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To  
Miss Pemberton  
from

Beatrice Hart-Symonds

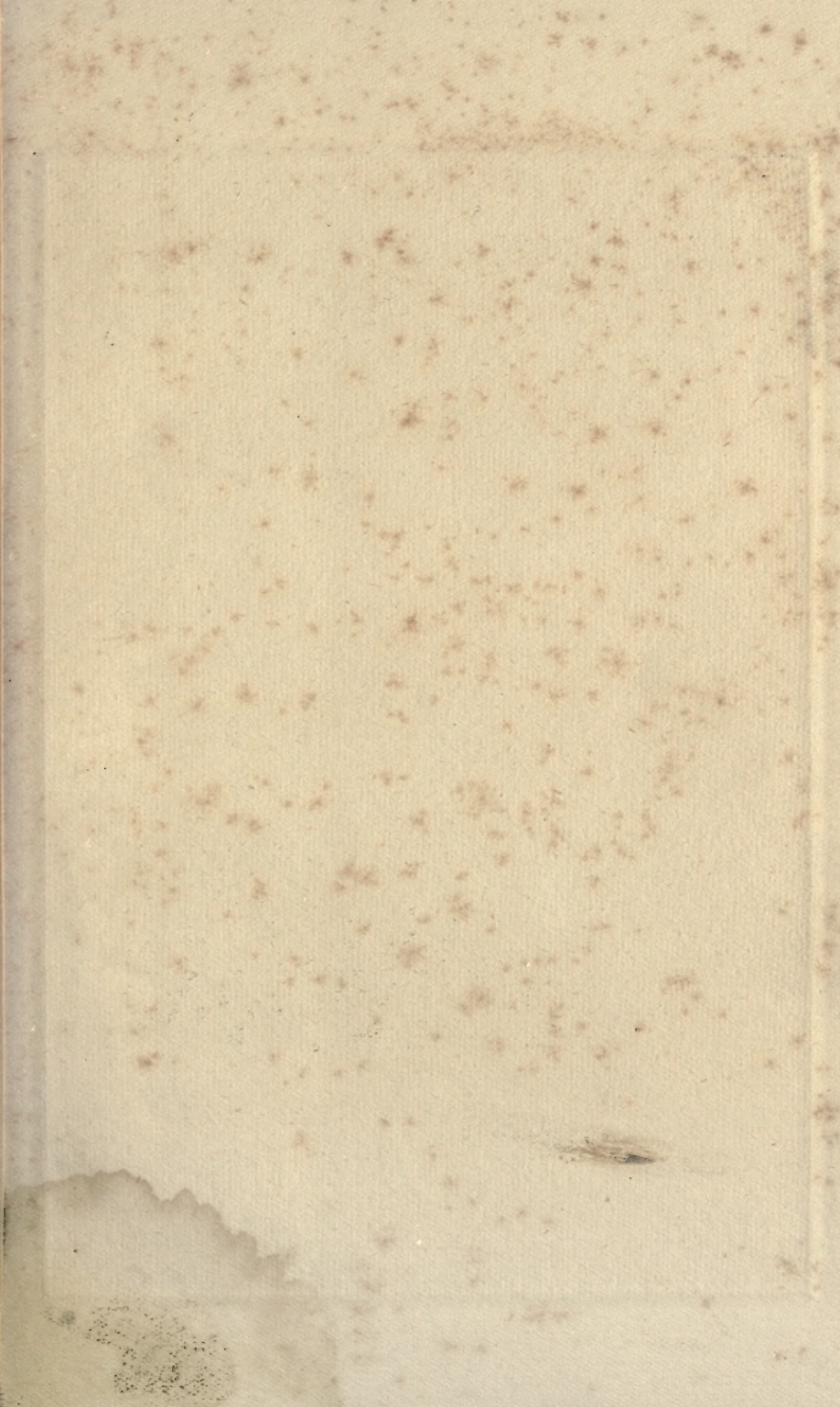




LETTERS OF MAJOR-GENERAL  
FITZROY HART-SYNNOT  
C.B., C.M.G.









*Maj. General Hart-Synnot, C.B., C.M.G.*



LETTERS OF  
Major-General FitzRoy  
Hart-Synnot  
C.B., C.M.G.

EDITED BY  
B. M. HART-SYNNOT

*WITH PORTRAITS*

LONDON  
EDWARD ARNOLD  
1912

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DEDICATED  
TO  
MY MOTHER



## PREFACE

THIS volume does not pretend to be a biography. I have merely linked the following letters together with a brief notice of the events which took place in the intervals. The letters by themselves are sufficient to furnish a record of the busy, strenuous life of their writer.

My most grateful thanks are due to Mr. Hugh Elliot for his kind assistance and advice; to the proprietors of *The Times* for allowing me to publish a letter; to Sir John Ross of Bladensburg; and to various members of my family who have been kind enough to read parts of the MS.

BEATRICE HART-SYNNOT.

BALLYMOYER,

*September 1912.*



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## PORTRAITS

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LETTERS OF MAJOR-GENERAL  
FITZROY HART-SYNNOT,  
C.B., C.M.G.

CHAPTER I

1844-1872

ARTHUR FITZROY HART-SYNNOT was born at Portsmouth on the 4th of May 1844.

The Harts were an old Dorsetshire family, and until about 1819 they held estates in that county.

The heads of two successive generations had been soldiers when FitzRoy was born. He was the eldest surviving son of General Henry George Hart, who, at the time of his son's birth, was a major in the 49th Regiment.

General Henry Hart was an enthusiastic soldier, but he did not have the opportunity of active service afterwards accorded to his sons. A great deal of his leisure and energy was devoted to the compilation and editing of *Hart's Army List*, which work became justly famous in the military world, and after his death in 1878 it was edited for many years by his eldest son. When this son was born, his father determined to name him after the two greatest soldiers of his day—Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, and FitzRoy, Lord Raglan.

Doubtless musing on the lives of these two great men after whom he was named, inspired FitzRoy's youthful mind to work hard for the career for which he was destined, but if past examples do really affect the actions of men, perhaps in his maturer years the study of Napoleon's life influenced him more than that of any other.

On the 9th of February 1858, when he was thirteen



## 2 LETTERS OF MAJ.-GEN. HART-SYNNOT

years and eight months old, he entered the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, and remained there till June 1860, when he passed for his commission. The records of the College show that while there he received three decorations of merit. But he was then only sixteen, and his father considering him too young for a commission, withdrew him from Sandhurst and sent him to a tutor to study for Woolwich, with the view of putting him in the Royal Engineers.

In 1862 he went to Cheltenham College, where he worked perhaps hardest at athletics; for in that year he established a reputation as a good runner, and was in the College twenty, besides taking an oar in the College eight and the Modern four.

From Cheltenham College he was unsuccessful in his attempt to pass into Woolwich. Meanwhile the Sandhurst rules had been changed and the age of entry raised; but under the new regulations he had forfeited his former claim to a commission without purchase, so, being still within the age limit, on the 1st of February 1864 he again went up for the competitive entrance examination and passed in fifteenth.

While at Sandhurst he kept up his reputation as a runner, and was presented with a cup by the other cadets as a mark of their appreciation of his various feats.

After a further course of ten months, he passed out in December of the same year, second on the list of successful competitors for a commission without purchase. And on the 23rd of December he was gazetted to the 31st Huntingdonshire Regiment.

He held the unique position of having been through Sandhurst twice.

On the 29th of May 1867 he purchased his lieutenancy. The following year, on the 22nd of December, he married Mary Susanna, eldest daughter of Mark Seton Synnot, Esq., D.L. of Ballymoyer.

After a year spent in Malta with his regiment, having served the minimum time required by regulations before an officer may compete for the Staff College, he became a candidate, and passed first in order of merit. After the usual course of two years, he passed out in 1872.

## CHAPTER II

### EN ROUTE FOR THE GOLD COAST

WHEN it was decided to send an expedition to Ashanti, to his great delight Hart was one of the twenty special service officers selected by Sir Garnet Wolseley, in addition to his Staff, to accompany him to the Gold Coast.

On arrival at Cape Coast, Hart was given command of the Sierra Leone company of Russell's Native Regiment, which was later augmented by some Kossoos, about 180 in all. These he trained and taught to shoot before the column advanced, as well as the short time at his disposal would permit.

In some letters written in journal-form to his wife, he gives an interesting account of his experiences from the sailing of the *Ambriz* to the occupation of Quirman.

*Steamship "Ambriz,"*  
Sept. 12, 1873.

MY DEAR MAY,—We are now about two hundred miles north by east of Madeira, so we expect to arrive there to-morrow morning; and as the weather is now calm, I commence my first letter to you, intending to conclude and post it at Madeira to-morrow. My next letter to you I shall post at Sierra Leone, where we shall be due in eight days from Madeira.

I collected on Thursday, at my hotel in London, all the kit I had ordered for the expedition, and left for Liverpool by the evening express, with Sir Garnet Wolseley and most of the officers, three saloon carriages having been engaged for us.

#### 4 LETTERS OF MAJ.-GEN. HART-SYNNOT

On Friday afternoon the 12th of September we embarked in the *Ambriz*, and as she was lying out in the river, we went on board by a steam-tender. About 3.30 P.M. we got under way, and from this point I shall continue my account somewhat in the form of a journal. The people on board the steam-tender gave us three cheers as we moved off.

I will now give you a complete list of the officers on board, forming the Staff of the expedition. Any rank that I underline you will understand is only local rank for the time being :

Commanding the Expeditionary Force, or Commander-in-Chief :

Major-General Sir Garnet Wolseley, C.B., K.C.M.G.

Colonel on the Staff, and Second-in-Command: Colonel McNeill, V.C.

Assistant Military Secretary: Captain H. Brackenbury, R.A.

Assistant Adjutant-General: Brevet-Major Baker, 18th Regt.

Deputy-Assistant Adjutants-General: Captain Buller, 60th Rifles, and Captain Huyshe, Rifle Brigade.

Private Secretary to Sir Garnet Wolseley: Lieut. Maurice, R.A.

Aides-de-Camp to Sir Garnet Wolseley: Captain M'Almont, 7th Hussars, and Lieut. Hon. A. Charteris, Coldstream Guards.

Commanding Royal Artillery: Captain Rait, R.A., Lieuts. Saunders, R.A., and Eardley Wilmot, R.A.

Commanding Royal Engineers: Major Home, R.E.

#### *Control Department.*

Deputy-Controller Irvine, C.M.G., Commissary O'Connor, Deputy-Commissary Ravenscroft, Deputy-Commissary Walsh, Assistant Commissary FitzStubbs, Deputy-Paymaster Potter, Assistant Paymaster Ward.

Surgeon-Major Jackson.

To organise and command the native forces the other officers are divided into two brigades :



*Cape Coast Castle Brigade.*

Brevet-Major Russell, 13th Hussars, in Command.

Captain Godwin, 103rd Regiment.

„ Bromhead, 24th „

Lieut. Gordon, 93rd „

„ Dooner, 8th „

„ Hart, 31st „

„ Townshend, 16th „

„ Lord Gifford, 24th „

*Elmina Brigade.*

Brevet-Lieut.-Col. Wood, V.C., 90th Regt., in Command.

Captain Furze, 42nd Regt.

Lieut. Richmond, 50th Regt.

„ Bolton, 1st West India Regt.

„ Woodgate, 4th Regt.

„ Graves, 18th Regt.

„ Eyre, 90th Regt.

I must tell you that the above is only what I have ascertained by inquiry on board; no orders have yet been issued about our organisation, but very complete orders will be issued on the subject at Sierra Leone when we land there, so possibly the above may not be what will finally be settled.

There are three fellows besides myself in my cabin—Gordon, Dooner, and Lord Gifford. The first two are old friends, in my class at the Staff College, and you know them both. Gifford is a very young lieutenant in the 24th; all are good fellows, and we are very jolly in our cabin, notwithstanding that in rough or rainy weather it is converted into a lagoon by the entry of the water!

We have on board the special correspondent of the *Times*, Winwood Read, and of the *Standard*, a man named Henty. You must take in the *Standard* from the day

you receive this, as Henty will write from Madeira. Please keep the leaves of the *Standard* with the special's correspondence for me, filing them in order of date; for though all the letters of special correspondents on military operations, excepting Hozier's letters, have been from a military point of view simply trash, they are occasionally useful, and at times interesting, particularly when there is no other information. And in this case, as the correspondents know us all so well, their information may be expected to be good.

Of course you will read the *Times*. I hope my father will get from the topographical department of the War Office two copies of the large scale-map prepared for us, one for you and one for himself, so that you can note our progress. The map is on the scale of five miles to an inch. We have each been given one, together with some printed notes on the country taken from all available sources of information, and a vocabulary of English, Fanti, and Ashanti words. The last two are generally the same, but occasionally quite different. Gifford gave me an English and Fanti spelling-book arranged by the missionaries.

We have with us all the information extant, and we spend most of our time now reading it up.

Our uniform for the expedition is of light grey cloth, braided with grey; felt helmet with pugaree, and high boots or leggings for the bush. We have each been given a useful pocket-book containing an almanac for the next few months, adapted to the Gold Coast—a very valuable thing.

*Sept. 14th.*—A strong gale all day. The Captain read the morning Church service. Very few fellows were able to attend, or appear at meals. I heard dreadful sounds in some cabins above the roaring of the waves!

*Sept. 18th.*—It is now very warm. To-night fellows are lying about in the saloon with only a sleeping suit upon them for coolness. I do not yet feel it more than a very pleasant temperature. I am glad we are making for the Equator and not the Pole!

*Mile's Hotel, Madeira.*

*Sept. 19th.*—I am now on shore, as you see by the address. It is a lovely place, and the weather more delicious than anything I have yet experienced. Dooner and I have been all about the town with a guide, and have just had lunch at the hotel. Dooner and I are just going to start for a walk into the country with our guide, so I will say adieu until Sierra Leone . . .

We all enjoyed our day on shore at Madeira extremely. Funchal is the name of the town there off which the *Ambriz* anchored, and where we landed.

All the officers except Dooner and myself, joined in having a big dinner on shore at 5 o'clock, but Dooner and I decided that as that would be the pleasantest time of day to be out of doors, and as we should have to embark again at 7 o'clock, we would have a very substantial lunch early in the afternoon, losing as little time over it as possible, dispense with dinner, and make up for it by a good supper after re-embarking.

We first took a Portuguese guide, a boy who had been many years in our West Indies, and who spoke English very well. He took us all over Funchal first of all. The weather was as hot as it is in English midsummer; that is to say, whenever we really have any summer in England, for, as I have often said before, it is seldom easy to tell what season of the year it is in England without the help of an almanac!

Although it was hot at Madeira, the air was inde-



scribably delicious. Madeira is more south than the latitude of Malta, yet there was none of that stuffiness that you remember in the heat of September at Malta. There is one very remarkable peculiarity about the place—there are no wheeled vehicles, sledges only are used. The streets and roads are paved with smooth pebbles, of which there is an unlimited quantity on the seashore. These pebbles are not flints, but on the contrary are of a stone soft in comparison with flint, and very tough. They are very smooth in the first instance, and as they wear away by use, become more and more slippery until you find you have to be careful in steep places to keep your footing.

I enclosed in my last a good photo of the carriage of the place, a sledge drawn by two bullocks. This vehicle is generally used in the town as a carriage, but the cart is simply a short thick piece of plank dragged by two of the same tiny oxen, by means of a pole between them, one end attached to the end of the plank and the other to the yoke on their necks. This pole acts as a carriage pole and also does the duty of traces. Very small loads are simply pushed along from behind by men, women, or children, with wonderfully little effort, if not up hill. Madeira is very mountainous, and the scenery extremely pretty. Directly you leave the town you must go up steep hills, whichever way you go. The mountain roads are paved with the same smooth pebbles. If you do not choose to walk up, there are horses for hire in abundance, or you can be carried up in a luxuriantly fitted-up hammock strung on a pole, carried on men's shoulders. But the descent by sledge is the best thing I experienced in the place.

After our lunch, Dooner and I, glad to get some exercise for our legs, walked with our guide to the top of one of the nearest hills, in preference to riding. We

found it a hard pull up, and extremely hot, but in an hour and a quarter got to the top of the hill, and rested in the cool chapel of a convent there, called St. Antonio. As well as I could judge, we had got up about 1500 feet above the sea ; no very great height, but enough to give a splendid view. All the way we had come, we had passed through vineyards loaded with ripe grapes. Every few minutes we met gangs of men, each man carrying a goat-skin full of grape juice to be made into wine. At the head and tail of each gang was a man who carried a long bludgeon, and who seemed to be chosen for their marked physical superiority to the others. It strikes me that this simplifies police arrangements, and secures a due amount of work. If a man plays any tricks with the goat-skin he probably has to stay at home with a bad headache for a fortnight ; no useful time is lost upon him, and he naturally returns to work when he can with his feelings enlisted on the side of honest labour !

I expect that a month of Madeira would be more than enough for anybody except the invalids, to whom its air is renewed life. It must be an uncommonly dull place. Except two hawks, I saw neither bird nor insect. The complete silence in the streets owing to the sledge locomotion is melancholy. The gardens were pretty, and fine palm trees, as well as many lovely flowers, were there ; but everyone looked solemn and depressed ; even the Portuguese children, who never had known another land, neither laughed nor played, but sat in groups and talked slowly and gravely, and whenever one of them spoke all the others listened. I thought if Arthur had been there he would have stirred them up !

As far as we had gone the country was very pretty and well planted, but further on the mountains rose up barren and desolate ; and I am told that if you go on you find not a single inn or place of refreshment. To descend

the hills there are sledges of various sizes, from sledges for one to sledges for half a dozen. These sledges are simply baskets on wooden runners, and with a comfortable seat. Three men push them from behind, and the two outer men each hold a strap attached to the front of either side of the sledge; by these straps they steer the sledge beautifully when going at a tremendous pace; if, for instance, the sledge is required to go towards the right, the man on that side checks it gently by his strap until the proper direction is gained. The men start by running and pushing at the same time, and then when the speed is faster than they can run they lean on the back of the sledge and propel it at almost a fearful pace by striking out with their legs behind, something like the action of skating. It took only fifteen minutes to get back over the distance we had taken an hour and a quarter to walk! The sledging down St. Gothard, on the snow, was nothing to it in speed.

I had heard nothing to shake my confidence in the men, so I only stimulated them by shouts of "Bravo bravissimo"; but Dooner, who had been told by the landlady, before we started from Funchal, that legs and arms were constantly broken in these descents, held on as I have never seen a man hold on but once before, when in a scramble for places on an Irish car the horse started off, and I saw one countryman holding on by another man's ear, the first convenient thing he could lay hold of: there was no room for him on the seat, and he was standing on the step, only saved from falling off by a terrible grasp on a sitting man's ear; and this latter could do nothing but roar, for he required the use of both arms to hold on to the car.

Soon after 7 P.M. we left Madeira. There is little of varying incident to tell you while we are actually at sea. I have been hard at work most of the time reading all



the information to be obtained concerning the scene of our future operations. Much of it is dry reading.

*Sept. 21st.*—About 6 A.M. we stopped off Las Palmas, a seaport of Grand Canary, but waited only a few minutes for the mails. It is a dreary-looking town, houses all white and flat-roofed as at Malta; and Grand Canary itself is a bleak, barren-looking, hilly island.

*Sept. 27th.*—We reached Sierra Leone about half-past five this morning. There was some rain in the early morning, but it soon cleared up. This is now near the close of the rainy season—that is, it is full spring here now, and the verdure is everywhere brilliant; in fact, vegetation is now looking its best.

I shall not attempt describing Sierra Leone to you in this letter, as we start on again at 7 o'clock this evening; but will write you full particulars of it in my next. I will only say that the place and climate are most agreeable. The sun is nearly exactly over our heads, and it is hot, certainly, but not too hot, for a pleasant breeze is blowing; and I have never felt in better health, or greater energy, in my life.

The foliage of the trees is most luxuriant and delightful to look at, but two months hence it will all be parched up.

The population of "Free Town," as it is called, is entirely negro.

All the troops of the West India Regiment have gone on to the Ashanti War.

I have just returned from a long and very pleasant walk with Dooner; we enjoyed it immensely. Birds of most brilliant plumage and butterflies as beautiful were flying about everywhere.

The negroes are most merry and entertaining; when they quarrel, they call each other all kinds of bad names in *English*, and the others stand round and scream with laughter as if they were mad.

## 12 LETTERS OF MAJ.-GEN. HART-SYNNOT

I heard one man call another whom he was quarrelling with a "black monkey"—they were both as black as pitch!

Thirty selected negroes have been brought on board, and to-morrow one will be allowed to each of us as a servant; they will accompany us to Cape Coast Castle, and go on with us to Coomassie, the Ashanti capital.

Dooner and I dine on board at 5 o'clock, and then I shall land again and post this letter to you.

The steam crane is now working overhead and making the table vibrate, so I can only write with difficulty.

We ought to reach Cape Coast Castle in about four and a half days after we start from this.

I have told you perhaps very often that I am extremely well; but I know you will be only too glad to hear it repeated, as the papers give such terrible accounts of the climate.

By the way, Sir Garnet Wolseley sent me a message last night by his private secretary, to say that he had reason to believe that I had been engaged as special correspondent to the *Daily Telegraph*, that he had no objection to it whatever, but that he considered that I ought to have informed him of the fact.

I sent him reply, first that I was not special correspondent to any paper, and secondly that I should not have considered it right to accept any such office without obtaining his sanction.

On the 27th of September we reached Sierra Leone about 5.30 A.M. The weather was delightful, hot in the sun but delicious in the shade, and a cool and refreshing wind blowing.

At daybreak we were all on deck, glad to see land again; for except the Cape Verde light, we had seen nothing of land since we left the Canary Islands. The coast is dangerous, and ships keep a good distance off it.

The day now breaks quite suddenly : it is quite dark, then there is a glimmer of daylight that hardly puts out the stars, and up pops the sun. Night comes on just as abruptly : you are reading comfortably on deck, the sun sets, you have only three or four pages to finish, but find you cannot get through them.

The African coast, when we first saw it on this morning, was not inviting ; no cliffs, no distant mountains, nothing but a long low coast-line covered thickly with trees and scrub, and half obscured by a heavy, dark, unwholesome-looking mist that clung to it long after the sun was well up. But at last Sierra Leone burst in sight : a promontory rising in green slopes from the sea, and rising again, higher and higher beyond, in a series of wooded hills brilliantly green ; for this is towards the close of the rainy season. It is the full springtime here, the very best part of the year ; the vegetation is luxuriant and splendid. Fountains of pure water are bursting out everywhere, and everyone looks glad. No one would think that this place is called "The White Man's Grave." But in a few weeks more all this beautiful vegetation will be shrivelled into hay ; the breeze and the clouds will be gone and the few fountains that remain will be foul. No wonder the people of Sierra Leone are merry now. Perhaps they are so always. I hope so. The nearer we got the more beautiful the place appeared. On a rock that we passed close to was, however, a melancholy sight : the *Nigretia*, a large steamer of this Company, stuck fast with part of the rock burst through her. She has been sold just as she is, engines and all, for £350 ! The man who bought her has paid £300 to have her engines taken out, and the engines are worth several thousand pounds. This catastrophe was the work of the pilot.

We moored a few hundred yards off Free Town, which is the port of Sierra Leone. The negroes crowded



## 14 LETTERS OF MAJ.-GEN. HART-SYNNOT

round in boats and scrambled on board in numbers. The prevailing negro here is the large-lipped, jet-black fellow, but there is a considerable mixture of other kinds, and I observe there is as much variety in their countenances as in those of white people. They are the merriest people I have ever seen, and I expect are very happy in their colony. They have perfect liberty, are well governed, can earn plenty, and can live well for threepence a day ! However, there was a great rush of candidates for private servants, and we took forty-one of them, selected by an officer and a native who is familiar with the place. My man is called Thomas Jackson. He is jet black, but I do not know what tribe of negroes he comes from. He showed me excellent certificates, and I hope I have been fortunate. I find he has been taken by the ship's baker as assistant baker till I want him. Where do you think he keeps his kit ? In the oven ! I went to ask him some questions about his former service, and he immediately opened the oven, and took out a bag containing all his kit ; out of this he took a big Bible, and out of this his certificates ! I am only afraid that perhaps some day the head cook may light a fire under the oven, and when Thomas Jackson visits his kit he will find only a lump of charcoal ! All these negroes speak English very fairly. They have a language of their own which they use to one another, except when they want to be abusive, and then all the bad language is English. At such times, as you do not understand the native words, you simply hear a vocabulary of rather strong English. They are strong, healthy-looking fellows, and Lieut. Gordon, 93rd Highlanders, has been left at Sierra Leone to try and raise a contingent of them to fight against the Ashantis. I fear they have no warlike instincts or tendencies whatever, and are too frivolous to be worth much against the cool, calculating ferocity of the Ashanti. Captain Furze,

42nd Highlanders, and Lieut. Saunders, R.A., have also been dropped here, to proceed up the River Gambia for the same purpose. These three officers will eventually rejoin us at Cape Coast Castle.

Free Town lies very low, but the barracks are high up on a hill, behind the town. The town is close to the seashore, and is quite shut in by hills on the land side. The houses are, with few exceptions, built of wood in one story, and thatched, generally detached; and in the intervals and along the sides of the streets all kinds of tropical fruit trees are thickly planted, principally coconut palms and bread-fruit trees, both of which are now heavily laden with young fruit. I told you in my last how Dooner and I passed the day. There are plenty of shops in the town, but one general warehouse monopolises most of the trade. This shop is called "Civil boy's shop." In reality it belongs to a native named Sybilboy. I was sorry our stay at Sierra Leone was so short. We continued our voyage about 8 P.M.

All that I mentioned in my first letter as to the appointments of the officers is correct, except in the following cases :

Brevet-Major Baker, 18th Regt., is Assistant Adjutant-General and Assistant Quartermaster-General.

Captain Huyshe, Rifle Brigade, and Captain Buller, 60th Rifles, are Deputy-Assistant Adjutant-General and Deputy-Assistant Q.M.G.

*Sept. 28th.*—Showers of rain during the day. Hot below, but cool on deck. A large bird hovered over the ship for some hours, and just as it became dark, Bolton, for a joke, told us suddenly that it was a fine vulture, and had just alighted on the deck. Instantly everyone gave chase, and the vulture appeared too tired to try flying, but ran well. At last, after a severe hunt, the bird was captured, and when a lamp was brought it

was a hen turkey from the ship's coop that stood before us !

The real big bird did at last come down on the deck, tired out, and proved to be a large and beautiful kind of heron. I hope it got off safely. The negroes caught it, and promised to let it go, but it is not likely any of them ever read the "Ancient Mariner," and I much fear the poor bird is now only worth his skin.

*Monday.*—About 7.30 this morning we stopped off Monrovia. This port is the capital of Liberia, which I think was originally a Yankee colony. We stopped only two hours, just for the mails. No one went on shore, as it was raining torrents.

We get now every day, the following fruits (taken on board at Sierra Leone): oranges, bananas, mangoes, custard-apples (why called apple I cannot conceive), sour sop, which is a fruit about the size of a cocoa-nut, but irregular in shape, with a green rind, and tasting like sour pine-apple, more nasty than nice, I think; guavas and Avocado-pear, a fruit the size of a Jersey pear, but not a bit like a pear in taste; it is very soft inside, and eaten either with sugar or pepper and salt. This fruit is always pronounced "Alligator-pear" by the sailors, and among officers it is called "Subaltern's butter"—why, I cannot discover.

Captain Brackenbury gave an excellent lecture on deck to-day, on the history of the Gold Coast.

*Sept. 30th.*—At about 10.30 this morning we stopped about a mile off Cape Palmas for the mails of that town. Immediately crowds of savages put off from the coast in canoes, and came round the ship. These natives are of a nice bronze colour, are hideous in the face, but splendidly made. Their muscular development was beautiful to look at, and their skins beautifully smooth, and, except where tattooed on the face, without a spot or blemish.



One fine fellow climbed up on board, and I could not help catching hold of his fine arms, and feeling the muscles that stood out in large bosses all over his body. I bought a very pretty monkey's skin from him for only sixpence! It will make you a nice muff when I return. These savages must be vain in their way, for their hair was shaved very carefully in patterns like garden paths. They wore coloured cloths round the waist, necklaces of beads, very tastily put on, and bracelets. Some of them wore large ivory bracelets. I tried to buy one of them, but they would not sell them. A negro told me they are put on when they were children, and could not be taken off now.

Their canoes are very well made out of a log burnt hollow, and cut to shape, and they are worked by paddles or sail.

They brought fresh cocoa-nuts, and were glad to barter a cocoa-nut for one ship biscuit, and we were glad of the cool drink.

At 11.30 P.M. we continued our course. Our negroes are wonderfully merry. They sing really very well in parts. This evening I heard great peals of laughter from them, and went to see what it was about. They were asking each other riddles in English; and these are specimens of the riddles:

“Which of de bishops have de biggest hat?”—answer, “Him wid de biggest head.”

“In what month do de ladies talk least?”—answer, “In de month of February.”

This afternoon Captain Huyshe gave a good lecture on the geography and features of the country we are going to.

*Wednesday.*—To-morrow morning early we shall be due at Cape Coast Castle. We shall then have been nineteen and a half days on the voyage.

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It will be my duty to-morrow to superintend the landing of the luggage, so I shall be fully occupied for some time; and if a mail for England is just about to start, I shall finish this abruptly and send it off; if not, I will add some news of Cape Coast Castle.

. . . . .

## CHAPTER III

### ABRAKRAMPA

MY DEAR MAY,—On the 2nd of October we arrived off Cape Coast Castle early in the morning.

The *Ambriz* anchored about a mile off the shore, and close to her lay the *Simoon*, which is used as a hospital ship; a capital plan, as anyone who is out of sorts can go there for a while and pick up again in the pure sea air.

My duty was to receive all the luggage on shore, so I took an early breakfast on board, and then despatched all the negro servants in boats for the shore, and went myself with the last boat-load of them.

The landing here has to be done in surf-boats. These are large, strong boats that will bear a vast deal of battering about. They are worked by two rows of natives with paddles, and one with an oar in the stern to steer. The men rowing sit side-saddle on the edges of the boat from bow to stern, and then work all together with their paddles, keeping time by saying "Ish" at each stroke. The passengers and luggage are put in the middle of the boat between the two lines of paddle-men.

As you approach the shore the waves become very large, and move in huge rollers; great skill is then shown in waiting for each roller, and as soon as it lifts the boat, paddling ahead as hard as possible, so as to keep as long as possible with the wave. This moves you at a great pace, and then you are left behind or drawn back a little, and have to wait for the next roller.

As you get within a few yards of the shore, the rollers



break and make the well-known surf of this coast ; a sight worth seeing when you are out of reach of it !

Most of the boats are swamped as they reach the shore, but the natives rush into the surf, and take off everything and everybody in a twinkling.

Before I knew where I was, I found myself lifted and held over the heads of three or four Fantis, who ran on shore with me, just in front of a huge wave, and set me down high and dry.

I had now about a hundred natives and several overseers, who were also interpreters, to work under my orders.

The Castle stands on the shore, and I had the luggage carried into the Castle yard as fast as it arrived. Between the arrivals of luggage loads, I went into the yard. I had made out a list of the negro servants opposite their master's names, and by this means I was enabled to sort the luggage. The negroes, with few exceptions, cannot read even enough to distinguish the names on baggage ; so I went to each piece, called the servant of the owner, and made him put it on the spot I had pointed out for his master's luggage. There was a large quantity of stores landed as well as the baggage, and it was nearly dark when it was all done. I had been hard at work in the sun, all through the day, only stopping for about an hour in the afternoon, when Sir Garnet and the other officers landed ; and I joined the procession to the Governor's house. The usual salutes were fired as he landed, and a guard of honour formed of some West Indian troops was on the shore. He was received at the Governor's house by Colonel Hawley, and went through the forms of taking the oaths of loyalty, &c., and having his commission read aloud.

Colonel Hawley, whose appointment as Governor (or " Administrator " I think he is called) is suspended for

the present, then embarked for England, and I returned to the seashore.

My labours were amply repaid by the thanks I received from the fellows, who were right glad to find their luggage safe and ready to be moved to their new quarters.

I then started off for "Prospect House," which, as I mentioned in my last letter, has been allotted to Major Russell and his officers.

I had sent all our baggage off there as soon as I knew it was to be our quarter, and when I arrived everything was comfortably arranged, and a good dinner ready.

I never felt better in my life, and did good justice to the dinner!

This house is about three-quarters of a mile from the Castle, and stands on the top of a hill high above the Castle and town: it has the reputation of being the healthiest spot here.

The Castle is built on the rocks on the shore, not much above the level of the sea at its foundations.

On the north or land side there is a small town inhabited by the Fantis and a few English traders. The houses, save the few belonging to the English people, are merely huts built of clay and gravel mixed, as far as I can make out, so as to dry hard; and they are generally two stories high, either thatched or with flat roofs of the same stuff spread on rafters.

The Fantis are the people of the country at Cape Coast and in its neighbourhood. They are not as black as the negroes, but more of a bronze colour. There is just as much variety in their features as in the features of people in England, but it is only rarely that I see a face among them that we should call good-looking.

I am writing now, after a week's stay here; for I have had so much work to do that I have not been able to write before; but of this you will hear as I go on.

## 22 LETTERS OF MAJ.-GEN. HART-SYNNOT

The infants of all the black people are decidedly the best-looking of the lot; they are jolly little things, and from the time they are born until they can run about, they sit contentedly on their mother's back, never crying and always looking happy. The way in which they are carried is curious. Every woman from the time she is quite a child wears a sort of saddle behind her waist. It is about half the size of your muff. What it is made of and how it is fastened on I do not know, for these facts are hidden from view by the skirt which they wear. I thought at first that this excrescence was intended merely to be ornamental and only corresponded to the "pannier" of my countrywomen, but it is, in fact, the saddle on which the baby is to sit. When a mother proceeds to carry her baby she bends her back down until it is horizontal, then she dexterously puts her baby riding astride on it; the baby immediately grasps its mother as far round the body as its little arms will reach, and waits quietly like this until its mother has shaken out the few yards of cloth that form at the same time her upper garment and the clothing and back support of her child. She then wraps the cloth round herself and baby once, so that it comes up just to the baby's arm-pits, and finishes by hitching the ends of cloth in a wonderful way that makes all fast and secure, and off she starts; the baby slips down on the saddle I had mentioned, and its mother has both arms free, or else supporting a burden on her head.

All burdens here are carried on natives' heads. When landing here there were cases that it took the united strength of from four to six Fanti backs to raise from the ground, then *one* man with a cloth or piece of hay rope on his head would duck under and carry it off on his head!

I have noticed that when the baby is asleep and the



mother can spare one arm, she tucks the baby's head under that arm. I suppose this is more comfortable than having the head rolling about, but it must be mightily hot for the head. This is also the position for giving the baby its food.

. . . . .

*On board H.M.S. "Simoon."*

*Tuesday.*—Anchored about a mile off Cape Coast. This is a great jump, dear May, from 2nd to the 21st of October, but the fact is I have been working so hard that I have not been able to keep up my letter to the day, and at night I have been too tired out to hold a pen. As soon as I arrived here, that is at Cape Coast, I was attached temporarily to the Quartermaster-General's department to reconnoitre and survey in the neighbourhood. I felt so well and my work was so much approved that I pressed it on, as I now find out, too hard, and on Saturday last, the 18th inst., I was bowled over with fever, but happily not until I had just completed the last bit of survey required about here, and well started the drilling of the natives placed under my command.

This is a comparatively mild form of fever called "seasoning fever." I have only been ill for two days, just the same kind of fever you had at Malta, only I have not suffered nearly as much as you did. During eight days the fever is liable to return in force, but not dangerously, so I shall stay here at least eight days, and as I feel quite well again, except somewhat thick-headed from quinine, I do not expect a relapse. I am very well treated, may have anything I ask for, and the kindness of the captain, doctor, and officers could not be surpassed. I hope by next mail after this to send you a full account of all that has happened since the 2nd of October, but I must close this now because the home mail is expected,

and she only just stops here. I was very disappointed not to hear from you by last mail. I am sure you wrote to me, and there must have been a hitch in the posting.

Everybody but myself in Prospect House heard from their homes, and I only got a letter from my bootmaker. No doubt I shall get two letters from you, dear May, by the next arrival. Colonel McNeil is here on board doing very well; you will have read of his wound in the wrist. Captain Buller had a remarkable escape. You remember my prismatic surveying compass?—he had one like it hanging at his waist, and a bullet struck the little metal projection that holds the prism, broke it to pieces, but was stopped in doing so, and did no further harm.

I am perfectly well now. I dined at Mess last night, and got up this morning to breakfast, and I hope now I shall soon be on shore again, as there is a vast deal to be done; and since I have been here, Mr. Dooner and Major Russell have both been brought here with fever: Mr. Dooner has had a bad attack, but is getting on well. Major Russell has only been slightly ill.

. . . . .

*Oct. 25th.*—I returned to Prospect House to-day at 1.30 P.M. quite well again. I am able to add this as the mail is late; however, I must send off my letter now. Captain Buller (I don't know if you remember him?) and a Commissariat officer were brought on board the *Simoon* with fever before I left; all are doing very well.

This afternoon there is to be a great scene in the town. All the Fanti women are going to turn out and unmercifully beat all the Fanti men who remain in the town when they ought to have turned out to fight the enemy. This is an old custom; it was stopped by the last two governors, but Sir Garnet highly approves it, and told the women he hoped they would not delay to put it in practice. The cowardly men will have no

chance of resisting, as the women will so greatly outnumber them. The custom is that in war time the women take the town all to themselves, and beat out any man that ventures into it, as the men are all expected to be fighting.

. . . . .

*Abrakrampa.*

*Nov. 2nd.*—I returned to Prospect House from the *Simoon* on Saturday week last, perfectly well again, and next day Major Russell, Lord Gifford and Mr. Townshend were ordered off to this place with 100 of our natives, leaving me alone at Prospect House with another 100 natives, who occupied huts made of sticks and palm leaves on Prospect Hill.

Mr. Dooner was still laid up with fever on the *Simoon*.

On Tuesday the 28th my force was augmented by seventy-nine men called Kossoos, from a tribe near Sierra Leone, a very fierce, warlike, bloodthirsty lot, just the fellows for this war.

I had a week of very hard work on Prospect Hill, and was continually bothered by false reports that the Ashantis were coming on to attack the place at once; shaken up in the night and told they were close at hand. They had been beaten near Elmina, and the prisoners said they meant to revenge it by a great attack upon Cape Coast. However, it has not come off; and it appears that on the contrary the Ashanti army that was threatening Elmina and Cape Coast is trying now to retire towards Ashanti, and we are doing all we can to cut it off.

It has been pushed off the road to Ashanti from the direction of Elmina, and is now trying to get across country eastwards, so as to cut into one of the other roads to Ashanti.



At Dunquah, a place twenty-four miles on the road from Cape Coast to Kumassi (or Coomassie) they were beaten back by some of our party after a sharp fight, on Monday the 27th of October, and failed to gain the road.

Captain Godwin was badly wounded in the groin, and has been taken to the *Simoon*.

On Thursday morning the 30th of October I received a hasty note from Sir Garnet telling me to come and see him at once. He told me to get ready all my natives (about 180 in all) and march out next morning early and join Major Russell at Abrakrampa.

Abrakrampa is about thirteen miles from Cape Coast northwards, and is to the west of the Coomassie road three and a half miles and on a cross-road that runs westward ; it thus becomes one of the points that the Ashantis would try to force.

I worked hard till midnight arming and equipping my men, and began again at 4 o'clock next morning, but with every effort I could not get off my party till 5 P.M.

I had to do everything myself. Each man received a white duck frock, a haversack, belt, ammunition pouch, a rifle, and fifty to eighty rounds.

I made every man fire a round at a lid of an arm-chest, which I put up against a huge ant-hill as a target. This was all the instruction in firing I had time to give, but I hope that at least they each know how to load and fire, and I must say the aiming was not bad.

We reached Abrakrampa at 11 P.M. It was moonlight, or else we should have been obliged to bivouac on the way, as we could not have gone on in the dark.

Roads here are tracks cut in the densest of bush. There is only width for one person to walk ; so it is necessary to move in a string, one by one in single file.

Even this track is rough, uneven, and constantly crossed by fallen trees.

A hammock with twelve bearers was sent for me to be carried in ; I did not expect this, and was very grateful for it. I am not sure that I could have marched to Abrakrampa that night. The week on board the *Simoon*, on slops, had somewhat reduced my strength, and I had had little rest since then.

The natives are extremely slow, disobedient and stupid for the most part in matters new to them ; so preparing and equipping them was a very different thing to doing the same for a number of white men.

I sent the bearers on first with my baggage ; my hammock came next them ; then I came on foot myself, then came some Kossoo chiefs ; then the Kossoos, followed by natives of various tribes ; and last of all a rear-guard of Sierra Leone men to keep up the pace and prevent straggling.

When I had marched the party clear of Cape Coast I got into my hammock for the rest of the way. These hammocks are made of a piece of canvas stretched by two rods at the ends, and suspended by a number of strings attached to these rods, and a long bamboo pole. There is a screen on the pole over the hammock, with strings on each side, by which you can pull it so as to be between you and the sun. At the ends of the pole there are cross-pieces which rest on the heads of two men at each end of the pole, so that four men carry the hammock when possible, but generally only one man can fit at each end owing to the narrowness of the roads.

At a village called Assayboo, I left the main road to Coomassie and branched off to the left to Abrakrampa. This branch road was very bad. It is three and a half miles from Assayboo to Abrakrampa up and down hill, over trunks of trees, through several swamps, one of

which for a hundred yards was more than knee-deep in water and smelt horribly ; and the route was so narrow that the bush brushed me in my hammock. It was, fortunately, sufficiently moonlight to see the way.

I kept the fellows with my baggage close in front of me lest they should bolt.

My baggage consists of a waterproof valise that unrolls for me to sleep upon ; it contains a thin mattress and blanket, and a bag at one end in which the few things necessary for a field kit are stowed ; this softened at the top by my overcoat forms the pillow.

We reached Abrakrampa at 11 P.M. I was in very good time, for an attack from the Ashantis was expected next morning, and my reinforcement was valuable and in time.

I will try and enclose a rough sketch-map in this letter, showing our several positions.

Abrakrampa is the nearest outpost to the headquarters of the Ashanti army. Their headquarters is at a village called Anasmadie, rather less than a mile to our west. There is a narrow road on which only one man at a time can walk, between this and Anasmadie, through a dense bush. We have 700 men here altogether, including sailors, marines, and blacks. We believe the Ashantis have from seven to ten thousand men at Anasmadie ; our sentries and theirs constantly meet and exchange shots in the bush.

This must have been a nice town before the war ; there is a good-sized church built by the missionaries, and the houses though only of mud and with earth floors are well built and very well thatched. It is the capital of the kingdom of Abra. The King is here ; he is a tall, remarkably fine, and good-looking young man. Of course the town is greatly defaced now, for we have put it in a state of defence—loopholed the walls, blocked up



the entrances to the town with all kinds of obstacles, cleared the bush away and cut down the fine trees for some distance all round, and turned the church into a citadel. No attack came off on Saturday the 1st November as we expected; only a few shots were exchanged by our outposts, and one Ashanti was killed. We are very desirous that the Ashantis should attack us here; we expect in such case to give them a tremendous thrashing, whereas if we move after them into the bush our success will be doubtful. They are quite at home in the bush; lie concealed till they get a good opportunity and then open fire.



*Nov. 11th (Tuesday).*—This is a long pause, dear May, from the 2nd to 11th of November, but the reason is that I did not like to finish up and post a letter to you saying we were hourly expecting a great attack, and leaving you in a state of anxiety as to the result. So I kept my letter for a later mail, and I have not been able to continue it till to-day.

