicals opposed on principle, but with good taste. One was Mr. Cremer, member for Haggerston, who had never voted sixpence towards the war, and intended to be consistent. The other, Mr. Labouchere, member for Northampton, was opposed on principle to grants of money to successful generals, but he did not refrain from expressing admiration for Lord Kitchener, saying he had done his work well as a military man, particularly because as a general he had always recognized that the object of war was peace. The greatest tribute to Lord Kitchener was the confidence of the Boers in his word. This was the extent of the opposition offered by the proprietor of *Truth*.

An incident which took place early in June in South Africa afforded Mr. Morley an opportunity for paying, in face of a Scottish audience, one of the finest compliments that could come from him to Lord Kitchener. The Commander-in-Chief

was visiting the Boer delegates who had so recently been in the field against the British, and had remarked that had he been one of them himself he would have been proud to do as they had done. Mr. Morley, referring to the incident in a speech to Liberals in the Empire Palace Theatre, Edinburgh, said he would vote Lord Kitchener £50,000 to-morrow for saying that and nothing else. Mr. Morley was still at this period one of the "Little Britain" school of thinkers, and he had certainly been among the severest critics of the course of British diplomacy which preceded the war. His Edinburgh observation must be read as evidence of how Lord Kitchener's chivalrous conduct towards his late enemies in battle appealed to the hearts and imaginations of the British people. A South African counterpart was the tribute of Mr. Schalk Burger, who said to an interviewer of the *Natal Mercury* that "the Boers thoroughly admired Lord Kitchener".

The Commander-in-Chief himself was now finishing up at Pretoria preparatory to returning home. In accordance with the old custom, by which a distinguished officer is chosen to carry home dispatches announcing an important victory, his military secretary, Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton, left Cape Town on 4th June, bearing Lord Kitchener's dispatches containing the original documents of the Peace Treaty. On the following Sunday (8th June) in Pretoria a solemn thanksgiving was held for the return of peace simultaneously with the service held at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. This was an impressive ceremony which answered to the emotions now filling every breast, British and Dutch alike. The morning was unusually warm and bright for South African winter, and Pretoria wore a settled and peaceful aspect to which it had been a stranger during two years and a half. Troops to the number of 9500 lined up, forming a horseshoe on the three sides of Church Square fronting the Government Buildings. From the latter temporary platforms, covered with red cloth and

packed with the leading people of the Transvaal, jutted out into the centre of the square. Another platform was reserved for the Commander-in-Chief and his staff. Palms and ferns, flags and bunting, were part of a picturesque scene, in which no building and no yard of standing-space in the square was without its quota of the populace.

Punctually at ten o'clock Lord Kitchener came on to the dais in front of the reserve platform. Of the generals who figured at the occupation of Pretoria about two years before only General Ian Hamilton and General Kelly, in addition to Lord Kitchener himself, took part in the ceremony of 8th June. The first event was the presenting of decorations by Lord Kitchener. Colonel Congreve read out the record of the man's deed as each recipient came up, and Lord Kitchener looked his happiest in discharging a duty which aroused much enthusiasm among the onlookers. Several officers and men received the Victoria Cross, and Red Crosses were bestowed upon some hospital nurses. Lord Kitchener and his staff next descended into the square and faced the platform, which was then occupied by the officiating clergy, among whom were the majority of the army chaplains, headed by Archbishop Jones of Cape Town, Bishop Carter of Zululand, and Bishop Chandler of Bloemfontein. Choirs from Pretoria and Bloemfontein led the singing, accompanied by the military bands. An undenominational form of service had been ordered by Lord Kitchener, who was always firm for bringing in all the churches on national occasions. The Archbishop of Cape Town preached a short sermon, expressing gratitude for the restoration of peace, and emphasizing the urgent necessity of lasting peace between the peoples lately at war. The closing hymn, sung to the familiar Old Hundredth, understood by Dutch and British alike, was deeply affecting. Then the National Anthem was sung to the accompaniment of the massed bands. Dutch and British in unison took off their hats. The service ended

with Kipling's "Recessional", the choir of 200 walking round solemnly and impressively. A short pause, then Lord Kitchener and his staff ascended the dais. Facing the crowd, he lifted his hat and called: "Three cheers for the King!" The soldiers and the people responded heartily: enthusiastic cheering of the two races joined in common Sovereignty filled the square. When this demonstration subsided General Barton, from the bandmaster's stand, called for three cheers for Lord Kitchener, which were given with fervour.

On the eve of his departure from South Africa a great banquet was given in his honour at the Wanderers' Hall, Johannesburg, on 17th June, by the Town Council, the Chambers of Mines, Commerce, and Trade, and the Stock Exchange. Over 400 persons were present. The occasion was marked by a fine eulogy and analysis of the hero of the evening delivered by Lord Milner.

"The stupendous difficulties of his task", said the High Commissioner, "are realized in this country. Nothing but a will of steel and untiring energy could be successful in grappling day by day with a mass of complicated details which have seldom been grouped into any human brain; only persistent stoical courage could have brought him through it to this present perfect success. Men of this temper are commonly supposed to be less sensitive to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune than others, but no man has felt more than Lord Kitchener the loss of the many gallant officers and men. But all the more honour is due to him that he never let the acuteness of his sorrows and disappointments deflect the steady unswerving pursuit of his aim. Lord Kitchener's name will go down to history as the foremost of our men of action, while he leaves the scene of his greatest achievements esteemed, almost beloved, by the men whom he fought and conquered."

Lord Kitchener received a magnificent ovation when he rose to reply. He appreciated the good spirit and the uncomplaining manner in which the people of Johannesburg had borne the regulations imposed by martial law; and he made

an earnest appeal to mine-owners to afford lucrative employment to members of the irregular corps about to be disbanded, who had borne the heat and burden of the day. But his most interesting theme lay in the lessons of the war. Some of them, he said, had learnt to ride and shoot. All had learnt discipline, to be stanch and steadfast in the hour of danger, to attack with vigour, to hold what they had gained. They could never forget the true friends and comrades by whose side they had stood in a hundred fights. Even the hardships which they had so cheerfully endured would, in remembrance, be only pleasures. "Keep up the glorious records and organizations of those distinguished regiments. Teach the youths that come after you what you have learnt. Keep your horses and rifles ready and your bodies physically fit, so that you may be prepared at any time to take your due part in the great Empire which unites us all." What had we learnt about our enemies? We had been told that the Boers would run away. But we found that they always came back. They subordinated themselves to their leaders and worked with discipline through a long and protracted war. They were courageous in attack, and had shown marked ability in retreat, which was a lesson to all. Another characteristic of the Boers, which, if we were true to the traditions of our forefathers, we ought to be most capable of fully appreciating, was their wonderful tenacity of purpose and disinclination to know when they were beaten. There were many among them whose characteristics and methods we did not like and did not approve; but, judging them as a whole, they were a virile race and an asset of considerable importance in the Empire. Lord Kitchener bade his audience remember that the advent of the happy time of complete reconciliation greatly depended on the way in which the Boers were treated. An example had been shown, and a great lesson learnt, from the war, namely, the meaning of the words "British Empire", and "standing shoulder to shoulder"

in the struggle. If others came to assist us we were ready to go to them in case of need.

A few days later Lord Kitchener arrived at Cape Town, where he was received with great honour, and the guns of the fort fired a salute. From the station, where he was awaited by Sir H. H. Settle and Lady Settle and staff, Colonel Cooper, Base Commandant, Mr. Graham, Acting-Premier, Mr. Frost, Secretary for Agriculture, and Major Deane, representing the Governor, he drove to the Town House through streets lined with troops and amid the acclamations of crowds of people. General French was already at the Town House, at the entrance of which a large stand had been erected. The Mayor and Town Councillors in their robes received Lord Kitchener, and the Mayor presented an address, adding that the town would also present a sword of honour, which, however, had not yet been delivered. An address was also presented by the Irish Society.

"It is very gratifying to me", said Lord Kitchener, in a general reply, "to receive an address from Cape Town on my first visit since I left this place early in 1900. I must apologize for not coming more frequently, but I have as my excuse, the justice of which all will allow, that I have had a great deal of important work to do, and when I could tear myself away from head-quarters it was to hurry to some place which was giving me trouble. I therefore did not come to Cape Town. (Laughter.) I take the Irish address as a compliment to the country in which I was born; and I am sure all will rejoice with me at the noble manner in which the Irish regiments have maintained the honour and glory of the Old Country and have proved once more that Irishmen are loyal to their King and country."

Renewed enthusiasm greeted him as he drove to the Castle. He was entertained to luncheon by the Mayor, his health being proposed by the Governor, Sir W. Hely-Hutchinson. His reply on this occasion was more interesting from the fact that during the war all had not been smooth sailing

between him and the Cape authorities on the subject of martial law. To his relief, he said now to his audience, he found that Cape Colonists did not denounce martial law, for which he was primarily responsible. Without it the farmers of the colony would have been either actually or politically dead. The farmers had been fed with lies, not always told them in Dutch, until they thought the British people were a nation of monsters. Martial law had then stepped in and prevented people from taking a fatal step. It had also been effective in preventing munitions of war from reaching the enemy. Now that peace had come he asked them all to put aside racial feeling, and also to put aside "leagues" and "bonds", and to strive for the welfare of their common colony. Briton and Boer had had a good fight, and they were now shaking hands after it. It was a happy augury for the future that the people of Cape Colony had not dealt in a vindictive spirit with the question of the rebels. Lastly, he expressed the hope that all the colonists would soon become again a happy and united family, as Providence meant them to be.

A highly unusual experience befell Lord Kitchener on this occasion. After the speeches a young lady slipped into the room, behind the chairs of the guests, and tapped him on the shoulder. He turned round, and the enthusiastic admirer kissed him! Immediately steps were taken to have her removed, but she had brought with her a lovely bouquet of Cape flowers, and presented it to Lord Kitchener. At the same time she asked him to write his name in her birthday book. Lord Kitchener turned and asked for a pen, which someone handed to him. He then signed his name, and the young lady, the daughter of a well-known Dutch doctor in Cape Town, went away.[1]

Lord Kitchener and General French subsequently sailed for Britain in the *Orotava*. His farewell address to the troops

[1] *South Africa*. 17th June, 1916.

before leaving South Africa is characteristic of Lord Kitchener's gift of saying the essential in the most direct language. More, it is a piece of self-revelation. In the case of one who revealed himself so little, we look to such messages to find the man, and this message from a great commander at the close of an arduous campaign is instinct with humanity, sympathy, and vision.

"The General Officer Commanding-in-Chief wishes to express his best thanks to all general officers, officers, non-commissioned officers, and men for the excellent service they have rendered since he first took the command eighteen months ago. The period in question offered few opportunities for those decisive engagements which keep up the spirit of an army and add brilliance and interest to its operations. On the other hand, officers and men have been called upon for increasing and ever-increasing exertions, in the face of great hardships and other difficulties, against dangerous and elusive antagonists. The conduct of the troops under these trying circumstances has been beyond all praise. Never has there been the smallest sign of slackness or impatience. It seems to Lord Kitchener that the qualities of endurance and resolution they have displayed are much more valuable to a commander than any dashing or short-lived effort whereby some hard-fought actions may be won in a campaign of ordinary duration. The Commander-in-Chief also has special pleasure in congratulating the Army on the kindly and humane spirit by which all ranks have been animated during this long struggle. Fortunately for the future of South Africa, the truth in this matter is known to our late enemy as well as to ourselves; and no misrepresentations from outside can prevail in the long run against the actual fact that no war has ever yet been waged in which the combatants and non-combatants on either side have shown so much consideration and kindness to one another.

"This message would be incomplete if reference were not made to the soldierly qualities displayed throughout the campaign by our quondam enemies, and to the admirable spirit displayed by them in carrying out the surrender of their arms. Many Boer leaders who at an earlier date recognized the futility of carrying on the devastating conflict beyond a certain point have already for some time served with us in the field, and the help which they rendered us will not be forgotten. Many also

of those who continued to struggle to the end have expressed the hope that on some future occasion they may have an opportunity of serving side by side with H.M. forces, from whom Lord Kitchener can assure them they will receive a very hearty welcome. In bidding the Army of South Africa farewell, it only remains for Lord Kitchener to wish every individual serving in it all happiness and prosperity for the future."