### 30 LETTERS OF MAJ.-GEN. HART-SYNNOT

The great attack of the Ashantis came off at last, on Wednesday and Thursday last, the 5th and 6th of November; we have given them such a defeat as they have probably never before experienced in the long history of their country.

I must just go back as far as the 3rd of November and run through the events up to the commencement of their attack.

We had been ready for them since the 1st of November, with about eight hundred men, of whom forty were white, viz. sailors and marines, and the rest black, but *all* well armed.

The accounts of prisoners, taken every now and then by our scouts, all agreed that Amanquah Tia, the Ashanti Commander-in-Chief, intended to attack us with all his army, numbering from seven to ten thousand men.

The prisoners also named Monday the 3rd of November as the day decided upon.

No attack came off, however, on Monday; and in the afternoon some natives came in here and told us there was heavy firing going on at Dunquah, and that the Ashantis appeared to be moving off in that direction.

Dunquah is ten or twelve miles from here to our north on the Cape Coast Coomassie road. Colonel Festing was in command there with some troops and white officers, including Eardley Wilmot.

We at once got ready a force to march on Anasmadie, and ascertain if the Ashantis had left, and if possible to take and hold the place. Gifford, attended by an excellent scout, went first, followed by about eighty of his natives. I followed with nine picked men from my sixty Sierra Leone men. These nine men were armed with breech-loaders, and I judged them sufficient to keep Gifford's men, whom we knew to be cowards, well up and prevent their retreating, by stopping up the road. After

my nine men came Lieut. Gordon (98th) with about seventy Houssas.

When we got about a quarter of a mile from Anas-madie, Gifford came in view of an Ashanti outpost of about twelve men, one of whom fired at him; the scout who was standing by him returned the shot and killed one of the outpost on the spot, while the rest of them ran into the bush.

At the same time an Ashanti fired out of the bush behind me at Gordon, but missed him. Thirty or forty of our men must have fired at this fellow, but so wild was their aim that he got off.

No sooner were these shots heard than the whole of our line, or rather string of men, began firing right and left into the bush. The noise was so great that at first I could not tell whether we were being fired at, and thought we must be caught in an ambush, in which case the firing right and left was right. But in a few seconds I saw our men were firing simply in panic and at no enemy, and shouted at them to cease, without any effect, for a general stampede to the rear had commenced; and Gifford's men came back on the road in full flight, with the force of a torrent, and letting off their rifles in all directions.

I could do nothing but back a pace into the bush and shout to them to stop, for my Sierra Leone men had been swept out of my sight. I could see that my shooting any fugitives down would not have produced any effect in stemming the rush. At last Gifford and the scout reached the spot where I was, and the cowardly natives passed away. I was right glad to find all my nine men within a few yards of me jammed a yard or so into the bush.

There were also a few Houssas, and further back a body of our natives had stopped at last. It was decided that all should retire to Abrakrampa, and that the scout,



myself, and Sierra Leone men should form a rear-guard and cover the retreat. We hoped that this affair would have the good effect of drawing on the Ashantis to attack the town ; but it did not, and we heard only the hum of a multitude of voices from the direction of Anasmadie, showing that the Ashanti army had not left that place, or at all events only in part.

Nothing happened on the 4th, but we heard that on the day before (3rd), Colonel Festing had attacked a position of the Ashantis encamped in the neighbourhood of Dunquah, and that poor Eardley Wilmot was killed. He had been badly wounded in the arm but made nothing of it, and injudiciously, but very bravely, pushed forward to a place where the Houssas warned him not to go, as they knew the enemy was there in great numbers, and the consequence was he was shot dead. A slug penetrated between his ribs and entered the region of his heart. Colonel Festing, I hear, carried his body off at once, and was wounded in doing so.

Nothing happened on the 4th, but we knew by reports and by a tremendous clamour of voices in the Ashanti camp that their army had concentrated under Amaquah Tia, to attack us in full force, carry the town, seize our provisions, and pass on through the place. Their fires, or rather the smoke of them, showed that they had advanced to about a quarter of a mile from us. And some fellows captured at the edge of the bush told us they were busy cutting paths to the front.

We continued improving our defences, and had fortunately, ere this, cleared the bush away round the town to the distance of a hundred yards ; and we hoped that the enemy would try to cross this open space.

On the afternoon of Wednesday the 5th of November they gave notice of a move, by drums and shouts, and much jabbering, as only black men can jabber, everyone

talking at once, and of course nobody doing the listening part! At 3.45 P.M. they attacked by the Anasmadie road, with a heavy fire on the town from the edge of the bush there. The church and "Nelly" commanded the débouché of this road, and a fire still more deadly was sent in return into the bush. Every now and then "Nelly's" voice was heard above the fire of musketry, and rockets were discharged at intervals into the most likely parts of the bush. These were often received with yells, as if they had done mischief, but we have as yet no proof of the extent of their useful effect, save one body shattered to pieces; and a very unreliable report of a prisoner, that one rocket killed four chiefs who were consulting together, or as they call it, "holding a palaver."

The attack from the Anasmadie road was made with great persistency, and gradually the Ashantis extended to their right along the west side of the town, but without leaving their cover in the bush. A continuous and hot fire was kept up on both sides. It relaxed only once slightly on the Ashantis' side; and then from the southern end of the town, which it was my duty to defend, I saw the whole line of our defenders advancing steadily across the open space to the bush. I concluded that Major Russell had ordered them now to take the "offensive" against the enemy, and without waiting for orders I took the reserve of my men, leaving the rest to guard the south side, where no sign of the enemy appeared as yet, and determined to co-operate with our advancing men, by turning and getting round the Ashanti right flank. For this purpose we half crossed the open, fired a volley into the bush, and then ran forward and seized the cover of the bush; but just then Major Russell sent me an angry message to move back again at once. He was quite right, and I had been much surprised at this advance of ours, and thought at the time

that we were throwing away the advantages of our strong position. All the advancing line from the town retired at the same time, and I found out afterwards that they had all advanced without orders.

The Ashanti fire continued hotly from the same front all the rest of the day and through the night, which was moonlight, up to 1.30 A.M. next morning, when it ceased, and ours ceased also. We put out strong guards, and the rest of us lay down to sleep where we were, each officer with his men. We had not much rest, for outbursts of firing occurred at intervals through the rest of the night, and obliged us to get under arms. When day broke all firing had ceased save occasional shots exchanged by outposts and scouts. The smoke of the Ashanti fires rose up at the same distance as before, and they were so quiet that we thought it would be well to interrupt their rest. The King of Abra accordingly went to the top of a commanding rise of ground and shouted defiance at them, calling them cowards; they shouted back that they were only waiting to have their breakfasts, and would then be at us again. We fired a few rockets at the spots marked by smoke of fires; and at 10.45 A.M. on Thursday morning the 6th of November they advanced again to attack us. Our prisoners had told us that this day they meant to surround us. On the past day the Ashanti fire had done no harm; only seven men had received wounds worth mentioning, and not one white officer had been wounded. The Ashantis fired principally with slugs: nothing more deadly at close quarters, but they were not effective at the distance across our clearing, and to this we must attribute our trifling list of damages. Nearly everyone was hit with the slugs, but only those men who had advanced to close quarters across the opening were wounded by them; except one white soldier who was hit in the eye, which is done for. A



small proportion of the enemy fired bullets ; but they fired high, too high, as badly instructed riflemen always do, and I did not see one bullet strike, though many passed over my head. A bullet makes a singing noise as it goes through the air ; slugs are little pieces of lead of various shapes ; those used by the Ashantis are generally little cubes. I have kept a few that fell about me to show you ; but besides slugs, they often fire mixed up with the slugs, sea-shells, curious hard nuts, and scraps of iron. Our advantage lay in the clearing we had made for the width of a hundred yards round the town : if they could have got within fifty yards of us under cover, their slugs would have been more deadly than our bullets ; but as it was their thousands could not approach our hundreds, and, as I shall tell you further on, our bullets penetrated into the bush with good effect.

*Nov. 12th (Wednesday).*—I must conclude my letter to-day and send it into Cape Coast, as the mail for England is due to-morrow. This will go home to you by the *Ambriz*, the steamer that I came out in. . . .

To return to the story. I said that at 10.45 A.M. on Thursday, 6th of November, the Ashantis renewed their attack in great force and increased vigour. They came on again by the Anasmadie road, and rapidly extended round the north end of the town, and along the west side to the south end ; so that the town was exactly half surrounded. A heavy fire of musketry, that never slackened for an instant, was kept up on both sides. I was somewhat surprised at the Ashantis attacking again by the Anasmadie road, considering they had utterly failed to reach the town by that line the day before, and I had been at work from daylight to the moment of attack with all my men, except a guard, strengthening the defences on the south and south-east end of the town,

thinking it probable they would work round, and try on that side. However, I think they probably thought a good deal of the fact that the Anasmadie road is sheltered by a rapid descent of ground, about a hundred yards after it leaves Abrakrampa ; and we had not had time to clear away the bush beyond the crest of the hill, so that they could collect in safety in great numbers on the slope of this hill up which the Anasmadie road ascends.

We should like to have cleared all that slope of the bush growing on it, and to have extended our defences to the summit of it, but it could not be done in the time available.

I was very anxious that the Ashantis should not get more than half-way round us, for the natives that form by far the greater part of our forces are sad cowards, and if they had heard firing behind them as well as in front, perhaps they would have rushed back into the town, and from thence escaped into the safe part of the bush.

I took my rifle and watched the extension of the Ashantis southwards narrowly. I could not distinguish a man, but the puffs of smoke showed exactly where they were ; and these puffs were extending rapidly round the south end and had got across the Assayboo road, the road by which I came here and our direct line of communication with Cape Coast.

There was a piece of a broken-down wall standing a little way out in the clearing that just suited my purpose, and I determined to try if some steady shooting would stop the extension ; for I had little doubt our men were firing too high, and though they might be killing men farther back in the bush, they were shooting over the foremost Ashantis, and thereby increasing their confidence. From behind this piece of wall, I fired thirty or forty rounds at the extreme right of the Ashanti

attack, aiming with great care at the spots where, from the fresh puffs of smoke, I judged the fellows who had fired must be. I have no means of knowing whether these few steady shots had any effect in stopping the extension, but the extension *did* stop and receded to the *other* side of the Assayboo road. Elsewhere the firing had not diminished on either side, and on the north end the Ashantis had made several rushes (three or four) to cross the open and reach the town, but they were shot down before they got half-way across; and on these occasions "Nelly" did good service, firing bags of bullets at them from the roof of the Mission Church. The firing continued unrelaxed, until after it was quite dark. I think it was about half an hour after dark that it stopped, except occasional shots here and there, and at this time Sir Garnet Wolseley and his staff arrived with about 1000 men, of whom about 300 were sailors and marines, and the rest were natives of the Cape Coast country. Sir Garnet had started from Cape Coast in all haste with these, as soon as he heard we were attacked, but it was all over just as he arrived. He was much pleased at what we had done, and freely expressed himself so. He had made a detour to reach us, and came in by the Accroful road, on the south-east; for the Assayboo road, which is the direct road, was, as I have said, actually in the hands of the enemy for part of the day; and as the enemy were known to be from seven to ten thousand strong, at least, he might not have been able to pass by that road. We kept up strong guards and a vigilant look-out all night. The officers of Sir Garnet's personal staff very kindly offered to relieve us for the night and take command of our men for us, but I do not think any of us accepted the offer.

Next morning all was silent and still where we had for many days heard the drums and voices of the



Ashantis ; and heard the early shots in their camp, as they fired off their rifles to make sure that the night dew had not clogged them. (The fellows who have only flint guns always do this.)

All was silent, and when a reconnoitring party entered the bush, it was found that the whole Ashanti army had fled away. They must have gone in a tremendous panic, for they had left the ground covered with their camp equipage, rifles, barrels of powder, &c. &c., and many dead. And it is the custom of the Ashantis at all risks to remove their dead, or at least to cut off and carry away their heads, or bury them in secluded places, as they detest the idea of the skulls of their people ornamenting the drums and houses of their enemies, more particularly as having been for centuries a conquering nation, they look with contempt as well as hatred upon the tribes that have joined us in warring against them.

All that day, the 7th of November, the natives of Abrakrampa continued to bring in plunder which was piled up in heaps, and reconnoitring parties moved out to find in what direction the enemy had fled. Many prisoners were brought in and examined by means of interpreters, of whom we have plenty. They were questioned carefully apart ; some seemed well informed and others knew little, but their accounts agreed well.

It appeared that Amanquah Tia, the Ashanti Commander-in-Chief, bolted in the night. He had been wounded in one leg slightly, and was carried away in a blanket attached to a long pole, borne by six men, so that his flight might not be discovered till morning ; and he had left his grand travelling chair, which is really a work of art, and which we have captured, behind. However, his flight was discovered and the news spread like wildfire, with the cry that the white man had come to destroy them all, and that Amanquah Tia was off.

So off they went pell-mell—I cannot yet exactly say where. Now all the above, remember, is only put together from stories of prisoners, so do not receive it as an established fact.

Some of our prisoners are awful to behold. I have got in a degree accustomed to the sight, but still feel miserable at the aspect of them. There is a youth and also a woman who are literally little more than skin covering the bone; the boy looks worse because he has less clothes to conceal his wretched condition; every bone and the shape of every joint are clearly indicated, the skin being strung tight on. These were Ashanti slaves, and were caught by our scouts with many others, several days before the fight, creeping down to some plantain trees near the town to try and get some of the fruit to eat. They are sadly to be pitied; they wish to stay with us as prisoners, being equally afraid of Ashantis and Fantis. Some of our prisoners have died, though all have been well treated both with food and by the doctors; but those that died were almost starved to death when they came in. There are many other prisoners, though, that are in capital condition, and even fat. These have had useful occupation found for them in helping to bury the bodies of their dead countrymen. There are also here many men, women, and children who have been captives in the hands of the Ashantis for various lengths of time, and have just managed to escape owing to the rout. Some have been years in captivity; and as they belong to tribes about here, they were well welcomed. They said they had been used to carry baggage, powder, food, &c. for the army, and it appears that besides the seven to ten thousand fighting men, there were as many or more slaves used simply as carriers.

On 8th of November (Saturday), Gordon (93rd Regt.) was sent in one direction, and Captain Bromhead in

another, with a force of natives each, to find out the direction taken by the enemy ; and I lost no time the same day in surveying the road from this to Anasmadie. I took an escort of twenty of my men, in case of any skulking Ashantis turning up on the way. I cannot easily describe the utter confusion in which the Ashantis had left their camp. Dead bodies were lying about, from a short distance out on the clearing, all along the way to Anasmadie, and already the horrid effluvium was as much as I could stand ; a few hours later I could not have made the survey. Some lay just where they had been shot, others had evidently gone some way and died in the effort. At one place there was evidently a chief whom they had tried to convey away but had to leave ; he was carefully laid out on a mattress which had been carried on a rough kind of wicker-work support which was underneath, and he had been carefully covered up to the waist with a blanket. Probably he was not dead when they abandoned him.

The road to Anasmadie, that had only been wide enough for one man to walk, was widened out, so that four or five could walk abreast ; and on either side the bush was intersected in all directions by fresh paths, cut up to the edge of the clearing at Abrakrampa and communicating laterally—just, in fact, like the threads of a cobweb.

The whole of the road was so blocked up with camp effects, such as boxes, chairs, brass basins, rifles, barrels of powder, thousands of ammunition pouches, bags containing skulls and bones of enemies, well polished, thousands of glass bottles, all empty—so I suppose every one drank off the contents of his bottle before he bolted—and no end of things too numerous to mention. It was difficult to get along through these things, although the natives had already been gathering up for a whole day.



The camp began about two hundred yards inside the bush, and reached up to Anasmadie, and beyond, the camp consisted of little huts, made in the bush, of twigs and palm leaves. The distance to Anasmadie I found a mile and fifty yards. It is a little village with only a few houses and one street. It was quite empty, none of the natives having dared yet to return to their houses. In a rude hut of palm leaves a little beyond, there was lying a shrivelled-up Ashanti, who appeared dead at first sight, but as he moved his head and fingers slightly, now and then, it was evident that he was not dead. He was not wounded, and was evidently just expiring from starvation. We poured some tea from my bottle, with a little brandy, down his throat, but without any good effect.

*Nov. 13th (Thursday).*—I had to put off concluding my letter till to-day, but as the mails are all late, I shall be in time. I must just add to what I said, that Sir Garnet and his staff left again for Cape Coast on 8th of November (Saturday), taking back with him all the men he had brought except the natives; and Russell sent back all these natives with their king, next day, for their cowardly behaviour in the presence of the enemy; so we are now as we were before the fight, with a force of a few marines, the King of Abra and his men, and the various native forces we brought with us, about 800, I think, altogether. . . .

To-day, 15th, we hear a report by a prisoner at headquarters that the Ashantis under Amaquah Tia passed through Tamboboo, a place on the Sweet River, eighteen miles west of Dunquah, and were trying to cut out a road to retreat by northwards to Ashanti. From all accounts they have had such a defeat that they are trying to get back to their own country as fast as they can, and it would not surprise me if they were to offer to accept peace o<sup>u</sup>

any terms, rather than try to fight it out again; but this is merely an idea, and may be worth nothing.

The correspondents of the *Times* and *Daily Telegraph* (Winwood Read and Boyle) were both present at the fight at Abrakrampa, and as we gave them full information, you should read both their accounts. All prisoners tell us that a son of Koffee-Kalcalli, King of Ashanti, was killed at Abrakrampa on, I think, the first day of the fight. His head, they said, was taken away in a box.

*Cape Coast.*

*Nov. 15th (Saturday).*—I started from Abrakrampa yesterday afternoon for Cape Coast, to get from my baggage all I require for the journey to Coomassie, for the Abrakrampa force is not likely now to return to Cape Coast till the end of the war, and we daily expect to move on northwards. I slept last night at Assayboo, where there were a few naval officers and men forming a small garrison. Assayboo is a little village of about twenty huts, but being, as you will see from my rough sketch-map, on the main road and at a junction of roads, is important, and is for the present a fortified post. I fell in at Abrakrampa with one of our paymasters named Ward, a very fine, nice young fellow, on his way to Cape Coast, so we travelled together, which was very pleasant. He had a hammock and bearers, and so had I. We walked from Abrakrampa to Assayboo, as it was the cool of the evening, and the road is difficult. At Assayboo Ward felt unwell, and wished to stay the night there and go on in the morning, so of course I agreed, and the naval officers were very hospitable, and refreshed us out of the little they had, and gave us sleeping room on two spare bedsteads in the hut forming the hospital; these bedsteads were formed of a frame of bamboos supported on forked sticks stuck in the ground, and with sticks fastened like a gridiron. All the rush mattresses

were in use for sick men, and as I had brought nothing to sleep on, I was glad at earliest dawn to get off this gridiron and rouse up Ward to go on. My bearers were better off outside; each had cut two or three large palm leaves, and laid out on them under a tree for the night. I meant to have returned to Abrakrampa to-night, but Sir Garnet's staff offered me lodging and dinner, so I decided to start at dawn to-morrow morning.

Sir Garnet, I am very sorry to say, is laid up with fever on board the *Simoon*, but I hope will soon be all right on shore again. I am finishing up my letter in his bedroom, and sleep to-night in his bed at Government House, it being his wish that his room should be so used, in his absence, by any of his officers. Accommodation is scarce here now, and this room seems to combine bedroom and study, and is where I found him the morning before I started for Abrakrampa.

*Mansu.*

*Dec. 1st.*—After the repulse we gave the Ashanti army on 5th and 6th ult., and their flight northwards, Captain Bromhead (24th Regt.) and Lieut. Gordon (93rd Regt.), were sent out with their native troops to follow them and find out and report on the direction of their retreat. Captain Bromhead went northwards, and Gordon westwards; the latter soon found none had gone that way, and was conducted round by a good guide, so that he joined Bromhead. They soon came up with the rear of the Ashanti army (this was the 8th of November). The Ashantis turned and fought well, whereas the natives opposed to them were most cowardly, and the Ashantis beat them back, killing sixty of them. And Gordon and Bromhead were obliged to retreat defeated, and even leave their dead, and the breech-loading rifles of the dead, in the hands of the enemy.

Gordon and Bromhead reached Abrakrampa again late the same evening.



Prisoners taken here and there all reported that Amanquah Tia had sworn that he would return as soon as he had got more ammunition and take Abrakrampa, and that he had sent 2000 carriers rapidly to the Ashanti country to get him supplies.

The Ashanti army, however, continued to retreat slowly northwards, cutting new paths through the bush to move by; and when, a few days later, Bromhead took his men out to reconnoitre on the road he had been repulsed upon, he found the Ashantis gone, and the remains of the new camp they had made for a rest after their flight.

The camp was of vast extent, reaching miles along the road and far into the bush. The *headless* bodies of the men we had lost on the 8th lay on the ground where they had fallen, and we were sickened by the stench.

The Ashantis had taken off the rifles. Here and there in the camp we found the heads in heaps where the Ashantis had abandoned them, as if they had started off in a hurry. And in every pool of water they passed was a dead body, either one of our natives or of an Ashanti slave, killed for the purpose, and thrown in to destroy the water, and prevent it being useful to us.

Russell's force, now called "Russell's Regiment," to which I belong, remained some time at Abrakrampa guarding the left against a return stroke of the Ashantis on that side. And Colonel Wood's force was sent forward along the main road towards the River Prah.

The River Prah is the southern boundary of Ashanti, and about half-way from Cape Coast to Coomassie.

Engineers went with Wood's force to improve the road and make bridges.

Colonel Wood got to this place, Mansu, where I am now writing. This is still forty miles away from the



*Lieutenant FitzRoy Hart.*  
1873.

LONDON: EDWARD ARNOLD.





River Prah; it is about the same distance from Cape Coast, and on the main road. It is being made a great depot of stores, and immense supplies of ammunition, preserved foods, &c. are accumulated here to supply the troops in our advance from this to the Prah. Last Thursday, I think, the Ashanti army was found to be near to this on the west, cutting its way through the bush northwards in retreat. Wood moved out to attack them, but was defeated, and only effected a safe retreat with great difficulty. However, this showed clearly the position of the Ashanti army, which had been lost sight of for many days, and Russell was ordered to move his force to Wood's without delay, leaving Captain Bromhead and the natives under him to guard Abakrampa for the present.

We marched off from Abakrampa on Saturday last, the 29th of November, each man carrying 180 rounds of ammunition. We went by Acroful to Dunquah that day, ten miles, having halted for about three hours at 9 A.M. to breakfast and rest.

Yesterday (Sunday), we left Dunquah at 5 A.M. and marched twenty miles, reaching this about 5 P.M. At 9 A.M. we had halted by a nice stream, and fires were lighted and breakfast got ready very quickly. We halted there till about 1 P.M. and then finished the march. Marching in this country is fatiguing, particularly in the hot hours, when the sun shines directly overhead, and there is no shade given by the bush on either side. It begins to be very hot at 8.30 A.M. and the great heat lasts till about 3 P.M., when it decreases considerably, and at 4 P.M. it is pleasantly cool, and gets cooler till at night, particularly just before daybreak, it gets quite cold, and the whole country is drenched with dew. After the first few miles of march nobody speaks, not even the natives; everybody plods on in silence, for it is as much as he can

do, but the jabbering when there is no marching defies description! By the way it is kept up, it reminds me more of frogs in a marsh than anything else. There are some very good bamboo huts here, and I had a delicious night's rest, and early this morning a swim in the River Okee, on which this place is situated.

Summer seems really to have begun with our arrival, for yesterday was the first day they have had no rain here; this is a great thing, for the damp is more to be dreaded than anything else.

We march on to-day to a place called Acrafoom, seven miles farther on, where we are to stay till further orders.

Colonel Wood's force has moved on to Sutah, fifteen miles from here, for the Ashanti army has continued its retreat. They are too strong, brave, and well organised to be trifled with by probing them with small reconnoitring parties; and I trust ere long we shall attack them in great force and completely smash them up.

You will excuse a clumsy letter, as I am writing on my knee in all the noise and turmoil of a camp.

I forgot to tell you that poor Eardley Wilmot was engaged to be married; he told me so on board the *Ambriz*, and showed me the photograph of a very pretty girl, his fiancée. He was killed, shot on a narrow bush path, up which he had pushed by himself in advance of all his men, firing rockets at the enemy, though he was warned and advised not to do so, and told the path was lined by Ashantis in ambush. This took place on the road between Dunquah and Ainsa (a place on the west of Dunquah).

If I cannot write again so as to be in time for Christmas, I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year; and as for us here, I hope we may all have crossed the Prah by then and may eat our Christmas dinner on Ashanti ground.

*Ahtoh Insu.*

*Dec. 9th.*—We, *i.e.* “Russell’s Regiment,” are now at Ahtoh Insu, a place about fifty miles from Cape Coast on the road to Coomassie, and about twenty-five miles from the River Prah. We hope now to cross that river, and thus enter the enemy’s territory, in a few days; for scouts have brought the good news that Aman-Quatiah (I spelt the name wrongly before) and the Ashanti army have actually recrossed the Prah, and thus retreated into their own country.

Some very good and trustworthy scouts have now started forward to ascertain if this is undoubtedly the case. It will be a great thing if it proves to be true: the two days’ engagement at Abrakrampa will have been a decisive action, and Sir Garnet will have cleared the protected States of the invaders, and have become himself the invader, even before the arrival of the English troops.

The Ashanti prisoners, recently captured, say Aman-Quatiah estimated that he had lost 500 men, killed, at Abrakrampa.

We buried all that lay in the open ground near the town, and on the main roads; but the extent of ground covered by the Ashantis was too great for us to think of burying those killed in the bush, or even trying to count them.

I went some distance into the bush by the bypaths they had cut to effect their advance, a couple of days after the fight, to try and form a rough estimate of the number killed; but I was soon stopped by an overpowering stench, that made even a black soldier that I took with me, retch.

I thought from what I saw that probably 300 Ashantis had been killed by our bullets, but considered my estimate worth very little, owing to the comparatively small portion of ground I had explored.



Like all savage tribes the Ashantis are very cruel. A wretched Fanti whom they had taken prisoner came slowly into our camp, after their retreat from Abrakrampa ; he was leaning with both hands on a long stick, and was literally chopped all over with sword-cuts. There were six or eight gashes on his head alone ; each cut reached the bone, and would have finished off a white man. One slash on his cheek had cut his ear in halves ; how he lived and walked was extraordinary. Our surgeon sewed him up, and we gave him some money to buy what he might want. He told us that as the Ashantis ran away, everyone who passed him gave a cut at him.

We were very glad to leave Abrakrampa, for the atmosphere had become badly tainted, and the large flocks of vultures that had arrived showed there was abundant cause.

On Monday the 1st of December, the day after we reached Mansu, we marched on to Acrafuma, a place six miles farther on. Here we found only a few huts of sticks and palm leaves, and these much out of repair ; we set to work to repair them as quickly as possible, for here, away from the Coast, there is generally a thunder-storm every afternoon about 3 P.M., accompanied by a deluge of rain. Huts are very quickly made here, and will keep out the heaviest rain if properly thatched. Four forked sticks are cut and stuck in the ground for the four corners, according to the size of hut required. The two poles on the first side are higher than the two on the other, so as to make a sloping roof for the rain to run off. Poles are laid in the forks of the upright pieces, and bound with native rope, which grows in the bush, and is the stalk of a kind of convolvulus ; it is very tough and strong, and renders string quite unnecessary here. The roof is thatched with palm leaves, arranged one over part of the next below, just as slates are, and four thick-

nesses of these will keep out the heaviest tropical rain. The walls are also built of palm leaves, which, owing to their strong stems, will stand upright without much additional support. A bedstead is also very soon made; it is only necessary to fix four forked sticks in the ground, then two long sticks are laid in the forks for the sides of the bedstead, and finally a number of short pieces are laid across from side to side and tied down. Nobody who can avoid it sleeps on the ground in this country, not even the commonest natives. I am very adept now at making these huts, and I always make a comfortable mess house at every place we stop at, as well as an easy chair for Major Russell. It is a great thing to have a large comfortable mess hut where we can all meet together and keep each other jolly. It seems that with bamboos, palm leaves, and native rope one can make very quickly any shelter or furniture required here.

On 4th of December we moved on three and a half miles to Sutah, a nasty place on clay soil, which is not good to encamp on. Next day, Friday the 5th of December, we marched on to this place, Ahtoh Insu, four miles from our last stopping-place.

Colonel Wood and his troops are still some miles in front of us, but we shall join at the Prah. All is quiet in front, no fighting; provisions are being hurried up, and the difficulty of getting bearers enough is great. The engineers are working hard in front, cutting and making a road out of the mere pathway that forms the existing road outwards. It seems probable now that the war will end before long; nobody thought we should reach the Prah without the assistance of the regiments from England and many a hard fight. Nobody, however, can tell us what the Ashantis mean to do next. Sir Garnet came to the front a day or two ago to see how we were doing,

and has returned again to Cape Coast. We are pausing just now for information and supplies. This is a good encamping ground, on sandy soil, and close to a stream that gives us good drinking water and a place to bathe, though not to swim. The bush here is much less dense, and we have got well into the forest country. I am sorry I have no time to send you any sketches, for there is much that is beautiful to see, but I have so much work to do that I can seldom find time for anything else.

Vegetation is most luxuriant ; and there are beautiful birds and insects all about. . . .



## CHAPTER IV

### FROM THE PRAH TO COOMASSIE

*Prasu (on south bank of River Prah),  
Dec. 25, 1873.*

MY DEAR MAY,—I am wishing you and all at home a Merry Christmas. I am now sitting under a tree on the south bank of the Prah.

“Russell’s Regiment” and “Wood’s Regiment” are both here; and we are making our own camp, and, with the aid of the engineers, camps for the English regiments when they arrive, for we might have to pause here several weeks while bridges are being made and a fortification on the opposite bank to protect the bridges. There are to be three bridges all close together, so as to be protected by one fort. One bridge will be a permanent one made of wood, another will be of pontoons, and the third will be a kind of ferry.

*Jan. 2nd, 1874.*—I was obliged to leave off writing on Christmas Day owing to the amount of work to be done, and so much has there been to do that I have not been able to resume it till to-day; of course there can be no such thing as rest on Sunday, and when night comes on and work stops I am always too tired to write or do anything but sleep. The work has been the construction of a sort of Aldershot camp on the south bank of the Prah, where the road to Coomassie is divided by the river, besides the collecting of materials for the engineers and their trained labourers to build superior huts and encamp-

ments for the English regiments. We, *i.e.* "Russell's Regiment," have had to build our own camp. From the first the duty of laying out our camps has devolved on me. Hitherto we have generally found huts enough standing to accommodate all our men, and I have only had to build the officers' huts; but here the spot assigned for us to occupy was in a state of nature—thick forest, with a more or less dense bush about ten feet high growing in the intervals between the forest trees. Russell wished to have a nice camp made here, the huts to be built on the sides of a square, and the space in the middle to be cleared for a parade ground. The men would occupy these huts, while the officers would have theirs along the edge of the river, on the top of the high bank which it has here; there being a high road eighteen feet wide to be made between the officers' quarters and the rest of the camp, in a line of direction laid down by the engineers, and be the main road of communication between the different camps. We face the north, and on our left is Colonel Wood's Regiment, and on our right the artillery. Beyond the artillery are the engineers, and beyond the latter is being constructed the camp for the English regiments, so I had, first of all, to get four passages cleared in the forest in the form of a square; and the difficulty of making the natives do this properly, as they could not see the object of it, was great. They are accustomed to build their huts promiscuously all about the encamping ground, and when the camp is required for a very short time this does well enough. At last the ground was sufficiently cleared, and I put up in the clearing the end portion of a hut for each tribe of our natives, leaving them to continue the huts to the given length after the pattern I had made. Only a small portion of the hutting could be completed by the end of the day we arrived here, so the men had to sleep out in

the bush under hastily-made shelters constructed of a few sticks with some plantain leaves laid on them. When the huts were finished we cleared away the bush inside our square and cut down all but the largest forest trees. I got a quantity of nice yellow sand brought up from the river side in empty wooden boxes, in which the tins of preserved meat are sent, and we sanded our roads, so that last night when the work was quite finished the camp of "Russell's Regiment" looked extremely well; and the principal medical officer reported to Sir Garnet that in his long experience in India and elsewhere he had never seen a camp better made than ours, in sanitary and all other respects. . . .

To-day Sir Garnet and his staff will arrive here, and the English soldiers will begin to arrive on the 13th. My hope is that Russell's camp will be considered good enough for an English regiment, and that we shall consequently be ordered to advance before the others and give up our camp, thereby saving the engineers a deal of labour, for already they are rather behindhand with the camps. There are only four or five engineer officers, and they have the bridges to make as well as the camps for the line regiments.

*Jan. 3rd.*—Sir Garnet and some of his staff dined with us last night. Russell had sent an invitation on to meet them *en route*; and we were lucky enough to have received a present of a turkey from the special correspondent of the *Standard*, and this came in very useful for dinner.

Just as I expected, Sir Garnet was delighted with our camp. Major Home, the commanding engineer, was right glad to hear of its being handed over to him; and we, "Russell's Regiment," are ordered to cross the Prah and advance into Ashanti.



Colonel Wood's Regiment are wild with vexation, for they are to remain here till the general advance of the army.

We were to start to-morrow, but as the bridge will not be finished till to-morrow night we are to start on the day after, Monday.

*Jan. 5th.*—I have already been four miles into the Ashanti country, on the other side of the river, reconnoitring. I surveyed the road as far as I went, and sent in a sketch and report to headquarters. For this I was thanked, and told it was most acceptable at the present time; but was reprov'd for going without leave from headquarters.

Only Major Russell knew I was going, and of course we both knew I should be told I ought not to have gone, but what of that if the result is successful!

At dinner last night, Sir Garnet told me to make him a second copy to send home with his despatch by this mail.

I took a few of my own natives armed with breech-loaders with me for this reconnaissance, and on the 27th December we crossed the river in a canoe and took the bush track (or road as it would be called here) towards Coomassie.

It was soon evident that the Ashantis had gone clean away; there were huts all along both sides of the road that evidently had not been used for weeks. In many of these I found human skeletons lying on the beds, proving that the Ashantis had retreated so hastily that they had abandoned their sick.

At about four miles' distance the road turned to the east and to the west, and did not continue straight on; and as I could find no clue on either to point out the Coomassie route, and as I had no guide, I was obliged to return.

I fancy the enemy must be a great way off, and that we shall soon bring the war to an end now.

It is wonderful to think that the Ashantis will allow us to cross this great river without opposition.

The great joy here on Christmas Day was the arrival of our long-delayed English letters just as we sat down to dinner. Could anything have been more opportune? . . .

*Essiam, a small deserted Ashanti village about twelve miles north of the Prah on the Coomassie road,  
Jan. 6, 1874.*

MY DEAR MAY,—After I had posted my last letter further dispositions were made by Sir Garnet, who, as I mentioned, had established his headquarters on the 2nd January at the large encampment we have been forming at Prasu, on the south bank of the Prah. Lord Gifford was appointed to the charge of the scouts, who are to precede the advanced guard of the army, and by their native stealth and ability are to gain intelligence of position and strength of the enemy; and I was ordered to support and assist the scouting party with an armed party, to survey the road as far as we could go, and to fortify the towns and villages that would be halting-places *en route*. Plenty of work for me, but I am right glad to have it to do.

Accordingly Gifford started yesterday morning over the Prah with forty-two scouts, and altogether a force of about seventy armed men of various tribes including the scouts.

“Russell’s Regiment” had to wait for the bridge to be completed, which was not done till late in the afternoon; and I crossed the river about 11 A.M. in a large canoe left by the Ashantis.

I took my own men (the Sierra Leone men) and Mr. Dooner’s men with me (Mr. Dooner being ill)—over 100, both together.

It took five trips of the canoe to get my party over. I then marched on about eight miles, a guide being with me, to a place called Attobiassi, which I was to prepare for the first halting-place of "Russell's Regiment." Here I overtook Gifford. It was a miserable little village, half surrounded by marsh and long, rank grass, and in all directions and in many of the huts dead bodies not quite reduced to skeletons.

So I marched on a quarter of a mile farther, and found a nice position on a ridge of some high ground with a delicious stream of water flowing along the front, but covered with forest and bush as all the country here is.

I put out the necessary sentries, and then set the rest of my hundred men to cut down the bush and small trees, so as to form a clearing for Russell to encamp on his arrival with the rest of his regiment.

Gifford pushed on with his scouting party to the village where he and I are alone together at this time with our respective parties, four and a half miles, I should think, from the position I had chosen for Russell.

As Gifford's party approached this village they saw several armed Ashantis, who fired on them. Their fire was returned, and one Ashanti was killed. The other Ashanti men bolted. None of Gifford's men had been hit, but after he had entered the village a shot was fired from the bush, and one of his men was badly wounded, but not seriously. Instantly a number of his men rushed into the bush where the shot came from in pursuit, but could not get hold of the man who had fired.

To return to what I was about at Attobiassi: it was nearly dark when Russell and his men arrived, as there had been hitches in the construction of the bridge, and it was not ready for many hours after the time announced for its completion.



Russell had brought eight days' provisions for all our men, and a good supply of reserve ammunition.

Every man carries eighty rounds in his pouches, and besides these we have a large reserve supply in boxes.

From Gifford's note it appeared unnecessary to support him that night, so we all lay down to sleep in the clearing I had made. Russell was very much pleased with the position.

I had dozens of large fires lighted all over the ground with all the dry stuff that would flame well, so as to purify the air ; and round one of the largest of these fires we officers made our beds upon the provision boxes, with our feet to the fire and our bodies radiating like the spokes of a wheel. About us lay 600 men, all blacks, very closely packed, so much so that in going to visit my sentries, and stepping with the utmost care, I trod from one man's face to another's. I was very sorry, thinking I might have damaged them seriously, perhaps trodden an eye or some teeth in ; but as they only gave a kind of suppressed squeak, and turned over from their backs on to their sides fast asleep again, I concluded all was right.

Before daylight this morning I was ready to march with my men ; and as soon as we had light enough to see the path we marched on to Essiam, this place, a distance of four and a half or five miles where I found Gifford and his party and the dead Ashanti.

I passed several skeletons of dead Ashantis lying in the middle of the path with their heads towards Coomassie, and in attitudes that looked plainly as if they had fallen there from sheer exhaustion and died, probably starved. The bones of many others had been scattered by wild beasts.

On arrival here I strengthened outposts with enough men to secure us all round from surprise, and sent a strong party to keep the road a quarter of a mile to the

front. All the rest of the men except a reserve kept under arms.

I set to work to cut away the bush and fell the trees all round the village as far as possible.

This is a lovely spot: a pretty little village with about twenty very nicely-built cottages on the top of a little hill. Gifford and I have each appropriated one of the best cottages, and we have our meals together.

There is excellent water in a clear stream close by, full of small fish. All rivers and streams here are crowded with fish.

*Jan. 7th.*—I wrote to you last night till my lantern burned out, and I went to bed by moonlight; cheerful rats gambolled about in the thatch of my cottage, but I was so tired that I scarcely said “—— the rats,” when I was fast asleep. I had cleared from thirty to fifty yards all round, and entrenched the village on the enemy’s side. Soon I shall have entrenched the village all round. The scouts have just gone out. I hear “Russell’s Regiment” is coming here to-day, so no doubt Gifford and I will occupy the next village ahead to-night.

The postman is waiting. I enjoy this work immensely, and am in the best of health. . . .

*Essiaman, a village 11 miles from the River Prah,  
on the way to Coomassie,*

*Jan. 7, 1874.*

MY DEAR MAY,—This morning Major Russell marched in here with the rest of his regiment from Attobiassi, where I told you I had left him yesterday morning.

Gifford’s best scouts went on early from this to investigate the route as far as the next village called Ansah. They reported the village deserted; and Gifford then went on with an armed party to verify their report.

The first half of the day I continued fortifying this

place, and then took a few of my men as escort, and began to survey the road towards Ansah.

When I had gone two miles I met Gifford and his party returning. He said Ansah was about three miles farther on, and he had found it deserted.

I surveyed on another half mile, *i.e.* about half-way to Ansah, and then returned as the day was closing.

I forgot to tell you that a day or two before we left Prahsu a special messenger from the King of Ashanti arrived there, escorted by two men armed with rifles and several men carrying provisions. The messenger brought letters, the purport of which I do not know. The Ashantis were detained two or three days by Sir Garnet, and one morning were allowed to witness a practice with our mitrailleuse. It was fired up a reach of the river, where the rain of bullets it discharged could be seen by the splashes of water. All but the chief messenger appeared greatly astonished; he looked on just as calmly as if it were an everyday sight to him. That night one of the two Ashanti men who carried rifles blew his own brains out with his rifle. My opinion is that this was a great chief disguised as a common Ashanti soldier, and that the sight of our large camp, nearly completed bridge, and mitrailleuse drove him to this act in despair. Yesterday the messenger and the rest of his party passed through here on their way back to Coomassie. I had been sent orders to pass them through my post. They were first of all stopped by my rear guard and conducted into the village, and I then took them myself, with an escort and interpreter, through my foremost outpost and as far as my most advanced sentry. Here I told them (through the interpreter) that they were safe and might go—but that if they delayed near us I could not give them any immunity. The head man thanked me in a remarkably dignified manner for



the treatment he had received, and especially for having handed over safely to him two women—a mother and daughter—who had not had time to escape from this village. He then said a messenger would arrive from the King in about three days, and would show a white flag.

I believe negotiations for peace are on foot, but Sir Garnet very rightly does not allow these to delay his operations.

He has ordered that the return messenger is to be detained at the most advanced outpost.

*Jan. 8th.*—I took the same party of my men as yesterday, completed my survey of the road to Ansah, and sent in the sketch and report to headquarters after my return here.

I found it to be four and three-quarter miles from this, ruined and deserted.

There was one body of an Ashanti in a hut at least a week dead. No further signs of Ashantis.

To-morrow morning Gifford and I leave this early, to push on beyond Ansah, supported by Lieut. Gordon, 98th Regiment, and the Houssas.

*Jan. 9th.*—This morning early Gifford started on with his scouts. I followed with a few of my best men; and about three miles behind us Gordon followed with about 100 Houssas, to support or cover a retreat if necessary.

The scouts had reported Ashantis not far beyond Ansah.

The next village to Ansah is called Acrafuma, distance not exactly known, but probably about seven miles.

Between these two villages we knew there was a good-sized river, and our object to-day was to reconnoitre as far as this river called the Fumusa, and if possible even as far as Acrafuma.

We passed through Anseh, to which place I mentioned I had surveyed yesterday, and here we left our baggage and provisions for two days with our servants, who were to prepare shelters for us to sleep in.

Gordon on his arrival was to stop here, unless his assistance was required, in case of a skirmish in front ; and his men were to clear the bush and jungle a bit round the place.

Gifford and I went on with our men, and reached the Fumusa River without seeing anything of the enemy.

I surveyed the road on from Anseh to the river. The river is two and a half miles from Anseh.

It seems queer talking of roads ; a road here is merely a bush path on which only one person at a time can walk. But we are making roads as we go many feet wide.

This English road has been completed at this date from Cape Coast as far as the Prah.

At the Fumusa River we rested half an hour. It is a beautiful little river, from ten to twenty yards wide, rushing over rocks like the river at Ballymoyer, and almost as pretty.

The trees here are too high and too close for their beauty to be seen ; they are gigantic. I have scarcely ever seen a tree-top ; it breaks your neck and sprains your throat to look up at them, so I don't.

The Fumusa is no obstacle, as it can be forded anywhere.

From the information brought in by the scouts, who had crept through the bush towards Acrafuma, we decided that it would not do to attempt that place to-day, so we returned to Anseh ; and here I am writing to you by my lamp under a little shelter made of four poles, with a roof of plantain leaves, where our servants have rigged up two bedsteads of poles for Gifford and me, and a big log fire at our feet. Gordon close by in a

similar building—merry hyenas laughing all round.  
Good-night. . . .

*On the south bank of the Fumasa (or Fumasu),*

*Jan. 10, 1874.*

MY DEAR MAY,—Gifford and I left Ansah early with our men and baggage, and marched to the Fumasa River that I told you about yesterday. Here we left our servants and a small guard on the south bank. Gifford and his scouts then crossed the river and moved cautiously towards Aorafuma. I followed with my ten men, surveying the road, and ready for action. At the distance of about two miles from the river the buzz of Ashanti voices in the direction of Aorafuma indicated large numbers there, and according to the scouts, upon whom we have to depend a good deal, there might have been several hundred men there. We then retired to the Fumasa River, and cleared away a good deal of bush. I made a footbridge across it, and we have posted a strong piquet on the north bank, with outposts and sentries half a mile in advance, also guards both up and down the river on the south bank. Gifford and I have our little shelter on the side of the road on the south bank; our men all about us. Curiously there are no palm leaves or plantain leaves to be got just here, so to keep off the heavy dew we have roofed our shelter with our waterproof coats. Our bedsteads have been made under this in the usual way—four forked sticks stuck in the ground about a foot and a half high, two poles resting in these for the sides, and then small sticks lashed across for laths. The natives make a bedstead like this in a few minutes from constant practice. Every native makes one for himself. Anyone who sleeps on the ground soon dies, owing to the pestilential exhalations from the amount of decaying vegetable matter. You are all right if you are a little way off the ground. I had a most



delicious bathe in the river this evening. Is there anything in nature more delightful than a river rushing over a rocky bed? I often am reminded of Ballymoyer, and though the vegetation here dwarfs the largest tree that grows in the British Isles, and though there are plants growing about here as weeds that would drive a Kew gardener to despair, this spot is not more lovely than the Ballymoyer *glen*.

Sir Garnet will receive our report this evening, and we shall, I hope, be reinforced to-morrow, and attack and occupy Acrafuma. We could not do so to-day—we have not more than eighty men between us, and our nearest support is Gordon at Ansah, two and a quarter miles behind us, with a hundred men.

*Jan. 11th.*—Still on the banks of the Fumasa, and no orders for a move on. There is no such thing now as rest on Sunday, I am sorry to say, nor has there been for many weeks. We are a case of a man having to pull his ox out of a pit *every* Sabbath day as well as every day of the week.

Gordon arrived here this morning with 100 Houssas, but with orders not to cross the river.

To-day I strengthened my bridge, and cut a good road to it on both banks. We have cut down a good deal of bush, and are fortifying this place in case the Ashantis should try a return attack.

We are much concerned at this time at the absence of two of the scouts, who ought to have been back at one o'clock this afternoon from scouting, and it is now night and they have not returned.

*Jan. 12th.*—This morning early, before breakfast, Gifford and his scouts went towards Acrafuma. I and my ten men went with them.

After a slow and most tedious march, and much waiting

to give the scouts the time they said they required for their investigations, we got into Aerafuma. Of course it was deserted.

I surveyed the rest of the distance there, and found it to be over four and a half miles from the Fumasa River.

The village consisted of about a dozen huts made of wattle covered with mud plaster; one that was white-washed was evidently a fetish house, *i.e.* a kind of wretched temple. These people select all sorts of things to be their fetish or god for the time being—a tree, or stone, or animal, or anything—and believe it omnipotent, but think it can only be invoked to aid them by bloodshed; consequently the King of Ashanti and great chiefs execute their slaves by dozens, and even by hundreds, at a time when they particularly desire something to be granted by the fetish. In this fetish house there was a paltry sort of altar; whatever had been on it had been taken away, but before it was a heap of miscellaneous remains of some ceremony—human hair, all sort of pots and mats, &c. &c., and a pile of egg shells sprinkled with blood, which was still red: I hope not the blood of the missing scouts.

We then returned to the Fumasa River, and soon after our arrival an ambassador from the King of Ashanti was announced by our outpost on the Coomassie road. According to our orders received he was detained there with his retinue, consisting of a small escort and several provision carriers. Huts were immediately built for them at the outpost under surveillance of the guard, and they were not allowed to approach within sight of our post on the river. This time an Ashanti chief of some consequence had been sent. A tall, young, very good-looking fellow, decorated with gold and silver bracelets, necklace, &c. &c. He sat down with a smile of indifference, in a portable easy chair that was carried for him—he himself had

been carried in a hammock—and did not evince the smallest curiosity. He then signed to a slave, who brought a good-sized box and put it in front of him, and removed a nice holland cover such as ladies in England like on their travelling-boxes ; a japanned tin box was disclosed beneath, and then another slave produced a bunch of keys and opened the box. The chief took out some letters directed to the Governor, and handed them to us. There was nothing of the savage in his appearance. His features were like those of a European, and his manners those of a well-bred gentleman in our country, notwithstanding his colour was the darkest black. He had brought with him one of our six white captives from Coomassie, Herr Huehne, a Prussian. This poor fellow was a sad sight. He was overjoyed at his escape from the Ashantis after five years of captivity, but he looked so ill, wan, wasted, and yellow from suffering that it made one's heart sad to look at him. After about an hour's rest and some refreshment we started him on with fresh bearers for his hammock. I can only tell you briefly the news he gave me. He had been liberated by the King of Ashanti and sent with the ambassador, but the king had refused to allow the other captives to go ; so there remain at Coomassie, Monsieur Bonnat, a Frenchman, and Mr. and Mrs. Ramseyer and their two children, Germans, five in all. The king, he said, is a short man, young and pitted by smallpox. He had constantly called for Huehne and talked to him about the war, at first in a haughty, ferocious manner, saying he would destroy every white man as far as the coast, and place a governor of his own at Cape Coast Castle. But latterly, since the defeat and flight of his army, and the news brought by the last messenger of our having bridged and crossed the Prah, he had sat trembling ; and not an Ashanti dare speak in his presence unless first spoken to



by the king, for instant execution would have been the result. He frequently called Huehne, sometimes telling him that he would soon torture and execute him, and sometimes avowing the greatest friendship for the English, and saying that the white people were quite mistaken in thinking he meant to fight against them or annoy them. Huehne also told us that "every able-bodied Ashanti" had been sent across the Prah to fight us; that Amanquahtieh, the commander-in-chief, is the most powerful chief in Ashanti; that he had heard Amanquahtieh address the other chiefs when about to start for the war, and he had begun with this simile, which I must apologise to you for repeating: "When any of you are troubled by lice in your head you shave off all your hair, and you are rid of them. I go now with you and our armies to shave the country from the Prah to the sea, and thus clear away the white men and all who trouble us." At this time, Huehne said, the King of Ashanti ridiculed the idea of the English fighting the Ashantis, and said to him: "The white man cannot fight us. The white man walks with an umbrella (and here the king laughed, sneered, and mimicked the white man), and is afraid of the sun and afraid of the rain; he will never invade Ashanti; if he tries to invade my country we will surround him and destroy everyone, or else the climate will kill him for us." The white captives had been worked as slaves by the king, and amongst other work had been made to build him a new large house in Coomassie. I trust that in about three weeks more the king will see other white men burn it down, by way of impressing upon his memory and the memories of his people that they made a great mistake when they compelled their white captives to build it. Huehne said he was sickened at the brutal bloodshed always taking place at Coomassie. On last New Year's Day the king had

cut off the heads of twenty-five slaves, an unusually small number, to propitiate his fetish ; and once when a youth related to the king was ill a hundred heads were cut off in Coomassie ! Huehne also said that 40,000 Ashanti soldiers had entered the Protected States to fight against us, and that Amanquahtieh on his return had *owned* to the king that he had lost 20,000 of these by sickness, hunger, and battle. He saw the remains of 180 chiefs alone, carried on biers past the king. The survivors of the army had fled home, utterly demoralised and tired of the war.

Remember all the above is what Huehne related as he rested by the Fumasu River, and I cannot vouch for its being the fact. If Huehne's statements are accurate, it is evident that the fight at Abrakrampa has been the decisive action of the campaign, and you may judge for yourself that peace is close at hand. I am ordered not to repeat at present anything I know of the ambassador's message, so I will pass that subject by.

This morning Russell and all his regiment arrived at the Fumasu. The engineers and all their labourers arrived too, so my little clearing was soon filled ; and all hands set to work to cut away bush and enlarge the encamping ground. Major Home, the commanding engineer, highly approved the position I had chosen for my bridge and the new roads to it ; said he would make the large permanent bridge at the very same spot, and thanked me for the assistance he said my footbridge gave him in hastening the construction of the other—so that piece of work was satisfactory.

Gifford and I and our men, supported by Gordon and the Houssas, went on before Russell and occupied Acrafuma. Russell, after a short halt at the Fumasu, brought his regiment on to this place, where we have encamped.

*Jan. 14th.*—This morning Gifford and his scouts went on to the next village, Ahquansraimu, and I surveyed the road to it, and returned here (to Aerafuma) for the night as I was ordered to do so. Gifford also returned. Gordon continues to support us with the Houssas.

The scouts started a few Ashantis at Ahquansraimu, and they ran off like hares.

The scouts said they were armed with spears only—however, they left a barrel of gunpowder behind them!

This morning my servant caught a spider not smaller than your hand on the foot of my bed; they say that if it bites a person they are likely to die. I have killed it, and will try and bring it home for you to see. It was such a large spider that I thought at first it was a land-crab.

The ambassadors returned to-day *en route* for Coomassie with Sir Garnet's reply.

*Jan. 15th.*—I am writing this to you really on Sunday the 18th, as I have been so hard at work since Wednesday; and have been so tired by the end of the day that I have not been able to add my daily quantum to this letter. I will, however, go back to the 15th.

On this day Gifford and I moved to Ahquansraimu and slept there; and next day Russell and his regiment overtook me at Ahquansraimu. He had received orders to march on without delay to Moinsi, a village at the foot of the Moinsi Hill on this side.

This hill is high and very steep. The direct road to Coomassie passes over it, and Moinsi is the last village till the hill is crossed.

Russell stopped and encamped with his regiment at a river two miles beyond Ahquansraimu, as he was troubled with fever, and not fit to go farther that day.

The scouts pushed on towards Moinsi; and I followed



with some of my men, surveying, having left my baggage at Russell's camp, as I intended to return there for the night.

I found it four and a half miles farther on to Moinsi. It was late, and as Russell was to come on early next day I gladly accepted food and a greatcoat from Gifford, and slept soundly in a shelter my men made by a large fire, and on a mattress of dry leaves.

*Jan. 17th.*—Russell arrived here early, and his advanced guard moved up to the top of the Moinsi (also called Adensi) Hill, and established itself there.

There was an alarm given by the scouts of a large body of Ashantis preparing to attack the hill, but it ended in nothing.

There are Ashantis close on the north of the hill, but we do not know in what force. I expect they will retreat hastily as we advance.

An Ashanti woman told us that all women and children had already left Coomassie; she had escaped from her country as they were going to kill her for something or other. She also said the king had sent much gold to the King of Gaman (on his north-west frontier) asking him to help him against us. The King of Gaman kept the gold, but declined fighting against the English!

I surveyed to the top of the hill on 17th; it is only three quarters of a mile to the top, but very steep.

*Jan. 18, 1874.*

MY DEAR MAY,—My last letter to you gave news up to 17th, when we, that is "Russell's Regiment," which forms the advanced guard of Sir Garnet's army, had reached Moinsi, a town at the foot of the Moinsi Hills on the south side, and had occupied the summit by a strong advanced guard of our own. It is a wonderful

fact that we got possession of this hill without opposition. We expected a hard fight here. It is only three-quarters of a mile to the top, but the ascent is so steep that you depend upon the aid of projecting stones to get up. Forest and dense bush continue the same all over the hill. By the time the white troops arrive the engineers will have made a zig-zag road up and down the hill.

Russell advanced his headquarters to-day to the top of the hill, and his advanced guard moved on to the bottom of the hill on the north side. The descent on the north side is much less steep than on the south side, and as the distance is exactly the same in both it follows that the country north of the hills is more elevated than that on the south. I notice a decided improvement in the atmosphere on this side, although I have enjoyed the best of health on the other side.

*Jan. 19th.*—All “Russell’s Regiment” moved on to-day to Quisah, a town only three-quarters of a mile from the foot of the Moinsi Hill. It is a pretty little town, and is the first town of Ashanti proper—the country between the Moinsi Hills and River Prah having been conquered by the Ashantis.

On the way we passed several objects, the work of fetish priests, put as spells to stop our advance, such as sheep or goats, curiously wrapped and buried alive in the path with their heads out of the ground. They were dead when we passed, but could not have been dead more than a few hours, as they were still fresh. Then there were curious humbugging signs with various sticks and nuts and earthen pots; but horrible to relate, for one of these signs a human victim had been sacrificed; and a man horribly mutilated was exhibited, fastened to two bamboos, so as to appear to stand upright.

*Jan. 22nd.*—We continued at Quisah for three days

and occupied the houses, which are well built of clay and wattle work and thatched. They have only the ground floor, which is always raised about two feet above the ground, and is simply a dais of hard, dry clay.

We are now simply waiting for Sir Garnet's forces to come up and concentrate close behind us, when a general advance on Coomassie will be made.

The advanced guard has now been increased, and consists of Russell's and Wood's Regiments and some artillery, the whole advanced guard being under the command of Colonel M'Leod, 42nd Highlanders.

I continued to survey the road in advance.

*Jan. 23rd.*—To-day "Russell's Regiment" moved on three-quarters of a mile farther to the next town, Fommanah. This, like the last, was deserted, but evidently very recently and somewhat in a hurry.

I had an outpost about a quarter of a mile beyond Fommanah on the Coomassie Road. About noon my foremost sentries, who were concealed on each side of the road some distance beyond the outpost, sent me word that they had stopped a party of Ashantis with a white man in front.

I went there at once and found Monsieur Bonnat, the French captive, who, as you may imagine, was overjoyed to find himself free at last.

Behind him were two ambassadors from the King of Ashanti and several other Ashantis.

I shook hands warmly with Monsieur Bonnat, but did not take any notice of the ambassadors, nor even acknowledge their salutes, until I had first asked where the other white captives were; then they stepped on to one side of the path, and Mr. Ramseyer, the Swiss, walked up carrying a little girl of about three years old in his arms. Behind him came a hammock, in which his wife and an infant were carried.



Imagine their delight to find themselves safe at last in the hands of the English after five years' captivity in Coomassie! When these greetings were over I asked them to introduce the ambassadors to me. Then we all proceeded as far as my outpost, where we stopped, for I have not authority to allow anybody to pass that point.

A long chain of slaves carried chairs and provisions, and the Ashantis were soon comfortably seated close by the bush on the shady side of the path. You must sit very close under bushes in this country at midday, for the sun at that time here is in the zenith.

While my messenger was gone with the news to Major Russell, I enjoyed a chat with the now released captives. They were so happy, and looked in fair health except the little girl, who was very pale.

Soon Major Russell and a number of other officers arrived, and then we all went into Fommanah to lunch. All the Ashantis were quartered in one block of houses under a guard, but treated with all due courtesy.

After lunch the white people from Coomassie continued their journey with their black servants, who were all, I believe, released Fantis who had been taken prisoners, and the Ashantis remained in our care.

The letter from the King of Ashanti to Sir Garnet was sent on at the same time.

*Jan. 24th.*—This morning I surveyed as far as the next town called Dampoassi, two and three-quarter miles, and returned again to Fommanah. Dampoassi was deserted.

This afternoon Sir Garnet moved his headquarters to Fommanah, and brought up the Naval Brigade and Rifles there. The ambassadors returned to Coomassie this afternoon with Sir Garnet's reply.

*Jan. 25th.*—This morning Russell's Regiment marched from Fommanah to Dampoassi, the place I mentioned yesterday, and the rest of the advanced guard followed.

*Jan. 26th.*—At daylight this morning we were all ready to march in fighting order, for we had heard that a village called Adoobiassi on our left about three miles off, was occupied by Ashanti soldiers in considerable force. It would never do to go on and leave an enemy on one side, who might make raids upon our convoys of supplies, so we were ordered to attack the village and its garrison.

"Russell's Regiment" was to go first, and after it some English soldiers and sailors, and "Wood's Regiment." It was Dooner's turn to go first, so he marched first with his fifty natives. I followed closely with my negroes, now reduced to fifty-two in number, and I believe some West Indian soldiers followed next after my men; but as the train was too long for me ever to see the tail of my men I am not certain.

The road to the village was merely a narrow path through forest and bush, so that we followed one another singly, in Indian file. The orders given for the assault were, that on getting close to the village Dooner was to turn into the bush on the left and skirmish round the left of the village in the bush, and I was to turn into the bush on the right and skirmish through the bush round the right of the village, while the next party were to go straight into the village itself.

A party of scouts acted as guides, and led the way in front of all. So we marched on. At last the first shots were heard in front. Dooner's men, who were in front of me, rushed forward with savage yells; I followed close up, and my men close after me (the pluck of our natives is up now, for they have experienced their ability to beat the Ashantis); in a few seconds turning a bend of the road

I found myself in the village, where rapid firing was going on in all directions.

It was impossible in the smoke to see who or what was there ; but obeying my orders, and I highly approved of those orders, I took to the bush on the right side.

I have long impressed upon my men that if they will only rush into the bush, instead of standing in the path, they will find themselves better men than the Ashantis, and to-day they followed me in right well.

We expected that the Ashantis would, after their usual plan, and a very good plan it is, rush out of the village to the cover of the surrounding bush, and, screened by it, fire into our troops as they entered the village, and so I expected to catch the fellows beautifully—but not so !

Guided by the noise in the village, I circled round the right half of the village at about fifty or sixty yards distance, and, after many falls, scrambles, twists, and turns, got to the main road *beyond* the village without seeing even a single Ashanti in the bush.

About half of my men were either close behind me or came up in a few seconds, and we ran on along the main road for a few hundred yards, where I came upon Dooner and most of his men, for the order to halt had reached him. . . .

At all events the attack was a success. The Ashantis, completely surprised while at their breakfasts, had fired only a few shots and rushed off like hares, escaping by the road beyond. And the pluck and assurance of our natives have been raised.

Dooner and I now marched back to the village, where we found Russell and the rest of his regiment.

Two or three Ashanti prisoners had been taken, one of whom is the Chief of Essiaman, and three or four Ashantis had been shot dead.

This village is very large, and might be called a town.



It had long ago been evacuated by its proper residents, and was at the time of the attack occupied by a body of soldiers only.

We burnt the village by way of warning such parties off our flanks. We returned to Dampoassi to breakfast, and then marched on to Coomassie. We remain here all to-day, but march onwards to-morrow morning.

*Jan. 27th.*—Sir Garnet expects the whole war to be over in a week, so you will not have time to answer this letter, for I shall not be long behind it myself.

I don't know what I shall do for clothes when I reach England. I'm not sure that they would take me in at a respectable hotel! I'll drive to my tailor's and sit there till they make me enough to begin with!

This grey uniform is all I have. I have sewn it up so often that it won't sew any more. I have to put the needle through several inches away from the rent, else, you know, it draws a fringe on both sides of it instead of mending it up! My socks are all like mittens. It is not worth while telling you about my pocket-handkerchief, for I have only three-quarters of one left, the other piece having gone yesterday to tie up a fellow's finger.

By the by, Sir Garnet has asked for a special steamer to take home himself and all the officers who remain of those who came out with him in the *Ambriz*. He expects we shall be ready to embark about the 25th of February. Monsieur Bonnat offered his services to Sir Garnet, and is going back to Coomassie with us.

*Jan. 28th.*—To-day we marched on from Kiang Borasu to a small town named Ahkankuasi, three and three-quarter miles farther on. The towns and villages are much closer now, and we passed through two intermediate ones in this short distance. Our marches are short, I am sorry to say, for the difficulty of keeping up

sufficient supplies is great. Russell pushed on the Houssas, about a hundred in number under Gordon, to the next village, Adadwassi, a mile and a half farther, to form an outpost there, for the drums and voices of Ashantis could be heard at Adadwassi in the direction of the next village, Insafoo ; and the scouts said there were large numbers there, and that it was not impossible they might attack us.

*Jan. 29th.*—Early this morning Russell prepared to march on through Adadwassi and occupy Insafoo. I went on ahead surveying, and when I reached Adadwassi the scouts reported that all was silent at Insafoo, and that it must have been evacuated in the night. So I started on by myself, intending to survey about a mile farther and then wait for "Russell's Regiment" to come up. I had scarcely gone a hundred yards beyond Gordon's most advanced sentry when, turning a bend of the path, I found myself suddenly face to face with the Ashanti ambassadors and their retinue of carriers. They know me pretty well by this time. I brought them back as far as Gordon's guard, and when "Russell's Regiment" came up they were sent on, under escort, with the king's letter. We marched then to Insafoo, which we found quite deserted. It is a mile and a quarter from Adadwassi.

Captain Nicol, a Hants Militia adjutant, was left behind yesterday with some men of "Russell's Regiment," to which he had been attached, to assist Colonel Wood's Regiment in taking another village on our flank. The attack was made to-day, the 29th. Nicol was shot, and died a few seconds after.

*Jan. 30th.*—To-day Russell marched on another mile and a quarter to Quirman.

The army will concentrate here to attack, for the

Ashantis have refused our conditions of peace and mean to fight it out with us.

Sir Garnet is coming up, and the advanced guard, consisting of Wood's and Russell's Regiments, some artillery and white troops, all under command of Colonel M'Leod, will begin the attack to-morrow.

*On the road to the Coast, a few  
miles out of Mansu,  
Feb. 19, 1874.*

MY DEAR MAY,—All is well. We took Coomassie on the 4th February, after five days' fighting, from Quirman.

The Ashantis fled at the last in all directions.

We destroyed the town, and commenced our march back next day.

I have been so fortunate as to have been in the thick of all the principal engagements. My own men have done excellently, in fact all that I could have wished, and have been specially reported to Sir Garnet by Russell.

Once they took a village strongly occupied by Ashantis, by a sudden rush into the midst of the place, when we were at the head of the advanced guard, so that when the main body came up the work was done.

And again, when an ambush opened a heavy and unrelaxing fire upon the flank of the column in the last fight before Coomassie, the Brigadier came up and, pointing to my company, which happened to be next him, asked Russell if he thought those men would go into the bush at them.

I said, "I think they will," and thereupon in we plunged and forced the Ashantis back in their own element, the thick tangled bush, though we could only make a couple of yards progress per minute; and when we had



driven them back a hundred yards from the road they ceased to reply to our fire, and I suppose retreated altogether.

It was my hope to have written to you long ere this a full account of the five interesting days from Quirman (to which my last letter extended), from the 31st January to Coomassie on the 4th of February, but I have not been able to do so.

I could not give you a full idea of the amount of work I have had to do.

At Quirman I took the duties of Adjutant and Quartermaster of "Russell's Regiment" in addition to my other duties, because Captain Burnett, whose duties these were, had been sent away in fever; so at the close of each day's march and fighting I had then the quarters to arrange, supplies to get, guards and piquets to arrange for the night, returns of killed, wounded, sick, and missing to make out, ammunition expended to account for, and orders to get and issue for the next morning's march.

Then I had the road from Coomassie to Quirman to survey as we went back, for of course it could not be surveyed going forwards! So you will not be surprised that I had not a moment to write to you.

I was slightly wounded in the left hand by a slug when we took the village alluded to before. I only think it worth mentioning to you because you might see my name returned as "wounded," and fear it might be something bad. . . . In very great haste.—Ever yours,

A. FITZROY HART.

At Quirman malaria fever, not the least-dreaded enemy of our troops, caused Captain Burnett, Adjutant and Quartermaster of "Russell's Regiment," to remain behind invalided, and when the regiment advanced on Amoaful, Hart was appointed in his place. This appointment he held in addition to his other duties until the end

of the war. He was subsequently attached to the Quarter-master-General's department for survey work.

It is unfortunate that his extra work prevented him from keeping his journal during the last five important days of the campaign which embraced the actions of Amoaful, Bequa, Ordahsu, and finally the entry into Coomassie.

At the battle of Amoaful, which was the big battle of the campaign, the 42nd Highlanders were the main attacking force; "Wood's Regiment" and half the Naval Brigade formed the right column, while the left column was formed by "Russell's Regiment" and the other half of the Naval Brigade.

The left column was attacked before it had gone a hundred yards, and one of the officers was killed.

The difficulties of the two columns in the bush were great, for as well as the painfully slow progress there was always the danger of firing into the 42nd in front; for owing to the denseness of the bush they could scarcely see a yard in front of them. After some hours' hard fighting the town was taken and the Ashantis dispersed in all directions. The next day, 1st February, they were defeated again, and Bequa was taken. The following day, at a village called Jarbinbah, about 1000 Ashantis assembled and tried to dispute the advance of the columns. However, "Russell's Regiment" carried the village at a rush, in which Hart was slightly wounded in the hand.

On reaching Ingimmamu, which at this time became the base of operations, a flying column was sent forward. The column was badly harassed by the enemy. "Russell's Regiment" "had to shoot its way through ambush after ambush,"<sup>1</sup> and finally after severe fighting they found themselves on the bank of the river Ordah. "Russell's Regiment" forded the river and encamped on the other side.

Next day Ordahsu was attacked and taken; the Ashantis made yet one more stand, and tried unsuccessfully to retake the village—but the war was over, and our troops marched on six miles and occupied Coomassie.

Hart was twice mentioned in despatches, and received

<sup>1</sup> Windwood Reade, *The Ashantee Campaign*,

the medal and clasp. The special correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* gives an amusing account of the auction at Cape Coast of the loot from King Koffee Kacalli's palace in Coomassie. Most of the portable things were made of gold or silver, and the prices ran high, so that it was not an easy matter for many who wished to, to buy a souvenir within their means. Hart was fortunate enough to secure a pair of silver candlesticks, which are now at Ballymoyer.



## CHAPTER V

### ZULULAND

IN June 1874, Hart got his company. During the next two years he was employed by the Intelligence Department upon the scheme of defence of England. This was most congenial work to him, as it entailed life in the open air—chiefly surveying in the eastern counties.

In 1877-78 he was Brigade-Major to General Shipley, who commanded the 2nd Brigade at Aldershot. In the autumn of that year Aldershot was on the *qui vive*, for rumours of war with Russia as well as with the Zulus were in the air.

In November, Captain Hart was sent on special service to South Africa. On his arrival at Durban he was appointed Staff-Officer to Major Graves, who was to command the 2nd Regiment of the Native Contingent. This force was formed from volunteers from the South African colonies, and from friendly Kaffir tribes, who arrived equipped for war with assegais and shields.

The first few weeks were spent in equipping, arming, and organising this force into two battalions, and when this was accomplished they marched to the Tugela and joined Colonel Pearson's column of invasion, which consisted of some regular troops, the Naval Brigade, and "Graves' Regiment."

The story of this column's hard fight at the engagement near the Inyezane River, on their way to Ekowe, is fully given in one of the following letters.

When, after the retreat to the Tugela, "Graves' Regiment" was completely broken up owing to the desertion of the natives, Hart was appointed Staff-Officer of the Lower Tugela district, and of the Ekowe relief force, with which latter he took part in the action of Gingindhlovu.

After the relief of Ekowe, Lord Chelmsford reorganised

his forces, dividing them into three parts—two divisions and a flying column; and he appointed Captain Hart Brigade-Major to the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Division.

And when Lord Chelmsford had taken Ulundi and reduced Cetywayo's capital to ashes, "the King became a fugitive, and the Chiefs of the districts from the sea to Ondini tendered their submission." Sir Garnet Wolseley, who had just arrived from England, finding that so large a force was now unnecessary, sent some of the troops back to Natal to embark for England, and reorganised the remainder, making two new columns, under Colonels Clarke and Russell, to advance upon Cetywayo from the south and west, while some Swazis, led by an English officer, closed upon him from the north.

Colonel Clarke, who was allowed to appoint his own staff, chose Captain Hart for his chief Staff-Officer. When Cetywayo was finally captured, and all the Zulu tribes had submitted, except one on the Natal frontier, Clarke's column marched back that way, and after receiving their submission, the war being over, they once more recrossed the Tugela.

Hart was several times mentioned in despatches, and at the end of the war he received a brevet majority and the medal with clasp.

His letters give a full account of the part he took in the campaign, and are in themselves a little history of the war.

*On board the "Roman,"*

*Nov. 1st, 1878.*

MY DEAR MAY,—I embarked on board the *Roman* at Plymouth. The 1st of November was a Friday, and so, in respect of sailors' superstition I suppose, the *Roman* had commenced her voyage the day before from Southampton.

The officers on board are :

Major Bengough, 77th Regt.  
 Captain Buller, Rifle Brigade.  
 Captain Cherry, 32nd Regt.  
 Major MacGregor, 29th Regt.  
 and myself

on "Special Service," and there are also on board for "Transport Service":

Captain Hon. R. Campbell, Coldstream Guards.  
 Captain Essex, 75th Regt.  
 Captain Gardner, 14th Hussars.  
 Captain Barton, 7th Fusiliers.  
 Captain Huntley, 10th Regt.  
 Paymaster Bacon.

Captain Barton you will remember very well, as aide-de-camp to General Shipley. He received a telegram from General Shipley, just before we embarked, wishing us both good-bye and good times.

Captain MacGregor you know. Captain Gardner was in my batch at the Staff College, the others are all strangers to me, at least they were nine days ago, for now we know each other very well. Barton and I are very old friends; we were at Fleming's together before we entered the army, when we were both in "Russell's Regiment," in the Ashanti war, and afterwards he was General Shipley's aide-de-camp, when I was his Brigade-Major. We have taken a cabin together on board.

Everything on board the *Roman* is excellently managed, and she is, for comfort, a yacht by comparison with those abominable vessels that ply between Liverpool and the Gold Coast.

There are eight civilian first-class passengers. Among them is a Mrs. —, the fattest woman I have ever seen, fatter than a woman I once saw for a penny, at Charlton fair, twenty years ago; fatter than I ever imagined a human being could be, and live—I expect she is the fattest woman in the world!

Nov. 23rd.—I am hard at work learning the stars of the southern sky. Nightly, stars I have never seen



before appear. I am a stranger to the southern sky. The use of this knowledge will be to obtain my exact latitude and longitude, if I should be in remote parts of the country not accurately known.

*Nov. 30th.*—We reached Algoa Bay (Port Elizabeth) about nine this morning. The first thing was to inquire for news, and all news was very satisfactory. We heard that the Kaffirs have concentrated in Zululand, their own territory, to fight us there, and that the operations of Lord Chelmsford's forces against them are about to commence, so it appears that we arrive in good time. The dreadful idea of my being too late sometimes crossed my mind on the way out. Then again, we got news from England up to the 10th of November, that had been telegraphed to St. Vincent in cypher, for the Cape newspapers; and this news assured us that there was no prospect of war between England and Russia. You can imagine my distress if there were war now with Russia, and I not with the 2nd Brigade! The *Roman* stops a few hours at East London, to pick up some irregular troops for the front, and then we shall be due at Durban on Thursday.

*Dec. 7th.*—Early this morning we went ashore in a tug-boat. From the landing-place, we had to go a couple of miles by rail to reach Durban. On arrival, there were only orders for me awaiting us. I was appointed Staff-Officer to Major Graves' 3rd Buffs. Major Graves is to command an irregular regiment, composed of 2000 natives, taken from friendly Kaffir tribes, and he and I will have to organise this force, and take it to the front to fight if there is war. The question of peace or war will remain undecided till the end of a fortnight, after Tuesday the 10th of December.

An ultimatum will be received by Cetywayo, the Zulu Kaffir Chief, on Tuesday the 10th inst., and he will be given a fortnight to agree to all the terms of it. If he refuses, we shall invade Zululand at once. It is not expected that there will be an agreement, and war is looked upon as certain. Cetywayo has been arming for a long time, and has been overbearing and insolent. His capital is Ulundi, and if there is war, Ulundi must be captured. I remain at Durban for the present with Major Graves. Our two thousand natives have been raised, and will be sent to us at an appointed place, near the Zulu frontier, when the equipment is ready. We shall probably form a camp there. You had better address my letters as before, to the care of Lord Chelmsford.

*Dec. 8th.*—I dined this evening with Commodore Sullivan; he commands on the African station, as far as the navy is concerned.

*Dec. 9th.*—All the others who came out with me in the *Roman* went off this morning for Pietermaritzburg, the present headquarters, to get orders.

I am very fortunate in my appointment, and very much pleased with it.

*Dec. 13th.*—I told you in my last that Major Graves is to command one of the irregular regiments. It is called the 2nd Regiment of Natal Native Contingent, and will have two battalions. I have been appointed Staff-Officer, and Major Graves and I are the only two officers of the regular army in the regiment. All the others are volunteers, from various parts of the South African colonies. Lord Chelmsford has refused the assistance of any more regular troops, probably on account of the Russian question.

The Tugela is the frontier of Zululand and Natal. A

naval force of, I believe, nine officers and about a hundred men, has been landed at the mouth of the Tugela, where the principal road from Natal into Zululand crosses by a ford ; and they will cover us from the enemy while we are forming on the Nonoti.

I have been at work on the question of arming, equipping, and supplying our force on the Nonoti, and I hope we shall be assembled there in a few days.

You cannot imagine what a strange collection of men the Europeans of our regiment are : we have English, Irish, French, Germans, Danes, Swiss, Dutch, Norwegians, Swedes, Belgians, and besides these Europeans, America is represented. I expect there are some strange personal histories among those men. I dare say by degrees I shall become acquainted with them.

*Dec. 16th.*—This morning we received by telegram, from headquarters, permission to move to the Nonoti, and encamp there, as soon as we could get our regimental equipment. I found the tents, &c. were not likely to be ready for a long time. I proposed that we should go to the Nonoti with such as we could get, and then make huts to supply the deficiency. This was approved on the morning of the 16th, and I then set to work with all my possible effort to get the equipment. On Thursday the 19th of December I started about noon, by special train from Durban, with the officers, sergeants, and corporals of the regiment, our baggage having already gone on ahead. I thought we should have gone very quietly, but there was a crowd at the station to see us off ; Major Graves was not yet able to join us, so I started in charge. We numbered about two hundred altogether. Railway carriages being few, open trucks were provided chiefly. I got into a carriage, but finding it extremely stuffy, I got out again at once, and took a place in one of the trucks.



In this I had plenty of air, a pleasant breeze, and could see the country well. The Nonoti River is about sixty miles from Durban by road, to the place near the mouth of the river where we were to form camp. There is a railway from Durban for sixteen miles in that direction, to a place called Saccharine, and as the highroad between Durban and Saccharine is particularly heavy and bad, it was arranged that the transport bullock wagons should go to Saccharine and meet us there, we going by rail.

The country we passed through was very interesting to me. Most of it was laid out in plantations of sugar-canes, and there were also plantations of tea and coffee. Large tracts of coffee had been abandoned to go wild.

The railway is only opened to the public from Durban to Avoca, half-way to Saccharine, but the metals being laid to Saccharine, the Government allowed us to proceed so far. Avoca is a pretty vale, but does not approach in beauty the original, from which, I suppose, it is named. As we reached Saccharine, it changed from a bright summer day to wet. The bullock wagons, ten in number, were ready, and I set all hands to work to unload the trucks and load the wagons. It was cheerless work doing this in the rain, and the ground soon worked up into deep sticky mud. It was not an easy matter to get my men to do the unloading and loading methodically, especially as there was a strong point of adverse attraction in the form of an inn close by. However, I got the wagons loaded before daylight failed, though not in the manner exactly that I had wished. Our supplies were somewhat mixed, and we thereby suffered inconveniences on the march, that would have been avoided had all my party entered heartily into the task—that is, as heartily

as was possible in the rain and up to the ankles in mud ! I had hoped to get on our way a few miles farther before night, but I found this impossible, so I gave the order to bivouac at Saccharine.

The railway authorities gave leave for us to take shelter under a large, half-completed, iron shed, and placed the little station-house at my disposal. No sooner had I given the order to bivouac, than little fires were lighted on the ground, in the open, in all directions. I had rations of preserved meat and groceries to be issued. The rain fortunately ceased, and soon all were merrily preparing an evening meal. Up to this, I could have got through a vast deal more with disciplined British soldiers, but at this stage the British soldier would have been more or less helpless, whereas these men could shift at once for themselves, and I had no need to look after their welfare. At such times the independent colonial life that my men have been accustomed to, perhaps all their lives, saves their commander all trouble and anxiety.

I had better describe what my party consisted of. The regiment consists of two battalions. Major Graves commands the whole regiment just as a general commands a brigade, and I am the Staff-Officer. My duties are like those of a Brigade-Major in the field, but I have besides to direct and superintend the whole work of organisation and equipment. Major Graves and I are the only officers of the regular army, all the others are volunteers for the war ; and the sergeants, corporals, &c., are volunteers also. Major Graves, besides commanding the regiment, is also commandant of the 1st Battalion ; and one of the volunteer officers named Nettleton is commandant of the 2nd Battalion—that is, does the part of Lieut.-Colonel of a battalion, but is called “Commandant.” The volunteers in each battalion are :

10 Captains.
20 Lieutenants.
30 Sergeants.
30 Corporals.
1 Bugler.
1 Interpreter.
1 Adjutant (Lieutenant).
1 Quartermaster „
1 Sergeant-Major.
1 Quartermaster-Sergeant.

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Total . . . 96

Then there is a doctor for the regiment, so that adding him and myself, we white people number 196 altogether. I had better mention the native chiefs' names, because I may have to speak of them a good deal hereafter. They are :

## IN 1ST BATTALION.

<i>Chiefs' Names.</i>	<i>Number of Men.</i>
Delewayo . . . . .	200
Zipuku . . . . .	100
Macabo . . . . .	200
Musi . . . . .	500
	<hr/>
Total . . . . .	1000

## IN 2ND BATTALION.

<i>Chiefs' Names.</i>	<i>Number of Men.</i>
Ungawe . . . . .	500
Sotondose . . . . .	400
Dikwayo . . . . .	100
	<hr/>
Total . . . . .	1000

At present only half the full number of natives summoned have joined us, but we expect to receive all in the course of a few days. They were ordered to assemble



at the Nonoti by 21st of December, and we were to meet them there.

And now to return to the bivouac. Dr. Mansell and I laid ourselves out on the floor of what will be the ticket office of the railway station, rolled in our blankets, and soon every square foot of space in the station and around, under the verandah, was occupied by bodies in blankets.

It was a dark night, but all seemed in very good spirits, notwithstanding the wet and dirt.

I could hear nothing all round but the croaking of frogs and bursts of laughter as the later arrivals searched for a spot to stretch out upon, and in doing so trod upon, or tumbled over, the earlier sleepers. One man tried for an hour to imitate the croaking of the frogs, and at the end of that time he succeeded tolerably well. This, I imagine, was exclusively entertaining to himself, and I was glad when he fell asleep.

I ordered our march to commence next morning at 4.30, and all were up and ready by that time; but the difficulty of starting the wagons was so great, that it was a quarter to six before the whole was *en route*.

There were ten wagons, each drawn by a span of sixteen or eighteen oxen, but during the night the wheels of the laden wagons sank very much in the soft ground, and it was difficult even with two spans to start them.

When a wagon sticks, part, or the whole of a second span, is hooked on in front, the native drivers get on both sides with whips ready, and at a signal down come the lashes on the oxen, accompanied by the most awful shrieks man ever uttered; you might, if you shut your eyes, imagine your ear at a loophole of hell! These infernal yells are kept up and joined in by every available native, while the oxen, perfectly unexcited thereby,

strain with dignity at the rope. Sometimes they fail to move the wagon an inch, and then the process is renewed after a few minutes' rest. Sometimes they get the wagon in motion, and then the whips are at once applied with redoubled force, a sense of justice to the ox being drowned in the current of opinion that the wagon might stick again.

About 10 A.M. we halted near a town called Verulam. It would be called in England a pretty village. We halted here to "outspan." Almost everywhere there is excellent pasture *pro bono publico*, and oxen are never given anything else. At 12.15 P.M. we were *en route* again, and at about 5.30 P.M. we arrived at a beautiful park-like place where we stopped for the night and bivouacked in the open under a clear sky. All the country around was like park, beautiful grass with groups of trees and patches of bush here and there in the same state of nature as it has always been ; but no inhabitants, except at intervals of many miles. I went to have a bathe in a small stream close by, and on chance of finding a duck there, I took my gun with a couple of No. 4 cartridges. To my surprise there were numbers of wild duck, and I killed one flying on the opposite side of the stream, with my first shot. I went back to the bivouac for some more cartridges, but the darkness came on suddenly, as it does here, before I could get them.

*Dec. 21st.*—This morning we were all ready to march at 4.30, but the oxen delayed us till past six. Last night my horse strayed away, and was lost. He was knee-haltered, which is the invariable practice of the country, and I allowed my horse to be knee-haltered, contrary to my opinion, by the advice of those who have lived in this country all their lives. My invariable practice in camp and bivouac had been to secure my horses by their head-ropes, close to where I sleep at night, so that during the

day I could see they were properly looked after. Diligent search this morning failed to produce my horse, and we started without him. He is a good strong animal that I bought from Major Graves.

All the country we pass through now is the same unending park. Here it was that fifty years ago hunters found countless herds of antelope, elephants, giraffes, zebras, and the lions and leopards that prey upon them. Now the great herds have receded before the colonists, and though there are plenty of antelopes, they are very shy, avoiding the open and frequenting the bush, so that without many guns and many more beaters, it is difficult to shoot them, and a solitary hunter has but a poor chance.

At midday we outspanned on a plateau called Compensation Flat. I suppose the "compensation" is the ever getting there, for the roads to the plateau from both sides are very steep, and as heavy as the plum-duff of my schooldays!

About 3 P.M. we had reached a river called the Umhlali, (pronounced M'plah-lee, with a sort of hiccough at the beginning. Oh! the pronunciation of the Kaffirs!) Well, here we outspanned again, for the oxen, notwithstanding the "compensation" of Compensation Flat, were distressed. The beauty of the river atoned for the spasm produced in speaking of it by its own name.

Then we went on, and an hour before dark I ordered bivouac by the Tete River. It was a bright starlight night, cool and comfortable; fires were lighted all about, to cook our evening meal, and afterwards we laid out our blankets on a rich meadow on the hillside.

*Dec. 22nd.*—All were ready to march at 4.30 A.M., except the oxen, and soon it was evident that they had been driven away by neighbouring Kaffirs, probably



to prevent them eating their corn in the night. At last they were found, miles away, and brought back, but it was nearly seven before we commenced our morning march.

Our first breakdown occurred to-day, but the wagon was repaired properly in about an hour. We crossed the Umooti, a comparatively large river, by a ford, called always a "drift" in this country, and about noon outspanned at Stanger. Stanger is the most advanced military depot of supplies on this line of operation.

At Stanger, I was joined by a hundred and forty of Delewayo's natives. They were all armed alike with assegais and shields. An assegai is a short spear, with a flat, sharp, double-edged blade forming a point at one edge, and a wooden shaft. Some of the native tribes produce excellent steel for their own use, by smelting the ironstone of the country with charcoal. Some assegais are made to throw and some to use as a lance. They use them with great dexterity. Their shields are made of hide, with the hair left on, are oval in shape and very tastefully ornamented by, I think, the Raler antelope skin, worked on to a dark hide ground. They wear a little, but sufficient, clothing hanging from the waist. Vanity seems to me to have reached its maximum in the human race amongst the Kaffirs. No coiffure that European lady ever achieved comes up to the elaborate hairdressing of a Kaffir. The time it must have taken to arrange his head I have not yet discovered. His hair is pulled and twisted and toozled, in a marvellous but always becoming manner, whenever he has leisure to attend to it, and then his head is decorated with remarkable care and symmetry with beads of various colours, particularly red, the colour so particularly becoming to black men.