An incident of the voyage home was receipt of news (communicated by the *Inyati* on 3rd July) of King Edward's illness and the postponement of the Coronation. At Las Palmas Lord Kitchener received official visits from the Governor's aide-de-camp and from two Spanish naval officers and two British Consular officers; while a deputation of British residents presented an illuminated address.

He was received as the conquering hero on arriving at Southampton on 12th July. A case of smallpox, of which the victim was a member of Lord Kitchener's personal staff, was hardly permitted to delay the proceedings of landing. The usual ceremony of being admitted to the freedom of the borough was part of the welcome. After signing the roll, Lord Kitchener addressed the company, congratulating the mayor and the people of Southampton upon the very efficient manner in which that splendid port had fulfilled all the military requirements for putting an army in the field some 7000 miles away. On the journey to London Lord Kitchener alighted at Basingstoke for a few minutes to enable the Mayor to read an address from the Corporation. His arrival in London was the occasion of a grand demonstration of royal and public welcome. Meeting him at Paddington were King George, then Prince of Wales, the Duke of Connaught, the Duke of Cambridge, Lord Roberts, and the head-quarters staff. Sir John Aird was present, as Mayor of Paddington, to present an address from that borough, and Lord Kitchener took his mind off the splendid scene before him for a moment in order to enquire of Sir John how the Assuan dam was getting on. He then

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LORD KITCHENER'S HOME-COMING FROM SOUTH AFRICA

From a drawing by W. Hatherell, R.I.

changed his staff cap for the more characteristic helmet, and began the drive through great cheering crowds of Londoners —it was Saturday and brilliant weather. At Victoria Gate a halt was made to allow the Mayor (Lieutenant-Colonel Probyn) and Corporation of Westminster to present an address. Then the procession went on along a route kept by the Indian and colonial troops who had come to Britain at this time for the Coronation. Constitution Hill was lined by a brilliant gathering of ladies, ensconced on Government stands, eager to see one who not only bore the reputation of a military genius, but was commonly regarded by the fair sex with awe as one who "disliked women".

His destination was St. James's Palace, where he was entertained by the Prince of Wales. The distinguished company present to meet him included the Duke of Connaught, the Duke of Cambridge, Prince Arthur of Connaught, Lord Roberts, the Duke of Devonshire, the Marquis of Lansdowne, Mr. Brodrick, Mr. Balfour (who on this same day became Prime Minister on the retirement of the Marquis of Salisbury), Sir Ian Hamilton, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, and Lord Chesham. In congratulating Lord Kitchener on behalf of King Edward, the Prince of Wales at the luncheon said:—

"I cannot tell you what pleasure it gives me to carry out the wishes of the King, to offer you the heartiest welcome on your return safe and sound and to congratulate you on the able and highly successful manner in which you have terminated the long and arduous campaign in which you have been so actively engaged during the last two and a half years. I feel confident that these sentiments of your Sovereign are fully shared by your fellow-subjects throughout the Empire. We have watched with the greatest admiration the patience, tenacity, and skill which you have shown in coping with the enormous difficulties that confronted you, and which example seemed to have inspired your whole army. Gentlemen, I will now ask you to drink the health of Lord Kitchener, and I know you will join with me in giving him a most hearty welcome."

Replying to the toast, Lord Kitchener said :—

"Your Royal Highness, I feel deeply grateful for the very kind way in which you have expressed the gracious message of His Majesty the King to me on my return from South Africa. The Army in South Africa will feel highly honoured by Your Royal Highness's gracious words, and by the magnificent reception which has been accorded to me as its representative. The length and severity of the campaign have called forth qualities of rare endurance and perseverance on the part of all ranks. As a result I think I may answer Your Royal Highness that the Army has never been in a fitter condition than at present to take the field whenever it may be called upon to serve its King and country."

From St. James's Palace Lord Kitchener passed on quietly to Buckingham Palace, where King Edward personally presented the Order of Merit to him. Queen Alexandra also received him. Then he made the short journey to Belgrave Square, where—as on the occasion of his visit home after Omdurman—he became the guest of Mr. Pandeli Ralli. In the evening London was illuminated in his honour. A particularly happy device at the Canadian Coronation Arch in Whitehall described him as "hero in peace and war".

During subsequent weeks Lord Kitchener was in great demand everywhere, and, although he never cared for functions or fuss, he submitted himself most agreeably to the wishes of his countrymen. On 31st July there was a South African dinner at the Hotel Metropole, when occasion was taken to present the sword of honour from the Corporation of Cape Town, which has been referred to. The Lord Mayor of London presided, and, in handing over the sword to Lord Kitchener, associated the whole Empire with the unanimous enthusiasm of Cape Town in regard to him. British-Boer and Boer-Briton alike owed to Lord Kitchener, under Divine providence, the inestimable blessing that they were now one.

"We have watched, my Lord, your inflexibility of purpose, your unwearied ardour, your steady application, and above all your absolute

THE BANQUET AT ST. JAMES'S PALACE, JULY 12, 1902

Lord Kitchener replying to the toast of his health

From a drawing by S. Begg

justice. You stand out before your fellow-countrymen as a model Englishman, and that, I venture to say, will be to you a higher title than any decoration or any rank that can be conferred upon you. No wonder that an appreciative country desires to hand to you emblems and tokens of gratitude. I am quite sure, my Lord, that this sword, in the hands of a British soldier, will never be unsheathed in an unrighteous cause, and that it will never be re-sheathed in its scabbard, if the cause is righteous, until justice, mercy, and liberty have been upheld and maintained."

After expressing, in reply, the confident hope that in South Africa at any rate the sword would not again be drawn from its scabbard, Lord Kitchener turned the thoughts of his enthusiastic audience to the man—his friend—who had been left at the helm in that country.