The amount of attention bestowed upon ornamentation

of himself is the most apparent characteristic of the Kaffir, and as I have said, I see in him vanity in its intensest form. The Nonoti River is about seven miles from Stanger. I started on ahead of my party to choose the camping ground, and took the hundred and forty natives with me. At 6.15 this afternoon I reached the Nonoti River. The rain, which began as I left Stanger, was now pouring down in torrents. I passed the natives across by the drift, to the opposite side of the river, and made them understand that they were to shift for themselves till next morning.

They at once betook themselves to a bushy clump, lit fires and made shelters for the night. They were very pleased at coming on ahead with me, and of course I knew they would be. I put them across the river to be out of our way till we had formed camp. I chose the ground on the near side of the river, the right bank, for our camp. My party arrived just before dark, drenched; and to make things more comfortless, two wagons stuck fast before they reached the camp, and these wagons contained the personal luggage and the tents. They stuck when close to camp, but darkness came on, and it was therefore impossible to find individual baggage, nor did the men care to carry up tents and pitch them in the dark on the soaking ground. Under these circumstances, I ordered one of the bales, containing blankets for the natives, to be opened; the wagon conveying them had got into camp, and I distributed blankets to everyone on loan. A few fires were lighted with great difficulty, but the majority of the men being very tired, rolled themselves up in their blankets, head and all, and lay down to sleep in the rain. Dr. Mansell had got the ambulance-wagon up, and had pitched its two tents: one was reserved for any sick, and in the other, Mansell accommodated whom he pleased. I was glad to hear a "bed"

had been made there for me. The "bed" was a hospital blanket laid on the wet ground!

I managed to get my lantern off the baggage wagon, and I walked about to see all settled down for the night, before I retired. All at last were rolled up for sleep but one man. I found him standing alone in the rain. He was a Frenchman. He addressed me in piteous tones as "mon Capitaine." He was "trop malade" to roll up and sleep, he had rheumatism apparently in all parts, "ici et la"; his "baggages n'arrivaient point," the water tumbled and "il ne savait que faire." I took off my waterproof coat, put it on him, put him in the hospital tent and advised him to "coucher la" in the coat. Then I went to my bed; the others were all fast asleep in the tent, and the little space left for me seemed luxury compared to what I had seen outside! The others had taken off their wet boots, but experience had taught me to keep mine on. In the morning they all felt very cold, while I was warm: and they could not get their boots on again without painful efforts. . . .

*Dec. 23rd.*—Another wet day, but there were intervals without rain. I got all the wagons unloaded, and enough tents pitched to shelter everyone.

*Dec. 24th.*—No rain to-day, and never in my whole life have I ever before so heartily welcomed a dry day. I laid out a great part of our camp to-day.

*Dec. 25th.*—Another fine day. The thermometer 90° in my tent, but a cool, refreshing wind blows constantly. I heard this morning that Major Graves had reached Stanger, and had got my lost horse. Major Graves arrived in the afternoon. Paddy Wack had been found by a Kaffir, not far from where I lost him.

*Dec. 31st.*—It is now New Year's Eve. During the



past week I have been incessantly at work, forming our two battalions, dividing the equipment, arranging the camp and drilling the 1st Battalion for Major Graves. I am very pleased with our natives. They are the most intelligent blacks, and best black soldiers—so far as I can tell without yet having seen them fight—that I have ever seen. I am sorry that only a tenth of them is to be armed with rifles, that is, only ten men in each company of a hundred; the remainder are to have only their assegais and shields. There are not arms enough in the colony, I believe, to arm more. I take out the 1st Battalion to drill every day, and it is astonishing how quickly these natives grasp the idea of the movements I consider it necessary to teach them, and the spirit with which they do them is splendid. Already they can march well in line, change front, and attack a position. I place the captain in front of the centre of his company at all times; and a lieutenant on each flank; the sergeants and corporals behind the company. My words of command are, of course, understood by all the officers and serjeants and corporals, and then I depend upon them to get the companies into their proper places. This they do by signs and native words they have learnt for the purpose, and they do it very well. My drill to attack a position is this:—I form the battalion in line, in two ranks—the natives always move in two ranks—and I point out the position to be attacked; then I call out to the front, the ten riflemen of each company, and they spread along our front, a sergeant with each ten.

On my giving the order to advance, they run forward twenty yards, halt, and fire two or three rounds. Then they run forward another twenty yards, halt, take up the best cover they can, and fire again: and so they go on twenty yards at a time. I follow leading the whole line of natives, with their assegais and shields. At my signal,

the whole line rushes forward after the riflemen, and at my command and signal they all fall flat on the ground. At my signal they rise and rush forward again, and again fall flat, so as to escape the enemy's fire as much as possible: and so we go, the natives uttering fearful war yells at each rush; then, as we get near the supposed position of the enemy, I let the whole line rush forward upon it pell-mell, and in this way I hope the assegais will come into effective use. I hope to break the enemy's position up with the riflemen, and then to let the rest close with him in all their savage fury. Major Graves has allowed me to undertake and carry out the drill. A red pugaree has been provided for every native, as a distinguishing mark. In the 1st Battalion it is worn over the right shoulder and under the left arm. In the 2nd Battalion it is worn round the head. The 1st Battalion have blue blankets, the 2nd grey. In marching order, the blanket is worn in a roll over the left shoulder, and tied at the ends under the right arm. The native delights in that blue blanket; no matter how hot the day, he loves to carry it; and when he is arrayed in blue blanket and red sash, he is as proud as a monkey!

This is a lovely spot; a more delightful camping ground could scarcely be conceived. It always reminds me of Ballymoyer demesne, except that the large veteran trees are absent. There are no very large trees here. The Nonoti at this place forms a loop, and our camp is on a little hill in the loop, affording ample and more than ample space. The river flows forward along our left side, then bends round across our front and flows back along our right side, so that there is water everywhere within easy reach. The drinking water is drawn from our left up stream. We are about two miles from the sea. I have had presents of delicious venison. I have not had time to go out shooting myself, but those who have, have shot

antelopes close by. One day, some of our natives hunted an antelope right into our camp. In an instant the whole of our natives were under arms, each with a handful of assegais and his shield. I never saw so quick a transformation. The poor beast had no chance; it was surrounded in a few seconds and killed close to my tent. This achievement so excited Delewayo's men, that they instantly after assembled, and, to relieve their excitement, stormed a neighbouring hill with great violence; there was nothing but its steepness to resist them!

To-day we heard news that Cetywayo has refused the ultimatum, defied us, and added that he would "Chew us up like beef." So now for war!

On Sunday next we are ordered to cross the frontier, the river Tugela.

Colonel Pearson, 3rd Buffs, will command the column of invasion on this road; and on Sunday he will assemble his column beyond the Tugela. It will consist of regular troops, the Naval Brigade, and "Graves' Regiment."

On the 29th, Lord Chelmsford paid us an official visit. The 1st Battalion formed up to meet him a little way outside the camp, the natives lining the road on both sides in martial array. Lord Chelmsford walked down this avenue of men, and they then followed and marched past him, singing their war songs. He was very much pleased with the progress of the 1st Battalion.

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE ZULU CAMPAIGN

*Ekowe, Zululand,*

*Jan. 24, 1879.*

MY DEAR MAY,—I am now about thirty miles beyond the Tugela, in Zululand, with Colonel Pearson's column of invasion, called No. 1 Column.

We are obliged to put all lights out every evening at eight o'clock, so I cannot write at night as I used to do in the Ashanti war; and I consequently find it very difficult to write you an account of our proceedings.

On the 11th January we marched from the Singwasi to the Tugela, and encamped on the Natal bank. The 99th Regiment arrived from England, followed us and encamped there also. There we joined Colonel Pearson, who had already with him the "Bufs," a naval brigade of about a hundred sailors, landed from one of H.M. ships, with two small rifled field-guns (seven-pounders) and a gatling-gun; a few Marines, a few of the Royal Artillery with two small field-guns to be taken on with us, and some large field-guns to be left in a fort that had been built on a hill on the Natal bank.

Commanding the passage of the Tugela one company of Royal Engineers, and further, some irregular cavalry, about 200 I think, and some irregular pioneers. The whole of Colonel Pearson's column numbers about 4000 fighting men.

On 12th of January, Sunday, at daybreak, the crossing of the Tugela commenced. Long-continued rains had put an end to the ford for the time, and a deep and rapid

stream, 270 yards wide, flowed where in dry weather one can walk across.

A steel hawser had been stretched over the river by the Naval Brigade, and a ferry-boat, large enough to take the heaviest laden wagon, had been built, and this boat, or raft, was dragged backwards and forwards from bank to bank by ropes pulled sometimes by our natives, sometimes by bullocks, the boat being all the while attached to the steel hawser. The operation of crossing in this manner was necessarily tedious, but I dare say it was the most expeditious manner, since any bridge able to stand the force of the current would have to be made of a size and strength that I think would have required more time than was occupied by ferrying across.

From the 12th to the 18th of January, the process of crossing continued all day, and as much as possible all night. The heavy wagons and oxen were the most difficult part. Several attempts to make the oxen swim the river were made, and many thus went across, but so many turned back, and so many allowed themselves to be carried unreasonable distances down stream, that it was found to be shorter work to ship them over on the raft.

On the 18th of January, part of Colonel Pearson's column advanced from the Tugela, upon the road leading to Ulundi, the Zulu king's capital.

This first division of the column consisted of some of the irregular cavalry, four companies of the " Buffs," the Royal Artillery, and Engineers, part of the Native Pioneers, the Naval Brigade, and 1st Battalion of Major Graves' Regiment, less two companies left at the fort on the Tugela. Major Graves and I both went with the 1st Battalion. This advanced column was not allowed to take more baggage than absolutely necessary, nevertheless it required about thirty wagons, for we had to

carry fifteen days' supply of provisions, meat excepted, our meat carrying itself on its own legs !

We encamped for the night on the Inyoni River. No signs of the enemy had been observed, but we took every precaution, carefully guarding our flanks and rear against surprise. On arrival in camp, wagons are collected on the best defensive ground, the oxen turned out to graze, but all collected before dark, and the alarm post of every part of the force assigned. Before sunset we all take up our positions of defence for practice, and at 3 A.M., just two hours before daylight, we silently occupy these alarm posts, and there remain under arms till daybreak. This is done because the Zulus are apt to attack at such a time, and it is considered essential to our safety to be able to receive them in the darkness. This we do every night, and it is the most harassing duty we have. At 3 A.M. one is in one's deepest sleep, and to turn out then, as often as not in the rain, and remain on the *qui vive* for nearly two hours, is equally obnoxious to white man and black. A curious sound composed of a thousand coughs, yawns, and sneezes unrestrained, satisfies the commander that his camp is awake, and may, for all we know, have stopped the Zulu in his advance !

On 19th January we advanced to the Umsundusi River, and encamped just beyond it.

Early this morning the remainder of Colonel Pearson's column left the Tugela ; it consisted of some of the irregular cavalry and pioneers, five companies of the 99th, the two guns of the Naval Brigade, and the 2nd Battalion of Major Graves' Regiment, less two companies left in garrison on the Tugela. With this second part of the column came the remainder of the baggage—about eighty wagons. In the afternoon this division joined us at the Umsundusi, but all could not cross the river before dark.



So far the weather had been rainy, and consequently comfortless and unhealthy for us, unable to avoid everlasting wet feet. I suppose constant exercise has done much to keep me continually in good health under the circumstances.

The Zulu country is like Natal : unending park, groups of trees and wooded ravines, with the richest pasturage in the world growing all over the open ground, except near the numerous Kaffir kraals where Indian corn, sugarcane, pumpkin, kidney beans, &c., are grown. I suppose everything in the vegetable kingdom would grow here luxuriantly. The surface of the country is very hilly, but the hills are not very large and they are too steep to be called undulations. Beautiful and delicious streams of water abound, and the atmosphere is so clear that you are able to see clearly to distances far beyond what is possible in any part of Europe ; so much so, that what appears two or three miles off to an English vision, is nine or ten miles off.

We remained all the 20th on the Umsundusi to gather up the tail of the wagon column. Our whole column, when on the line of march, is several miles long from the head to the tail. On the 21st we advanced again, and encamped about three miles beyond the Amatikulu River.

On Wednesday, 22nd January, we advanced again, and in the course of that day we found the Zulus, in a very formidable position, across our road and on either side. No sooner did our attack commence, than they at once came down upon the flanks of our column, and endeavoured to surround us, while they engaged us warmly in front. A hot engagement lasting several hours took place, and ended in our gaining the heights in front and repelling the flank attacks. I am obliged to defer a description of this engagement till my next letter, as

I have been too often interrupted by various duties to have time to describe it in this. . . .

*Lower Drift, R. Tugela,*

*Jan. 30, 1879.*

MY DEAR MAY,—The news of the Zulu victory and terrible British disaster will reach England by this mail, and you will be anxious for news of me. I briefly mentioned at the close of my last letter that we, Colonel Pearson's column, had gained a victory over the Zulus on 22nd of January, after several hours' hard fighting, and next day reached Ekowe and began making a fort there. That same 22nd of January, many miles away on our left, beyond sight, reach or hearing of us, the Zulus also attacked the rear of Lord Chelmsford's column, with terrible success. He had gone forward with part of the column to attack the Zulus in front, but they cleverly avoided him there, and came upon the after part of the column in overwhelming numbers, killing seven companies of the 24th Regiment to a man, capturing the guns, sacking the baggage, and inflicting losses, not yet fully notified, upon the irregular troops.

News of a British defeat reached us at Ekowe, on 26th or 27th, in very vague terms ; and on 28th came a message from Lord Chelmsford, without any news of his disaster, telling Colonel Pearson that the whole Zulu army was marching against Ekowe, and directing him to take any steps he thought best for the safety of his force, but if possible not to abandon the left bank of the Tugela. Colonel Pearson decided to hold his ground, complete his fort as speedily as possible and stand a siege ; but as he would not be able to feed all the force for any length of time, he ordered Major Graves' Regiment to retreat

to the Tugela, leaving all our baggage at Ekowe, and to cut our way through the enemy if intercepted.

We started about 1 P.M. on the 28th of January, and reached the Tugela, thirty miles distant, about 2 o'clock at night without having met any resistance. The ford here is fortified on both banks of the river. Lord Chelmsford is, I believe, coming here with his column, and a powerful force is to be assembled as soon as possible, to relieve Ekowe and break the Zulu army up. Experience has been gained, which I hope will ensure our success.

I had a remarkable escape in the fight on the 22nd. I was driving back some Zulu scouts with the leading company of the advanced guard, before the action began, when a mass of Zulus suddenly rose from concealment on our left, and opened a heavy fire upon us, killing six out of the nine white men who were with me. I must keep the details for a future letter.

*Feb. 7th.*—I had not time in my last to give you any details of the fight on 22nd January, in which I took part with Colonel Pearson's column. There were two hard fights that day, at places far apart, and while Colonel Pearson's column was engaged, and gaining victory on the road to Ekowe, we had no idea that many miles away, on our left, Lord Chelmsford was suffering a disaster. Nor did we hear anything of it till several days after, and then in such meagre terms, that we thought the Native Contingent there had suffered alone and lost their leader, Colonel Durnford. It was not until I reached the Tugela with our Native Contingent, on the night of the 28th, that I heard what had happened. I will go back to the 22nd January.

On the morning of Wednesday, 22nd of January, we started early from our encampment, which I think I told you was about three miles beyond the Amatikulu



River, and purposed to reach Ekowe (pronounced Etch-ow'-ah) in that day's march. A slight change had been made in the order of march that I have already sent: a company of Graves' Regiment of Native Contingent was put at the head of the column, and marched from a quarter to half a mile ahead, as advanced part of the advanced guard, and two other companies marched one on either side, at from a quarter to half a mile from the road, to search the country and guard against surprise. I undertook the direction of these three companies, a duty which I liked much. Each company consisted of a hundred natives; and its white men were a captain, two lieutenants, three sergeants, and three corporals. All the white men had rifles, and about ten men in each company had rifles; the remaining natives having only assegais and shields. Bear those facts in mind as you read this narrative. We had marched a few miles; and I had proceeded about half a mile beyond a small river called the Inyezane, with the leading company, when Colonel Pearson decided to halt there for breakfast, and to outspan the oxen to graze. We had not been molested by the enemy, but we had seen for the first time, to-day, Zulu scouts watching us from the tops of distant hills. Colonel Pearson himself rode to the head of the column and gave the order to halt for breakfast, and noticing the scouts, that I had already reported to him, still watching from the heights, about three-quarters of a mile ahead, he said at the same time, "Hart, go and make a raid upon those fellows." I immediately took on the company of our Native Contingent that had been leading the way. We were then in the river valley. In front, at about three-quarters of a mile off, a steep hill rose on the right-hand side of the road and another steep hill on the left of the road, while the road itself rose gradually upon a third and less elevated

hill between the other two, and was within effective musketry range of their summits.

The whole country was covered with rich grass, with groups of trees standing, park-like, here and there, and thick bush at the bottoms of the ravines, or "kloofs" as they are called, between the hills. The hill on the right of the road was the highest of all, and one or two scouts stood there at first, but disappeared before I advanced; but on the spur that ran towards me from the base of that hill, several scouts remained, and did not seem disposed to retire. I accordingly turned off the road to my right with the company, and advanced towards this spur. The Zulus then retired, and on reaching the spur I could see them running away beyond a second spur of the same hill that lay behind. A small ravine lay between the spur we stood on and that beyond, and I ordered the company to cross and pursue. We all advanced together. The kloof was, as usual, full of bush, and there was also a marsh, but there was no difficulty in crossing. I found a track through the marsh by which I crossed easily on horseback, and soon we were all advancing on the further side, my men opening fire upon the flying scouts. Suddenly a mass of Zulus appeared on the hilltop on our left, and opened a fire of musketry upon us at a distance of about 400 yards. I saw at once that we had almost fallen into a trap, and I instantly gave the order "Retire." At the same moment the Zulus poured down the hill by hundreds at the top of their speed, with a tremendous shout, while others above kept up the fire over the heads of those descending the hill. The kloof was not far behind us, and we reached it, as far as I could perceive, without any loss, although the bullets whistled amongst us and struck the earth all about us as we went. There only remained to cross the kloof and we should be safe. I was at the end of the company

next the enemy—the end next the hill—and I even had to ride some little way towards the Zulus, to reach the track by which I was certain my horse could cross. So it seemed to me that as I had got safely over the kloof, all the others, who were further from the enemy, must necessarily have done so too, and it was not till the close of the general engagement which followed that I found that one of the lieutenants, two sergeants, and two corporals were killed in the kloof, evidently with assegais. I have never been able to make out how this occurred, although I have questioned all who I thought might be able to throw any light on the matter. I have not been able to find anyone who saw any of them killed. Their bodies lay among the *not* very dense bush in the kloof, and they all appeared to have met their death by assegais. Their rifles and ammunition were gone. Whether they were overtaken in the kloof, or whether Zulus were concealed in the kloof, and only appeared upon our retreating, I cannot determine. It has been suggested that they were murdered by our own natives, but this idea I see the strongest grounds for rejecting at once.

On passing the spur beyond, where we had first seen the Zulu scouts, I met Colonel Pearson, who had ridden forward at the sound of the firing. I told him that the enemy was coming on in force, and that he would require regular troops to the front at once, as the enemy would in a few minutes be on top of the spur in front of us—the spur I have just mentioned, and which formed a long ridge with patches of bush on the top. Some men of the "Bufs" were already close up, and they formed front in the direction I pointed to. Hardly were they in position, when puffs of smoke along the ridge and the sharp crack of bullets striking the wood about us showed that the enemy had reached the ridge.

From the summit of the high hill above—the hill on



the right of the road—a ploughing fire was opened upon us, but the range was now too great for it to be effective at this spot. That high hill is called Majia's Hill, after a chief named Majia, whose kraals are situated about it. It was on Majia's Hill that the scouts appeared before my advance, it was Majia's Hill that poured down the fire that obliged my party to retreat, and Majia's Hill formed, as you shall hear, the key of a most formidable position, occupied by several thousand of Cetywayo's best soldiers, bent upon destroying Colonel Pearson's column.

The soldiers of the " Buffs " replied at once to the fire from the ridge ; a gun was brought up and some rockets ; and then a second gun and a gatling. Masses of Zulus could now be seen about a mile off, marching towards the rear of our column, along our right flank. Upon these masses the guns were directed, and shell after shell burst in their midst ; while the rockets also were sent amongst them. But for all this they made, later on, a most determined attack upon our baggage train, endeavouring to surround our column. While the first few shells and rockets were being fired, I ordered the company of our Native Contingent, that had been with me on the raid, to rally near the gun.

The enemy had now begun to fire upon us from a kraal that stood close by the road, about half-way up the hill I have already described to you ; the road passes between the two high hills, Majia's on the right and another on the left. This fire was coming into the backs of our troops who were engaged near the gun. I accordingly marched the company I had rallied together, with another company of the natives who had been on the advanced guard, against the kraal ; but the courage of our natives utterly failed, they crouched down under any cover they could find, and after fruitless efforts to

make them advance, I called upon the white men of the two companies to go with me without them. We advanced steadily against the kraal by the main road, the officers, except myself, dismounted ; and the little party used their rifles well, and did as I directed, halting to fire, and advancing again when I gave the word. Thus we approached the kraal. It was a small kraal, but it occupied a very advantageous position ; the enemy covered by it could fire a quarter of a mile down the road ; and the road up to it, and the ground about it, was under the fire also both of Majia's Hill and the hill on the other side of the road. As we approached, the enemy retreated from the kraal, except a few men who remained almost until we reached it. Not one of our party was killed or wounded in taking the kraal ; but several dead bodies of the enemy there showed that our fire had been more effective. I at once set the kraal on fire, and as the flames shot high into the air, in consuming the huts, we gave a loud cheer all together, and I trusted that flames and cheer would as much dispirit the enemy as they would exhilarate our men. The Zulus, who had retired from the kraal, now made a stand, a few hundred yards farther back, upon the road, the ground still rising towards them. I ordered my party to advance again, but found they had not a round of ammunition left. I knew that our ammunition reserve was a long way off, so fearing that there might be a difficulty, I rode back myself to where Colonel Pearson was still engaged with the guns and the " Buffs," in the place I have before described, and I got leave to take ammunition from the first supply, no matter to whom it might belong. I thus got a supply at once, and got some of our natives who were crouching about to carry it, but so great was their dread of the fire upon us as we went, that it was only by pointing my revolver at their heads, and threatening to shoot them on the spot, that

I could manage to get them up to the kraal with their loads. On my way back to get this ammunition, I met part of the Naval Brigade and some of the "Buffs" coming up to the kraal—then in flames. I was therefore not a little surprised to read in Colonel Pearson's report, when I saw it long after, that the kraal had been taken by the Naval Brigade!

When my party had replenished their ammunition pouches, some minutes were spent by ourselves, the



AA. Valley of the Inyezane River.

B. Majia's Hill.

C. Kloof where five white men of our raiding party were killed.

D. Position taken by Colonel Pearson, with two guns, gatling, rockets, and part of the "Buffs" and Naval Brigade.

EE. Spur occupied in force by the Zulus.

F. Kraal stormed by white men of the 2nd Regt. N.N.C.

GG. Route by which Majia's Hill was stormed.

H. Heights from which the Zulus fired upon left flank of our attack.

sailors and the "Buffs," in replying to the enemy's fire, directed upon us from in front, from right and from left. I tried to push my party on, but found the enemy's number so great, that we could make no impression on them. So I went to Colonel Parnell, who commanded the detachment of the "Buffs" at the kraal, and told him that my men would go on and charge up the heights, if he would support with the "Buffs"; for without them, we had not rifles enough to put down the enemy's fire—in fact I had only about eight men with me; they were



fighting with great coolness and courage ; but from such a handful, a good lead was all that could be expected. We had commenced the attack in this direction, and I was anxious we should not lose the lead. Colonel Parnell's answer was, " Very well, go on." So once more my party advanced. One of the sergeants—the remaining sergeant of that unfortunate company that had commenced the battle to-day—was here badly wounded in the leg, and died a few days after. As we advanced, the enemy began to show signs of fear, and his ranks on the hilltop thinned very perceptibly. I urged my men to their utmost speed, but it was severe work for them, on foot, breasting the hill. The sailors and detachment of the " Buffs " followed them up. A very fortunate circumstance now favoured us. I had seen the value of it to us some time before. Whereas the high hill on our left was separated from us by a deep and difficult ravine, Majia's Hill was joined to the hill on which our road lay by a neck of land, so that Majia's Hill could be reached without crossing a valley—without, in fact, descending at all—by following this neck of land ; and so I led along. The summit of Majia's Hill was now before me, about 200 yards off, and the enemy, though still firing upon us from it, were now reduced to a small group, who held their ground. My little party plodded steadily on ; they were now but half a dozen white men, and so perseveringly had they clambered up the steep ascent, that the " Buffs " and the Naval Brigade were now, at least, fifty yards behind us. Two hundred yards more, and the position would be ours. I urged my men to their utmost speed, and charged forward on horseback at the group of Zulus on the summit. They fled—all but *one* man. He stood leaning forward, watching me intently, his left hand on his knee, and his rifle ready in his right. I could see glistening on his head the black ring that

signifies in Zululand a married man. The Zulu monarch forbids men to marry till they are forty years old, because he cherishes a large and well-organised army, and considers that the attractions of wife and kraal extinguish the martial spirit of his warriors. Here before me was a remarkable exception to that idea. I was rapidly approaching him, he was now only a hundred yards distant, and in a few moments I should use my revolver, but just then he dropped quickly on one knee, took very deliberate aim at me for a couple of seconds, and fired. He seemed scarcely to believe he could have missed his prize, for he waited to take one eager look at me, as his smoke cleared away, and then seeing me still coming on, he bolted away and disappeared. Directly afterwards I was on the summit, and saw hundreds of Zulus crowding down the opposite side of the hill in full retreat. I fired my revolver into the crowd, and looked round for my men to open fire, but it is one thing to ride up a hill and another to walk up! It was some minutes before they reached me. Then up came the "Bufs" and the men of the Naval Brigade. We stood on the key of the enemy's position. We commanded the whole country round. This the Zulus knew, and they retreated from all quarters, then from our position we opened a heavy fire upon them in all directions. They swarmed below us, some crowding as fast as they could run across the open country, others darting from tree to tree in the kloof below, and many walking along under our fire, apparently with the utmost indifference, but probably quite out of breath. So rapid had been our advance and so unexpected our capture of Majia's Hill, that we had surprised all these masses of men before they could get out of range. Here I stood upon the very hill where the men were posted who early in the day had so nearly entrapped my company of raiders.

Far away, towards the tail of our long column of wagons, we could see the 99th Regiment advancing across the low ground of the Inyezane River valley, in fighting order, towards Majia's Hill. It struck me that they thought the hill still in possession of the enemy, so I suggested a British cheer, to undeceive them. We all gave three hearty cheers, they were understood at once, and we saw the 99th withdraw.

The engagement was now quite over, the Zulus had dispersed, and we prepared to resume our march. The Zulus, with their usual tactics, had endeavoured to surround us, but they had been successfully kept back by the rear-guard. Another lieutenant of "Graves' Regiment" was killed, shot through the head, in the attack upon the rear of our column; so that Major Graves' Regiment lost by this engagement seven of our white men, including the sergeant who died afterwards.

Our casualties were extraordinarily small, considering the thousands of bullets fired at us from advantageous positions. The only other white men killed were two privates of the "Bufs"; four of our natives only were killed; and sixteen white men wounded. Colonel Pearson's and Colonel Parnell's horses were both shot under them. The position chosen by the Zulus was remarkably strong; my description of it will, I dare say, make that clear. It is by far the strongest position between the Tugela and Ekowe. We know now that Cetwayo sent there several thousand of his best troops, and ordered them to destroy Colonel Pearson's column. The Zulus took up their position excellently, and were so well concealed, although in such numbers, that we were unaware of the presence of any force until we were actually engaged. We have since learned that their plan was not to attack us until the column was between the two high hills, but that in consequence of my raid,



the engagement was brought on prematurely, and their plan spoilt.

How fortunate then was that raid ! It cost five good lives, but perhaps it saved the column from a disaster—or at least from a repulse. The Zulus fought well, showing judgment and courage quite equal to their enemy, but although they outnumbered us greatly, they could not hold their ground against our artillery and superior rifles. We had the best rifles in the world ; they, for the most part, merely muskets, weapons of the past ; so that while we reckoned our losses by units, they must have reckoned theirs by hundreds.

Our own natives I found utterly useless in battle—but I will speak of them in my next letter.

We dug a large grave by the roadside, and buried all our killed white men therein together. Our chief interpreter, a clergyman, read the burial service.

Meanwhile, the head of the column had proceeded on again. We did not reach Ekowe that day, but bivouacked for the night, well prepared against attack.

Next morning, Thursday, the 23rd of January, we proceeded, and soon reached Ekowe, and at once began to make a fortified post there, to form the first depot of supply in Zululand, preparatory to our further advance. . . .

. . . . .  
*Lower Drift, Tugela River,  
 Natal-Zululand Frontier,  
 March 8, 1879.*  
 . . . . .

Ekowe was merely a little Norwegian missionary station a short time ago, but now it has become a place of renown in South Africa, if not in England too, by this time. My time at Ekowe was principally spent in fortifying the post, and I had already

made our natives expert at entrenching. My plan of entrenching ground with them was simpler far than the military regulation one of marking out the lines of the trench with white tape. I dispensed with the tape, and made the natives all hold hands, and stretch out thus in a string at arm's length. Then I walked along the string of men, and put them exactly on the ground where the entrenchment was to be dug. Next I had a pickaxe and shovel put by other men at the feet of each man in the string, and then, but not till then, I let the men leave go hands, whereupon they would commence to dig where they stood, each excavating a bit of trench from where he stood, to his neighbour on his right. I had thus entrenched the most exposed parts of the position at Ekowe, while the Engineers, with the regular soldiers, were making a substantial fort within. This fort was well in progress ; and I was proceeding to entrench the less exposed parts of the position, when, about noon on 28th January, Colonel Pearson received a message from Lord Chelmsford, briefly telling him to expect the whole of the Zulu army down upon him ; to take any steps he thought best for the safety of his force ; and if he retired, to endeavour to his utmost to hold the left (Zulu) bank of the Tugela. That was all—not a word about the disaster at Isandhlwana, so we were still quite ignorant of its occurrence, and had only heard a rumour that Colonel Durnford had been killed and his native contingent defeated ; but at the same time, rumour said that Lord Chelmsford had next day gained a tremendous victory. His present message was dated several days back, so the Zulus might be upon us at any moment, perhaps twenty or thirty thousand strong.

There was no time to be lost. Colonel Pearson called the commanding officers together, and it was decided to hold the post, but that, as the place would probably be

invested by the enemy for many weeks, the whole of the irregular cavalry and Native Contingent (*i.e.* the two battalions of "Graves' Regiment") should at once retire to the Tugela, to enable the provisions at the post to hold out long enough; and they were to endeavour to cut their way through the enemy, should he be found to have intercepted them, as was not improbable, between Ekowe and the Tugela.

I was called in then, from work at the defences, and was allowed to give Colonel Pearson my opinion. I read Lord Chelmsford's message. It was evident that he had received at least a serious check, for his message made no allusion to any possibility of his being able to assist Colonel Pearson; and his mention of the Tugela, and desire that the passage of that river should be held, showed me that there was no hope of reinforcement of Ekowe.

I advised Colonel Pearson to take the opposite course. I recommended him to destroy all his stores, except such ammunition as could be easily conveyed, and to retire at once on the Tugela, while there was a possibility of doing so; and I gave the following reasons:—

1. Because the position was naturally weak, being commanded at effective musketry range by hills that the enemy could occupy; while the artificial defences required at least a day more to complete them in the simplest form.

2. Because the water supply was outside the defences, under fire of ground accessible to the enemy, and within his power to reach and poison.

3. Because there was nothing of material importance in the post to render its defence desirable; neither town, wounded, women and children or garrison artillery to suffer by the evacuation of the post.

4. Because if the Zulus acted wisely, the post could



not be relieved without severe sacrifices of our troops ; so that a present retreat to the Tugela and subsequent advance again in great force, would probably in the end gain a greater moral and material advantage over the enemy, while it would certainly secure us from reverses in battle.

However, Colonel Pearson adhered to the decision to hold the post ; and I at once prepared the Native Contingent to march. We left all our kit at Ekowe, only taking what we could carry on our persons or horses, and this was principally ammunition, for we expected a fight on the way.

My plan, which Major Graves approved, was that, as we knew the natives could not be depended on in battle, but would go just where they thought safest, we should not depend upon them, but that all the white men should march together—both battalions—and the natives follow by companies. The officers mounted to ride first, the white men on foot to follow immediately after ; and the pace to be regulated by the powers of the latter, the mounted officers to lend horses, by turns, to those on foot who might break down.

If we met the enemy, we were to keep together, attack vigorously, and endeavour to force our way through towards the Tugela.

About 12.30 that afternoon of 28th of January we started. I said good-bye to Colonel Pearson, and added that my greatest hope was that my advice would prove to be bad advice. It is now 8th of March and I can still hope this. Our latest news of him is dated the 24th of February, and he had not been attacked, so his defences must be most formidable now, perhaps impregnable. The Zulus have invested the place, but they are evidently too wise to attack it now. He has ample provisions to the end of March, and before then we shall have forces

enough assembled here to expect to relieve him. *If* we can do this successfully, without the loss of too many lives, then it will be well that Ekowe was not evacuated. There remains, therefore, only one "If."

The beginning of our march was intensely hot on foot, but pleasant riding. As we approached Majia's Hill, I noticed our natives eagerly gathering the leaves of a shrub and stuffing them into their nostrils. This was in prospect of the stench from the battlefield, and I was glad to follow their example. The leaves chosen had a very pleasant smell.

We halted when we had passed the Inyezane River, to draw in stragglers; and I then took the sketch. We pressed on our march, and as night came on it became cool and refreshing. There was good starlight, so it was not difficult to keep the track. We passed, after dark, safely through the Amatakulu Bush and crossed the Amatakulu River into open country again, a long, weary, and anxious march.

Our natives, as I expected, did just as they thought best for their personal safety—two thousand of them—sometimes they ran far ahead of us, sometimes they followed behind, sometimes they kept as close to us as possible.

Once across the Amatakulu I felt sure we were safe. We had seen nothing of the enemy, and I was sure now that we should not; and that if he was following us up, our pace was too rapid for him to overtake us before the Tugela.

Thus relieved of my chief anxiety, sleep came over me, and from time to time I slept soundly as I rode; and I slept without relaxing hold of my reins or of my carbine, which I carried in my right hand—facts which surprised me and surprise me still. The wakings from these naps were not pleasant. Everything within sight, in the

starlight, assumed weird and hobgoblin shapes of the most unaccountable and fantastic form—the combined effect, I suppose, of fatigue and care upon the brain. It always took several seconds of staring and eye-rubbing to dispel each. Only once in my life before have I seen these phantasmagoria : it was in Ashanti, as I was being carried at night, in a hammock, after a long and anxious day's work.

At last, this weary march of thirty miles approached the end. It was two hours past midnight when we reached Fort Tenedos, as it is called, after the crew of H.M.S. *Tenedos*, who made it, the fort which covers the passage or drift of the Tugela here on the Zulu side.

We unsaddled our horses and let them loose, and lay down on the dewy ground outside the fort. We had no kit, so we had no preparations to make for our repose ; saddles made pillows, and that was all. I fell at once into a sound and refreshing sleep, "Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care."

Next day our natives deserted. They said the Zulus were going to enter Natal, and that their wives and children and cattle would be captured in their absence ; so they laid down all Government property that had been issued to them, and departed without leave to their kraals. Thus up to 13th of February there was a complete collapse of "Graves' Regiment."

On 12th of February, Lord Chelmsford came here ; he appointed me Staff-Officer of the Lower Tugela district, which extends five-and-twenty miles from this. Colonel Law, who commanded the Artillery, he made at the same time Commandant of the district, during the absence of Colonel Pearson (the real Commandant) at Ekowe.

The 2nd Regiment of Natal Native Contingent was ordered to reassemble at once, and has done so ; but the two battalions are in future to be quite separate, and



will not therefore require a staff-officer. Major Graves has been called back to his civil employment at Durban, and Captain Barton, whom you know, has been appointed to command his battalion. There is much to be done up here in the front ; and I have been hard at work, principally fortifying this place and organising with Colonel Law, the relief of Ekowe. He is to command the relieving force, and I go as Staff-Officer. We shall take 1000 regular soldiers, Nettleton's battalion of natives, and Barton's if ready. We shall leave no stone unturned to ensure our success.

*Lower Drift, Tugela River,  
Natal-Zululand Frontier,  
March 21, 1879.*

MY DEAR MAY,—From the 29th January, when I had retired here from Ekowe with the Native Contingent, till 12th of February, when Lord Chelmsford arrived here, there was a lull.

The road to Ekowe was intercepted by the enemy, and all communication with the garrison cut off. The natives of Major Graves' regiment had gone to their homes ; and we, with the white men here, encamped on the Natal bank of the river, awaiting orders for the future.

Nothing could have gratified me more than my new appointment. Our plans have been changed more than once. At first we were going to try and open communication with a force of 600 regular soldiers ; taking no baggage, and carrying our own supplies of ammunition, and food enough for four days. Then Lord Chelmsford promised to reinforce our expedition up to 1000 men, soldiers and sailors ; and we had decided upon the 13th of March to advance. But before that time, we received news of the prompt despatch of troops from England ; and as Ekowe was well provisioned, Lord Chelmsford

decided that we should wait for them, and decided wisely, I think, for there would have been no necessity to risk the defeat of our force by overwhelming numbers. We have since heard that the Zulus were aware of our intention, and had placed 20,000 of their soldiers to meet us—that information may or may not be accurate.

The 57th and 91st Regiments and the 3rd Battalion of the 60th Rifles are now marching here from Durban, their landing-place; and these, with the troops already here and our Native Contingent, will give us a force able, we may confidently expect, to defeat any army Cetywayo can send against us.

Colonel Law and I are at work unceasingly, all day. The organisation of supplies and transport is the great difficulty; and it is greater here, where the enemy may come from all sides at once, than it is in European warfare. To protect a long train of wagons in this war is a serious matter. Our train of wagons for this approaching movement is no less than four miles long! How to protect such a string of wagons was the question. My plan, which the General has approved, is, never to let the train get more than two miles long, and to manage that in this way: when the head of the column has advanced about two miles, it will halt upon an advantageous place, and remain halted until the tail of the train has drawn up to it and the wagons all reassembled. Then the head will move on again another two miles, and halt as before. The rate of advance will be slow in this manner—it will not average more than a mile an hour—but it will probably make our convoy secure, and remove the great weakness that is inseparable from a long line of impedimenta. I have no doubt we can securely guard a length of two miles.

All attention now is concentrated on this coming movement, and it may produce the decisive battle of the

war. On the other hand, the Zulus may perhaps decline combat and retire to fight their decisive engagement nearer to the King's kraal (Ulundi). We shall take every precaution against surprise.

From time to time we have managed to pass native messengers between this and Ekowe, and their adventures *en route* have generally been most hazardous. We reward them liberally. But the most successful means of communication has been by flashing the sun upon Ekowe with a looking-glass. This has been so far perfected within the last few days, that now we hold conversation with Ekowe all day when the sun shines. We signal from a hilltop in about two miles in advance of this.

From the hilltop Ekowe can be distinguished with a telescope, sixteen miles distant, in a straight line.

It is done in this way. A frame with two wires crossing in the centre is set up, and behind it a looking-glass fixed upon a stand by a screw, as well as vertically upon its own hinges. Then a little hole is scraped in the mercury, at the centre of the looking-glass, and the stand is arranged so that on looking through the hole in the mercury, the cross-wires and Ekowe are in one line. Then the glass is moved, so that the sun is reflected on the cross-wires, and we are sure then that it is reflected on Ekowe. One man keeps altering the glass as the sun moves, so as to keep it reflected on the cross-wires; and another, by passing a screen across in front, makes long and short flashes, by which letters of the alphabet are made, as in the telegraph code. They do the same at Ekowe. We use only a small bedroom looking-glass, and theirs must be a very small one, yet their flashes when well directed are very brilliant.

They have made sorties and attacked the enemy, and



are now engaged in making a road towards us, which will be a short-cut saving three miles.

The Zulus have never ventured to attack their fort, but they hang about and capture their cattle from time to time. They have also attacked the working parties at the new road, but not with effect. The Zulus at first came down upon the new road when the working parties retired for the night, and tried to destroy the work, but the garrison left torpedoes behind and blew them up. All this was, amongst other things, telegraphed by flashes. I went out to the signal station last Sunday, and just as I arrived came the sad message that Captain Williams of the " Buffs " died on the 13th. He was in the 41st Regiment at Aldershot, in my brigade. How melancholy after all this waiting, and when relief was drawing so near.

They are all right as to provisions at Ekowe. They have had some sickness ; but besides Captain Williams, only three or four deaths—private soldiers.

All luxuries in our baggage that we left behind have been seized and sold by auction. Pickles fetched 12s. a bottle, tobacco 30s. a pound, and penny boxes of matches sold freely for 4s. 6d. each !

It is a great thing now, that we can signal to Ekowe and tell them exactly when we start. They can assist much if the enemy gives battle.

I shall be glad to recover my kit again. I managed to buy a second shirt and a second pair of socks here ; but I should like a change of clothes in wet weather. I hate getting up in the morning and putting on wet clothes to begin the day in. Happily, we generally have sun enough to dry everything.

The socks I bought here from a travelling salesman are of unique manufacture ; they have been cut out of some stocking-looking material and then sewn together ; the large seams on the inside are comfortless in walking.

However, here, one is almost always in the saddle. Before long I shall have all I want. I brought my "housewife" from Ekowe, for it is always useful; and I find that if I go several days without repairing my only suit, it is in a bad way, too ventilating all over; and if I neglect to repair it for a few days the rags have set in! Imagine my feelings under these conditions at finding that my housewife had been stolen. I can now only tie myself together with string. It is something to know that I have a ball of string: in this country without railways, the difficulty of getting anything is great.

I am much grieved at the death of Colonel Home: the whole army and perhaps the nation suffers a loss. Besides this, I have lost in him one of my best friends.

*In Bivouac, Gingindhlovu, Zululand,  
April 2, 1879.*

MY DEAR MAY,—All is well. We, the relieving force for Ekowe, have got to a day's march of the place. Zulus attacked us fiercely this morning, completely surrounding us, and rushing up almost to our bayonets.

We successfully repulsed them, and then chased them a mile or two.

We were formed in square, cattle in the centre, wagons enclosing cattle; and troops outside the wagons, behind a simple entrenchment in a square.

We lost only one officer and about five men killed; and have about thirty wounded. We have counted four hundred and seventy-one dead Zulus round our square within a thousand yards of us.

My best charger was killed, shot through the body.

We hope to reach and relieve Ekowe to-morrow. The garrison of Ekowe signal to us by looking-glass sun-

flashes from distant hills, from whence they must have seen our fight with telescopes, as their first message was "We congratulate you." This was after the fight, no sun before. The officer killed was Lieutenant Johnson, 99th Regiment. . . .

*Entrenched at Gingindhlovu, Zululand,  
April 17, 1879.*

MY DEAR MAY,—I had only time to give you a hasty account of the progress of our column to the relief of Ekowe and a summary of our fight here on the 2nd of April. I shall now be able to recount what has happened more fully.

From the 13th of February, when Lord Chelmsford appointed me Staff-Officer of the Lower Tugela district, under Colonel Law, to the end of February, we were quite on the defensive, preparing to resist an invasion of Natal; and my time was chiefly occupied in strengthening and increasing the fortifications on the Natal bank of the Tugela at the Lower Drift. A strong redoubt had been built on the Zulu bank there, but it was expected that the Zulu army would cross higher up the river and attack our depot of stores on the Natal side. In this work, I was much assisted by a young lieutenant in the 99th named Alexander. I heard he had been through a course of field fortification and was a good officer, so I put him in charge of the working parties, to carry out the works I traced. This he did most industriously and exceedingly well; and so I was glad to discover that he was a son of your friend Lady Louisa Alexander.

The Zulus did not enter Natal. When they could have done so they did not; and when they would have done so, heavy rains swelled the Tugela and they could not.

From the beginning of March, Colonel Law and I were



deeply occupied in preparing a force for the relief of Ekowe. We found great difficulty in passing a messenger to Ekowe. Only natives could possibly evade the Zulus between us and the place; we offered good rewards, there were many attempts and many failures—our messengers coming back after perilous adventures and hairbreadth escapes. At last, for some time, no natives would attempt it, even for a reward of five head of cattle apiece. Let me interrupt myself here just to speak of the value of cattle to a native. He has to buy his wife, and her price is cattle. Every Zulu girl is the property of her father, or of her eldest brother if the father is dead. Every daughter born is a treasure because she is worth more or less cattle. A suitor must pay for his wife ten or fifteen head of cattle, according to her estimated beauty; and he may have as many wives as he can pay for. If he is a very poor man he may have to put up with a widow; for widows are almost as little esteemed by Zulus as by Sam Weller's father: one indifferent cow is considered ample payment for any widow. The rules of marriage are very strictly guarded; and so you will see that a native who is not born in possession of herds must be provident and work for years more or less, to earn the price of the wife of his choice; and when he refuses a reward of five head of cattle to make a journey of thirty miles, something very grave must lie in the way.

At length a messenger was got through to Ekowe and back. He travelled by night only, keeping off the road and going from copse to copse as opportunity offered; we had not then established signals by the looking-glass.

All was ready; and Colonel Law and I were to start with 1000 men, he in command and I as Staff-Officer. Happily for us and for all concerned, that movement did not come off. Before the 13th the news of the coming

reinforcements was received from England, and Lord Chelmsford stayed the relief of Ekowe. Colonel Law and I knew our expedition would be a perilous one, and we expected to fight a hard, perhaps a desperate battle, but it was not until long after, not until the relief of Ekowe, that we learnt that our force must have been annihilated, swallowed by the numbers Cetywayo prepared to meet us. The Zulus, we know now, had learnt our intention, and for days before the 13th Colonel Pearson and his garrison saw streaming past Ekowe, beyond the range of his guns, day by day, thousands and tens of thousands of Zulus in military array, all moving towards the formidable position of the Inyezane, that lies between the Tugela and Ekowe. What would they not have given to warn us of this! You can imagine, perhaps, what they felt then, and what they felt afterwards when they heard we had remained.

And now, from that time up to the 28th of March, Colonel Law and I worked harder than ever to prepare all that was required for the greater force that was to relieve Ekowe. Three complete British regiments were to be added, besides several hundred sailors and marines, and further, the reassembled natives that formerly made "Graves' Regiment," 2000 in number; and this time all, or nearly all, armed with breech-loaders.

And so the relieving force finally amounted to 3400 white men, with two guns, two Gatlings (mitrailleuses), and four rocket tubes.

All the preparations Lord Chelmsford left to Colonel Law and me; and we did our best to carry out well the trust placed in us. It was not a light or simple task to assemble the carts and wagons required to convey the equipment and supplies, and to determine the best equipment for the object in view, and then how best to dispose of it; to organise a transport of several miles in

length, out of civilian materials ; and lastly, to put all across the Tugela by the ferry, in order on the Zulu bank.

On the 28th of March all was ready. Lord Chelmsford moved his headquarters to the Tugela some days before, and prepared to take command of the force himself.

From that time Colonel Law and I were daily in conversation with him. At such times I am well conscious of the advantage of having always worked hard at the study and practice of my profession. Otherwise one would feel as he who cannot swim feels in five feet of water, a dismal sense of loss of weight, and with it desire to take a step lacking the force required to plant the foot.

Lord Chelmsford's plan was to proceed with the whole force for Ekowe, taking with us a month's supply of provisions ; to give battle where the enemy might present himself in our path, and having defeated him, to withdraw the whole garrison of Ekowe replacing it by one regiment, some natives, and the month's supply of provisions.

I suggested to him not to attempt to take that long train of supplies to Ekowe, but to entrench it in a strong position, before reaching the difficult Inyezane country, and leaving a sufficient guard with it, strongly fortified, to proceed with the rest of the fighting men, unhampered by baggage train, onwards for Ekowe ; and having overpowered the Zulus wherever they might oppose us, to withdraw the garrison of Ekowe altogether, and abandon the place, with the intention of forming a post at the Inyezane instead. This plan Lord Chelmsford at first approved and decided upon, but next day he returned to his own original plan. He was, I believe, disinclined to abandon even temporarily, to the enemy, any ground we had gained.

On the evening of the 28th of March, Colonel Law and I crossed the Tugela and bivouacked with the relieving force ; we had no tents. Heavy rain began to fall and



poured down all night, drenching us thoroughly. I wrote out the orders for the march to commence next morning; and I wrote in pencil, while a man held out a waterproof coat over my head and paper in the rain. Then I went round and read the dripping orders myself to the dripping commanding officers, for I doubted if they could read them. All this time I hoped the rain was wetting the Zulu powder.

At daylight on the 29th of March we started, and soon the sun came out and dried us. That night we assembled and bivouacked by the Inyoni River, ten miles from the Tugela. We took every precaution, forming a laager with our wagons and an entrenchment outside. A laager is a Dutch contrivance; it is an enclosure formed by jamming the wagons close together; the cattle are put inside, and the defenders are sometimes inside the wagons, sometimes behind an entrenchment outside.

Lord Chelmsford now came up and took command, and so Colonel Crealock, his military secretary, became the senior Staff-Officer of the force, and I, with the General's two aides-de-camp, Captain Buller and Captain Molyneux, were the others. Hitherto I had been the only Staff-Officer.

This was our force :

Seamen and Marines of H.M. ships	
<i>Shah, Tenedos, and Boadicea</i> . . .	640
2 Companies of the " Buffs " . . .	140
5     "             "     99th Regt. . .	430
The 57th Regiment . . . . .	640
"   3rd Batt. of the 60th Rifles . .	540
"   91st Highlanders . . . . .	850
"   4th Batt. of Native Contingent (Barton's) . . . . .	800
"   5th Batt. of Native Contingent .	1200
"   Native Scouts . . . . .	150
"   Mounted Troops . . . . .	230
Total . . .	5620 fighting men.

And there were besides, our commissariat, transport, and medical men, drivers, &c., and 136 vehicles, viz. 44 carts, drawn by four mules or six oxen, and 94 wagons drawn each by from sixteen to eighteen oxen. This train, if stretched out and without gaps, would extend over four miles of road.

At daylight on the morning of the 30th of March we advanced again and formed our laager for the night on the near bank, the right bank of the Amatakulu River. We had thus gone only between four and five miles this day, but as we could not have got the whole force across the Amatakulu and entrenched it before dark, the General wisely waited in a strong position on the near side of the river. I worked hard with the natives all the afternoon and evening, and by moonlight some way into the night, improving the approaches to the ford on both sides of the water. The water at the drift was about thirty yards wide and waist deep, with a round, even, gravelly bottom. I widened the road of approach at both sides of the stream and smoothed it; reeds grew in abundance close by, and I had them laid across the road, so that next day our wagons moved easily up the steep ascent from the ford, the wheels not sinking in at all.

The whole of Monday, the 31st of March, was occupied in crossing the Amatakulu, and we made our laager for the night about a mile and a half beyond.

On Tuesday, the 1st of April, we advanced to the locality where I am now writing, Gingindhlovu, seven miles from the Amatakulu, and there formed laager as usual.

Our laager was nearly a square of about a hundred and fifty yards a side, formed by the wagons drawn close together. Inside this were the cattle. Outside was a square entrenchment, leaving a space about twenty yards wide between the wagons and the entrenchment. In

this space were the troops and the guns and rocket tubes, all in assigned places.

The entrenchment was in its first stage; that is, it was merely a little trench two feet and a half wide and a foot and a half deep, the earth heaped up in front, to give as much cover as possible. Such a trench is quickly made—a regiment can dig cover of this kind for itself in half an hour, and it shelters one rank of men kneeling, very well. As time admits, it can be developed and made more and more effective to any extent. Every soldier entrenches, or should entrench his post, beginning, if time presses, with the first simple trench I have described. It has great advantages. It gives much cover from the view and fire of the enemy, and it makes the ground the soldier is to hold and fixes him there when under a heavy fire; without it, he might otherwise retire to seek cover. Furthermore, it is no hindrance whatever to his advancing at any moment, for he can step forward out of it.

About six o'clock on Wednesday morning, the 2nd of April, a shout ran round our entrenchment, "Stand to your arms!" The bugles sounded the "Alarm" and everyone bounded in to his place. Directly afterwards shots were fired by our outposts and we saw them retiring upon the entrenchments. Soon they were all inside with us. Close by me was one of our natives, his eyes fixed with the look of a hawk, while with one hand he pointed towards the Inyezane valley and said to me, "Impi," that is "Army." I looked there and saw what might have been easily mistaken for a streak of bush, bordering a stream and disappearing back into the distance miles away. But it was not bush; a few instants of observation showed that it was in motion: it was a stream of black men rapidly approaching our position from our left front; it was a Zulu army!

When the head of the stream arrived at about a mile



from our entrenchment, it split into two streams and began winding round our left, towards our rear ; and the other passed across our front and then circled round our right, meeting the head of the other black stream in our rear. Thus they surrounded us. Then began the most splendid piece of skirmishing eye ever beheld. No whites ever did, or ever could skirmish in the magnificent perfection of the Zulus. Unencumbered by much clothing, in the prime of life and as brave as it is possible for any men to be, they bounded forward towards us from all sides, rushing from cover to cover, gliding like snakes through the grass, and turning to account every bush, every mound, every particularly high patch of grass between us and them, and firing upon us, always from concealment. If total concealment were possible, we should not have seen a Zulu till he reached our trench, but it was not possible, and we could see them as they bounded from one point of concealment to another, always approaching. When a Zulu fires from concealment he instantly throws himself flat, to escape the shots fired to where his smoke has disclosed his place.

On they came. At one part they were about two hundred yards off, at another they had closed up to forty yards. Our soldiers fixed bayonets. However, they were not to be required to use them, for the deadly fire that combed the grass as it were all round us had killed every Zulu within several hundred yards. One hour had passed, and their fire evidently was rapidly diminishing, although there was no failing in the numbers still crowding up from the Inyezane valley.

At this sign of failing, we gave three tremendous cheers. Those cheers echoed through the valley and were heard far away ; and they were received as a sign of victory, as I have seen them received by Africans before, at Abrakrampa, at Ordahsu, and on Majia's Hill.

And now our two thousand natives rushed out of our entrenchments, our mounted troops went too ; and after one vigorous effort of the Zulus to stop the sortie, by wheeling up and firing into the right flank of the advancing troops, they turned and fled.

But their bravest men had not breath to run away, and they perished. Let me draw a veil over that part of the scene. Chivalry ends when pursuit begins ; but the dire necessities of war oblige that a defeated army shall also be dispersed, so that it shall never fight again ; it is called consummating the victory.

We had had a short but hard fight of an hour and a half. One of the first few shots fired killed my best horse, the one I rode on the 22nd of January. I was not on his back at the time.

All the bodies within a thousand yards of us were ordered to be buried at once, and they numbered 471. Such fine fellows—herculean limbs and the high intelligent forehead of European races. But the British public's notion of Zulus is its one notion of all black races, and that notion is the savage described by Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe*.

On Thursday, the 3rd of April, Lord Chelmsford found the ground towards Ekowe so swampy, that he could not take on the wagons of supply, and so he once more decided to abandon Ekowe. We entrenched our wagons strongly here, and advanced to Ekowe with the 57th, 60th, and 91st Regiments, and some mounted troops, leaving the rest to guard our entrenchment. We met with no opposition on the way, and reached Ekowe after dark. Next day the whole of the old garrison evacuated the place and started for the Tugela. We remained there during the 4th, and on the 5th of April abandoned the place, and marched back to Gingindhlovu, reaching this place on the 6th. . . .

*Fort Chelmsford, Inyezane River, Zululand,*

*May 2, 1879.*

MY DEAR MAY,—After the relief of Ekowe, Lord Chelmsford reorganised his forces and divided them into three parts, called 1st Division, 2nd Division, and Wood's Flying Column. General Crealock was given command of the 1st Division, and General Newdegate that of 2nd Division. These Generals have just arrived from England. Each division has two brigades of three regiments each. The 1st Division, to which I belong, is made up of the troops that have been operating from the Tugela. Its 1st Brigade is commanded by Colonel Pearson, now promoted to be a Brigadier-General; and its three regiments are the "Bufs," 88th, and 99th. The 1st Brigade is now at the Tugela. The 2nd Brigade is commanded by Colonel Pemberton, 60th Rifles, and its regiments are the 60th Rifles (3rd Batt.), the 57th, and the 91st Highlanders. The 2nd Brigade is now here about twenty-five miles in front of the Tugela, and holds the most advanced position. Great was my joy when, after the relief of Ekowe, Lord Chelmsford told me I was to be Brigade-Major to this brigade. I have mentioned all the regiments of the 1st Division, because this division will be the force operating from the Tugela in the renewal of the campaign, and it will be convenient to you to know this when reading the papers. Besides these regiments we have the Native Contingent, to which I began by being Staff-Officer, only instead of being "Graves' Regiment," they form two battalions called the 4th and 5th Battalions of Natal Contingent. Captain Barton, 7th Fusiliers, commands the 4th, and Nettelton, a good volunteer officer, experienced in the Colony, commands the 5th. These natives are here now; and we have also with us some irregular cavalry and about 400 sailors and marines attached to the brigade. So that



altogether we have about 3000 white men and 2000 natives here under arms.

Gingindhlovu, where I last wrote from, was a very bad station, owing to the bad water supply. We drank entirely from a marsh and there was a good deal of sickness and some deaths from dysentery. We have no filters. Colonel Pemberton had to be sent back to the base hospital behind the Tugela, suffering severely from dysentery, so Colonel Clarke, 57th Regiment, commands the 2nd Brigade for the time. I expect Colonel Pemberton will recover, as he has such courage about it. Those who fear soon die. Colonel Pemberton sent for me one day; he was very bad, and spoke with difficulty; he said, "Mind, Hart, if we are attacked, I am going to get up and command my own battalion. I shall not deprive Colonel Clarke of the chief command. I have no right to do that when I am on the sick list, but I shall command my own battalion."

At last we got leave to advance, and on the 24th of April, Colonel Clarke and I with half our force moved on four miles to the Inyezane, and took up a strong position that Colonel Clarke and I had examined and chosen some time before. Next day the rest of our force joined us, and here we all are.

This is the same river that flows by Majia's Hill, where the fight was on 22nd of January, only we are much nearer the mouth of the river and only about five miles from the sea. We have water enough, though the river is but a small one; and we are on a high and healthy spot.

A fort and depot for provisions is to be established here, preparatory to our further advance, and we have been ordered by General Crealock to call it Fort Chelmsford.

We have no Engineers with us, so I am building the

fort, and this together with all my other duties keeps me hard at work all day. The digging is very good exercise for the men and helps to keep them healthy.

On the 27th I went with a body of irregular cavalry about nine miles in advance of this, to the next river—the Emlalazi—to make a reconnaissance of its mouth, with a view to its fitness for landing supplies there when we advance. This would be a great saving in time and labour over the tedious wagon traffic. A low line of sand dunes, covered with thick bush, lay between the beach and the country, then a marshy tract, and then high hills rose at about a mile from the shore. We approached by these hills, and then, taking due military precautions, passed the marsh, crossed the bush on the sand dunes—only about two hundred yards wide, but very dense—and reached the beach, fine firm sand. I examined the mouth of the river; and as no signs of Zulus appeared, enjoyed a good bathe in the sea, the surf being only moderately heavy. We then began to retire, but Lieutenant Startin of the navy, who had come with us, was a little behindhand in dressing after his bathe, and while we were hurrying him on, two shots were fired at him from the bush on the opposite side of the river, about two hundred yards off, and one of the bullets struck the sand very close to him. I never saw a man finish dressing more quickly! but he *did* finish, and retired without leaving one article behind! We fired a shot back at the spot the smoke came from, and there were no more. When we had reascended the heights, we saw a few small parties of Zulus, one of which went to examine our tracks in the sand and the others remained watching us from the farther side of the river.

*May 23rd.*—I enjoy my work here very much, while those who are behind, at the Tugela, find life rather dull. This is still the most advanced post; and the delay now,

to our march onwards, is necessary to accumulate sufficient supplies here for the whole division, when we go forward to attack the King's position. We have ammunition enough, and supplies of food only are required. Twice a week we receive a large convoy of about a hundred wagons, each carrying three or four thousand pounds weight, of chiefly food. This has been going on ever since we have been here, yet much more is required.

The stock of provisions certainly grows, but the rapid shoot that it makes on the arrival of a convoy, shrinks alarmingly before the arrival of the next! It reminds me of the progress of the snail, who got three feet up a wall by day and slipped back two in the night!

We have sent back 1000 of our natives for the present, half to the Tugela and half of them to Fort Crealock, on the Amatikulu; so that our force here is not much over 4000 men, but how they do eat! A large herd of oxen is driven up to us, and in a very short time we have eaten it all up. Perhaps it will interest you to hear what our rations are. Each officer and white man is given daily, without any charge of payment:

- $1\frac{1}{4}$  lbs. of fresh meat, or 1 lb. preserved meat.
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  „ bread, or 1 lb. biscuit.
- $\frac{1}{3}$  oz. coffee.
- $\frac{1}{6}$  „ tea.
- 2 ozs. sugar.
- $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. salt.
- $\frac{1}{30}$  „ pepper.

$\frac{1}{2}$  lb. to 1 lb. of fresh vegetables, if there are any, or  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. rice, or  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of peas or beans, or 1 oz. of preserved vegetables. Whenever we are under arms before day-break, we get an extra ration of  $\frac{1}{3}$  oz. of coffee,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. of sugar, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. of biscuit. As we here always get under arms every morning an hour before daybreak, and await



attack till it is light, we get this extra every day. When there are no fresh vegetables, an ounce of lime juice and  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. of sugar with it is issued to each. I think I have only tasted fresh vegetables about half a dozen times in the field—usually pumpkin, or sweet potato, looted from the Zulu gardens.

I think our rations are very liberal and they are excellent in quality. But withal, a ration of tough ox requires good and experienced cooking to be chewable! Also, I find it well to draw several days' supply of such items as tea and pepper, as the whole of a ration was liable to adhere to the Commissariat-scales, when inverted over my receptacle!

The tea is very good and the coffee splendid. The latter is grown in Natal, and so we get it very fresh and with a full and delicious flavour. I never enjoy it so much as after that early morning turn out. Oh! how I hate that hour before daylight. The turning out in the chill and wet, in cold blood, to be ready for the enemy who never comes with the dawn. Often then do I repeat to myself the Ancient Mariner's exclamation:

“ Oh! Sleep it is a gentle thing,  
Beloved from Pole to Pole.”

Indeed it is; and add thereto on my own account:

“ And waking is a hateful thing,  
Abhorred with all my soul.”

The precaution is wise, because the Zulus *might* come. But he enjoys the gentle thing Sleep, as much as other people do, and he detests cold. He wraps himself up in his blanket, head and all, and gets up a high temperature within the blanket, where, if he may, he will await the sun.

And during the whole campaign, there has never been but one attack at daybreak—the attack that produced the disaster at the Intombe River. You will have seen the details of the annihilation of the convoy there, in the papers.

As I told you, there being no Engineers here, the construction of Fort Chelmsford was left to me ; and I was very glad to undertake it. The fort is now finished, as far as its defences go, and has been finished for many days ; but I am still hard at work putting up sheds for the garrison inside, and store sheds. The natives give me most valuable assistance in the matter. I was given no instructions or conditions in building this fort, and this I was very glad of. It was left entirely to me.

Our troops are entrenched on a commanding hill, near the Inyezane ; and on the summit of this hill, within the entrenchments, I have built Fort Chelmsford, calculated for a garrison of 300 men, which, I think, is as much as we ought to allow to hold this position, when we advance. A certain quantity of our stores will be inside and the rest outside in sheds, which I have so placed, that they give no cover for the enemy and are within effective fire from the fort, so that they cannot be approached without heavy losses. All round the fort, inside, I have put up sheds close to the parapet, the roofs lifted high enough for the garrison to fire between roof and parapet. Under these sheds, the future garrison will sleep on the ground that they will stand up upon to fight, in case of attack.

Water will always be kept stored in barrels, never allowed to be empty.

In the middle of the fort I have sunk a mine, eleven feet deep ; and already three galleries diverging from the bottom are making good progress. The ammunition

will be stored there. All is very successful, and everyone is well satisfied with the fort.

The General has not paid us a visit yet. He is at the Tugela with the 1st Brigade. I speak of General Crealock.

Since I last wrote to you, he ordered us to make a reconnaissance of a particular spot on the Emlalazi River, with a view to our forces eventually crossing there. This is the next river, eight or nine miles in front of us—the river, the mouth of which I have already told you about when we explored it. He ordered the reconnaissance to be made by our irregular cavalry, and that I and a Lieut. Sherrard, R.E., who was sent up, should go with it. We were to cross the river at the drift mentioned, and explore the opposite side.

This reconnaissance we undertook on the 16th of May. We found the drift from the description, but it was tidal and not then fordable. Hardly had the advanced cavalry scouts reached the river bank, than the Zulus began to gather in small clusters on the opposite hilltops. There was a hill on our side of the drift, about three hundred yards from the river, where we formed up our main body. At about three hundred yards beyond the river and opposite, was a little circular hill, of about the same height. In a few minutes, some five hundred Zulus, who had collected on a hill a mile off, started at a run towards us, very cleverly got the little hill I speak of between them and us, and soon, as we expected, reached its summit, keeping covered by the long grass there, but just showing their heads now and then. We had already dismounted our men, sent the horses back a little way to get cover, and were in line ready for them.

They opened fire first, and we of course returned it. A few of their bullets struck the ground amongst us, but the rest all whistled overhead.



Sherrard and I made our observations, and an eye sketch of the position, while our men kept the Zulus occupied ; and after about twenty minutes we had noted all that was necessary, except that we could not measure the width and depth of the water, the Zulus outnumbering us too much ; nor could we have crossed the drift, even if fordable. However, we made an estimate of it, that I expect will be pretty accurate.

We had under 200 men only with us. The Emlalazi is evidently now considered by the Zulus the line of demarcation between us.

While this was going on two messengers from Cetywayo were at Fort Chelmsford, asking for peace. They were by no means humble. They said the King had told them to say he had lost a great many men in the war, and so had we, and therefore it would be well to stop now. "And so had we," mark that ! Right well he knows it !

This request for peace reminds me of the Ashantis' similar, but most humble, petition just before the battle of Amoaful.

There are those though, of weight, who think Cetywayo means peace. We shall see.

*Emlalazi River, Zululand,  
June 25, 1879.*

MY DEAR MAY,—We are established on the next river to the Inyezane, eight or nine miles beyond it, and at the very drift that I have told you we reconnoitred on the 16th of May.

From the time that I posted No. 15 to you, up to the 21st of June, when I started with our main body for the Emlalazi, my time was chiefly occupied in strengthening Fort Chelmsford and in building huts to store our heaps of provisions in. Large parties of soldiers and natives worked at this daily, under my directions ; some

going out with wagons to fetch timber from distant woods, some gathering reeds for thatch on the river bank, some digging, some building, and others cutting raw oxhides into strips for lashing the logs together, and tying the rafters. We had no nails and no cord, nor could we get any, so I had the hides of the cattle we eat cut up, and though the smell was severe, for there was not time to wait to dry the hides, one day's sun generally purified the lashings, and as they shrunk in drying, they bound the timber together like iron bands.

Our natives cut up the hides; they do it very quickly and cleverly, making a whole hide into one continuous strip, by cutting a band about an inch wide, round and round the edge of the hide, till it is entirely used up.

We were all very glad when the order to move on arrived, for, besides the desire to progress with the war, our situation was not a healthy one—it was the reverse. Fever and dysentery attacked us; and for some weeks we sent every week to Natal from forty to sixty and sometimes more men invalided.

I have enjoyed continuously excellent health—I may say, bounding health; it is a circumstance for thankfulness, not for boasting, for when these maladies are in the air, or the water, or wherever it may be that they arise, no one can say he will not be stricken.

There was, unfortunately, to the prevailing windward of us, a large extent of low wet country. I rode across this ground one day, in the course of duty, and recognised therein, at once, the normal smell of the Gold Coast—concentrated essence of malarious emanations—a smell that alarmed me when I first met it some years ago, but that I grew familiar with, and even took kindly to, when I found there was nothing else to breathe! No doubt much mischief was blown from this low tract up to our fort on the hilltop.

But there were also two other very probable causes of sickness : one our numbers, for congregation is in itself a source of disease, and the other our water.

The Inyezane is a small stream, and now in the winter, the dry season, it almost ceases to flow and the water taken from the pools is not good. Added to this, a considerable number of dead Zulus had long been in the river, up-stream of us, some as near as a mile. Whether they were thrown in to poison the water, or whether, as our natives say, they were wounded men retreating from Gingindhlovu, drowned in trying to cross the river when it was swollen, I do not know.

You will perhaps remember my telling you in the Ashanti war, that when the Ashantis retired from Abakrampa, they rendered undrinkable every source of water along the bush path behind them, by throwing in dead bodies, and even killed their own men to supply bodies enough—for some distance the bodies were all Fantis ; then they were Ashantis.

I don't know whether this is a Zulu practice, nor am I going to make any inquiries that might set the suggestion afloat. The bodies in the Inyezane were almost reduced to skeletons when we found them.

In the bullet pouch, on the belt of one of them, was found a letter from Colonel Pearson to Lord Chelmsford, written at Ekowe and sent by a native messenger. He must have been killed, poor fellow.

The natives who took, or attempted to take, messages between the Tugela and Ekowe, were always volunteers for the purpose. Brave fellows indeed were they who, without a single eye to applaud, without the stimulus of any excitement, without any prospect of decoration to incite ambition, undertook to make their way in the cold, dark night through the Zulu host. Sometimes quite successful, sometimes sorely chased, sometimes "missing,"



The letter was still quite legible throughout. Probably the skeleton on which it was found was that of the Zulu who had killed the messenger.

At first, Colonel Pearson used to send his letters rolled up in the inside of a reed, but later, they were more securely hidden, thus : the iron plate was unscrewed off the foot of the messenger's rifle, then a hole was bored into the butt, at the part that was covered with the metal plate, the letter was put in the hole and the plate screwed on again. When two messengers went together, each had a copy of the letter thus hidden in the butt of his rifle.

We got the noxious remains out of our drinking water ! But the Inyezane at best is not large enough for men to drink by thousands.

At Fort Chelmsford we received several important messages from Cetywayo. But I have omitted to tell you that before we left Gingindhlovu, as long ago as the 21st of April, an important Zulu chief, named Umagwendu, joined us. He is a half-brother of the King's ; the same father, but different mothers. He had been against his brother's policy of continuing the war. Cetywayo suspected disloyalty and sent him this message : " Are we not brothers ? Had we not both the same father ? Come to me, and if we are to die, let us die together."

Umagwendu, however, went the other way. It happened thus :

Some of our natives, foraging one day in the neighbourhood, took prisoners several women and children, and brought them to our camp. Another of our natives immediately recognised among the women his mother-in-law. This man had fled from Cetywayo's power into Natal, and taken a wife without the King's leave. The wife was safe in Natal, and here was the mother.

From his mother-in-law, this native learnt that Umagwendu wanted to join us, but feared we should kill him. I suppose that as he held an important command in that terrible fight at Isandhlwana, he thought we might retaliate on him. However, some of the prisoners were sent to tell Umagwendu that he might come, without hurt.

The first reply was, that Zulu soldiers sent by the King, were watching his movements, and that he could not move without a certainty of their cutting him off.

At last, having walked hard all through the night with three or four of his wives and some twenty or thirty attendants carrying babies and baggage, he arrived at our outposts, and his party there laid down their arms; Umagwendu himself depositing a first-rate Martini breech-loading carbine, equal to the best we possess.

He is very fat and very ugly, apart from the circumstances that he has a dreadful squint. He led the way into our camp, followed by two of his chief men, and then came the wives. These dames were exceedingly fat. They wore short kilted skirts, and their shoulders were wrapped in shawls of brilliant stripes. Not good-looking under any circumstances, they had disimproved themselves after the custom of all Zulu women when they marry, by shaving their hair off from their foreheads to the crown of the head. The remaining portion was worked up into an elaborate bunch and coloured red by a preparation of red clay. The deportment of these ladies was peculiar; they bent themselves at the waist till their heads were little above the waist, and remained staring at the ground in this attitude, with a ridiculously solemn expression, for about a quarter of an hour, while I arranged quarters for the whole party.

This was bowing down with their faces to the earth, in salutation, only instead of doing the bow again and

again as the patriarchs of Genesis did, they made them all into one. I thought the pain of straightening themselves again after being thus cramped for a quarter of an hour must have been acute.

All that I could offer Umagwendu for the accommodation of himself and party was the underneath part of a wagon. We had no tents. All our men slept on the open ground. And this wagon was the best accommodation we had to offer. There was no hood to the wagon, so I got a tarpaulin pulled over it, so as to hang to the ground on three sides and on the other if desired.

I then told Umagwendu he had better put the ladies and babies under the wagon, and that as for himself and the others, they could sleep under sky or cloud, as we did. He did not appear to like his quarters at all, but I left him to make the best of it ; and soon they filled up all the basement story of the wagon. Umagwendu himself took a place there, the retainers formed a half circle in front of the entrance, a fire was lighted in the middle, meat began to frizzle, all the babies began to sing together, and the whole party were quite happy.

To keep off inquisitive people, I ordered a boundary-line formed of boxes of ammunition to be laid round the party. These boxes of ammunition were conveniently close, so I took them. Umagwendu at once showed evident signs of alarm. He knew what those boxes were, for he had captured hundreds upon hundreds of them at Isandhlwana, and I imagine he thought we were going to blow the party up. So I sent the interpreter to tell him they were put there to keep our own people from crowding round him as they had done. His answer was, "Thank you ; they were worse than the flies in summer."

The Zulus make remarkably good similes in their conversation.

When, after the disaster of Isandhlwana, our troops



once more began to advance across the Tugela in force, one of our Zulus watching the bodies of men going over the river, said to another, "The Zulus kicked the white ant-heap, and see, the ants come swarming out."

Shakespeare would have been pleased to hear that speech.

Next day, we sent off Umagwendu and his people to Natal. He said that his other wives and all the rest of his people and his cattle had been cut off by the Zulu soldiers, and were killed by this time as a matter of course ; and he asked leave to join us and fight to avenge them.

As Cetywayo has circulated a false report, to intimidate the disloyal, to the effect that we tortured Umagwendu brutally, cut off his ears and so forth, his request has been granted, and he is now here in the front to show himself to any Zulu messengers who arrive.

From Umagwendu, I learnt that no prisoners were taken at Isandhlwana—all died fighting.

Several petitions for peace were sent by the King to us, at Fort Chelmsford, but they were not very satisfactory.

On the 6th of June, three of the principal chiefs arrived with such a message. One of them, I was very glad to find, was Mabilwane, who commanded in the engagement at Inyezane. I much wished to ask him some questions, and when business was over I did so.

He said he had heard of those white men being killed in the kloof ; that there were Zulus concealed in the kloof, but he could not say whether the white men were killed by them, or by those that rushed down from Majia's Hill at us. No men, he said, had come forward to say they had done it.

He saw me ride up Majia's Hill on what he called "the great red horse," though he was not near enough to recognise the rider. And when I asked him why so

many men ran away when I reached the top, he said, "Because when the men who were behind saw a horseman appear on the summit, they could not imagine that he could have got there unless a great number came too; and they at once raised a cry, 'Here they all come,' and then there was a panic and a flight."

On the 18th and 19th, General Crealock joined us on the Inyezane. The "Bufis" and a force of the navy had come up.

On the 20th we sent forward an advanced party of one regiment, the 91st, some guns, and the Engineers to repair the road.

On the 21st, the main body followed. Rain had made the roads so heavy, that we had to laager for the night on the way; and on the 22nd we reached the Emlalazi.

All Zulus had retreated, and no resistance was made to our bridging the river. General Crealock, on arrival at Fort Chelmsford, received me very warmly. I had never met him before. He expressed the greatest satisfaction with the fort, and was well pleased and satisfied with all Colonel Clarke's force had done.

This is a much nicer locality than that we have left. We have not a good enough supply of water for so many men, but then we go on again, probably in a day or two.

The river is tidal, as we are only about two miles from the sea, so it does not afford us drink. It is a small stream, only about twenty yards wide.

We are busy now daily, working at the road near the bridge, to make it firm enough for our wagons. And the Engineers are making a small redoubt on the top of the hill on the opposite bank, the hill the Zulus fired from, to be called Fort Napoleon, after the late ill-fated Prince.

We have left a small garrison at Fort Chelmsford and shall leave another in Fort Napoleon.

. . . . .

*Emlalazi Plain, near Point Durnford  
landing-place,*

*July 3, 1879.*

MY DEAR MAY,—We are now encamped close to the seashore, between the Emlalazi and the Umhlatuzi Rivers, about five miles in advance of the Emlalazi.

The whole of my brigade (the 2nd) is here, also the "Bufs" and some detachments of the other regiments of the 1st Brigade, irregular cavalry and the artillery of the 1st Division.

General Crealock is here too, so the whole of our division is assembled at this place, except part of the 1st Brigade that is either in garrison at the forts on the road behind us or following us up.

Sir Garnet Wolseley is a little way off the shore, on board H.M.S. *Shah*, which cast anchor there yesterday morning. Sir Garnet could not land yesterday owing to the surf, but is expected to do so this morning.

Two steamers with provisions are lying at anchor close by. They arrived on Monday, and part of their cargoes has already been landed.

The object now is to form a base of supply here, and thus avoid the long, difficult and severe process of transit by wagons from Durban to the front. I have used the word road, I dare say, frequently in my letters, but I must tell you that a road in this country and in Natal is merely the wagon track upon the natural surface of the ground. In places it is hard, and the wagons run easily enough, but more often the wheels follow deep ruts already made, or, in making a new track, cut several inches deep into the fresh turf. In wet weather progress is scarcely possible, sometimes it is quite impossible.

The surface of the country is a succession of innumerable hills and valleys, small and steep; the road bends about in all directions, to follow the least difficult course,



but cannot avoid constant ascents and descents. The sufferings of the oxen *en route* are dreadful to contemplate. At very difficult places the wagons are double-spanned, as it is called; that is, two spans or from twenty-eight to thirty-two oxen are attached to one wagon, several whips are worked with cruel severity, the usual yelling is kept up, and occasionally men push behind at the same time with all their might. For all this I have seen a wagon fail to move. Then the oxen are given a few minutes' rest, and the effort is made again. Now and then a wagon sinks up to the axles in a soft place; then it has to be off-loaded, drawn out empty and reloaded.

You will not be very much surprised after this, when I tell you that on our first day's move forward from the Emlalazi we made only three miles' progress.

The wretched ox has a very bad time of it. In England there are humane laws, which would forbid half the degree of severity an ox here receives as his daily meed, and lookers-on in England would prevent it. . . . The necessities of war also press heavily upon the Natal ox. Besides his labour and torture, he now gets indifferently fed. It is midwinter and the grass is dry and distasteful to him, except here and there when it was burnt at the proper time of autumn and is now succeeded by a rich green crop.

The advanced guard of our division left Fort Napoleon on Thursday, the 26th of June, and next day the main body, with which I was, followed.

Next day we proceeded, and joined the advanced guard here, after sunset; forming our entrenchment by moonlight.

We had descended from the top of a high hill, on which our laager was formed, and entered a meadow plain stretching away for many miles to the front, and

separated on our right hand from the sea by a range of wooded sand-hills bordering the beach.

Numerous short palm-trees grew in the plain, and huge clusters of their fruit hung down within reach. This fruit was the size of a medlar and the same colour, with a polish on the skin, but the interior was almost entirely occupied by the kernel. The pulp is very sweet, but very poor eating.

On Monday, the 30th of June, the ships arrived and anchored off the shore.

I have not had time to have a bathe yet, but hope to have a dip to-morrow.

Although it is midwinter, I must remind you that the temperature is about the same as the English midsummer, but a little warmer in the middle of the day, and colder in the middle of the night. I don't know, I am sure, why it is winter, for the trees remain in leaf, and there are flowers and butterflies all about, just as they were in December.

Night has come, and Sir Garnet has not been able to get on shore. I trust he will do so to-morrow. Lord Chelmsford and Colonel Wood from the north must be close upon Ulundi, if not actually there, and it is time we were there too, and the war ended.

The surf here is small compared to the surf at Cape Coast Castle; but they have not got here, either the splendid surf-boats or the clever Fantis to work them. The Zulus hate the sea, and there is not, I believe, a canoe or a fisherman in the whole nation!

*July 9th.*—At the close of my last letter, I just mentioned that the ships of provisions and the *Shah*, with Sir Garnet on board, had all gone on the morning of the 4th, landing being impracticable owing to the surf.

The *Shah* steamed straight away for Durban, but the

ships merely stood out to sea until the wind fell ; and in a day or two afterwards returned and began putting their cargoes on shore. This is done by what they call here "surf-boats," but the term "boat" is not satisfactory ; *barge* would be more fitting, for they are one-masted, decked vessels, about the size of, and having a general resemblance to, a Thames barge. They are cleverly worked in this way. A strong hawser is fastened at one end on the beach, and the other end is anchored several hundred yards out to sea. The loaded surf-boat leaves the ship and picks up the hawser, as far out as possible. The hawser is then passed lengthways over the boat, through a fork at the bows and a fork at the stern. The rudder is removed, and the surf-boat is then ready to move backwards to the beach along the hawser, and has a flat bottom for repose upright when aground.

The process by which the boat is moved along the hawser is very ingenious. Two "stoppers," as they are called, are put on the hawser. A stopper is simply a hitch made with a small rope upon the hawser, one end of the rope being fast to the boat and the other in a man's hand on board. When the man pulls the rope, the hitch tightens, and will not slip along the hawser, so the boat is stopped ; when he relaxes his hold, the boat is released again.

One stopper prevents the boat going forwards and the other prevents it going backwards. When a roller comes in, the stoppers are relaxed at the moment it reaches the boat, and the boat is then carried by the roller some distance towards the shore. The moment the roller leaves the boat, the stopper is applied which prevents the boat slipping back upon the reflex of the wave ; for, you know, there is always a surging to and fro of the waves.



The next roller is treated in the same way, and so the boat progresses, bit by bit, till it passes through the surf and strikes stern upon the beach.

The cargo is passed out by hand, and the boat got out to sea again by the contrary process simply.

The sight is very fine, for all this is done in very troubled waters; the huge boat being one moment hidden completely from view, and the next almost pitched out of the sea.

Such is the Indian Ocean on its most tranquil days. Yet it is calm compared to the Atlantic, upon the western coast.

On Saturday, the 5th of July, General Crealock sent forward a column to seize Ondini, Cetywayo's old kraal, since converted into a military kraal, the headquarters of one of the Zulu regiments.

The organisation of the Zulu army by regiments, each having a muster-place, when they mobilise for war, is done with a system and method that is quite on a par with European powers.

Our force consisted of our irregular cavalry, supported by a battalion (the 91st), a gun, a Gatling, and 500 natives, under Colonel Clarke.

He was to laager his force for the night at the Umhlatuzi River, while the cavalry pushed on, and next day to follow up in support of the cavalry.

We, Colonel Clarke's party, started from this about 4 P.M., but got so bogged on the way, that we were overtaken by the darkness, and had to halt till 7.30, when the moon was up and we could see our way.

We reached the heights overlooking the Umhlatuzi, distant nine miles from this, and formed laager there.

I was very tired, having been in the saddle all day, on various duties; and had just rolled up in my blanket, and sunk into a comfortable sleep, when the General,

with the cavalry, passed through our position on the way forward.

The General said he wanted me to go on with him ; so I had to saddle up and go on again.

Our guide took us four miles out of the way, so it was two o'clock at night when we reached the Empangeni mission-station ; which was in ruins, having been destroyed by the Zulus.

This spot was seven miles from Colonel Clarke's laager ; but we had been eleven.

The General now changed his mind, said the cavalry should go on to Ondini, and that he would go back to Colonel Clarke, and return with his force to camp.

I was so tired, that I had frequently slept soundly as I rode.

The prospect of starting for another seven miles was not cheering ; still less so a march *back*. I was right glad, then, when the General said he would wait at Empangeni for two hours.

I immediately stuck my sword deep into the ground, tied my horse to the handle, and lay down in the long, silky meadow grass, when I got shelter from the cold night wind, and at the end of two hours' deep sleep, woke punctually, quite refreshed.

The cavalry marched for Ondini. The General, his staff, and I, with a cavalry escort, took the direct road to Colonel Clarke's laager.

I trotted on ahead with the message to Colonel Clarke, not to advance.

Colonel Clarke met me as I approached, with a warm shaking of the hand and much expression of joy, for he had expected me some hours before, and at last feared I must have been killed on the way back.

While breakfast was cooking, I enjoyed a bathe in the

Umhlatuzi ; the water was shallow and quite clear, so I had no fear of crocodiles.

Then we proceeded back to this camp. On our way we heard our guns firing a salute, which was in honour of Lord Chelmsford's seizure of Ulundi. The news of his victory had just arrived.

On Monday, the 7th of July, Sir Garnet Wolseley arrived here, with Colonel Brackenbury (his military secretary) and Captain Maurice, and two men, aides-de-camp, that I don't know. Colonel Russell is following up.

Lord Gifford, who has been with us—his regiment, the 57th, being one of my brigade—has joined Sir Garnet in his old position as aide-de-camp.

The cavalry returned from Ondini on the evening of the 7th ; they found it evacuated, but it had been occupied recently. It was a very large kraal, 350 yards in diameter, and containing 640 huts. They burnt it.

I paid my respects to Sir Garnet on the 8th and was received very cordially. We have had several days of heavy rain, quite unusual at this winter season : the result is, we are shut in upon our plain by impassable marshes that have formed. So it is well we have communication by sea.

Working parties are hard at work all day making roads over the marshes, and the unloading on the beach still goes on.

We shall probably know soon what effect the capture of Ulundi will have upon the war.

The Zulus are surrendering here by hundreds, laying down their arms. They are splendid fellows ; it is always a pleasure to look at them. By surrendering, they and their families are protected ; and they save their cattle, but are obliged to sell some to us.



There is a remarkable hauteur in their manner as they surrender, as if they would say, "We are down now, but we have hit you as hard as you have hit us."

*Ondini (Ulundi), Zululand,*

*Aug. 13, 1879.*

MY DEAR MAY,—You will see by the heading of this letter that I have left Port Durnford and am at the Capital. In all English maps it is called Ulundi, and therefore this name has been taken up by the British forces, but no such place or name is known to Zulus, or to white residents in Zululand. Ondini is the proper name and spelling of this now famous place.