"We all have confidence in Lord Milner," he said. "We all realize the difficult work that is left before him, and we all wish, with confidence as well as with sympathy, that he may have every success in accomplishing the anxious task that lies before him in that country. It is nearly three years now that I have worked in close communion with the High Commissioner, and I may say that our old friendship, which existed prior to my going to South Africa, has only been strengthened and increased by the days of stress that we have passed through together. Although events immediately prior to the war may have, in some degree, influenced the full appreciation of Lord Milner by a certain class of our new subjects in South Africa, I am convinced that the better he is known the more his great and high qualities and great ability will be appreciated by every section of those who now recognize him as their ruler. Nothing could more greatly assist Lord Milner in his task of reconciliation and re-creation of prosperity than the rapid development of the country, which I am sure you know is full of natural resources, and has every description of potential wealth. Gold, iron, and coal are very good assets, and when you add to them the development of agriculture and the introduction by assisted immigration of fresh blood into the country, I think you may assure yourselves that you have nothing less than the making of a new America in the South African hemisphere. The question of who will supply the energy, the brains, and the money that are required to carry out this great develop-

ment is one more for you than for me; but when, as in South Africa, patriotism is joined to self-interest, I am not afraid that you will fail to sow the seed and reap the harvest for which I hope we have prepared the soil."

One of Lord Kitchener's first engagements was at St. Martin's Church when a replica of the Onslow Ford statue of Gordon, designed for Chatham, was unveiled by the Duke of Cambridge preparatory to its being sent to Khartoum. "I am very glad", said Lord Kitchener, "that this monument is to be set up on the banks of the Nile, where it will be a lesson alike to the European and the native of a man of blameless life who put duty before himself and died for his country."

In company with Mr. Chamberlain, on 1st August, he went to the city to receive the freedom of the Grocers' Company and to be entertained at dinner. He then went off as the guest of the Duke and Duchess of Portland to Welbeck, where he spoke at the annual show of the tenants' agricultural society. It was an auspicious moment when, on 6th August, he and Lord Roberts went together to the Guildhall. King Edward was back in London, and the public anxiety on account of his health was changed to rejoicing. In such an atmosphere the citizens of London imparted even greater warmth than usual into their reception of the two most popular soldiers of the time. The address to Lord Kitchener was in these terms:—

"We, the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Commons of the City of London, in Common Council assembled, desire to offer you a hearty welcome on your return from the long and arduous campaign in South Africa, and to tender to you our thanks for the splendid services rendered by you, and by the gallant troops under your command, in bringing the war to a successful conclusion. In common with all your fellow-countrymen we recognize your military skill, and the tenacity, endurance, and resolution shown by your Lordship, and by the army under your command, in overcoming not only the military difficulties but also those of a physical character presented by the vastness of the territory in which

the war was waged. You have shown yourself to be equally distinguished as statesman, as diplomatist, and as an illustrious commander. We especially desire to express our admiration of the ability displayed in the conduct of the negotiations which resulted in the surrender of the Boer forces in the field. We would also bear witness to the humanity shown by your Lordship and the Imperial troops during the course of the war, and to the efforts which you made on the termination of hostilities to induce our former enemies to become loyal subjects of His Majesty the King. We would once again recognize the distinguished services you have rendered your country in Egypt and the Soudan by annihilating the power of the Mahdi and the Khalifa, and giving to that ancient land the blessings of peace and of a just and settled government. We are proud to claim you as one of the freemen of this ancient city, to again offer you our warmest welcome on your homecoming, and to express the earnest hope that you may long be spared to devote your conspicuous talents to the service of His Majesty the King and to the upholding of this world-wide Empire."

Like the reply of Lord Roberts, that of Lord Kitchener paid the sincerest compliments to the army which he commanded during the final phases of the war.

"It was an Imperial army," he said, "drawn from all quarters of the globe, and as a fighting-machine it was hard to beat. We had also with us those brave Colonial comrades whose fine spirit and loyalty led them to sacrifice their private interests to share with us the hardships of a long and arduous campaign. As long as that spirit exists we as a people have the qualification of Empire, only requiring that our leaders and rulers should so mould and direct that spirit as to ensure that it shall be efficiently used for the common benefit of the whole British race."

Lord Kitchener was of course an important figure in the coronation procession on 9th August. In the words of one who was to sit in the War Cabinet with him twelve years later, Mr. Augustine Birrell, "his presence and demeanour more than satisfied all his countless admirers".

Now there was an interesting little South African interlude. The Boer Generals Botha, De la Rey, and De Wet arrived at

Southampton in the *Saxon* on 16th August. They at once visited the *Nigeria*, which was lying close by (and in which Mr. Chamberlain was about to take a party to see the assembled fleet at Spithead). Here they were received by Lord Kitchener and presented to Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Roberts. They were invited to attend the Coronation review of the fleet, but declined on the ground that family reasons demanded their presence in London. At Southampton and in London they were enthusiastically welcomed. Next day they were received by the King on board the *Victoria and Albert* in the Solent, Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener being present, and were taken for a trip round the fleet at Spithead. On 5th September Lord Kitchener attended an official interview given by Mr. Chamberlain to the Boer generals at the Colonial Office, at which amnesty and other questions were discussed.

To return to the order of Lord Kitchener's visits, on Saturday, 23rd August, he attended the annual agricultural show of the tenants of Lord Londonderry's estate at Wynyard Park, Stockton-on-Tees. At the luncheon he referred to the returning troops and their want of employment. Having merited the approbation of their countrymen by their services in South Africa, it was not too much to ask that some direct step should be taken in great public centres and amongst large employers of labour to find them good, permanent, wage-earning positions. From here Lord Kitchener went on to spend a few days with the Duke and Duchess of Portland at Langwell Lodge, Caithness. On 3rd September he reached Welshpool on a visit to the Earl and Countess of Powis at Powis Castle. Summoned to London to the Boer Conference at the Colonial Office, he returned on the night of 5th September to Powis Castle, and on the following day attended a parade of the Montgomeryshire Imperial Yeomanry in Powis Castle Park. Here Lord Kitchener, who had been accorded a great popular welcome, presented the South Africa medal to

members of the 88th and 89th Companies of the Yeomanry, and made an interesting little speech on national training.

"The Yeomanry", his lesson ran, "have had some experience of what it means to be more or less untrained in war, and how greatly a man, whatever his spirit and pluck may be, is handicapped by want of training in a fight. You therefore will realize how essential it is that the young men of the country should join the military forces and become trained by those who have reaped experience during this war, so that they may be ready if the necessity should arise to take their place as trained men in the ranks. You must not forget that we shall not always have, nor do we wish to have, a war that lasts long enough to train our men during the campaign. It is therefore, I think, of vital importance that every one, whether in this country or in that Greater Britain beyond the seas, should realize that it is the bounden duty and high privilege of every British able-bodied man to defend and maintain that great Empire the citizenship of which we have inherited, and the honour and glory of which the men of the Empire are determined shall, as far as lies in their power, be handed on untarnished to those that follow us."

At Ipswich on 22nd September Lord Kitchener was in his family homeland, and had the distinction of being the first admission to the burgess roll since, in 1821, the Iron Duke visited the town. Marlborough in 1709 and Nelson in 1798 were other burgesses. Lord Kitchener had very little doubt that it was as an East Anglian that he was welcomed. He was glad to tell Suffolk that she was very well represented by the men who were sent out to South Africa, and had every reason to be proud of them. It was true that at the first start-off, on a pitch-dark night, the Boers were able, by unexpected magazine-fire, to disturb somewhat the equanimity of the Suffolk Regiment; but the men quickly learnt the lesson, and on many occasions afterwards, by vigorous attacks, both by day and night, disturbed in a far more serious manner the equanimity of the Boers. Referring to the distinguished names on the burgess roll of Ipswich, Lord Kitchener said

it added greatly to the lustre of the privilege which had been conferred on him to be associated with names so glorious in the military annals of the country. "To few indeed is it given to rival the illustrious services and genius of these great men, but I hope the events of the past few years have shown that the spirit of devotion to duty and country burns in all ranks now with as pure and steady a flame as it ever did in the brave days of old." From a dais erected in front of the Town Hall he distributed 100 war-medals to reservists of the Suffolk Regiment, to Yeomanry, Volunteers, and mobilized men. To himself the presentation was made of a Past-Master's jewel of the British Union Lodge, Ipswich, No. 114, of Freemasons, in honour of his eminence in the craft as Past District Grand Master of Egypt and the Soudan and Past Grand Warden of England. The W.M. of the British Union Lodge, Mr. G. W. Horsfield, handed the jewel to Lord Kitchener, who, in acknowledging it, expressed regret that his stay was so short as to prevent his spending more time with the Freemasons of Suffolk. He afterwards drove to Aspall, the home of the Chevalliers, attended by the cheers of an enthusiastic country-side. Next day, 23rd September, was spent in a tour through mid-Suffolk. He received an address from Hoxne Rural District Council which was encircled in a silver ring. In the history of ancient and modern times, said the Rev. F. French in presenting this, there was no example of greater humanity, greater kindness, and greater generosity than had been displayed by Lord Kitchener and his brave army in South Africa. Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Chevallier, of Aspall, and Miss Chevallier, of Norwich, accompanied Lord Kitchener to Mendlesham, the rail-head of the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway. On the way he inspected the boys of Kerrison Reformatory School at Thornden, forty of whose old boys had served with the army in South Africa; and he also spoke to the scholars of Eye Grammar School. The first

passenger-train journey of the rail from Mendlesham to Haughley was then undertaken. At Haughley the party changed to motor-cars, and proceeded to Stowmarket railway station. In Stowmarket Lord Kitchener received a very cordial welcome, and addresses were presented by local bodies. Then, entering the train, he left for Newmarket, where he was met by Colonel Frank Rhodes, and proceeded as his guest to Dalham Hall till the following day.

On 30th September, when he was presented with the honorary freedom of the city of Sheffield, the compliment was accompanied by a silver dinner service and a small case of Sheffield cutlery, which Lord Kitchener said would be of great practical value to him in his new position as Commander-in-Chief in India. Before making a tour of the principal works he recalled that some years ago, when the advance into the Soudan was decided upon, he had to procure the very best guns to re-arm the Egyptian forces. After careful study in this country and on the Continent, he was able to place an order with the great firm that was now established in Sheffield. Those guns were supplied to him with the least possible delay. They were fully tested at the battles of Atbara and Omdurman with the most satisfactory results, materially assisting his men in winning the day with the small losses that they incurred on those occasions.

At Sheffield Lord Kitchener was the fourth honorary freeman; on 4th October, when he visited Chatham, he was made the first freeman of the borough. In his speech at the luncheon, he observed that every sapper felt as he did when he came back to Chatham—he was returning to the home of his youth. He told how well the Royal Engineers did in the war, and that if the lines of railway they had worked were stretched out they would extend from Cape Town to Cairo. It was a Royal Engineer who invented the approved pattern blockhouse; and to the energy and efficiency of that corps

they owed it that the blockhouses were so efficient a protection. After leaving the Town Hall Lord Kitchener proceeded to the Royal Engineer Barracks. He was presented with an address by Gillingham District Council. At the barracks he presented a number of war-medals, and that evening he dined with Major-General Sir Thomas Fraser, commanding the Thames District, and Royal Engineer officers at their mess.

Meanwhile a number of gifts which Lord Kitchener brought from South Africa had been distributed. To the King he presented a hybrid zebra, or quagga, which was provided with a home in the Royal Zoological Gardens. To the City of London he gave the ox-wagon which was said to have belonged formerly to Mr. Kruger, and the remains of a big gun which the Boers rendered useless when they adopted guerrilla tactics, in which guns were an encumbrance. To the corps of Royal Engineers at Chatham, for preservation in the museum, he gave the four statues of "typical Boers" which had been presented to him by Mr. Samuel Marks, who had intended having them erected in Pretoria before the war.