I told you of Sir Garnet's arrival at Port Durnford. Soon after, he made great changes in our army.

So large a force was no longer necessary. Lord Chelmsford had reached Ondini. And the Zulus commanded by Cetywayo himself, or at least acting under his gaze, had made but a half-hearted resistance of half an hour, and then fled, abandoning the most venerated place in their land, the King's chief kraal.

Ondini was burnt. The King became a fugitive, and the chiefs of the districts from the sea to Ondini tendered their submission to Sir Garnet.

A much smaller force would therefore do to finish the campaign by overpowering such troops as Cetywayo could rally, and subduing the districts beyond Ondini.

Sir Garnet accordingly broke up our existing organisation. Most of the generals and their staffs returned to Natal, to embark for England, and part of the army was ordered to follow.

Sir Garnet then formed two new columns: one under Colonel Clarke, to advance upon Cetywayo from the south; the other under Colonel Russell (my chief in Ashanti), to advance upon him from the west. At the same time

the Swazis, a neighbouring people hostile to the Zulus, led by an English officer, and strengthened by a contingent of white irregular cavalry, were to descend upon the King from the north.

Oham, the King's first cousin, a great chief in Zululia, had long ago joined the British side, and now at the



Strategical situation towards the close of the war, August 13, 1879.

fitting time he had been sent to his people in the north of the country, to raise them in arms against Cetwyayo.

And thus, on all sides but one, the Zulu king is being hemmed in. On that remaining side are the Lebombo Mountains, a range over which there is only one pass, and beyond the pass deadly climate and tribes that hate the Zulu.

I have made a sketch-map, which I enclose ; it will show you the present situation more clearly than it can

be described. I have noted on it the position and strength of our forces, and the roads we use for communication and supply. I have also marked all our fortified posts used either to secure the roads or to protect depots of provisions.

You will see the road to Ekowe by which I first advanced under Colonel Pearson's command, and the coast road to Port Durnford by which I afterwards advanced under General Crealock. Notice, then, the road from Port Durnford to Ondini by St. Paul's—that is the road by which Colonel Clarke's column has moved. The column was made up of :

The 57th Regiment.  
 3rd Batt. 60th Rifles.  
 5 Companies 80th Regiment.  
 Barton's Battalion of Native Contingent.  
 100 Native Scouts.  
 350 Irregular Cavalry.  
 2 Guns.  
 4 Gatlings.  
 150 Engineers and Native Pioneers.

There were at first over a hundred wagons for baggage and provisions, and at St. Paul's the number of wagons was more than doubled, each wagon drawn by from sixteen to eighteen oxen. Then there was our Field Hospital, composed of several wagons and ambulances some fifty regimental pack-mules carrying ammunition, and about thirty carts with reserve ammunition, entrenching tools, &c.

We take two hundred rounds of ammunition for each soldier; he carries seventy himself; two mules follow every company with thirty rounds more for him, and the carts following with the baggage carry the remaining hundred.

Sir Garnet told Colonel Clarke that he might choose



his own staff. Colonel Clarke offered me the post of principal Staff-Officer; and I need not tell you that I joyfully accepted his good offer.

On Thursday, the 24th of July, we started from Port Durnford for Ondini. Sir Garnet Wolseley had gone back to Natal, and said he would join us at Emtanjaneni, by the Rorke's Drift road, on the 6th of August. He also told Colonel Clarke that, though he should accompany his column, he did not intend to interfere with him in the command. He has kept his word, for excepting the necessary general directions, he has left Colonel Clarke quite alone.

Sir Garnet Wolseley knows that this is the best way, when you have chosen a good man, to get plenty of good work done by him.

The weather was very pleasant, like English midsummer. The country, too, was exceedingly pretty. On our left hand was a range of hills, with rocky precipices; and elsewhere the country was the same continuous park that I have described before.

By the streams were thousands of those large white lilies, esteemed in England for their beauty, but here they possess besides, a faint but delicious perfume, and this in midwinter.

We had no expectation of attack, but we ran no risks, and entrenched our camp every night.

It was pleasant camping, for fresh ground here is always nice.

St. Paul's, an English mission-station, is on a plateau which rises very abruptly from the Umlilatwzi valley, to about 1000 feet; and so the ascent to St. Paul's—called the Inkwenkwe Hill—is very steep; and though only three and a half miles long, it took us a day to surmount the plateau, double-spanning each of our wagons and hauling with drag-ropes at the steepest parts.

On the 30th of July we reached St. Paul's. Here was one of our military posts. We halted a day, to make some alterations in our transport, and proceeded now upon the plateau.

The country on the plateau was not inviting. There were no trees, not even a bush, nothing but grass, and it was chilly even in the sun.

We were obliged to carry with us several days' supply of firewood, for cooking; and serve it out stingily, at the rate of one pound weight per man a day. Water too was scarce, and it had to be sought far down the plateau sides.

On Sunday, the 3rd of August, we reached Kwa Magwasa, which was our foremost military post, called Fort Albert. Colonel Thynne of the Guards was in command there.

Here there was an English mission-station, belonging to Mr. Robertson, who accompanied Colonel Pearson's column to Ekowe at the beginning of the war. The Zulus had destroyed it, as they had St. Paul's, but the flowers in the garden were blooming luxuriantly amidst the ruins. . . .

We proceeded next day. In the evening rain began, and we were obliged to halt all the following day, the roads being unfit for the wagons owing to the wet.

On the 6th we proceeded, and joined a convoy which had been sent up to us with supplies by the Fort Evelyn road. It was escorted by detachments of the King's Dragoon Guards and the 24th and 58th Regiments.

Major Marter was with the first, and my old Ashanti friend, Bromhead, with the 24th.

Next day was our last on the plateau, and we descended at Emtanjaneni to the valley of the White Imvelosi. The last part of the plateau was a dreary sight. Lord Chelmsford's force had encamped there;

and the ground for miles was strewn with the skeletons of horses and oxen and the yet imperfectly decayed bodies of oxen, that had been left sick, to recover or perish. A horrible stench clung to the plateau, and flocks of vultures and crows careered about.

We were right glad to get down into the wholesome and pleasant valley. Here we were again in the warmth of English summer, with plenty of wood and water.

Colonel Clarke and I rode on ahead to choose a camping-ground ; for we were to halt a day to build a fort and establish a military station there, to be called Fort Victoria.

We chose a very pleasant place, and there was then no sign of the approaching storm.

The grass was full of partridge and quail, and a large partridge about half as big again as the usual size, that they call here a pheasant, but it certainly is not a pheasant. There were also hares and some small antelopes.

Soon the column came up ; camp was pitched, and the men spreading about, of course, started those hares and antelopes that were foolish enough to have remained. The most exciting chases then resulted ; the hare or antelope bounding in all directions, amidst the shouts of the men, and everywhere finding retreat cut off, till at last someone became the slayer or the capturer.

A beautiful antelope called a springbok was thus caught alive. It would be impossible to exaggerate the beauty and elegance of this creature.

Sir Garnet joined us in the afternoon. Towards evening a strong wind and rain set in ; the storm increased towards night, so I prepared for wreck by packing up everything in my tent except my bed ; and I then



turned in, and drew my waterproof-sheet over me, for the rain was blown with such violence that it showered through the canvas.

I had fixed all the tent-pegs most firmly beforehand. The storm was raging as I fell asleep, but the tent was bearing it well.

After some hours, I was awakened by being slapped violently and severely about the head. I started up. The tent was tottering and flapping furiously; the ropes had slipped and many pegs had drawn. In another minute it would be down. The canvas, shaken by the wind, inflicted grievous boxes in the ear or nose as the case might be. I bounded out with the mallet and, assisted by some soldiers, secured the tent just in time, and it weathered the remainder of the storm.

In the moonlight, I could see that many tents were blown down and the occupants had taken shelter elsewhere.

I thought the officer in the next tent to mine was smothered under his, and was glad to feel it was only a box. He had fled!

My horses, poor creatures, with their eyes shut, their noses between their knees and their tails in the teeth of the wind, stood in the gloom, like iron statues.

Meanwhile, I had got very wet, and when I got back into my tent I found my blankets wet. But every conception depends upon comparison. I could conceive only comfort and luxury in rolling up in those wet blankets after my experience outside the tent. To be out of the wind, to be sheltered from the downpour, to lie in only a moderate shower—it was too delightful. I was soon asleep again.

Next day the wind had abated, but the rain continued all day.

We heard that Sir Garnet's tent had been the first to

blow down in the night. His staff went quickly to the rescue and soon put it up again.

None stirred out during the day who could avoid it. The following day, the 9th of August, the sun rose upon a perfectly blue sky, and a match could be lighted in the open air. The day was beautiful, but what a scene of death lay around. Four hundred and fifty-two of our oxen lay dead in the camp, killed by that storm!

The 9th of August was passed in making Fort Victoria, drying clothes, and burying oxen.

On the 10th we advanced to the White Imvelosi River, and encamped on the bank in a lovely spot—meadow grass, mimosa trees, and beautiful specimens of crystalline rock all about, aloes in flower, and birds of brilliant plumage.

Next day, Monday the 11th, a very different scene. We crossed the White Imvelosi and marched to Ondini—an undulating grassy plain, bounded by a circle of fine hills; scarcely a tree or bush; burnt kraals, and here and there human skeletons, the remains of Lord Chelmsford's conflict.

The cavalry, after a careful search yesterday, found hidden a few miles off, the British guns, captured by the Zulus at Isandhlwana.

. . . . .  
*Ulundi,*

*Aug. 31st.*

. . . Cetywayo is captured. And on Tuesday next, the 2nd of September, I march with Clarke's column for Natal. On arrival at Durban I shall embark at once for England, as far as I know.

I have been hard at work surveying Ulundi and the neighbourhood. It seems to be one of my functions in war to survey. It has not been part of my regular duty in this campaign, as in Ashanti. However, Sir Garnet

wished me to survey Ulundi, and I was very glad to make the survey of this interesting place.

The weather has been delightful ever since we have been here, so the work has been very pleasant, albeit the frequency with which I have come suddenly upon human skeletons in the grass has been forbidding—especially as I have been quite alone. When one is not alone, the light of one's companion's presence dispels all the gloom of horrors, just as the arrival of a lamp spoils a ghost story!

There is nothing so dead and harmless as a skeleton, yet when you contemplate them in solitude they appear to possess a life of their own, especially when there are many together. Some look angry, some threatening, some foolish, some astonished, and those that are on their faces seem to be asleep.

These skeletons were Zulus, killed in Lord Chelmsford's fight on the 4th of July.

On arrival here, search was made for the remains of the Hon. W. Drummond, a young man not in the army but attached to Lord Chelmsford's staff on account of his knowledge of the country. He was missing after the action, and so assumed to be killed, for Zulus never take prisoners. We heard from certain Zulus who had submitted to us, that after the action he had ridden forward amongst the retreating enemy, who, of course, killed him at once. They indicated about where this happened, and after a long search his remains were found, and identified by some of his hair remaining, but principally by the boots with spurs. His bones alone remained besides, and they were duly interred by our chaplain.

The body of Captain Wyatt-Edgell, 17th Lancers, which had been buried, was exhumed and put in a coffin made by the engineers, and lined with tin from our empty provision cases, to be brought to England.



While all this was going on with the dead, it fell to my lot to be more useful and to bring back a body alive, that was supposed to be dead. A private soldier of the 60th Rifles was in hospital here with fever and became delirious, a common result of this fever. In his delirium he managed to escape from the hospital tent one morning and disappeared. The most diligent search was made for him all day—even the streams were examined—but he could not be found. He was absent all night, and when next morning he was still lost it was considered from the state of health he was in that he must be dead somewhere, and attention was then directed to find the body.

In the course of my surveying I found the man wandering in the bushes. His delirium appeared to have passed, for he seemed to be heading towards camp; and he gave me his name correctly when I asked him, and told me who I was when I asked him if he knew me, but he gave me an altogether absurd explanation of what he had been about. He was very weak, so I put him on my horse and led him to camp, much to the surprise of his comrades.

Let me correct a mistake in my last letter. I told you this place is called by Zulus Ondini. I should have said Undi. Ondini is a locative case of Undi, and means of, from, to, or at Undi. This locative case is a peculiarity of the Zulu language. So that if you ask a Zulu coming this way where he is going, he will say, "Ondini," meaning to Undi. And by "Ondini" he would express that he was a native of, or was living at, or coming from Undi. Undi, I find, is an abbreviated form of Ulundi, which has long been disused and is now quite unknown as a name in the country, though it is used in our maps, and by ourselves in consequence.

After a long hunt the King has been taken, and if it had not been that his own people disclosed his where-

abouts, there is no saying how long the hunt might have been prolonged.

There is one general feeling of relief and gratification at his capture.

He was taken on the 28th instant by Major Marter (King's Dragoon Guards). I believe it is decided that the credit of the capture is due to Lord Gifford.

Gifford, who was the most pertinacious of all the pursuers, having several times nearly caught the King, at last marked him down at a certain kraal.

This kraal was separated from Gifford's party by an open expanse, but there were wooded heights beyond the kraal.

He decided to wait till dark to approach, lest the King, whose look-outs would discover him, should get the alarm in time to escape into the wood. But Gifford sent the information of where the King was to another party. This information, it appears, fell into the hands of Major Marter, who with his party was on the wooded side, not knowing in the least where the King was. He at once closed on the kraal and made the capture.

With Major Marter, was my interpreter, Mr. Oftebro, who knew the King well personally.

Cetywayo's first expression was surprise at his being caught at that side. He did not think horses could pass on those hills.

Then he requested that he might be shot at once. Later on he became in very good spirits, Mr. Oftebro tells me, and made jokes at Marter's expense.

For instance, alluding to the strong guard Marter kept upon him, he said to Mr. Oftebro :—

“ I am just going out of the hut for a minute, but before I go out, tell your master to put a ‘ Company ’ (using the English word) here, and a ‘ Company ’ there,

and a 'Company' there" (pointing with his finger all round).

And then he laughed at the precautions he thus burlesqued.

Another time, he told Mr. Oftebro that when the cavalry were very inconveniently close in pursuit of him, he happened to have eight horses, so he gave some of these to some boys, and told them to ride away across the open to a certain bush and there dismount and escape. This they did. The ruse took splendidly, and away went Major Barrow and his horsemen as hard as they could go, while the King moved leisurely to another kraal in the opposite direction. Cetywayo laughed a good deal as he told the story.

I don't know how I have omitted to introduce Mr. Oftebro to you before in my letters. He is a young man of twenty, the son of a Norwegian missionary, to whom the celebrated Etyowe (spelt Ekowe in the map) belongs. He was born in Zululand, went to school in Norway, but has been most of his life in Zululand. He speaks the language like a native, and very good English. He knows Zululand well, and Cetywayo intimately. He has been my constant companion from the time I prepared the column for the relief of Ekowe with Colonel Law. He lives with me in my tent, and is to me an unfailing fund of Zulu information.

All the spelling of places and persons I mention are on his authority, and he can always give me the reason why a name should be so spelt.

The Zulu language has been carefully reduced to grammar. The letters have their particular sounds; and so a word can only properly be spelt in one way.

It is a most pleasant language to the ear, and excepting certain clicks which occur occasionally it sounds rather like Spanish.



The King arrived here to-day. He declined to ride or drive, and walked into camp at a slow and dignified pace, looking a monarch all over although a prisoner.

He is the finest Zulu I have seen—very tall, of herculean build, splendidly made, stout without being corpulent, and remarkably handsome !

Cetywayo is King by right of descent, but he might well have been chosen from the whole nation, after the manner of Saul, for his superior body, without reference to his virtue.

Three men, who were taken with the King, attempted to escape by a rush on the way here ; one did escape, but the other two were shot dead by the escort.

The escort, entering the camp, was composed of parts of various corps that had been on the chase. In front marched some of the King's Dragoon Guards, then some of Barton's natives, then some of the 60th Rifles, then the King, then more of our men.

The King wore at his waist the leopard skin, which is reserved exclusively for royalty ; and, thrown over his shoulders, a red shawl with broad green stripes, of those bright colours which are so becoming to blacks. On his head was simply the black ring which all married Zulus wear. Cetywayo is married ; he is in fact very much married, and I don't know that the number of his wives has ever been estimated even by himself !

At two o'clock this afternoon he was despatched to Natal. He went in an ambulance wagon drawn by eight mules, with an escort of irregular cavalry, taking with him a few servants and a selection of wives. He goes to Pietermaritzburg first.

All the Zulu tribes have now submitted, except one near the Natal frontier, so Clarke's column marches back that way, and we shall either receive or force the submission of these. We fully expect they will submit

on our approach, and we do not at all imagine we shall have any fighting.

Our road to Natal for this purpose will be by the "Middle Drift" of the Tugela.

The state of my clothing has long called loudly for peace. I will not say much about it, because I know this gives rise to laughter, whereas it is more properly a subject for tears. Every device that engineering can suggest has been applied inside my garments to keep them together, but they are in that state in which engineers pronounce a bridge or house unsafe. They may fall into ruin at any moment by any sudden and injudicious movement on my part, such as a gesticulation of joy at the prospect of returning home.

I had to dine with Wolseley with one knee out in the open air! A new knee had been put in, but it had been taken from that which remained, and the rent was made worse. Well it was that he said to me, "Come as you are."

I could push my finger through my flannel shirt, but I don't. It is immaterial whether I put my socks on through the toe or through the ankle, they are equally open both ways. My staff patrol-jacket had loops of braid, which have now come in useful to tie it together—the hooks and eyes being no more.

*Sept. 1st.*—To-day, which curiously happens to be Cetywayo's coronation day—the day that six years ago he was crowned at Ulundi by the British Government—Sir Garnet Wolseley received the principal chiefs of the land, and divided Zululand into several parts, announcing that Cetywayo should never reign again.

The several divisions of the country are to be ruled each by a chief, who was named by Sir Garnet, and these chiefs are to be independent of each other. They

themselves, or representatives for them, signed the terms of peace.

*Sept. 2nd.*—We crossed, or rather recrossed, the White Imvelosi to-day on the homeward march, and encamped for the night on the opposite bank.

Sir Garnet inspected the column when we were formed up ready to start; we marched past, and then he took leave of us most warmly. He goes to the Transvaal to settle matters up that way, escorted by five companies of the 80th Regiment, some dragoons and artillery.

To-day, for the first time since I entered Zululand, I had leisure to go out shooting. What a change in the state of things! No more anxiety for the safety of the camp, no scouting for the enemy, no necessity to entrench, no preparations to receive attack. A comfortable encampment, with plenty of room, and only ordinary precautions.

I came upon a flock of guinea-fowl and killed three with two shots. I found them very large, almost small turkeys.

*Sept. 3rd.*—We started at 2.30 this morning by moonlight and reached our camping-ground near Fort Victoria. Here it was that we had the severe storm. We encamped on fresh ground beyond the position of the 452 dead oxen.

This also is a beautiful place, always park, but here and there craggy hills and deep precipitous ravines most picturesque to behold.

Mr. Oftebro and I dined on one of the guinea-fowls. It was delicious, quite equal to pheasant, and more than two hungry men could eat. . . .

*On the Zulu bank of the Tugela,  
Middle Drift,*

*Sept. 18, 1879.*

MY DEAR MAY,—The war is over. All the chiefs of this, the last conquered region of Zululand, have sub-



mitted to us. We are on the banks of the Tugela. Part of the column crossed over and encamped on the Natal side this morning, and the last of the column with its headquarters will evacuate Zululand this afternoon.

What a long time it has taken to subdue the Zulus, and what a capital resistance they have made, without artillery, without horses, without telegraph, without a single *written* order or message !

I crossed the frontier with the first troops that invaded Zululand from the Tugela on the 13th of January ; I recross it to-day with the last of our army eight months afterwards.

The march from Ulundi has been most pleasant. The weather has been delicious, and the country passed through very beautiful. We left Ulundi on the 2nd of September ; we have marched every day but one, when we waited to receive certain submissions, and we arrived here yesterday. The distance from Ulundi by the route we have followed is a hundred and fifty miles. It is not a regular wagon road, so we have had in some places to make a road for our wagons. In some places the hills were so steep that we could neither drive over nor round them, so we had to cut a road along the steep side wide enough for our vehicles. With great care we had only one accident—by bad driving—the mess-wagon of the 57th Regiment ran off the cutting and rolled over and over down the hill, to the great grief of the officers and the contents.

We all thoroughly enjoyed our return march. No sooner had we started than the Zulu chiefs sent in their submission, and began to arrive at our camp even before the appointed time.

Instead of finding the country desolate, we now found the natives living fearlessly with their families and herds in their kraals, which are dotted all over the country ; and

so confident were they of the white man's fair-play that they came at once to headquarters with a complaint in the case of any misbehaviour of our people, and I am glad to say such misbehaviour was limited to a few—a very few—petty thefts and one or two compulsory sales of articles of curiosity.

The Zulus were so sharp in identifying the offenders, that nearly all their grievances were redressed. As an instance I will mention the following :

Two Zulus came to my tent. They told me that a white man had asked them to sell him a wooden milk-pail and a pillow (let me just observe that a Zulu pillow is a piece of wood carved for ornament and curved at the top to fit the head—I suppose their woolly heads find this soft enough). Well, they declined to sell them ; whereupon, they said, the white man threw down a shilling and walked off with the pail and pillow. They remonstrated and went with him, but he threatened to shoot them ; they then watched him from a far distance, and noted the tent he entered. Now it is by no means an easy thing to distinguish a particular tent in a large camp, but these men, when I sent our military police with them, at once walked to the tent and pointed it out. Their property was discovered inside. The offender was one of our wagon conductors. I censured him for the want of fair-play he had shown, and pointed out the discredit such acts might throw upon negotiations with the conquered. He admitted the truth of the Zulus' story, and I ordered the articles to be given back. The loss of his shilling, I told him, he must bear himself ; for the Zulus had refused to touch it, and one of our natives passing at the time accordingly picked it up, as rejected by both parties, and had appropriated it—to him it represented the wages of a day and a half.

The presence of the native families and cattle was a

guarantee that there would be no treachery on our line of march. Zulus have no reason to wish to attack us, for the terms of peace are manifestly for the benefit of all Zulus excepting a few great men, whose greatness departs with the fall of Cetywayo. Thus our march back has been most enjoyable. Our camps have been pitched in the pleasantest instead of the strongest places, and those who liked, have been able to wander about shooting and fishing in perfect security. This change, after many months on the *qui vive* in contact with the enemy, after months of hard work by day and nights passed in boots and accoutrements, is enjoyed by all.

We reached Entumeni on the 12th of September, and started next day along the unknown road to the Middle Drift. Every day we encamped in some delightful spot—rich grass underfoot, pleasant woods in the kloofs, and cheerful brooks of water.

It is now spring, and a fresh variety of wild flowers are springing up in bloom. The kloofs or ravines are warmer than the hill-tops, and there the vegetable world is finest. It is nothing by comparison with the luxuriant wild growth of Fanti-land and Ashanti, but it is very fine for all that. A small stream generally trickles through the kloof, and in that stream grow fragrant lilies, while beautiful ferns spread along the banks. Most conspicuous among these is the tree fern. These tree ferns are of all sizes, from a few inches up to ten or twelve feet, and are, I think, the prettiest plants I have ever seen. The stems are straight and clean up to the top, where the young leaves in a ring uncoil, erect and then bend over gracefully in a circle of immense, magnificent fronds.

The streams are full of fish. I have only once had time to go out fishing, and my tackle was a mule-driver's whip with a hook attached to the lash. Yet with grass-



hoppers for bait, I caught fish as fast as I could catch grasshoppers to bait my hook. The fish were all the same kind, quite new to me, not bad eating, and something like grey mullet in appearance; in weight from a quarter of a pound to a pound. The water also abounded with crabs, about the size of my hand, and I continually caught them too.

We have crossed the Tugela and are now encamped on the Natal side. The last patrol is just about to evacuate what was the enemy's country, and to-morrow morning we shall proceed for Durban by Greytown and Pietermaritzburg.

Good-bye, Zululia, we shall *perhaps* never meet again; but you will as surely be British territory hereafter as Tuesday follows Monday! . . .

## CHAPTER VII

### BOER WAR OF 1881

AFTER a few months' leave, in March of 1880 Major Hart rejoined his regiment at Chatham, and in the following October moved with it to Dover; and in January of 1881, being barely recovered from a bad attack of scarlet fever, he was again sent on special service to South Africa, where he served during part of the Boer War under Sir Evelyn Wood, as Deputy-Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General of the Natal Field Force.

*On board the Union Company's  
steamship "Pretoria,"*

*Jan. 26, 1881.*

MY DEAR MAY,—Passing through London, I finished my business there, and went on to Southampton by an evening train. The cold in London tortured me. I knew that my recent scarlet fever had devoured much of my flesh, and I felt the want of that flesh like the want of an overcoat. The much-eating and the restricted exercise of ship life is already bringing me a new supply; and I have hopes at this rate that by the time I reach the Cape I may even be the glad possessor of fat!

Arrived at Southampton, I heard that the *Pretoria* would not start till 2 P.M. next day, so I ordered supper at the station hotel, and put up there for the night, it being then 10 o'clock.

As I was on the point of entering the coffee-room, I was suddenly stopped by a sight which dismayed me.

Through the glass doors I saw all about the large coffee-room some five-and-twenty or thirty hip-baths,

and sponge-baths, while wet towels were lying flung in all directions, even on the little dining-tables.

In the midst, two or three parties of men and women were eating supper. I said to myself: "Can such an unseemly thing have occurred in the United Kingdom, in time of peace! Can the whole male population of a hotel have been tubbing together in the coffee-room, because the bathrooms won't take them in fast enough!"

Entering, I found immediate relief in the discovery that the snow and thaw had been too much for the roof!

*Jan. 27th.*—I went on board at eleven this morning. But a dense fog that the pilot would not stir in, kept us alongside the quay till next morning.

I have a cabin to myself, and am most comfortable.

During the night the wind had risen again, and about midday it blew furiously upon us from the westward; we were, in fact, in a squall, and it was necessary to put the ship's head out of her course, to meet the heavy seas that broke upon us. It had rained heavily, and two seamen went to bail out the boats that hung from the davits over the sea. One entered the life-boat on the starboard side of the quarter-deck, and the other the corresponding boat on the port side. The ship's head was not quite in the wind's eye, so the former seaman was on the windward side. He had only just got out of the boat and reached the deck, when the tackle at one end gave way, and the life-boat was suspended by one end, swinging to and fro in the gale with dangerous violence.

All eyes turned instinctively to the other side; the boat there was all right, but the seaman was gone. No one had seen him fall. There was the dreadful shout of "Man overboard." The engines stopped; life-buoys were thrown overboard; some of the sailors rushed up



the rigging of the mast, to get the best possible chance of sighting "Yellow Bill," as I heard them call him; and the rest of us held on to the ship at the stern, and searched in eager silence for any sign of the unfortunate sailor in that angry sea, which one moment was within reach of our fingers and the next appeared as far off as the ground from the second story of a house.

Little was said, for no swimmer could look into that sea and not feel convinced that even if he were not hampered with a suit of tarpaulin, one or two, or three minutes, would be the most that he could exist there; if, indeed, he could breathe at all in the choking spray.

The life-boat had now stove itself in, and it was cut away and floated off upright, sustained by its air-chambers. The engines worked again, and the *Pretoria* described a circle round the spot.

All eyes were strained in the forlorn hope; but of course nothing was seen, but occasionally a buoy or the boat as they crested the waves.

Once more the *Pretoria* resumed her way, leaving poor "Yellow Bill" in the Bay of Biscay for ever, with a broken life-boat for a tombstone.

*Feb. 19th.*—The *Pretoria* reached Cape Town early in the morning, having made the journey from Plymouth in twenty days thirteen hours, including the stoppages at Madeira and St. Helena. This was very good, considering that we had little or no calm weather and many rough days. We went as usual into the docks alongside the quay.

After breakfast on board, I went ashore. I first went to the barracks to see the 91st Highlanders, old friends of the Zulu war, and I got a good summary of news from them. They are naturally severely disappointed at not being at the seat of war. They are kept at the Cape in

consequence of the openly disloyal attitude of the Dutch population, which cheers publicly, in our colony, at the news of British reverses by the Boers ; and publishes in the Queen's dominion what used once to be called High Treason.

There are people who sympathise with the Boers, as an injured people fighting for their independence most justly, they think. Those people have omitted to read the history of the Boers. If they had read that history, they would know that Boer independence means the right of carrying on slavery ; freedom to pick quarrels with negro tribes, and attack them, shoot down the men and carry off the children into slavery. They attached great value to a black slave ; as much as £400. They enjoyed the chase which brought them this spoil. There was little or no danger attending it, and the slaves were brought home to Boerdom under the sporting title of "black ivory." Whenever the wickedness of these proceedings was suggested to the Boers by the British colonists, the answer always was that the Kaffirs had stolen their cattle ; that it had been necessary to attack them for this ; and that it would have been cruel to leave the orphan children to perish, when the fathers were killed. This argument was weak enough by itself, but the Kaffirs had their say too.

They stated that the Boers had taken land from them by force, and that they had retaken it by force, when they could ; and I cannot anywhere find that the Kaffirs looked upon the removal of their slain countrymen's children as other than spoliation. England will not tolerate slavery : this is the Boer's great grievance—in this one matter he cannot do as he likes—because England forbids, and so he has repeatedly pushed off, trekked as he calls it, to lands beyond English law, and as often his own misgovernment has brought about

the necessary annexation of his land to the British territory.

England gave back to the Boer his independence, in what is now called the Orange Free State ; but he is, at this period, hardly prevented there, by a wise President, from proceedings against England, that would naturally lead to his again losing that independence.

As to the Transvaal, England took possession of it, only just in time to save it, Boers and all, from being swallowed by Cetywayo, whom the Boers had aroused, with all his nation of warriors, because they persisted in claiming and occupying a slice of his country.

Now that the Zulu terror is overpast, the Transvaal rebels rise again against the annexation.

Such, in as few words as possible, is the political history of this war, that I am on my way to take part in.

The Highlanders were very good to me ; invited me to dinner on the 21st, and to make use of their Mess. I was sorry to have to decline dinner, as I had only my travelling clothes accessible, but they would have me come even in that garb.

From the barracks I went to the Castle, the headquarters, and found there General Hon. Leicester Smyth, who commands the troops in Cape Colony. I knew him before, as I was on the Staff of one of his brigades in the autumn manœuvres of 1877.

He very kindly gave me Sir G. Pomeroy Colley's despatch to read, with a sketch of the ground at Lang's Nek, and gave me all the information he could of the military movements since I left England. This was a great benefit to me.

*Feb.* 20.—Last time I was at Cape Town I spent almost all my time at Wynberg, the pleasant suburb, so now I explored Cape Town and its vicinity.

I suppose the view of Table Mountain as you approach



by sea is one of the prettiest views in the world ; and it always looks well, however you see it. The town stands between the foot of the hill and the sea, and is the reverse of nice. It is in bad order, slovenly, subject to stench at any moment, and afflicted with dust of which I have never felt the like, and been so punished, except perhaps sometimes between the permanent barracks at Aldershot. I left the town and walked for some miles along a pretty road called Kloof road, at the foot of Table Mountain, till I came to a lovely bay with a white sandy shore called Hout Bay. It was very hot and the sea looked most tempting, so I took a plunge in head first, off a boulder of granite, but the cold was so intense that it took my breath away, and I hastened out gasping. I went in again less suddenly, but again the intense cold drove me out, and this with a hot sun blazing high overhead and the water only a few feet deep. I am told it is due to some ocean current. It was decidedly refreshing.

*Feb. 21st.*—Still at Cape Town. The grapes are now abundant and delicious, and have scarcely any stones. The largest and finest bunches are sold for twopence !

I dined this evening with the 91st.

*Feb. 22nd.*—The *Pretoria* proceeded at 2 P.M. . . .

*Feb. 24th.*—Anchored in Algoa Bay, off Port Elizabeth, about 8 A.M. I was right glad to find the *Asiatic* waiting and ready. I and the Natal passengers changed into her, by means of a steam launch ; and at 6.30 P.M. the *Asiatic* started for Durban.

*Feb. 25th.*—The *Asiatic* anchored off East London about 3.30 P.M., and put some passengers and cargo on shore ; and we went on again at 6 P.M.

We now coasted along about a mile distant from the

land on the one side, there being no land nearer than Australia on the other. The country looked like beautiful unending park, with bright green grass down to the sandy beach. There lay the richest soil and best climate in the world—almost unused. Here and there a Kaffir kraal, with a few cattle feeding; and sometimes, but rarely, a white man's farm. Hills and vales, grass and woods, with streams and rivers abundant—but no population.

Meanwhile tens and hundreds of thousands of our countrymen in the United Kingdom are in poverty from overcrowding—a month's journey from this abundance!

*Feb. 27th.*—We anchored off Durban about nine this morning. The passengers, mails, and cabin baggage were soon put on shore; but I cannot get my baggage from the hold till to-morrow morning. Then I hope to proceed to Pietermaritzburg by rail, and join Sir Evelyn Wood there to-morrow. I hear that he advances with reinforcements, for the front, from Pietermaritzburg on the next day, Tuesday, so I arrive just in good time. . . .

*“The Plough” Hotel, Newcastle, Natal,  
March 11, 1881.*

MY DEAR MAY,—Sir Evelyn Wood is here. I dined with him this evening, and to-morrow I ride on to our most advanced post, Prospect Hill, confronting the now celebrated Nek, with an order in my pocket appointing me Staff-Officer there.

Now I must go back to the 27th February. During the night of the 27th I was awakened by the voice of somebody who arrived late in the hotel where I slept, and who in a loud tone told briefly that Colley had been defeated with great loss and killed. I listened attentively to the unknown voice in the courtyard, and then

tumbled back to sleep again, hoping I had heard a fib that morning would refute. Morning brought confirmation of the story.

As soon as I could get my baggage, the greater part of which was my indispensable saddlery, put on shore, I went by rail to Pietermaritzburg. It is about seventy-four miles by rail, and takes six hours. The curves and ups and downs of that line are a remarkable piece of clever engineering, but the rate of progression is distressing. It was late when I reached Pietermaritzburg on 28th.

Next morning, the 1st of March, I reported myself to the commandant there, and I was shown a telegram from Sir E. Wood, directing that I was to be commandant of the Base of Operations at Durban till further orders. Of course I was very sorry to have to go back instead of forwards; however, I lost no time in taking up my duties with all my heart.

I returned to Durban by the next train, on the 1st of March. At Durban, I became Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General and Commandant. I was most ably assisted by a Lieutenant Wilson of the 60th Rifles.

On Friday the 4th of March a telegram came from Sir Evelyn ordering me up to the front, to my great joy; and saying that a seat had been taken for me in the next postcart of Tuesday, from Pietermaritzburg to Newcastle, and so on Monday the 7th of March I again went to Pietermaritzburg by rail.

I bought a horse at Durban, and shall buy a second here. My Durban horse is following me by road, in charge of a Kaffir groom whom I engaged there, and my old servant Nquasi—"George"—that clever and faithful native who served me all through the Zulu war.

I had written to the magistrate of his district to say I was coming out from England by the next mail steamer, and wished to have "George" again; and "George"



accordingly left his kraal and presented himself at Durban, wearing my old patrol jacket that I had worn in Zululand, with the scrap of Ashanti medal ribbon on it, and all the rents repaired !

“George” was delighted to see me. First he doffed a European hat that he had taken to wearing, and then he ran at me and shook my hand. This was the Kaffir warrior who had first taken my fancy more than two years ago, in the native contingent, as he marched with a shield in one hand and his assegais in the other to our place of rendezvous at the Nonoti River, and who afterwards became my faithful servant all through that war.

On the 8th of March I started for Newcastle by postcart with Colonel Buller, who had landed in the meanwhile.

The postcart is a two-wheeled vehicle, drawn by six horses, and driven by a Hottentot. It will take five passengers beside the driver. One each side of the driver, and three behind. The military authorities can take all the seats in time of war if they require them ; and Colonel Buller took the whole for himself and me, so as to enable us to take our field-kits and saddlery with us. There had been much rain, and the road, which is only the undressed surface of the country, was very heavy, and severely rough. The postcart seems made to stand any degree of jolting, and the Hottentot drives his team splendidly.

The distance from Pietermaritzburg to Newcastle is a hundred and eighty miles. It can be done by the postcart, with changes of horses every few miles, in a day and a half in fine weather, but we were over three days doing it.

One of our changes of horses, the first day, was where the road crosses the Umgeni River, and I had time to see, close by, one of the sights of the world—a precipice over

which the Umgeni leaps in one clear bound over three hundred feet to the continuation of the river below.

It was a magnificent sight. The whole of the surroundings, too, are beautiful, and there are no spectators—only the solitary traveller like myself!

The postcard cannot travel at night, as the road is so bad.

We slept, or tried to sleep, the first night at a wayside inn, where the fleas kept me awake the whole night, and when the candle was lighted for our early rising next morning I saw at least a score of fleas of all sizes retreating from my position.

That place was called Klar Kloof. The next night we slept at Ladysmith, a little town, where we overtook a troop of Inniskilling Dragoons. We had breakfast at Estcourt. The following day we could not get farther than the foot of the Biggarsberg Hills, and there we stayed the night at Carey's Hotel, a little bit of an inn. We had had a wet day and a very bad road. Once the cart had stuck fast, and our horses were unable to draw it out even after we had taken all the load out. Happily a wagon came up at this moment and the oxen were lent to us, and the cart was then pulled out of the mud-hole. We crossed the Sunday River on a raft, and breakfasted at a very neat hotel belonging to an English gentleman farmer.

A convoy of fifty wounded soldiers arrived at Carey's in the evening—they were very wet, but very cheery; all spare shelter was given them freely.

This morning we started again at six o'clock, breakfasted at the Ingagane River, and reached Newcastle about 3 P.M. I had no idea when I arrived what my appointment was to be, and I leave to you to imagine my joy when I heard I was to go up at once to our foremost post as Staff-Officer there.

. . . . .

*In Camp, Mount Prospect, Natal,  
March 23, 1881.*

MY DEAR MAY,—I am the only Staff-Officer here, so I have much to do. The headquarters of the army are at Newcastle, about twenty miles back; but during the armistice the General has been staying at "Smith's Store," a house about two miles from this, on the Newcastle road.

In front of us, about three miles distant, is the now celebrated Nek. The Boer forces are there; we see them distinctly, and with my telescope I see that they have fortified themselves abundantly. Towering up on our left front, at about the same distance in a straight line to the summit, is Majuba Mountain, on the top of which Colley was killed. Two or three hundred paces from my tent is his grave.

We occupy here two hills not half a mile apart, with a nice brook flowing between. We are strongly fortified by a chain of detached forts built of sods. Earthworks are impossible, for although there is rich grass everywhere, there is rock everywhere too, close beneath.

My old Zulu friends, the 3rd Battalion of the 60th Rifles, are here, also the 92nd Highlanders, besides other troops.

I cannot write even to you, all that the General said privately to me in appointing me to be the Staff-Officer here, but one of his reasons which I may mention is amusing from the very seriousness with which he gave it. He wanted here, he said, a Staff-Officer who would not think the force to be detained for the defence of this position insufficient; who would be cheerful under all circumstances; cheerful when a great many people were killed about him; who, in fact, when everybody was killed except himself (the Staff-Officer), would still be cheerful! That was the reason he gave for choosing me!



Next morning I breakfasted with the General, bought a pony from one of his aides-de-camp, and rode to Mount Prospect, and took over the duties from the Staff Officer I found there.

The armistice was to expire at midnight on the 14th, but the conference which Sir Evelyn Wood had begun with the Boer leaders not being concluded in time it was prolonged for four days, afterwards for three days, and now for two, *i.e.* till to-night.

Poor Lady Colley came here on a visit to her husband's grave, and stayed at Smith's Store for two days. Everything was done that was possible for her comfort—a tent was pitched near the grave for her to rest in, and no one went near the spot while she was there. It was, I hear, her wedding-day when she first saw her husband's tomb.

Sir G. Colley's grave is in the little cemetery that has been made on this hill for the killed, and for those who have since died of their wounds. I have made a sketch of the grave, and, curiously, Majuba Mountain is its natural background.

The telegraph is open up to this camp, and frequent telegrams pass between the General and Lord Kimberley. There are also frequent letters sent by flag of truce, from the Boer leaders to the General.

All the Boers that I have seen in this way are immense men—perhaps they sent their finest specimens.

Throughout the 17th and 18th inst. it poured with rain. Remembering how often in the Zulu war I had wet feet for several days at a time, I brought a pair of indiarubber long boots with me this time, and they are an immense advantage. I would not accept £20 for them now!

. . . . .

*Camp, Mount Prospect,  
March 30, 1881.*

MY DEAR MAY,—This day last week, the 23rd of March, was an eventful day. Peace was signed. I fancy that never before in the history of the world has peace been received with such little joy. I have heard, and I think it probable, that the majority of the Boer forces was dissatisfied with the peace, and only gave unwilling obedience to an influential Boer minority. A spirit of depression has fallen on our troops. A British force—I will not say a British army, for it has not reached that dimension—has been three times beaten in battle by an enemy that it almost despised, beaten on every occasion of conflict—out-generalled, out-mancœuvred, out-fought, and even chased, its attack repulsed, its defence forced.

The Boer had been underrated as a fighting man. It is many years since we have been at war with the Boers before this time, and in the interval rifles have come into general use, and the circumstance does not seem to have been foreseen by the British chief, that the Boers would thereby gain an immense advantage against us. A nation of rifle sportsmen must and ever will be the best shots of the world. Add to the possession of the best rifles manufactured a life spent in the stalking of game, the judgment of distance, and the practice of aiming, and you have the actual conditions that make the Boers' fire terrible.

The British army cannot compete with him *in that*; but England possesses two things for her army more terrible than the rifle practice of the Transvaal—superior numbers, and artillery. The artillery can batter the Boers' defences to pieces if it can gain a position to open fire from. Hitherto the Boer has ably prevented such position being secured, and has fought determinedly

and right well to prevent it. The advantages of superior numbers has not yet been used against him. It is absolutely essential to make up for his superior shooting. Troops enough are on their way to us; it was only necessary to wait for them; and all the defeats of our little body here would be compensated for, so far as compensation ever could be gained, by a crushing victory over the Transvaal commandoes—when the British lion was chained down by telegrams from Downing Street!

Soldiers are not allowed, or at least I suppose not, to have any political feeling; but I will say this, that what we all feel so deeply is this—that if terms were to be made by commission with the rebels, it should have been decided to do so at the outbreak of the rebellion, and not when we have tried to fight it out and been beaten. I believe I am not different to the other soldiers when I tell you I feel inclined to weep with vexation as I write—the vexation of not being allowed to fight it out to the end. Perhaps the war will be resumed. We have changed our camp to new fresh ground, but we keep our forts on the hill close by in repair. The Highlanders and Cavalry and the Naval Brigade have gone back to Newcastle, but we have here the 3rd Battalion 60th Rifles, a battery of artillery, and a squadron of Mounted Infantry, and here we shall probably remain, an advanced guard, until the Royal Commission has done its work.

*April 6th.*—I have finished the survey of Lang's Nek. I am about to commence the survey of "Amajuba Mountain." I will at present only say briefly that it is a steep, somewhat conical hill, with the point cut off, and the table summit surrounded by a fringe of precipice. It is a position that, until the 27th of February 1881, military men would have described simply as "inac-



cessible" against defence. But I will leave further description till I have done the survey.