Here for the moment we leave him and return to the thread of events in South Africa. For Lord Kitchener kept up his interest in the country, and he was destined to be interested in it from a military standpoint in 1914 very different in character from that of 1900–02. South Africa after the peace spent years of distraction. On 29th July, 1902, Mr. Chamberlain, in replying to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman in the House of Commons, had said that the Government would establish self-government as quickly as possible. Shortly afterwards Mr. Chamberlain went to South Africa to see things for himself. One of the incidents of his visit was a rather sharp altercation with De Wet during an interview in which Boer grievances were discussed—for Mr. Chamberlain did not possess the grand manner of patience

of Lord Kitchener. Botha, De la Rey, and Smuts all rejected Lord Milner's overtures to join the new Legislative Council in the Transvaal. The trend of opinion is shown by a remark of General Beyers in 1905, that if the Imperial Government mistrusted the Boers by refusing responsible rule, the Boers were justified in mistrusting the Imperial Government. Events at home moved rapidly after Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was returned to power with a great Liberal majority early in 1906. He insisted on establishing without delay full responsible government in Transvaal and Orange River Colony, and on revoking the Tory plan for modified representative government, which had been provided for by letters patent in 1905. Meanwhile Lord Milner had retired (April, 1905) and Lord Selborne been appointed High Commissioner. The Government sent a committee, headed by Sir West Ridgeway, to South Africa to enquire into the basis of a constitution, and out of this came the grant of a constitution to the Transvaal in December, 1906.

General Botha was Premier and Mr. Smuts Colonial Secretary in the new ministry. The former declared that British interests would be absolutely safe in the hands of the new Cabinet. They in the Transvaal were actuated by feelings of deep gratitude to the King and the British Government for having entrusted the Transvaal in a manner unequalled in history with the grant of a free constitution. It was impossible for the Boers to forget that generosity. Directly responsible government was granted to the Orange River Colony they would begin to work towards a united South Africa. On 1st July, 1907, the new Constitution for the Orange River Colony was formally promulgated at Bloemfontein.

Federation or unification in South Africa was the next ideal. Lord Selborne, in a dispatch dated 7th January, 1907, set forth the case for closer union in the most convincing fashion. In May of the following year an Inter-colonial Conference, which

was held to consider the questions of tariff and railway rates, unanimously resolved: "That the best interests and the permanent prosperity of South Africa can only be secured by an early union, under the Crown of Great Britain, of the several self-governing Colonies". Arising from this conference a National Convention to consider the question of union met at Durban in October, 1908. The members included Sir Henry de Villiers, ex-President Steyn, Generals Botha, De Wet, and De la Rey, Messrs. Schalk Burger, Smuts, and Merriman, Dr. Jameson, Sir George Farrar, and Sir Percy Fitzpatrick. At Cape Town the convention was continued, and by February, 1909, it had concluded a draft Constitution. A delegation carried the draft Act to London, where, with little alteration, it was embodied in the form of a Bill and passed into law. By this, the South Africa Act, 1909, a new State—the Union of South Africa—came into being. Cape Colony, Natal, the Transvaal, and Orange River Colony were united under one Government in a legislative union under the British Crown on 31st May, 1910. The Union Parliament was given full power to make laws for the whole of the Union, while to Provincial Councils was delegated the immediate control of affairs relating solely to the provinces. Lord Gladstone, first Governor-General of the Union, called upon General Botha to form a ministry, and on 4th November, 1910, the first session of the Union Parliament was opened at Cape Town by the Duke of Connaught. So began the building up of what Lord Kitchener eight years before had in mind when he spoke of "a new America in the South African hemisphere".

On the outbreak of the great European War in 1914 it fell to Lord Kitchener, as Secretary of State for War, to review the whole field. The Union of South Africa was asked to undertake operations against German South-West Africa. This was the ground or excuse for a fresh outbreak of unrest from the Boer side, which broke itself against the loyal and granite-like fidelity

of Botha and Smuts to the British cause, which was truly also the South African cause. By a strange mischance General De la Rey was accidentally shot dead near Johannesburg on 16th September, 1914. The police were on the look-out for a gang of desperadoes who had escaped in a motor-car; and the car in which General De la Rey and General Beyers were motoring home to De la Rey's farm was of a similar description. The police had orders to stop and examine all motor-cars and to fire if their challenge was ignored. Unhappily the driver of General De la Rey's car ignored the repeated challenge, and the car was fired upon, with the tragic result stated. The following month South Africa was to hear that the Germans had plotted to seduce the Boers from their allegiance. The first evidence of this lay against Lieutenant-Colonel S. G. Maritz, commanding the force in the north-west of Cape Province, who on 8th October, 1914, was relieved of his command and ordered by his successor, Colonel Conrad Britz, to come in and report. He replied that all he wanted was his discharge, and Colonel Britz must come himself and take over his command. Colonel Britz sent Major Ben Bouwer to take charge, but Bouwer and his companions were made prisoners. Maritz then sent Bouwer back alone with an ultimatum stating that unless the Union Government guaranteed to him that, before eleven o'clock on 11th October, they would allow Generals Hertzog, De Wet, Beyers, Kemp, and Muller to meet him in order that he might receive instructions from them, he would forthwith make an attack on Colonel Britz's forces and proceed further to invade the Union. Maritz had German guns and a German force with his command, and he had sent as prisoners into German South-West Africa all the Union officers and men who refused to betray their oath. General Botha took in hand personally to suppress the rebellion, and the bulk of the Dutch population rallied to his side. On 15th September General Beyers, Commandant-General of the Union Defence Forces,

had resigned on the ostensible ground of objection to the decision of the Union Government, at the request of the imperial authorities, to occupy for strategic reasons certain parts of German South-West Africa. On 26th October Maritz was completely defeated at Kakamas, and escaped wounded into German territory. Rebellion then broke out in the Orange River Colony under De Wet, and in the western Transvaal under General Beyers. On 12th November General Botha defeated De Wet's 2000 rebels, who also lost 255 prisoners, including Muller. Fighting and skirmishing continued. De Wet crossed the Vaal as a fugitive on 21st November, and was pursued by motor-cars. On 2nd December Colonel Britz reported that De Wet had surrendered to him at a farm at Wartenburg, 100 miles east of Mafeking. Beyers lost severely in an engagement to the south of the Vaal River, east of Bloemhof, on 7th December. He and others tried to cross the Vaal, and were fired on. He was seen to fall from his horse, but managed to grasp another by the tail. Next, he was seen drifting down-stream, shouting for help which never came. His body was recovered. Kemp had joined the Germans; Wessel Wessels, three members of the Union Parliament, and members of the Provincial Councils were among the 7000 rebels who were captured or had surrendered. Except for some expiring flickers the revolt was over.

"Our sacrifices in blood, treasure, and losses of population have been considerable," said General Botha in a statement on December 9, "but I believe they are not out of proportion to the great results already achieved or which will accrue to South Africa in coming years. For this and much more let us be reverently thankful to Providence, which has once more guided our country through the gravest perils, and let that spirit of gratitude drive from our minds all bitterness caused by the wrongs suffered and the loss and anguish which have been caused by this senseless rebellion."

While recognizing the necessity of just and fair punish-

ment, General Botha asked the community to remember also that now more than ever it was for the people of South Africa to practise the wise policy of "forgive and forget". De Wet was let off lightly on account of his age and condition. Sentenced in July, 1915, to six years' imprisonment and a fine of £2000, he was liberated before the end of December. Botha had turned the thoughts of the people to the next duty, namely, to make it impossible for German South-West Africa to be again used as a base from which to threaten the peace and liberties of the Union. "I hope and trust the people will deal with this danger as energetically as they have done with the internal rebellion," declared South Africa's great statesman-soldier and one-time antagonist of Lord Kitchener.

While the Great War was yet at an early stage, Colonel Sir Aubrey Wools-Sampson, who had distinguished himself in the South African War, and was now a member of the Union Parliament, came to London accompanied by Major Pickburn, in order to take counsel with the South African colony in the Metropolis, with a view to organizing a possible contingent from South Africa to fight on the battle-fields of Europe. He returned to South Africa on 24th October, 1914, bearing this message from Lord Kitchener to General Botha:—

"Wools-Sampson has asked me what he can do to help the cause of the Empire and how South Africans can do most. I said that in my view every man in the Union ought to go at once for the Germans in South-West Africa and see that matter through properly. After this is completed I will see that those who have fought there, Afrikander and Briton, shall be represented here if the war is still in progress, and I hope that all will serve the Empire loyally. If you care to publish this expression of my opinion as being likely in any way to help you—and that is its only object—please do so. On my advice Wools-Sampson is going back to South Africa at once."

Lord Kitchener's injunction to "see that matter through properly" corresponded exactly to the mind of South Africans

themselves. The temper in which General Botha and General Smuts were making history for South Africa and the Empire at this period may be judged by a public statement of the former at the close of the rebellion. He paid a warm tribute to General Smuts, saying that his "brilliant intellect, calm judgment, amazing energy, and undaunted courage have been assets of inestimable value to the Union in her hour of trial". And of the task they had just accomplished, and the one of greater magnitude that lay before them, General Botha said this:—

"In suppressing the rebellion the Government have had the most hearty co-operation of both races. Let us have the same co-operation in German South-West Africa. The undertaking before us is difficult, but if we all do our duty it will be carried to a successful conclusion. Now that German territory has become a refuge for Maritz and the other rebels, it is more than ever necessary that we should persist in our operations there. We cannot tolerate the existence of a nest of outlaws on our frontier, a menace to the peace of the Union."

That there might be nothing wanting to ensure the success of the enterprise, the Union Government, about a fortnight after these words were uttered (31st December, 1914), put in force the provisions of the Defence Act empowering them to commandeer men for military service. In this respect South Africa forestalled Great Britain. Many things were yet to happen in the Mother Country before the official admission that dependence on voluntary service was inadequate in view of the German menace.

Cruelly disappointing as the Boer rising must have proved to the German masters of the rebels, it had at least served them by delaying those operations against German South-West Africa which Botha had undertaken on behalf of the King. The British War Office had intimated that the occupation of such parts of the German colony as would give them command of the powerful wireless station at Windhuk (completed just

before the war) would be a great Imperial service; and in making this request of the home Government known to the Union Ministry the Colonial Secretary had added: "You will, however, realize that any territory now occupied must be at the disposal of the Imperial Government for purposes of an Imperial settlement at the conclusion of the war. Other Dominions are acting in a similar way on the same understanding." That communication was dated 7th August, 1914, and in September troops of the Union Defence Force were sent to Lüderitzbucht to begin the work. Then ensued the rebellion, with the result that for many weeks the internal situation distracted the energies of the Union leaders to the detriment of the main enterprise to which they had set their hands.

How formidable the undertaking was will be realized when we remember that the German colony had the reputation of being an overseas replica of Prussian militarism, and in a region larger than the whole of Germany itself. But a message from Viscount Buxton, Governor-General of the Union, which was read at the Imperial patriotic meeting at the Guildhall, in London, on 15th May, 1915, gave the British people an insight into Botha's bold grasp of the situation. A force of some 30,000 men, with guns, horses, medical stores, ambulance, and transport, had been conveyed oversea 500 and 700 miles, in addition to the land force destined to operate on the border. Every pound of provisions for the men and every ton of forage for the horses and mules had to be brought from Cape Town; likewise all railway material for rapid construction inland and along the coast. Men, horses, guns, supplies, and materials had to be landed at Lüderitzbucht and Walfish, neither of which ports possessed disembarkation facilities in any way adequate for such a purpose. Clearly the performance reflected the highest possible credit upon South African genius for organization. It is not too much to compare the driving force of

General Botha or General Smuts with that of Lord Kitchener himself. General Smuts superintended the organization of the entire expedition; and the whole of these operations were carried out without the aid of Imperial troops by the Union Defence Force and Defence Department, which was created only two years before. "South Africa", as the Hon. W. P. Schreiner, her High Commissioner in London, said at the Guildhall meeting, "stood solidly by the Empire very largely because of the great gift of self-government given to her".