We have a remarkable climate here. As you come from the sea at Durban you continue to rise, until here it is about 4000 feet or so above the sea-level, and consequently much cooler than the region of Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

The rainy season was just ending as I arrived at the beginning of March, and even the occasional thunderstorms with which the rainy season goes out, as well as comes in, seems to have ceased, and now begins the dry weather. Those thunderstorms were very loud and vivid; and one afternoon a brighter flash than usual struck Prospect Hill and killed one of our soldier butchers on the spot. He was a 92nd Highlander, and was sharpening his knife on the steel in the open air at the time. I saw him directly afterwards. His clothes were torn into rags from neck to foot; the stuff cover of his helmet was rent in fragments, but the basket-work frame of it was unhurt. His head was cut but not broken, and his hair smelt strongly of singeing; he was grazed on the chest, hip, and the outside of one foot in a straight line, just enough to draw blood, and the boot on that foot, but not the other, was shattered to pieces.

Curiously, he was not on the high ground of the camp, but in a hollow at the time: it is supposed that the knife and steel attracted the lightning.

Sometimes it is hot, never very hot, but generally the temperature is perfect; occasionally it is very cold. The air is so clear, the sky so blue, that the sun burns our skin even when the day is merely warm. Most faces are covered with burnt skin peeling off; noses especially catch it, and the longer the more so I find!

Mount Prospect, where we are encamped, seems a valley between the neighbouring heights that tower

above it. The ground is everywhere covered with grass, and is broken up into innumerable small hills, with flat or very gently sloping tops, and descending very steeply and sometimes precipitously into small ravines, which always contain a brook of clear water running rapidly and forming waterfalls and cascades of the prettiest description.

There is very little wood, that is our only disadvantage ; we have to send wagons a long way for it, and cut it out of the ravines, where it is difficult to get at. Close by us is the Buffalo River, one of the prettiest sights I have seen. It is not a large river, but it has cut its way into rocky gorges, hundreds of feet deep, most magnificent to behold. Often, as I ride along and see not a human being for miles, I think how many visitors the Buffalo valley would have were it in England, and the immense value that would be put upon the now almost uninhabited land which borders it. This is the time for grass fires. Everywhere the dry grass is being set on fire by the Kaffirs or colonists. What would be made into hay in England is burnt here, so as to get a fresh crop of young grass for grazing as soon as possible. Sometimes the grass fires are several miles long ; they burn always against the wind, and are beautiful at night. They are not dangerous, as they do not advance more quickly than one can walk, and they are easily put out. To protect our camp I have a fire piquet always ready to turn out with empty sacks or branches, and if a fire comes too near us they run out and slap it till it is extinguished. In from two to four weeks, according to the weather, a crop of young grass sprouts, and the horses and cattle eagerly seek it out.

The neighbouring heights are frequented by large baboons. A baboon may be complimented as being both interesting and amusing ; but I do think it was rude of

two officers of the — who returned to camp one evening by the valley, while their colonel and another officer returned along the hill-top, to say that for a long time they were puzzled to make out whether the latter were baboons or men!

My Zulu servant "George" (Nquasi) is just the same solemn, clever fellow as ever. He never gives me any trouble, and never wants anything. As usual, he contrives to provide whatever is needful. I never ask him any questions as to where he gets his implements from, but I noticed particularly that when he joined me here he brought with him the door of a house. I asked no question about it. I had no idea what object or use he could have in view with a door amongst his field-kit! However, I found out in a few days that this region is subject to fits of strong wind, that blow out and scatter all the fires except "George's." At these times "George" produces his door and sets it up on the windy side of his fire, and cooks away to leeward in perfect comfort.

When and where, on his way here from his own tribe to join me, he obtained information of these winds, and what house found the door that is so useful to me, are questions I shall never ask Nquasi.

*May 4th.*—Last week I finished the survey of Lang's Nek and Mt. Amajuba, and despatched the plan to headquarters. The headquarters are at Newcastle, twenty miles from this. I am glad it is accomplished. The work was hard for several reasons. It was wanted as soon as possible, and was therefore a labour when otherwise it would have been a pleasure. High winds blew on the hills, retarding the work and vexing the worker. The ground was often so steep and craggy that I had to leave my horse below and climb above—quite contrary to my nature, which, though it delights



in hills that are not frozen into misery, prefers always to ascend on other legs than its own. I will say this in favour and praise of my colonial horses, that whenever I lead them up or down precipitous places, they follow always at the bridles' length, and do not bounce on the top of me as English horses always do under such circumstances.

Another trouble was the distraction of my hitherto faithful compass from its proper allegiance to the north. It was liable to err and deceive me, owing to the attraction of iron in the ground, and this necessitated wearisome observations and corrections.

At last all was done, and yesterday I received the acknowledgment. It came from General Buller's aide-de-camp.

*Headquarters Camp, Fort Amiel, Newcastle,  
2nd May 1881.*

DEAR MAJOR HART,—General Buller is too busy to write, so has desired me to thank you for your sketch of the Nek and Brownlow's Koppie, and to say that as regards the latter more particularly both Sir Evelyn Wood and himself consider it one of the best delineations of a difficult line of country they have ever seen from the hand of any officer in the service.

Sir Evelyn considered it so valuable that he has had it photographed, in order that he may be able to keep an exact copy for future reference should it ever be necessary.—Believe me, &c.,

(Signed) DONALD BROWNE.

The views from the hill-tops were most beautiful, and I always regretted that I had not time to stay and enjoy them.

*May 25th.*—Ever since we have read out here Lord Cairns' speech on the Transvaal rebellion, we have felt some relief in the reflection that the British public at home have had the picture as clearly presented to them as if they had been here looking on from the very first.

Lord Cairns speaks as clearly and accurately as if he had been with the Natal army, and that army is thankful to him.

Soldiers are not supposed to have any political bias. Hitherto in the history of England it seems to me *that* has been proper and possible; but what is improper and impossible now is to expect soldiers to feel no disgust for the action of a Government that forces them to play the parts of cowards. Until the year 1881 I have always understood that it was an article of my military catechism never to make terms with rebels—to give no quarter, and to ask none. It seems to me bad enough that the question was ever asked—ever thought of—whether belligerent rights were to be given to subjects of her Majesty in the field, in arms against the Crown, but when it comes to taking three or four blows and then being told to cry “make friends” instead of fight it out, I see conduct not only unfit for men, but what would be condemned with kicks and jeers in the playground of every school in Britain.

I am still at Mount Prospect, and until all is settled I could not be better placed. I feel very grateful to Sir Evelyn for my appointment. I think that to be Staff-Officer of the advanced post is the best appointment in his command.

It is impossible to feel any certainty about what may happen, at present. If the Boers are to be given all they require, that is, if they are given the rights of conquerors, and it seems very like it, of course the war will not be renewed, and we may expect when the Royal Commission has finished its work that the Natal army will be dissolved.

That there will be a peace of any duration I do not think.

On my way out here, I thought that the year 1881

would settle the affairs of South Africa, so that there would be peace among whites and blacks for a generation at least ; but then I thought it would see the subjugation of the Transvaal, and the annexation of the Orange Free State. If the war with the Transvaal had been continued, the Orange Free State would have certainly committed itself so far that its annexation would have been proved necessary.

It once belonged to England ; but John Bull, about the time of the Crimean War, lost his head, and insisted on making it an independent state—in fact, anything, so that he was not troubled with the care of it—and so, much against the will and protestations of the people, it became the “Free State” ; and thus, in 1881, John Bull could not march his troops against the Transvaal that way, but found himself with the Drakensberg mountains between him and the enemy, and the passes or neks filled with the best rifles and best rifle-shots in the world. And the Orange Free State people, who had once begged, in vain, to be allowed to remain British subjects, now recruiting his enemy’s ranks to any required extent. Woe to the policy that ever gives up territory !

England is now in a fair way to lose South Africa as completely as she has lost North America.

The rule that was too strong to be endured in North America is becoming too weak to be put up with in South Africa. For instance, the Colony insisted on subduing the Basutos by force, and treated the advice from Home on the subject with marked contempt.

Do not be surprised if, when Mr. Gladstone has sufficiently apologised to Mr. Kruger for his attempt to put down the rebellion, half a million of natives open war on the Boers.

It is distressing to see the loyal families of the Transvaal streaming down this road, out of that country which



they dare not try to live in now. Wagon-loads of men, women, and children, with their servants and movable property. Even the children, who are wont to enjoy change of any kind, look dejected, as if they understood the circumstances as well as the elders.

The Boers, the loyal Boers of course excepted, are now, from all accounts, bumptious in a high degree, and even dangerous in their country to those who have not joined them.

It is only now that we have been able to carry on the restoration of the telegraph in the Transvaal. The Boers had almost entirely destroyed the whole of it. As soon as peace was proclaimed a civilian named Mr. Ilbery, with an assistant and a working party of natives, was set to work to restore the line, commencing from this place. On the 13th of April a message was sent here from Headquarters, saying that Mr. Ilbery had reported his work stopped by the Boers, and ordering me to go and investigate the matter. I at once saddled up, and taking with me one of our wagon conductors, who could speak Dutch, to interpret, I followed the telegraph line over Lang's Nek, until I came up with Ilbery's party on this bank of the Coldstream, a small river ten miles distant. Ilbery told me he positively refused to cross the Coldstream, because a Boer had ridden out to him, and told him he came from the Boers to say that the telegraph was not to be put up again in the Transvaal, and that if he attempted to proceed with it over the hill beyond the Coldstream he would be shot.

Ilbery asked if they would give him notice before they fired, and the Boer said the time for giving notice had gone by; it had been given often enough, and the next notice would be a bullet.

Then Ilbery said he told the Boer he was only obeying his orders, and when he made allusion to the Boer

authorities not having objected, the Boer said, "The next thing we shall do is to put Kruger and Joubert down in Wood's Camp; we don't care about them, and Joubert has put his name to things we don't like."

I then rode on across the Coldstream with my interpreter in search of Dutch settlers, the Boers of the neighbourhood. About five or six miles on I sighted the tops of willow trees, which indicated cultivation, and turning that way I came to the farm of a Boer named Visagie. Children of all ages were swarming about the dirty and untidy premises.

Having asked for the master, one of the stone cottages in the group was gravely pointed to; and I saw within the doorway a short, broad, and stout man of five-and-thirty, with a large brown beard and handsome features, staring gravely at me, in his shirt-sleeves. This was Visagie. He came forward, denied all knowledge of the message to Ilbery, and said that he did not believe there was anything in it. He told me, in reply to my question, that there were only three other Boer settlers in the neighbourhood, of these one had returned only the day before, another was his aged and blind father close by, and the third was Vanderschief.

I saw no use in visiting any but the last. I found his farm about three miles farther on. Vanderschief had been a leader at the beginning of the rebellion. He was there, an old man, using one crutch, and with an evil countenance. He was particular in asking my name and military rank; and beyond an occasional quick glance, looked neither at me nor the interpreter during the conversation.

He denied all knowledge of the affair also; and in answer to my questions, whether any party of Boers would send such a message to Mr. Ilbery, he said Joubert only could do so, and advised informing Joubert.

Both Visagie and Vanderschief answered my questions civilly, but I was not offered the usual hospitality, which is to off-saddle and drink coffee. This is an established custom among them with any stranger, and the omission of such an offer is a strong mark of antipathy. I should, however, have declined it under the circumstances if it had been offered.

I returned to the Coldstream, and invited Ilbery, when he had heard my account, to change his resolution and go on. He said that Vanderschief was a liar, and that he would not trust him or Visagie, or any Boer; that he would not cross the Coldstream, as if he did, he knew that some night a volley would be fired into the party. Then he went on to say that a passing Boer had said he nearly fell off his horse when he saw the telegraph at Coldstream, at the idea of the English supposing the Boers would allow it to be restored in the Transvaal. And further, that natives from the Transvaal had told his native telegraph workmen that they were mad, and would all be killed.

I was sorry that I could not persuade Ilbery to advance, nor could I determine whether the threatened intention of the Boers was real or not; so I could but offer, in concluding my report to Headquarters, to take on the telegraph far enough to prove the threat.

The General did not accept my offer; and until just now the restoration has been at a standstill.

If the General had accepted my offer, I had intended to act as follows:

I should have taken arms and ammunition for my party concealed in one of the wagons. By day I should have worked hard at setting up the telegraph, and if any Boer had brought me a threatening message I should have arrested him, and sent him back, bound, in one of the covered wagons to Newcastle, to be dealt with for



his offence, and as a hostage for our safety. At night I should have drawn the wagons together as usual, pitched my tent close to, and directly after dark should have armed my party, and removed with them, some fifty yards or so, to some sufficiently sheltered spot, piling the boxes of provisions so as to protect us as much as possible, and there have bivouacked, sleeping in the open in our blankets. In case of attack, I should count on the Boers firing into the tent and wagons, and should have immediately opened fire on them, hoping to take them by surprise, both as to our position and our being armed. If not attacked, I should have removed all back to the wagon at daybreak ; if attacked, and successful in beating it off, I should have at once entrenched and barricaded myself and party, counting that the Boers would renew the attack as soon as possible with increased numbers, and at the same time I should have sent off a native on my horse to take the news to Mount Prospect.

However, the hitch has been got over by negotiations, I presume, and the telegraph is now being regularly restored by the engineers.

*June 8th.*—Now that the guns unfairly taken at Potchefstroom have been given back by the Boers, the probability of a resumption of hostilities is gone, but until the Royal Commission has done its work there may be a possibility of a renewal of the war.

Meanwhile the little force at this post forms the advanced guard of the army, awaiting what the future may bring forth. Our little force here at Mount Prospect consists of the 3rd Battalion 60th Rifles, three troops of mounted infantry, and a battery of artillery. As the high road to the Transvaal passes through the middle of our position, there can be no secret as to what force is here. Our plan of action, however, in case we resume war, I must not tell you now. The Mount Prospect

force in such case must necessarily have a most important part to play. It will please you to know that I made the plan. The General sent me a confidential message on the 3rd of May to prepare and send him a scheme for our action, and on the morning of the 4th of May I sent it to him, complete in every detail. No work, except the carrying out of the plan, could be more to my taste. I received it back with the General's order written upon it, that it was approved for use, the General keeping a copy. And there was also a private note from General Buller, telling me Sir Evelyn and he were greatly pleased with it.

The 3rd Battalion of the 60th Rifles are my old friends of the Zulu war. There are great changes since then among the officers, but most of the men knew me, and often remind me of it when we are working together.

We are now in midwinter, and generally have frost at night up here, while down in the plains it is never even cold. The other morning the ice on the water in our buckets was three-quarters of an inch thick. It is cold in a tent under these circumstances, and the only way to keep warm enough at night is to wrap oneself up, head and all, in one's blanket. Of course we all sleep in our day clothes, not having any others. The days are serene and clear, with bright sunshine.

*June 29th.*—One day an accident occurred in the camp of our mounted infantry here. The officers had built a nice mess-house of sods, constructed an inviting fire-place for cold evenings, and erected an ambitious chimney—all of sods. I dined with them in their pride, when the house was declared open for use, and very pleasant were the company and the fire. Meanwhile, the sods dried and converted themselves into a very fair quality of Irish turf—after the mess-house of the mounted infantry was reduced to ashes!

I concluded that Irish bogs were to be found in Africa, and that the mounted infantry deserved the thanks of all in having discovered this fact, and thereby a new source of fuel to help us. I had only just directed their Commanding Officer to report officially upon the quality of the bog he had been so fortunate in discovering, when the bright prospects of turf were suddenly ruined by the discovery of coal.

It was reported to us that coal could be seen protruding from the cliffs of the Buffalo valley close by. I sent a sub. of Engineers to examine. He found that there was coal, as stated, but inaccessible for our use. He did his reconnaissance well, for not satisfied with failure he went about making inquiries, and one day a native told him he would show him where he could get coal in quite another direction. He went, and reported to me an abundance of coal at the surface, some five miles distant. Next morning I started with him at daylight to see the find. It was 24th of May. We rode southwards from here, over a small range of hills under features of the Drakensberg mountains, and descended into a plain, to a part where the grass reached our heads, on horseback. Here we came to a brook flowing over a succession of small waterfalls. We then tied up our horse to a bunch of grass and tied them together, and then made our way on foot up this stream, to a spot where there was a little waterfall about eight feet high. The water poured over a huge slab of sandstone in a narrow stream, so that there was plenty of room on either side of the fall to get close up to the slab. I stood on a rock at the side, so that my head was above the fall; the slab of sandstone projected a few feet, overhanging what was below. I stooped down, and there, immediately beneath the sandstone, was a seam a foot thick of coal—coal as black and brilliant as you see it in a coal-box in England! I looked



down at the rock I was standing on—it was a pale grey colour, not at all like coal. I took out my pen-knife and pressed the point of the blade upon it, the blade slowly sank in, and then a fragment of the rock shivered off, it was jet-black beneath. I was standing on coal. Lieut. Hedley (the R.E. officer) and I estimated that there were at that spot about fourteen feet in thickness of coal-bearing strata, some of it excellent, some inferior. Tools have been sent for, and when they come we shall send a detachment from this to work the coal. What a find this would be on any property in the United Kingdom!

I suppose it would mean at least a million of money at once.

I am using this tranquil time now, chiefly in extending the survey of the neighbourhood.

It is midwinter, but in the ravines and valleys it is like your midsummer; there the trees are in leaf, the aloes in full bloom, flowers abound, and lovely birds fly about in pairs; there seems to be perpetual summer in this land—even on the Drakensberg mountains. . . .

*Camp, Headquarters, Newcastle, Natal,*  
*Aug. 9, 1881.*

MY DEAR MAY,—The above heading shows where I am now. The Royal Commission has ended its sittings; Sir Evelyn returned here to-day, and there is not the most remote prospect of a renewal of the war.

I have been called in from Mount Prospect to be Deputy Adjutant-General at Headquarters, and so here I am.

The army will not be dissolved until the Boer Government is established and the British conditions confirmed.

Naturally they will be, considering there is no reason why they should not.

I left Mount Prospect for Newcastle on Sunday the

## 202 LETTERS OF MAJ.-GEN. HART-SYNNOT

31st of July. On the 28th the Artillery gave me a farewell dinner, on the 29th the Mounted Infantry did the same, and on the 30th the 3rd 60th Rifles.

Colonel Ashburnham, the Commandant of Mount Prospect, is also the Colonel of the 3rd 60th Rifles, and much I have enjoyed my service under his command.

There was nothing left undone under his command that ought to have been done. Into every matter that would improve the position and increase its advantage, he entered with all his heart, and everybody worked with a will.

There was surplus time and spirit found, too, to lay out a polo ground, hold rifle meetings, play cricket and football matches, create a troop of Christy Minstrels, and carry out athletic sports on a large scale. Work and pastime each received its fair meed of attention, and all went well. You will not be surprised when, notwithstanding my long stay at Mount Prospect, and all the advantages of coming now to Headquarters, I said good-bye with regret to my excellent Chief and the advanced guard at Mount Prospect.

After I had said good-bye to all on the night of the 30th, the Commandant followed me out of the mess-hut and wished me such a kindly farewell as I shall never forget, for it has sunk into my memory for ever. For months we had watched the Nek together, and been secretly prepared on a signal from Headquarters to play an all-important part that only he and I knew, I know now, excepting the Headquarter Staff.

*Mount Prospect, 3rd August 1881.*

MY DEAR HART,—I am anxious to send you a line, now that you have left Mount Prospect for Headquarters, to thank you most heartily for the manner in which you have performed your duties as Staff-

Officer to this force, since you have been serving under my orders ; and to say what entire satisfaction you have given me on all occasions.

You have never spared yourself when work was to be done, and you have at all times, not only carried out my orders, but always consulted my wishes in every particular.

I thank you most sincerely for the very able assistance you have rendered me while serving under my command.

I much regret the loss of your services here, but I trust that your transfer to the Headquarter Staff will be of advantage to yourself.—Believe me, yours very sincerely,

(Signed) CROMER ASHBURNHAM.

. . . . I started from Mount Prospect at seven on the morning of the 31st. It was not daybreak till six, so seven this time of year is a fairly early start here.

The battery of artillery next my camp *would* have an early breakfast ready for me, though I should have been well contented with my mug of coffee and a hunch of bread at that hour. However, when I had gone ten miles, I was quite ready for my second *déjeuner*.

My party consisted of a mule wagon conveying my servants, our tents, and handful of baggage, and myself on horseback alongside, my other horse following attached to the wagon.

Nquasi, however, was not going to sit tamely in the wagon, for although the mules trotted this was too slow work for him, and I soon saw him careering in huge semicircles off either side of the road, visiting kraals, stopping for a chat with sundry natives, off at a run again, and anon striking into the road again far ahead of us. You have no conception what running is until you have seen a Zulu or Kaffir do it. There was a notion that natives could only beat white men on foot at very long distances. This idea was blown into rags by an experiment—I think it was during the Zulu war—when at certain athletic sports some of the best races were thrown open to the natives, and the result was that,



short race or long race, the natives simply ran clear away from the white men, leaving them nowhere.

Well, about ten miles from Mount Prospect, that is, about half-way to Newcastle, I halted for breakfast. There was a pleasant stream, and the wagon was drawn up by it a little way from the road. The team of ten mules was outspanned, and they all, as usual, began their enjoyment by rolling and groaning with pleasure (I have observed with pleasure as well as with colic). Nose-bags at once extinguished my horses' heads; the saddle leaped on to its own back from my horse's back, a fire sprang up at the water's edge, a kettle boiled over, a delicious aroma of coffee filled the air, and a breakfast peeped up at me out of the short grass at my elbow. It was very pleasant, and I would fain have stayed there a couple of hours, but one hour was enough, and I was *en route* again. I went on to Newcastle, and having arrived was immediately settled.

I took advantage of being in the vicinity of depôts of supplies to have my old tent exchanged for a new one. My old tent had been I know not how long in use. It was very infirm when I came into possession of it. It had been frequently patched, and I saw with regret that the new pieces had all taken from the old—just as it was known nineteen hundred years ago that new pieces would do; it was, in fact, no tent for the rainy season due next month. Now I have a new tent and feel in luxury.

With my intense love for the open air, and open air pursuits, it was a treat to me to leave camp and make a reconnaissance with Colonel Grenfell of a short-cut into Zululand before Sir Evelyn's party started. There was believed to be a drift (ford) on the Buffalo River called the Steil Drift, that would take them very directly

into Zululand, but nothing more was known, and the question was, whether wagons could go that way and cross the Buffalo there. It was said to be some twenty or thirty miles off, and there was also said to be a salt lake lying somewhere in that region.

At 7 A.M., on the 17th, Grenfell and I started, each taking with a leading rein a second horse. I rode my pony first, and alas! my horse was in such high spirits that instead of allowing me to lead him, he began galloping round me in circles, spinning me and the pony round, and kicking his heels high up in the air. I then got a mounted Kaffir to take him, and I hoped he would follow the pony, but on looking back I saw him spinning the Kaffir and horse round, nipping the Kaffir's horse with his teeth, and unmistakably laughing at his own folly.

No more time was to be lost, so off I went, determined to try the pony's mettle by giving him the whole task. It was a very pleasant ride; it had, quite unexpectedly for this time of year, rained in the night, so the ground was just nicely softened for our horses' feet.

Some fifteen miles on we found the so-called salt lake. It had a strange taste, something like a chemist's shop, but certainly was not salt, and our horses drank it freely. The lake took us out of our course, so that we had to circle round to our left, in a course something like a fish-hook in shape, and then we found the drift on the Buffalo, having so far ridden thirty miles.

The drift was good, rather sandy, but quite good enough for wagons; we rode over, the water being not more than just up to our feet, and it was then time to off-saddle and rest our horses. Not a tree or bush was in sight. I fastened my pony to a tuft of grass. This is done by taking a long bunch, twining the upper half over towards the roots, and fastening the head-rope to that; it is as strong as a peg, or stronger. I never

turn my horses loose in strange country ; it is a rule of mine.

Colonel Grenfell turned his tired horse loose, and he immediately pricked up his ears and galloped off over the hills and far away, and we saw him no more. Some days after he was found by a settler and returned.

I now made a fire of driftwood and rubbish ; we took out our grub and, except for Grenfell's depression of spirits at the loss of his horse, we had a pleasant little lunch on the bank of the Buffalo. The empty tin of preserved meat, with a bit of string for a handle, made a saucepan second to none in boiling power, and our ride gave even the depressed Grenfell an appetite.

Then we took a direct course for Newcastle. It was a delicious day ; so far we had not seen a human being, a few Kaffirs excepted, but we had passed herds of antelopes of various kinds. They are a beautiful sight. When startled the herd goes off at a gallop, with an ease and grace that is perfect. A stag, when he gallops, throws his antlers back and his chin up—there are no deer in Africa ; the antelope holds his head the opposite way, and gallops as a horse does whose head is curved in by being ridden on the bit. He draws his chin in, and those that have long, straight horns look like unicorns, for, of course, the points of these horns then project to the front.

We found it twenty miles from Steil Drift to Newcastle, and an excellent route for wagons. My pony came in with me, just after dark, having carried me that day fifty miles, the longest ride I think I can remember having taken upon *one* horse in a day. The pony showed not the slightest sign of fatigue at the end, and is certainly a treasure. Whoever buys Blunderbuss from me when I leave will be lucky in his purchase.

*Sept. 8th.*—From the 14th of August to the 4th of



September, while General Buller was in Zululand, I was acting chief of the Staff here. The work to get through alone was immense, but the practice most valuable, and so I rejoiced in the work, and as all I have done has been well approved, it has been an unmixed benefit.

The weather in that interval was bad, and spoilt the pleasure of the Zululand party, I am sorry to say. Here it was severe and extraordinary, as you shall hear. The 25th of August was warm, like an English day of real summer, but on the 26th the sky clouded over, it got blacker and blacker, and the rain began to fall. Then the rain turned to sleet, and intense cold came over us. Towards evening heavy snow fell fast, and shut out the day. I put on all the clothes I have, even my second flannel shirt over the other, and my overcoat, and then rolled up, head and all, in my blanket. I fell asleep wondering whether our oxen would survive the night. When I awoke in the morning my tent was bulging in with the weight of snow upon it. Nquasi, good fellow, brought me my coffee as usual, as if nothing out of the way had happened, though he comes from the warm regions, and, I think, never saw snow before.

The first thing I saw as he opened the tent door was a dead bullock about twenty paces off, in the snow.

Then came the reckoning. Two hundred and thirty hired oxen, and seventy Government oxen—total, three hundred dead; and ten mules also. The horses had weathered the night.

A particularly distressing incident came to light in several little Kaffir boys frozen to death while herding the oxen—not Government oxen, but hired oxen; and I have grave doubts whether the masters of those unhappy children are free from blame, though I cannot establish a charge against them, at least not yet.

The average colonist has little more consideration for a native than a Boer has. He is not so deliberately and wickedly cruel to them—far from it; but he regards a native as an animal, who is only worth consideration in so far as it may affect the work to be got out of him. He would not *think* of treating a native with the regard that I show to Nquasi and Stowi, my two servants; but then he never gets, nor, I suppose, imagines, the faithful service and kind, willing, earnest work that my natives do for me.

The Newcastle people had told us that the winter would not depart without some snow, but such a storm as this was not in the recollection of any of them.

At Mount Prospect the storm was still more severely felt. The telegraph had broken down both sides of Newcastle, so we did not hear till afterwards how they fared. The storm there came on so suddenly and with such darkness that the Commandant ordered rolls of the troops to be called, and finding that some few were absent, he directed the artillery to fire signal guns to guide the missing men to camp. One party of a few men of the Rifles had gone to fetch the mail-bags from a roadside inn about three miles off, where the mail-cart that plies between Pietermaritzburg and Pretoria drops the letters for Mount Prospect. These men lost themselves hopelessly, and were out in the storm all through the night, though it was thought they would have taken shelter at the inn.

About daybreak one of them said he thought he could find his way to camp, and started off accordingly, alone. The others kept together, and ere long reached camp safely; their comrade had not arrived. Parties of search failed to find him for two days after, when he was discovered lying on his face, dead; and it was observed that one boot was missing, and his hand cut and head

bruised, so he must have had a hard fall somewhere in the course of his wandering.

The mail-cart, on its way to Pretoria, stuck fast in a snowdrift about two miles from Mount Prospect. In the cart were the driver, conductor, an artillery officer, and a private soldier. The soldier was more or less out of his senses; whether he was drunk, or in delirium tremens, the result of drink, is not clear. The artillery officer thought sometimes one, sometimes the other. The private struck him a blow on the head, but the officer put up as best he could with him until he should be able to hand him into custody: it was never necessary for him to do that. Twice the man wandered from the cart in the storm, and was brought back to it; but when it finally stuck fast, he disappeared in the snow and darkness. A party of search from Mount Prospect found the cart, and then commenced a search for the missing private. A very little way from the post-cart they found him dead. One of the mules of the team that drew the cart was dead; the rest, and the mails, were brought to Mount Prospect Camp, the cart being abandoned for the time. Such was the storm. Three days after the sun was shining brightly, and many people were saying it was too hot. These sudden changes are very remarkable, but it is a rule of this climate that summer changes to winter and winter to summer with violent storms of some kind.

Before that snowstorm the ground was everywhere, except in the ravines, parched and brown. Since the storm the spring grass has sprouted everywhere, and the whole surface of the country now is bright emerald green. The spring of Natal has begun.

Sir Evelyn Wood has not returned here; he has gone by Swaziland to Delagoa Bay, whence he is now on his way by gunboat to Durban. He is due there



to-morrow, and goes to Pietermaritzburg from there by rail, and establishes headquarters at that place. The Headquarter Staff, except myself, started to-day from this on horseback for Pietermaritzburg. General Buller gave me the offer of staying here to play first staff fiddle in this region, and I gladly accepted, for at Maritzburg I should have necessarily to play at number two. So here I am, once more alone. I shall have plenty to do, for the troops are here, but I shall not be overworked. The army will not move till the Convention is accepted by the Boers.

. . . . .

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SOURCE OF THE TUGELA

*Durban, Natal,*  
*Nov. 20, 1881.*

MY DEAR MAY,—You will see by the top of this letter that I am once more by the seashore, and I am now only waiting for the ship that is to start me on my way back. You will not be surprised to hear that I return by way of India; for you know how I tried to do so after the Zulu war, and failed. This time I was successful. Sir Evelyn and General Buller have done all in their power to further my wishes in this matter, and the result is that I have been granted leave by telegraph from England, and a free passage, with half of the 14th Hussars, in the *Hankow* to Bombay.

In my last I told you of my visit to Wakkerstroom in the Transvaal. I left off where I arrived there in company with Lieutenant Tristram of the 41st. He was good company, and only committed one offence in my eyes. It was this. The day was hot, and our salted provisions, on which we had breakfasted, had given us a great thirst apiece, at a stage in our ride when we could get nothing to drink. Just at this stage he told me that a popular drink of his at Oxford University at such times was a *bottle of hock* added to a *bottle of soda-water*, with *ice shavings*, and filled up with *strawberries*.

I told Tristram that such a speech at such a time was wanton cruelty.

At Wakkerstroom the Transvaal flag was flying in front of a small building, which was the Court House.

At a mile and a half north of the little town was a small fort, and detachment of two companies of the 58th Regiment. I had some confidential conversation with the commanding officer concerning his part in case of a renewal of hostilities ; and that ended, I went to the inn of the town. I declined the hospitality of the detachment, who would gladly have put us up ; for my practice at such times is to fraternise as much as possible with the inhabitants, and so gather information.

The inn was kept by an Englishman named Martin, with a Dutch wife. I remember her appearance, as exceptional to that of the Dutch women of the Boer class that I have seen. She so far resembled them that she was built on too large a scale ; but for that she was good-looking, had a fresh complexion, and was well shaped, whereas, I had hitherto observed that the Dutch women of South Africa are ugly, square-shouldered, without waist ; and in like manner, I may say, without ankles, these being visibly developed by, I suppose, pedestrian exercise until they have ceased to be.

In the best climate in the world you would expect that the Boer girl would at least look healthy : it is due to the unwholesome, insanitary condition of the Boer dwellings that she appears in the complexion of a Jerusalem artichoke. The men, as a rule, are fine, healthy-looking fellows ; but they gain this by a life spent chiefly in the chase, and thus outgrow their unwholesome childhood. I have never seen a bonny Boer child. All I have seen have been thin-limbed, pale-faced children. They are always dirty, often excessively dirty. Weak eyes, set in red, unhealthy sockets, are common ; and all these signs show an unwholesomeness that would contradict the perfection of the climate, were it not



well known that the Boer dwellings are insanitary to the uttermost degree.

The weather was delightful at Wakkerstroom. It is, I believe, the highest inhabited place in the Transvaal; and the air was at the same time warm, fresh, and exhilarating.

With door and windows wide open, Tristram and I were soon fast asleep; and I should have slept soundly till daybreak had I not been awakened by a loud, then soft, then louder, coo-ing, as of many pigeons in the dead of night, apparently proceeding from the interior of my mattress. I listened to this extraordinary sound for some minutes. Undoubtedly the sound came from my bed. It would cease altogether for a while, and then swell out, from soft tones into an uproar. So I struck a match to investigate the phenomenon. I first looked doubtingly under my bed, and beheld the mystery explained: a flock of pigeons had taken up position there for the night, and beyond blinking at my candle, showed no signs of objection to my sharing the room with them. At earliest dawn they departed.

After breakfast, on the 8th of October, the day after our arrival at Wakkerstroom, Tristram and I set off on our return ride to Newcastle.

On the 3rd of November, as I told you in a few hurried lines posted that day, the news that the ratification of the Convention had been accepted by the British Government arrived by telegraph at Newcastle, and the orders for the evacuation of the Transvaal and break-up of the army came at the same time. All arrangements had long ago been made; and as soon as I had written and signed the orders for the troops to march, my part was done.

The regiments were all to march down-country independently, so I was able to proceed by myself, inde-

pendently too ; and on the 10th of November I set out on my way down-country, riding one of my ponies and leading the other. A mule-wagon drawn by ten mules was at my service, and conveyed my two native servants, our tents, kit, and provisions.

At the Ingagane River I halted to rest and feed mules and horses, as well as to breakfast, and then proceeded.

Having got all I required in the wagon, I was quite independent of inns, and so I could stop when and where I pleased.

About nightfall we reached the Biggersberg mountains ; but I went on, as the weather was fine, lest rain should come and make the ascent difficult. We had crossed the hills by 9 P.M., and as it was too fine to pitch my tent, I bivouacked for the night ; and after Nquasi had given me my supper, I was soon fast asleep under the stars. In case of a thunder shower, I had reserved for my use the shelter between the hind wheels of the wagon, and got all ready for a rapid retreat there before I went to sleep.

It was well I did so, for the booming of thunder awoke me about midnight, and I had barely time to drag my "Wolseley" valise under the wagon when a heavy shower came down. At daybreak it was fine again, and after some coffee the mules were inspanned, ponies ready, and we were off. At Sunday's River I halted for breakfast on the bank of the stream, and had a delightful bathe while it was being prepared.

Then we went on, and at 5 P.M. (on the 11th of October) reached Ladysmith, seventy-six miles from Newcastle.

Here I met my old friend Colonel Allan, with the Headquarters and half the 41st Regiment, and I was put up by him, with immense kindness and hospitality.

Next morning I set about an enterprise I had long contemplated and had determined to undertake, if I were not obliged to travel down-country on duty with the troops.

I had heard, from time to time, wonderful accounts of a place in the Greater Drakensberg Mountains, where the Tugela rises in a series of waterfalls several thousand feet in height. The sight has been described as magnificent, as one of the great sights of the world, and it is known that so few persons have reached those falls that the numbers can easily be counted on the fingers of both hands.

To these falls I meant to go if the thing were possible, and at Ladysmith I sought a guide.

I did not get very much encouragement. I was told, amongst other things, that it was only possible to get there in the driest season, as it would be necessary to travel in the bed of the river for miles, there being no other route. Also, it was said, that Sir Garnet Wolseley had tried to get there and failed; and if he could not, who could?

I felt, however, that the weather was remarkably in my favour: the usual rains had not yet set in. There had been some rain, still, I had reason to hope, not enough to flood the river-bed.

The 41st referred me to a Mr. Tipper, who keeps a store in Ladysmith, and who, they said, was reported to have once visited the falls.

Mr. Tipper was very civil. He told me he had reached, or nearly reached, the falls some years ago, but that he would refuse an offer of £150 to go there again, if such an offer were made to him.

He, however, put me well in the way of going there. He found me a native guide, but could not get a horse for him, so I was obliged to lend him my second pony.



This I was sorry for at first, for I had to bring the guide back to Ladysmith by agreement, when otherwise I should have gone from the falls to Estcourt, many miles farther on the road down-country, and saved quite a day on my journey.

However, I was glad afterwards, for considering, as you shall hear, the distances I rode in the short time, it is not likely that my guide could have kept up with me had he not been mounted on one of my capital ponies.

Mr. Tipper told me that my guide would take me to a Mr. Allison's farm, near the Drakensberg, and that Mr. Allison would provide me with a guide to the falls.

I sent my mule-wagon on to Colenso, the next town on the road to Maritzburg, to await me there; and at 1 P.M. (12th November) I started south-westward with my guide for Allison's farm.

Everything was in my favour. There had been rain in the night, and the turf was just nicely softened thereby for the ponies' feet. It was now fine weather, and the atmosphere beautifully clear. The usual afternoon thunderstorms that swell the streams and drench the traveller had strangely ceased. My guide rode well, and so I was relieved of all anxiety of his giving my pony a sore back. A bad seat is likely to give a sore back in a short ride; it is certain to do so in a long one.

From Ladysmith I rode to Allison's farm, without stopping on the way longer than just to let the ponies drink a few mouthfuls in every stream we crossed, and fortunately these were frequent. At an average rate of eight miles an hour we reached Allison's farm, forty-five miles from Ladysmith, in five hours forty minutes, without stopping.

It is only ponies that can work like that. I did not

apply whip or spur once on the way, and the ponies showed no sign of fatigue, nor did they fail to eat well at the end.

My object this day was to reach Allison's farm before dark, and I arrived there in the dusk.

A cheerful farm it looked, planted with trees, and well cultivated. In the front garden was the master of the house. I introduced myself, explained my purpose, and apologised for the want of time enough to have asked permission thus to appear at the farm. Mr. Allison at once opened all hospitality to my use. My ponies were put up and well fed, a room got ready for me, and I was soon settled at supper with the household. There were Mr. Allison, a sturdy, middle-aged man; his wife, a kind, cheerful woman; and several little children, clean, healthy, and nice-mannered, for each little child walked up of its own accord and shook hands with me. Wisely, the servants at Allison's farm were all Kaffirs. Very lonely was the situation of this farm, but the country and streams and hills were beautiful, and in that farm reigned the law of kindness.

Next morning, the 13th of November, Mr. Allison started me on my way. He gave me a letter of introduction to a Mr. Ball, a farmer, nearer to the Drakensberg. He told me that Mr. Ball had been to the falls, and would either go with me there, or provide me with a guide; but he gave me a mounted native of his own, who, he said, would not only take me to Mr. Ball, but could, if necessary, show me the way to the falls, though he had not actually been there.

Mr. Allison gave me a packet of sandwiches, and I started with my two natives. We reached Ball's farm after two hours' ride, and found it shut up; everyone, even servants, gone away. This was a serious matter, for I had depended on getting a supply of food there.

Still, I might expect to get food at the last Kaffir kraal on our way, where we should have to leave our horses.

In three hours more ride we reached this kraal, which I have called "Poverty Kraal," for nothing could be got there, nor was there any other kraal within many miles. An elderly woman was in charge of the kraal. The men, she said, had gone away to buy corn seed, and there was no food at the kraal. Nothing could I get, though I knew there must be, if not chickens, at least mealie meal concealed, and that would have made porridge for us. Offers of liberal payment were refused, except that I obtained thereby a small basket of corn for the ponies ; the invariable answer was that she had nothing.

This I did not believe, nor did my guides ; but as it seemed to me contrary to the practice of chivalry to make a search in the kraal in the absence of the men, it became a question with me whether to go on without food, or expend a day in seeking supplies elsewhere.

The weather was remarkably favourable, and I decided to go on at once.

I divided my packet of sandwiches into three, and thus divided them with my two natives. I then left my Ladysmith native at "Poverty Kraal" in charge of the three horses, and started on foot with Mr. Allison's Kaffir. It was the hot middle of the day, and we began by climbing over a steep hill that made my heart beat quarter-seconds. Then we could see, some miles off, the uppermost fall of the source of the Tugela pouring over the top of a precipice that appeared, truly enough, thousands of feet high.

My guide hoped that I should be contented with this view ; but as soon as he found that I was not, and meant to go on to the foot of the falls, he acquiesced very good-humouredly.

I now took the lead, and made for the bed of the river,



then several hundred feet below us; for I could see that a little way on the river was shut into a narrow, winding gorge, shut in by vertical and even overhanging cliffs of rock, gradually increasing in height, from a few to many hundreds of feet in height.

In one hour from "Poverty Kraal" we were in the bed of the Tugela, then three-quarters dry; and from this it was plain that we had only to follow up the course of the river in order to reach the falls at the source.

For about two hours we scrambled along without any difficulty over the boulders on the dry part of the bed of the river, at a rate of about two miles an hour. Then we came to an extraordinary feature, that I delayed a while to contemplate, but not long, for time was a serious consideration, and if rain were to come on our positions might become perilous.

The curious feature I speak of was a sudden contraction of the river-bed into a passage about four feet wide, bounded by smooth rock-cliffs 200 feet high, and so overhanging that the passage was partially darkened. The water was perfectly transparent, and so cold that fish, which swarmed lower down, were no longer to be seen.

I started gaily up this passage, wading up to the knees, and thought it would present no difficulty. However, it presented two difficulties, each of which in turn appeared insuperable.

The first was a bulge of cliff over a deep pool. To swim across this would be useless, for there would be no getting out on the farther side. There was one hope left. On the farther side of the bulge was a ledge of rock, on which, if I could jump and hold fast, I could pass on; if I failed, I should drop into the pool, and have to swim out to the spot I jumped from. I invited my Kaffir to try, but he looked uncertain about it; so

I gave him my coat, and such articles as might be injured by a ducking, and took the bound. All right ; it was very easy after all. My native next threw the things to me, and followed in like manner.

Farther on in the passage we came to another deep pool, and I am entirely indebted to my Kaffir that we passed the hardest of all our obstacles.

Having contemplated it for some time, it was clear that there could be no getting out of the pool by swimming except where we stood. At last we discovered that, owing to a fortunate deposit of shingle in the pool at one side, it was possible, by wading out, to catch with the tips of the fingers the edge of a hole leading through the side of the rocky passage to the river-bed farther up.

I caught the ledge, and drew myself up by my arms till my chin rested on the ledge. Several times did I do this, but no farther could I get, and I returned to the edge of the pool to let my Kaffir try.

Umpatchan did as I had done ; but just as his chin reached the ledge, by a dexterous and astonishing swing of his left leg, at right angles to his body, he caught his toe on the top of the ledge. Then he looked back at me, and said he could do no more. I now urged and cheered him on to try, and he made two frantic efforts to get up, without success, but without falling off. Once more he tried, and was up ! Hurrah ! The next step was to pass to him our things, and the mathematical instruments that I had brought to calculate the height of the falls.

Then Umpatchan lay flat on the ledge, extended his arms down to me, and drew me up by the hands out of the pool on to the ledge.

The narrow passage was altogether about 200 yards long, and after that we found no serious difficulty,

although the way was difficult, and at two places the river-bed was so completely blocked by huge, impassible boulders fallen from the cliffs that we had to scale precipices alongside with much toil, clinging to roots and bush in order to pass obstructions.

At twenty minutes to 7 P.M., four hours after we had left "Poverty Kraal," we reached the foot of the falls.