General Botha had the Kitchener gift of not underestimating the task on which he was engaged. He knew that in German South-West Africa there had been built up, not only an admirable system of strategical railways, but very large accumulations of munitions and stores. The enemy's fighting force, including regulars and armed civilians, was variously estimated at from 10,000 to 14,000 officers and men, assisted by the remnants of South African rebels who escaped into the German colony. Early in the war the Germans had occupied Walfish Bay, the isolated strip of British territory just to the south of Swakopmund, but, finding this perhaps too near the coast to be healthy, they retired not long afterwards over the desert to the hills to the east. So when the northern force, which Botha was soon to join in supreme command, effected its landing in the fine harbour of Walfish Bay on the first Christmas Day of the Great War there was no one to oppose it. The Germans had also deserted the splendid town of Swakopmund, which was occupied by the South Africans on 14th January, 1915, and became a military base in preparation for the advance along the railway to the German capital.

General Botha landed at Lüderitzbucht early in February, and before going north reviewed the troops under Sir Duncan Mackenzie—including the 1st Battalion of the Transvaal Scottish—which were operating from that point along the railway into the heart of the German colony. This was one of three

southern columns, the others being that of Colonel Berrangé, starting from Kimberley and entering German territory at Hasuur, on the opposite side of the colony, and that of Colonel Dirk Van de Venter, operating from the Orange River in the south-east. Fighting had taken place on the 30th December on the southern position at Schuit Drift, where Maritz and Kemp made their last attack on Cape Colony, only to be decisively beaten at Upington, on the banks of the Orange River, on 24th January, 1915. Attacking Kakamas on 3rd February the Germans were heavily repulsed, and soon they retreated within their own borders. In General Botha's plan of campaign the northern army, which he commanded, was to advance along the line to Windhuk, while the three columns already mentioned—afterwards to form the southern army and converge on the capital under General Smuts—were to round up the Germans in the south.

Windhuk, the enemy capital, fell to Botha's army on 12th May. The Burgomaster met the Commander-in-Chief as he approached from Karibib, and announced that the town would be handed over without resistance. In a long and imposing cavalcade the victorious army entered the capital. The Union Jack was hoisted at the Rathaus, and a proclamation read declaring martial law to be in force throughout the conquered territory. With General Botha on the day of occupation were Brigadier-General Myburgh and Colonels Mentz and Alberts—all Dutch members of the South African Parliament who fought against the British in the South African War. Among others who distinguished themselves in the campaign were Brigadier-General Lukin and Brigadier-General Brits; in Colonel Alberts's brigade of burghers one column was under Commandant Piet Botha of Heidelberg, another under Colonel Collins, and the third under Colonel Classens; while attached to General Botha's staff was his son, Lieutenant Jantjie Botha, who, at seventeen, was said to be the youngest staff officer in the world. So

British and Boer went from triumph to triumph together. It is true that the Germans, instead of putting up the stiff fight that was expected of them, relied on the safer policy of retreat, and left the offensive for the most part to hidden explosives and poisoned wells (the latter a crime which was acknowledged by Lieutenant-Colonel Franke, the commander of the German forces); but the campaign of the invaders was none the less arduous and trying. In the words of General Botha: "The marches performed by one and all deserve to rank highly as military achievements, while the spirit and endurance of the men who have done the work should cause the Union justifiable pride in its soldiers".

News of the surrender of Windhuk was received with great satisfaction in South Africa and at home. "The ability displayed by General Botha", said Lord Kitchener in the House of Lords, "has been of a very high order, and has confirmed the admiration felt for him as a commander and leader of men." "You, General," wrote Lord Buxton to the Commander-in-Chief, "must be proud to command such a splendid body of men—Boers and British alike patriotic and loyal. This force—entirely South African—has enabled the Union and Rhodesia to undertake an allotted and effective part in the great struggle forced upon the Empire and the world by the militarism and overweening ambition of Germany." The fall of Tsumeb, the northern terminus of the railway, on 8th July, 1915, was followed at two o'clock next morning by the unconditional surrender of Dr. Seitz, the German governor, with all the remaining German troops in the colony. In this culminating success at Grootfontein 204 German officers and 3293 men fell into General Botha's hands—"a fitting conclusion", commented Lord Kitchener, "to a brief and brilliant campaign". His cablegram of congratulation to General Botha on 10th July was couched in terms of unusual warmth:—

"I am anxious to express to you on behalf of the army our sincere

admiration of the masterly conduct by you of the campaign in German South-West Africa, and to offer you and your force our cordial congratulations on your brilliant victory. We shall warmly welcome any South Africans who can come over to join us."[1]

To which General Botha replied next day:—

"Most cordially thank you for your kind congratulations, which are highly appreciated by all. I hope that soon many of my men here will take their share in the greater task in Europe."

To recall Lord Kitchener's words to Wools-Sampson, South Africans had "gone for" the Germans in South-West Africa, and had "seen that matter through properly". The question of their fighting in Europe was now timely. As a matter of fact, some days before the final surrender in South-West Africa, General Smuts announced that the Union had already made an offer to the Imperial Government to organize and equip a South African contingent of volunteers for Europe, as well as a force of heavy artillery. In due course the men of the South African Regiment (General Lukin, Divisional Commander), after distinguishing themselves in Egypt during the Senussi campaign, covered themselves with glory in the fighting in Delville Wood during the great Allied offensive on the Somme beginning in July, 1916.

Meanwhile, General Smuts had other work on hand in the African continent. Towards the end of 1915 General Smith-Dorrien was appointed to command operations against German East Africa; but he resigned in a short time owing to ill-health. His successor was General Smuts, "in whom", said Lord Kitchener on 15th February, 1916, "we can have the utmost confidence in view of his varied military experience". Five weeks later, after an important victory on 21st March, Lord Kitchener wired to General Smuts as follows:—

[1] It is curious to note that in the version of Lord Kitchener's message which was cabled by Reuter from Pretoria, and published a day ahead of the War Office version, the concluding sentence was rendered: "We shall warmly welcome *you and the* South Africans", &c.

"The Secretary of State for War wishes to congratulate you and all ranks under your command on your brilliant success and on the dash and energy with which your operations have been conducted in a country with the difficulties of which he is acquainted from personal experience".

Thus in Kitchener's lifetime General Botha conquered South-West Africa, and General Smuts took the lead in the campaign which in due time was to conquer German East Africa. None were more moved than those former redoubtable foes and later firm and honoured friends of Lord Kitchener when the tidings of his death flashed across the ocean to the scenes of his trials and triumphs in South Africa.

G. T.