Many were the windings of deep gorge we followed before we came to the last turning, and stood at the foot of the falls.

There was a sight, the magnitude of which I had never even imagined! My neck ached as I looked up at the summit of the mountain, over which the Tugela poured from the lake that is said to be its source up there.

It poured over, struck the cliff, poured over again, and so on, making three distinct waterfalls of the first magnitude on the way, and a small one at the foot, where I stood.

The nature of the gorge made it impossible for me to use my mathematical instruments, and so I set about attempting to estimate the height by comparison with my recollection of other heights. This is a very uncertain method. My conclusion was that the height of the falls, from the bottom where I stood to the top where the uppermost fall came over, was upwards of twice the height of the cone of Mount Etna.

The cone of Etna is 900 feet, and this would make the falls about *two thousand feet*, the height they are generally reputed to be.

I have heard that the summit has been ascended from the Orange Free State side of the mountains, where alone it is accessible, but I have no reliable information on the point.

That mountain is called "Mondi" by the Kaffirs,



and both the Tugela and the great Orange River rise on its summit.

The Tugela flows eastward into the Indian Ocean at Fort Pearson, where I was stationed so long in the Zulu war, and the Orange River flows westwards into the Atlantic.

I made a sketch of the falls, and then Umpatchan and I hastened back, hoping to repass the long passage before dark. Not so; we were benighted before that, and very wet, and without food or matches to make a fire. We lay down on the dry sand among the rocks in the bed of the river, and I for one was soon fast asleep.

It was so dark at this time that we could not make any choice of position. There was no twilight in the gorge, and darkness fell upon us suddenly. However, our position was good enough. We were in a small depression among the rocks, not reached by the stream, and the sand there was enough for us both, and when one is *very* tired and sleepy a stone does well for a pillow.

Umpatchan was uneasy about the river. If the river were to "come down," as he expressed it, he did not know what we should do. We were in a gorge a few paces wide, with a precipice hundreds of feet high on either side, and through this gorge the now small stream of the Tugela picked its way with pleasant sound.

It was only necessary to look at the masses of water-worn rock, now dry, and at the rugged foot of the cliffs, to picture the mighty torrent that roars through this gorge when the rains that fall on the Drakensberg at the source drain into the gorge. No one has ever seen the gorge at such a time, but the effects of the torrent are plain in the dry season. Caverns undermined in the cliffs, and gigantic boulders piled up into heaps, with

every angle worn off by rushing water, give a vivid idea not only of the long ages of time through which the water has done its work, but of the prodigious force with which it must at times make its way through the gorge.

I looked carefully at the sky, and considered all weather forecasts well known to me, but I saw no cause for any fear of rain. The weather throughout had favoured me in a remarkable degree. The usual afternoon thunderstorms had ceased for some days. The air was beautifully clear, there was no distant sound of thunder, and only a thunderstorm could "bring down" the Tugela. If there had been any prospect of rain, I should have struggled on in the darkness to get through the long passage I described, and once through that we could have escaped a torrent by climbing out of the river-bed.

But I saw no cause to expect rain; and it would have been a most difficult task to proceed, and would have been accompanied by risk of sprains or broken bones, and so I hove-to for the night.

I did not feel we were quite safe against a surprise by leopards, but as Umpatchan was not uneasy on this point, I presumed he was right. For an hour or two I slept soundly, and then I awoke, shivering with cold. A thin mist was being driven by a bleak wind through the gorge, and I shook with cold from head to foot.

Umpatchan was moving restlessly from side to side, and I wondered whether his bare dry limbs or my covered wet ones were the colder. He had jammed an old felt hat that he wore close over his face, and I had tied my pocket-handkerchief over my mouth, both good methods of economising animal heat. Our sleep was little and fitful for the rest of the night.

I knew that the moon in her last quarter would rise at half-past midnight, but it would be some hours after

she had risen before she could throw any light into the gorge, and I longed for that time to arrive.

At last, at 3.40 A.M. on the 14th of November, the moon appeared above the edge of the precipice, on the east or right bank of the river, and there was light enough to proceed.

Umpatchan was now sleeping soundly, but directly I touched him he jumped to his feet, and we proceeded. In the dim light I let Umpatchan lead. He did so beautifully.

A Kaffir's sight and hearing are both developed to an extraordinary degree beyond a white man's; so much so, that it would be silly for any white man to compete with a Kaffir in the use of those faculties.

Umpatchan picked out the way, and in those gloomy hollows, where it was often doubtful whether the dark object close by was a hard rock or a depression many feet deep, he solved the doubt without mistake, and so we went on.

On reaching the narrow passage it seemed to me that we could avoid it in returning by scaling the cliffs on the left bank, and thereby avoid its difficulties. Accordingly we did so, and at the farther, *i.e.* the lower, extremity of the passage we scrambled down a low cliff of about thirty feet, by clinging to bush and roots, though it would not have been possible to have got up there.

So it happens that it is necessary to go through the narrow passage when going up the river, but the passage can be avoided going down.

This sketch is something like the place, supposing you could see a section of it cut across from one side of the gorge to the other. **A** is the bed of the Tugela, in the narrow passage looking down-stream, and you can see Umpatchan and me there working our way up-stream. **B** represents where Umpatchan and I were on the way



back. Above my sketch, on both sides, you must imagine the hills towering up in a series of steps, each step a precipice of rock, until the narrow passage, so deep and grand when you are in it, becomes by comparison with the river valley of the Drakensberg a mere groove at the bottom.

We were both very hungry, as you can imagine, not having eaten since the morning of the day before, and both thirsty too, but the cold hard water of the Tugela



was always at our feet, and we drank frequently. So cold is the water there that the fish do not exist in the gorge. These frequent short drinks of this delicious water were most invigorating and refreshing, especially after the sun rose, and our exertions in his rays made us very hot.

At last we were so far clear of the gorge that we were able to leave the river-bed and walk on the grass on the bank. This was a relief indeed.

Umpatchan complained occasionally of his hunger, as if it pained him. I told him I was just as hungry as he

was, and I began to pull the wild flowers and eat them.

Umpatchan then made his way to a tree covered with waxy-looking bunches of blossom, of a brilliant scarlet colour, and commenced to chew them up. These blossoms smelt as strongly of honey as if they were honey itself, and no doubt they must contain much, but with the utmost chewing I could get nothing better than water out of them. At last we sighted "Poverty Kraal," and could see the three horses grazing. Soon we were there, and I expected to find that my Ladysmith Kaffir had got food ready for us, but nothing of the kind. He told me he could not obtain anything there to eat for friendship or money. The men of the kraal were all still absent, and the old woman in charge persisted in her assertion that she had nothing.

I again and again offered payment, but nothing was to be seen, and nothing was forthcoming, so we saddled up to start for Allison's hospitable farm.

In response to my parting remark that I had never before been uncivilly treated by Kaffirs, but always the reverse, a Kaffir girl seemed touched and ran up with a small calabash of Kaffir beer. Now Kaffir beer is, I think, a very nice drink when it is good. It is made from a species of Kaffir corn, quite unlike any kind of English corn; it is fermented, and at the same time is sour, very like buttermilk in taste, and of a reddish-brown colour. It is thick, and the sediment is always well stirred up into it with a twig before it is considered ready for drinking. So nourishing is Kaffir beer that natives will often live upon nothing else for weeks together, and grow quite fat on it.

I could have enjoyed a good big drink of it now, though a sour drink is not what I would have *chosen* after a fast. Unfortunately, this beer was so bad that

neither I nor my natives could drink it. So off we started. After about an hour's ride we came to a large kraal, where the head man at once produced a large black earthenware bowl full of the primest Kaffir beer. Such a bowl that it was enough work for both hands and arms to hold it up! I and my two natives between us drank it all, and were mightily refreshed.

We had fasted for twenty-four hours, and though that is a trifling fast for anyone with a poor appetite, I can assure you that for a man in perfect health, in a perfect climate, in the midst of hard physical exertion, it is a very long fast.

After three hours' ride at an average rate of seven miles an hour—for I would not press the horses, as they had only fed on grass—we reached Allison's farm.

Mr. Allison was greatly pleased at my success, for he said that since my departure a party of colonists had been to his farm, having tried unsuccessfully to reach the falls the day before I went there, and when they heard from Mr. Allison that I had gone, they had all declared that I could not get there, as it was impossible.

After a good breakfast, and horses well fed, and a good reward to Umpatchan, I wished my hospitable friends good-bye.

It was dark when I reached Ladysmith, and I was very stiff and sleepy. My ponies had done capitally, having carried me and my guide sixty-six miles altogether *that day*, without any sign of fatigue. Ponies beat horses hollow in such long rides, especially when, as out here, steep ups and downs are frequent.

Such was the effect of a comfortable night's repose that I woke up on the 15th as fresh as ever, and wrote my notes up to date before breakfast.

After breakfast I rode on to Colenso, where I found my mule-wagon waiting for me, as I had directed. I then



changed ponies, and when Nquasi had served my dinner, on we went to Estcourt, where I bivouacked for the night.

At daybreak on the 16th we started on again, and at about 9 A.M. halted on the bank of the Mooi River; where I halted and breakfasted, while the animals fed. We then went on to Howick, where, as a heavy thunderstorm was coming over, I halted for the night, about fourteen miles from Pietermaritzburg, and got my ponies into a stable and myself into an inn.

I told you about the falls of the Umgeni River, at Howick, on my journey up-country in March. I rose early to have a look at this wonderful fall again. It is a sheer descent of 280 feet, down which the Umgeni River leaps in one bound. It is one of the highest falls known, therefore probably one of the highest in the world—higher, I think, than any one of the several falls at the source of the Tugela, and of course a much larger body of water; but for all that it was, in my imagination, eclipsed by the stupendous sight I had just seen at the Drakensberg—a sight which would require much illustration, and an account far exceeding this brief description, to give you anything like an idea of its magnificence.

At Howick my journey may be considered ended. I had left Newcastle on the 10th of November; it was now the 17th. I had ridden 312 miles in those seven days, and enjoyed beautiful weather all the time.

On the 18th I moved to Maritzburg, where I found Sir Evelyn Wood and General Buller, and heard how they had completely furthered my wishes to go home via India, and had settled it all for me. This was most kind. I am given a free passage to Bombay in the *Hankow*, with six months' leave from H.R.H., and it is expected that she will start on Wednesday or Thursday, the 7th or 8th of December. . . .

## CHAPTER IX

### MAHÉ

*On board S.S. "Hankow,"  
Mozambique Channel, Madagascar,  
12th Dec. 1881.*

MY DEAR MAY,—At 11.30 we weighed anchor and steamed off for Bombay, taking almost a straight line from Durban to that place. In fact, but for the Comoro Islands, which came a little in the way, we could take a perfectly straight course to Bombay.

We first skirted along the Natal coast at a very few miles distance. Before we were out of sight of Durban the engine broke down, for some cause not clear to the engineer, who thought a fish must have choked the pipe that conveys salt-water to the condenser.

Just at this time a large turtle, quite unaccustomed to see a big ship in those waters, came swimming towards us from the open sea, lifting his head every now and then out of the water to have a good look at us, and evidently puzzled and inquisitive.

Down went the mate with a couple of seamen in a small boat, and while one man propelled the boat by an oar from the stern, the mate directed by signs from the bow. The boat circled round to get behind the turtle, and then followed him up. The view from the ship was very exciting. If the turtle only just glanced once behind him he would see the boat, would dive at once and escape; but his whole attention was fixed on the ship. He was about forty yards from us, and the boat close behind him, when he raised his head as high as he could stretch it out of the water, and it seemed as if he must

see the boat, but he did not. He blinked at us, lowered his head again, and flapped slowly towards us on the surface of the water. Just then the boat reached him, and the mate, a powerful man, seized him with both hands, one on either side of the shell where the hind flappers protrude, and with a sudden lift almost drew the turtle into the boat—a feat of strength which drew a burst of applause from the ship.

But the turtle was not to be so easily taken. It recovered its first surprise immediately, and at once set to work with its front flappers, which were in the water, with such force that he drew himself down into the water again, and taxed all the strength of the mate to hold him. Just in the nick of time the other two men joined the mate, clutched the hind flappers, and by the united power of the three men the turtle, amid desperate and nearly successful struggles to get away, was dragged over the gunwales into the boat, and there lay helpless.

A loud cheer rose from the ship; a large basket was lowered to the boat, and the turtle safely brought on board, where, poor fellow, he looked as sad as John Tenniel's Mock Turtle in *Wonderland*. I saw him weighed and measured; he was four feet six inches from his nose to the after-part of his shell (his tail was treated without any consideration); he was two feet four inches wide; and he weighed a little over fifteen stone.

. . . . .

*Dec. 11th.*—At noon to-day we had gone only a hundred and forty-three miles from Durban, owing to the long delay yesterday.

On the bill of fare for breakfast was "Turtle-steaks." Thinking this would be as delicious as turtle-soup, I ordered at once a turtle-steak—turtle indeed it was,



but if there had been substituted for it a lump of coarse tough beef I could not have told the difference !

The Seychelle Islands appeared on the horizon at about 11 A.M. to-day, and now at 3 P.M. Mahé presents a most pleasing view of hills and fields and woods. We shall not reach the harbour, I hear, till dark.

We were close off Mahé before dark, but as we came from the south-west, and as Port Victoria, as the harbour and little town are called, is on the north coast side, we had to take our course round the south-east end of the island, and darkness fell upon us as we entered the port—there is no twilight there.

A pilot came on board, and I got leave from the captain to go on the bridge ; for I always watch with the greatest interest the operation of taking a ship in or out of port.

The harbour of Mahé is formed by several small islands, being situated in front of a slight indentation of the coast-line. These islands are about two miles from the shore ; the two largest are not more than a mile across, and the others are mere rocks.

At the indentation of the coast of Mahé stands the little town Port Victoria ; and the harbour, formed, as I have said, in front of it, is about two miles square.

The whole of this is not available for ships ; for although there is a large proportion of deep water, deep enough for the biggest ships, coral reefs abound.

A lighthouse with a good red light, beacons, and buoys have been placed, and there ought not to be any difficulty in taking up a good anchorage ; but our pilot was extraordinarily stupid. He took us in within the red light, and dropped our anchor in a place where we could not possibly swing round without striking. Our excellent captain saw this in an instant by his chart, which he carefully observed the whole time, and without a

moment's hesitation ordered the anchor to be weighed, snubbed the pilot into silence, turned the *Hankow* round with remarkable ability in the narrow strip of deep water she lay in, and steamed out to a buoy where the French mail steamer to Mauritius is moored when there, and to this buoy made the *Hankow* fast, with plenty of deep water around as well as under her.

Captain Symington performed this feat in a harbour he had never entered before, and in darkness so com-



plete that it was necessary to send a boat with a lantern to mark the buoy.

As the *Hankow* is about double the size of the mail steamer, and as our pilot was not a pirate, it is impossible to gauge the stupidity that led him to put us into that cul-de-sac of coral, where we should probably have been wrecked had we remained.

Next morning, at daybreak, I rowed ashore with the captain. The view of Mahé was extremely beautiful, and became more and more so on nearer approach. The island is only eighteen miles long, and from three to five miles wide. It is very hilly, and the peaks rise steeply

to between two and three thousand feet above the sea. Masses of purple rock appear here and there in crags, precipices, and huge boulders fallen from the heights above ; and the rest of the ground, up to the highest hill-tops, is covered with the most luxuriant and beautiful tropical vegetation I have yet seen. The rock I found to be entirely grey granite, the exposed parts having been coloured by deposit of iron from dripping water. This deposit, when picked off, had the usual rusty colour on the inside, but had weathered to purple on the outside, and hence the masses of apparently purple rock that I could not recognise in the distance.

Springs, rills, and streams of delicious water abound. The shore is fringed with coral, and coral reefs extend in various directions out to sea. The sea is remarkably clear, and as the coral seems to care only to be just covered at low-water, the aspect of the coral, as I looked down upon it from the boat, was as distinct as if it were in my hand. I saw none red or pink ; some was tipped on every point with pale blue, but the rest was white, and in endless variety.

I had never seen living coral before, and I gazed at this coral garden, from a few inches to a few feet beneath the smooth surface of the water, with intense interest and pleasure.

Occasionally an oar struck it, or the boat grazed upon it, and then I observed that the branches were very brittle and broke off at once.

On reaching the pier, I found that it was about half a mile long, was built of granite at the sides, and had the intervening space, of about five yards wide, filled up entirely with fragments of coral, making a good roadway. On an enlargement at the outer end of the pier I was glad to see a goodly stack of coal.

The captain and I now went to the French Consul,



who is also the contractor for coals, and arrangement was made for our supply.

We naturally expected to put off again the same day, but the Consul at once said we could not.

The Roman Catholic bishop had died the evening before, and was to be buried that morning; and as all Mahé meant to go to the funeral, very little work would be done at the coal-yard. However, by our importunity, we did succeed in getting a small party of negroes to work at once, and a promise of more to follow.

The French Consul invited us to breakfast, and I gladly accepted, as I wished to hear all he could tell me about the place. The captain had to return on board at once to attend to business. As the Consul's breakfast was not to be till eleven o'clock, I started off to explore the place.

As Mahé is an interesting and unfrequented place, let me interrupt myself to tell you its history in a few words.

The Seychelle Islands, some thirty or so in number, were discovered by the Portuguese in the first, or one of the first, voyages made to India round the Cape. They, together with Mauritius and other islands, were afterwards taken possession of by the French, and named after a Count Hérault de Seychelle. Mahé was first settled in 1756 as a French dependency of Mauritius, and named Mahé after the Governor of Mauritius at that time. The idea of the French then was to grow spices there. The Seychelle Islands were known to be exempt from the hurricanes that ravage Mauritius and other islands of the Indian Ocean, and it was expected that spices enough could be grown there to supply France, and even to cut out the Dutch, who then carried on a flourishing trade in spices from Java and other places in the eastern seas. Nutmegs, cloves, cinnamon, and

other spices were accordingly cultivated at Mahé, and they flourished beyond all expectation; but in 1788, during the war between France and England, it was anticipated that these islands would be captured by the English, and the inhabitants accordingly destroyed the whole crop of spices, except, I believe, the cinnamon, which they could not succeed in eradicating totally.

Of course, the islands were captured by the English, and as in those days England was governed by men who did not easily give back territory that had once been added to the Empire, the Seychelle Islands and Mauritius remained British possessions at the termination of the war.

And now to return to my description of Mahé. The town of Port Victoria is on the shore. It is a little place, beautifully shaded by trees, and containing a few shops of provisions and liquors. There is a market-place, where fruit and fish principally are sold. The fish is very abundant and absurdly cheap, for they are excellent eating. A fish the size of a large salmon would cost sixpence.

There are, I believe, nine to ten thousand inhabitants, principally negroes, in the island, and they live chiefly on fish and turtle. Turtle are caught in abundance at one of the neighbouring islands, and kept alive at Mahé in large tanks, or enclosures on the beach. There is a rise and fall of five feet in the tide, and these tanks are replenished with sea-water at every rise of the tide. A big turtle of over ten stone in weight is sold locally for two pounds, or turtle flesh is sold at sixpence a pound. There are two kinds of turtle—those that provide the tortoise-shell of commerce, and whose flesh is inferior, and those with rich green flesh, whose shell is of no consideration, except to themselves. A small chicken costs a shilling, and meat, all of which, I believe, is

imported from Madagascar, costs a shilling a pound, so that only those people who are well off can afford to eat it.

The vegetation, as I have said, is beautiful and luxuriant in the highest degree. Very unlike the unpleasing fetid tangle of Fantiland and Ashanti, the vegetable life in Mahé is disposed as if it were a big botanical garden. Sierra Leone in the three months of September, October, and November only bears some resemblance to Mahé in vegetation, but is far less luxuriant.

Chiefly conspicuous by their number were the cocoa-nut trees, which were scattered thickly all over the island, from the sea-beach and the peaks of the hills; and besides these was an endless variety of other trees, among which were mango, bread-fruit, and many kinds of palms, and, of course, plantains and bananas in abundance. The cocoa-nut trees were laden with fruit—they usually are—and by mounting on a granite boulder I reached down a green nut to break my fast upon. Green cocoa-nuts are old and valued friends of mine. Much refreshed by my nut, I went on until I got a view of the other side of the island. At this place I found I was amongst coffee. Now coffee I was pretty familiar with in Natal, and I must say that I was amazed at the number of coffee berries that grew on the stems of the plants where I stood.

Pine-apples are large, good, and abundant, and cost a penny halfpenny each, but they are not as good as those that are *carefully* grown in Natal and in pineries in England. Bread-fruit was in season, and appeared in plenty on the trees. The tree is rather big, and has great dark-green glossy leaves, like a hand with many fingers, and gives a delightful shade. The fruit hangs from the branches, and looks like a green pumpkin. It is boiled and eaten before it gets ripe. I don't know



how much habit may do to make one esteem bread-fruit, but I think very little of it.

I was too hungry to wait for the Consul's eleven o'clock breakfast, so I returned to the town, and on inquiry was told that I could get breakfast at "Prince's Hotel." I was directed to a small house looking on the harbour, and mounting the title of "Prince's Hotel." Here I found a negro woman as proprietress; and having asked if I could have some breakfast, she told me that I could, but that as she had nothing in the house it would be necessary for me to wait half an hour, if I could be so kind as to do so. The politeness and the neatness of the people of Mahé is remarkable. French alone is spoken, and the polish of French manners is universal. In my walks I met hundreds of negroes; all were dressed in neat, clean light clothes, and there was scarcely one who did not salute or wish me good-day in passing.

In half an hour my hostess had served up a spatch-cock, a dish of poached eggs and sundry piles of fruit. Then came in a cup of coffee that perfumed the room—the best coffee I ever tasted in my life, even in Paris. I did not know that coffee could reach to such a delicious flavour, nor exhale such a profuse and sweet aroma: of course it had grown on the spot. Soon after my breakfast the other fellows began to arrive from the ship. They had waited for breakfast on board, as it was uncertain whether breakfast could be had on shore.

I took my chance of that, and so gained several cool hours of the early morning.

The bishop's funeral now came winding along the road by the seashore. It must have been over a mile long from beginning to end of the procession. Men, women, boys, and girls, black and white, were all arranged in regular order in two long lines, one on each side of the road, while here and there some person of importance

walked in the middle of the road between. About half-way in the procession came the hearse. It was a very small one, drawn by a piebald pony, and preceded by several priests robed and chanting the usual dirges of woe.

I had taken up position on the side of the road, at a place where I could reverently remove my hat without receiving a sunstroke, and I noticed that I was an object of intense curiosity to the procession.

At eleven o'clock I rejoined the Consul on his return from his late bishop's funeral, and as I had reserved some appetite for him, it was unnecessary to tell him I had been obliged to breakfast elsewhere.

After this I started off inland, following the principal route. This route was a fine wide road for a couple of miles southwards along the shore, and then it changed to a zigzag path ascending the heights, that run like a backbone through the island. The path was extremely well made. It was raised two or three feet above the ground by granite stonework at the sides, filled in with rubble, and finished off as smooth as a garden path on the top. It is not intended for wheeled traffic, being only about six feet wide, but for walking it is capital, and being raised as I have described, it is quite preserved from the torrents of the rainy season.

I followed this route to its highest point on the hills, refreshing myself occasionally with a green cocoa-nut, and then I took a general look round.

The sea was visible on both sides, and the same lovely view spread all round. The path descended on the farther side, and evidently extended to the other extremity of the island. But I had been walking for some hours, and having contented myself with this view I turned back. Of course it was very hot, but owing to the abundance of trees I walked as often in the shade

as sunshine, and a pleasant breeze blew continually, so that it was only necessary to halt a minute in the shade to be cool and comfortable.

The island is said to be very healthy. The white inhabitants had, I observed, the usual washed-out complexions of all white dwellers in hot climates, but I was told that there is very little sickness of any kind at Mahé, and I was told this in several quarters.

A very different kind of place is Zanzibar, our naval station in this region. Zanzibar lies on the African coast, about a thousand miles west of Mahé. I have never been there, but I know that the climate is intensely bad. I suppose that the question of Mahé *versus* Zanzibar as a naval station must have been considered in England, and I shall be curious to find out on my return what was said on the point, for I have made many notes bearing on the matter. . . .

*Dec. 22nd.*—I went on shore again this morning. By 10 A.M. I was on board again, and at 11 A.M. the last of our coal was in, and we started on our way to Bombay. . . .

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## CHAPTER X

### EGYPT

THE Boer war being ended, in March of 1882, Major Hart returned home via India and rejoined his regiment at Buttevant.

But four months had scarcely elapsed when one evening, just as he was sitting down to dinner, he received the following telegram from Sir Garnet Wolseley : "Can you start for Alexandria by mail, leaving London on Friday evening the 21st inst. ? If so, arrange accordingly." His arrangements were speedily made, and three hours later he started for Dublin, where he took hurried leave of his wife. He reached London at seven next morning, purchased his necessary kit, and paid a visit to the Horse Guards, where he received his orders from Sir Garnet Wolseley, which were that he was to be Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General on the Headquarter Staff of the army in Egypt, and that as soon as the army was formed he was to take charge of the whole of the Topographical Department in Egypt.

When all the troops had arrived from England, Sir Garnet Wolseley divided his forces into two parts. One part he left at Alexandria under Sir Edward Hamley, confronting the enemy, and with the other part and the Headquarter Staff he started on the 19th of August from Alexandria by sea. He landed some troops at Ismailia in the night and captured the place after a small fight, and took Arabi's governor at Port Said prisoner.

The transport *Catalonia*, with Major Hart and troops on board, went aground in the Suez Canal—fortunately, however, leaving room for other ships to pass her by ; and the *Osprey* in passing took off Hart and landed him at Ismailia.

Two days were spent in disembarking troops. On

the 24th Hart accompanied General Drury Lowe on a reconnaissance to the front, and they had a sharp engagement with the enemy near a village called El Magfar.

Three miles farther on Arabi's men had made batteries, and were strongly entrenched at Tel-el-Mahuta, and they opened fire on General Drury Lowe's force with their guns. But Sir Garnet Wolseley came up with some guns and reinforcements, and having obtained the information he required he retired to Ismailia. Next day, after slight resistance, the enemy evacuated Tel-el-Mahuta, and it was occupied by Sir Garnet's troops. In the action at Kassassin, on the 9th of September, Hart was shot in the elbow. Fortunately the bone was not injured, and he was only temporarily disabled, for on the 13th he took part in the battle of Tel-el-Kebir, where Arabi's army was finally defeated and scattered in all directions.

At the end of the war Hart was made Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel, and he received the medal with clasps, the fourth class of the Osmanieh, and the Khedive's Star.

*On board the P. & O. mail steamer "Kashgar,"  
July 26, 1882.*

MY DEAR MAY,—For the fourth time within nine years I commence a war correspondence with you.

On the 19th, this day last week, I was just going to sit down to dinner with my regiment at Buttevant when I received a telegram from the Adjutant-General (Sir Garnet), asking me if I could start for Alexandria by the mail leaving London on the evening of the 21st. Three hours after I was on my way to London via Dublin. I could not telegraph from Buttevant so late as eight o'clock, so I sent a special messenger by car to Mallow, an hour's drive distant, where the telegraph is open all night, and thus answered my message from the Horse Guards, and sent you the news, so that we could meet in Dublin on my way through. I was right glad to find that there was time available for us to meet!

After I left you on the evening of the 20th, I went through to London by the mail arriving there early on 21st. By the time I had separated and packed up such things as I required to take to Egypt, and had breakfasted, business had begun at the Horse Guards, so I went to Sir Garnet Wolseley to receive my orders.

He told me that I was appointed Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General on the Headquarter Staff of the army of Egypt, and that as soon as the army was formed I was also to take charge of the whole of the Topographical Department in that country. He added that he had held this appointment himself in China, and a capital and very interesting appointment he found it.

Having expressed my hearty thanks as well as I could, I had ample time to get all the information and maps the Intelligence Branch could supply, complete my kit with the few things experience has taught me to limit myself to in the field, and start by the 8.5 P.M. mail from Charing Cross.

Four other officers started with me for Alexandria—the Senior Commissariat Officer, a Colonel Jones of Engineers, who is to manage the fresh-water supply ; a Captain Gill, R.E., a man of much travel and several languages, who represents the Intelligence Branch ; and the Senior Medical Officer.

A difficulty had arisen about places in the mail train for us all. For some reason one special car only is allowed for Brindisi, and it was found that there were not places enough left for us all. This difficulty was got over by Lord Granville telegraphing to Paris to represent urgency, and so when we reached Calais we found an extra carriage specially added to the Brindisi train for our use.

This carriage seemed to excite curiosity all the way ; as if the train were so well known that any alteration



in its length were a cause of as much attentive investigation as a new spot in the sun, or a new tooth in a baby. At every stoppage a knot of people assembled outside, peering into every corner of it, like so many chickens waiting to be fed; and all along the line, again and again, I saw railway officials and navvies counting the carriages, contradicting each other, counting the carriages again, shrugging their shoulders, shaking their fists, and altogether showing disturbance of mental equilibrium that seemed to me in excess of what should be necessitated by the addition of a carriage to the Brindisi train.

Paris was reached early next morning, the 22nd, and continuing at once by the Ceinture Railway the train rattled on, with very few and very brief stoppages, by Dijon, Macon, and Aix-les-Bains to Mont Cenis. The weather rapidly grew warm as we went.

An abundant harvest was spread out wherever eye could reach. Reaping was going on busily under a warm sun, and there was a remarkable appearance of peace and plenty throughout the length of France.

The Mont Cenis pass is very pleasing to view. For many miles before the tunnel is reached the train runs into a deep ravine, with picturesque hills towering up on both sides, and a river rushing at a furious rate along the side of the railway. Some steep inclines are struggled up, and then comes the tunnel. It is said that it takes twenty-eight minutes for the train to go through, and this is right enough; we took exactly twenty-nine. There is a double line through it. For about a third of the way it seemed, by the moderate pace and the loud panting of the engine, that we were going up an incline; then suddenly the gasping sound of the engine ceased, the steam was given off freely, and we went ahead at the full speed of trains. The perfection of the ventila-

tion was astonishing; the tunnel was dry throughout and the air perfectly pure, so far as the senses can perceive, cool, no smell, no stuffiness. We passed through the tunnel during the night of the 22nd, the first night after that of departure from London. The next night, that of the 23rd, we reached Brindisi; and when you look at the distance thus traversed in little over two days and two nights, it must be called good going where time is all-important.

We arrived at Brindisi about 1.30 on Sunday night, and at once embarked in the P. & O. mail steamer *Kashgar*, which started at three.

*July 26th.*—I hear we shall reach Alexandria about 6 A.M. to-morrow. The time of the journey has been very useful for reading up official information and studying the maps of Egypt.

*Alexandria, July 31, 1882.*

MY DEAR MAY,—I found Sir Archibald Alison in command on shore; and the fleet under Sir Beauchamp Seymour, anchored off the town in position to support him. With a very small staff and a very few troops Sir Archibald had already done a great deal, and was securely established on shore. His difficulties had been great, although his landing had not been resisted. He found a large and principal part of Alexandria burnt down, and the streets there completely choked with the debris; a large population secretly hostile, and liable to rise on a favourable opportunity, occupied most of the remainder of the town, as well as the suburbs; while a few miles off Arabi with his forces had entrenched himself.

The town of Alexandria projects into the sea, in shape like a boot with a spur on. At the toe, the heel, and the

spur are, or *were* before the fleet destroyed them, three important forts, called Ras-el-Tin, Adah, and Pharos. These are more or less connected by lines of fortification on the shore, and form the coast defence of the place. The land side of the town is fortified by an old rampart and ditch, as you see marked by a dotted line in my sketch. This old rampart has come in very useful to us, for although the town has grown out beyond it, it



protects enough of the town for our necessities ; and now that it has been repaired and armed by Sir Archibald, it would effectually resist any effort of Arabi to retake possession.

In Alexandria we have the 46th Regiment, the 49th Regiment, half of the 35th Regiment, and a battalion of Marines, also some guns manned by sailors.

I have marked on my sketch the places where these troops are posted.

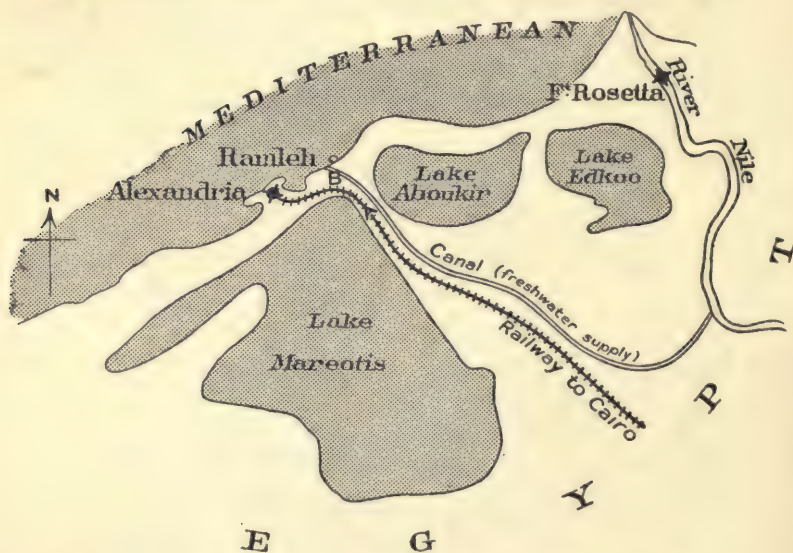
A considerable force is required in the place to over-awe the large and very hostile native population, eager



to rise and murder all the Christians, if they could see any prospect of success.

You will easily see that the problem of crushing Arabi, and at the same time restoring order and prosperity among these people, is not an easy one.

Political considerations that cannot be disregarded hamper the military operations; Arabi at his position



has cut off the canal supply of fresh water that you see at the bottom of my sketch. That canal comes from the hill, and is the water-supply of Alexandria. Now I will reduce the scale of my sketch so as to take in more ground, that you may see exactly how Arabi is placed with regard to us.

Notice Alexandria, and how lakes Mareotis and Aboukir close against it, place it on a narrow strip of coast from a mile or two miles or so wide. Notice now the narrow passage like an isthmus between those two

lakes, parts not more than a mile wide. By that isthmus passes the fresh-water canal before mentioned, and the railway from Alexandria to Cairo, and on that isthmus is Arabi entrenched; while his followers also hold Fort Rosetta, that you see near the end of one mouth of the Nile.

From Alexandria to Rosetta in a straight line is forty-five miles. I have marked Arabi's position **A**. At **B** is the advanced British position entrenched, confronting Arabi, at a pleasant suburb called Ramleh (pronounced Rahm-lay), the Brighton of this region, where the Khedive has a summer palace.

From Alexandria to Ramleh is about six miles. We have there the 38th Regiment, and my old friends of two wars before, the 3rd Battalion of the 60th Rifles; some 40-pounder guns, R.A., and some field-guns from the fleet.

Yesterday I went out there to examine the position and visit the Rifles. There is a railway to Ramleh.

Our headquarters are now in Alexandria, at the terminus of the Cairo railway, where you will see it marked in my first sketch.

We occupy a large house that I believe was let to families in flats. It is furnished throughout. Evidently the unfortunate inmates had to fly in great haste, for their private effects are all left about. We shall do what we can to protect them from further loss.

My bedroom evidently belonged to one of the ladies of the house, for articles of ladies' clothing, jet necklaces, and so forth, are all about, as well as one port-manteau, so stuffed that I imagine it would not shut and was abandoned in the confusion. A large wardrobe is locked up and without the key, so I hope it will not be opened till the owner returns. On the toilet-table still remain the photograph of, I suppose, the lady's

husband, a man of Eastern features in a fez, and the photographs of several little children, one of whom, a little boy, is beautiful. I shall not disturb them.

Alas! the mosquito curtains are gone; some sportsman on the staff has been there before me of course, and taken them. Never before have I been plagued by mosquitoes. In Malta their bites never affected me, nor would they now if I was assailed at night by only a few dozen, but they come by thousands and tens of thousands, and seem to endeavour to eat me up. Every night I have fought with them for hours, until I have dropped asleep from fatigue, and they have settled upon me like a swarm of bees, until my face and the backs of my hands are like a ripe raspberry. There is no irritation or swelling in their bites, as with people generally, but they have punctured every available spot on my face and hands, except the palms, which I suppose they found too tough.

I have a couple of yards of mosquito netting that I have had since the time of the Gold Coast in '73, but never used before. I wrapped my head up in this and hid my hands, but the mosquitoes found their way in by my neck at once in myriads, and made me pull off the net in no time.

I hear the soldiers get no sleep at night; but then they can find time to doze in the daytime, and I cannot. Happily, I have found a man in the town, who for the sum of 12*s.* 6*d.* will provide mosquito curtains, and I therefore hope to get my first night's rest to-night.

Much of Alexandria has been burnt down, as you know. This was done systematically, in the usual way, thus. All the bedding of a house is brought down to the ground-floor, then petroleum poured over the floor above; the bedding is lighted, and the whole house is in flames immediately.



Alexandria was famous for magnificent houses. The merchants vied with each other in the costliness of their dwellings, so that there were houses here by dozens; and some still remain that, beautifully built, lined with marble, and splendidly furnished, cost the owners a hundred thousand pounds each.

The limestone used is naturally very white, but has burnt into white lime; and the fallen ruins have so blocked the streets that the passages made, and being made, greatly resemble the efforts to make traffic possible when a town is blocked with snow. . . .

On the staff in Egypt now there are—Major-General Sir Archibald Alison, Bart., K.C.B., in command; Captain Hutton, 60th Rifles, Aide-de-camp and Secretary; Colonel Hon. J. Dormer, Assistant Adjutant-General; Major Hart (myself), Deputy-Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General; Major Tullock, Deputy-Assistant Quartermaster-General, is with the Admiral as military officer to him, and is often away on important duties in the Suez Canal.

When Sir Garnet Wolseley and all the troops have arrived there will be an organisation of divisions and brigades, of which hereafter.

*Aug. 1st.*—The weather here is very warm during the day wherever one is not in a draught; but as a considerable breeze from the sea has blown since I have been here, it has not been difficult indoors, with doors and windows open, to keep comfortably cool. The nights, too, are cool enough.

*Headquarters, Alexandria,  
Aug. 8, 1882.*

MY DEAR MAY,—On Saturday the 5th inst. we had a skirmish with Arabi's outposts. The telegraphic accounts you will already have read.

It was brought about by a desire on Sir Archibald Alison's part to ascertain certain important military points concerning the enemy and affecting us, and with this object he attacked Arabi's outposts briskly with some of our force, and in the course of the skirmish he ascertained what he desired to know.

We lost one of my friends of the 3rd Battalion 60th Rifles, Lieutenant Howard-Vyse, much to my regret; and three men killed, to whom must be added a few others, mortally wounded.

My second sketch in my last letter will have made clear to you the direction we took. I will draw it here rather larger, so that you may see our course on the 5th more distinctly.

You remember that I told you our advanced position is at Ramleh, six miles away from Alexandria, and that we have fortified the neck of the land there, across from the Mediterranean on our left to Lake Mareotis on our right, to prevent Arabi from reaching Alexandria.

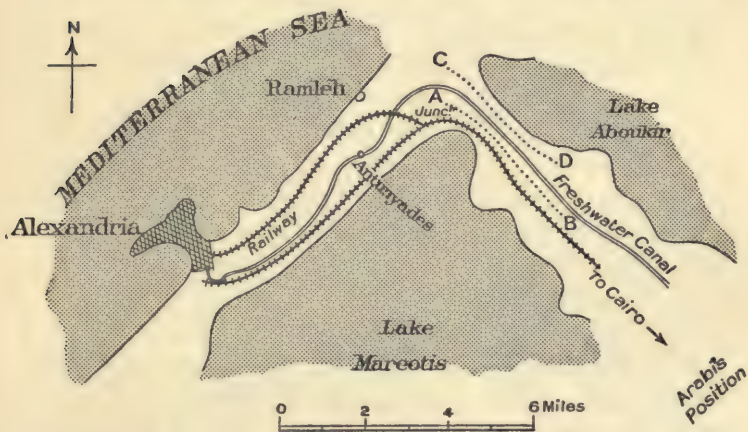
Arabi's main force is probably where I have marked it on the sketch, that is, about six miles beyond Ramleh. Notice now particularly the fresh-water canal, and particularly also the railway to Cairo, and how it leaves Alexandria by two branches, which unite where I have shown the junction. The branch next the Lake Mareotis is used in peace time for luggage trains, the other for passenger trains. On the former—the goods line—Captain Fisher, R.N., who commands the *Inflexible*, has got a fortified train, that he enjoys to run out towards Arabi on every favourable opportunity, and fire therefrom shells and rockets to tease him, and worry and slay his troops.

A curious object is Fisher's train! The engine is in the centre, with trucks fore and aft. In the front truck, pointing ahead, is a 40-pounder gun; guns and gatlings

peep over the sides of the trucks throughout, through loopholes of boiler plating, or any other bullet-proof material he could find about and turn to account, while the engine is hung all over with sand-bags to protect it, and looks, a little way off, like a butcher's shop hung out with joints of meat.

Then, sailor-like, he has rigged up a flagstaff over the end of the rearmost truck, and there the naval ensign waves, as over the stern in an ironclad.

Whenever Captain Fisher gets news of a body of



Arabi's men at all likely to be within range, out creeps his train like a huge crocodile along the lake edge, and he generally gets a shot.

Of course the enemy has done his best to prevent the advance of this train, and has effectually broken up the line in the neighbourhood of the junction, at a point as near us as our Ramleh guns would let him approach.

Well, on the afternoon of the 5th our reconnaissance of Arabi's position was made as follows. Captain Fisher's train, fully armed, moved out slowly to the point by the junction where the line is broken, and it was closely



followed by a train conveying a battalion of Marines and the General.

At the farthest point the Marines left the train, and advanced towards the enemy from **A** to **B** on my sketch. At the same time, on the other side of the canal, we sent forward a force from Ramleh, consisting of half the 38th Regiment and half the 46th, with one gun, from **C** to **D**.

Besides these, there was sent forward from Ramleh the 3rd Battalion of the 60th Rifles with one gun. This battalion and gun crossed to the south side of the canal by the railway bridge, where the railway crosses the canal near Ramleh, and moved close along the south bank of the canal; while the other Ramleh troops mentioned above, moved close along its north bank from **C** to **D**, covered by our, at present, few Mounted Infantry. I saw the Rifles and gun safely over the bridge, and I then returned to the north side, and accompanied the 38th and 46th, expecting to have most to do there.

We soon saw the enemy's cavalry close in front of us, in a garden. The gun was instantly brought into action, and at 5.10 P.M. the first shell fired burst in the garden. We saw their cavalry then, galloping away out of the garden to the rear, and it disappeared in the long grass and trees.

Directly after bullets began to whizz overhead in great numbers, and it was clear that the enemy's infantry was firing hard at us from the cover in front, with very bad aim, his bullets going high overhead. It soon appeared that the enemy were chiefly on the side of the canal where the Rifles were, the south side, and almost completely hidden in the long reeds and palms.

The Rifles advanced nimbly at them along the sandy plain to be crossed before the reeds were reached, and

we were obliged to wheel over our men to the right and fire over the canal across the front of the Rifles.

For some time our fire was answered well from the cover where the enemy were, but at last it was silenced.

The Rifles rushed up to the edge of the cover capitably, and I saw two of them racing to get a shot at the enemy before he abandoned the cover.

One of Arabi's men, who was shot from our side, fell dead in a shallow ditch in an attitude as though waiting to fire a shot, and as the Rifles ran up we saw each man in turn who came to this spot start and present his rifle at the body for a moment. A laugh at this generally rose from our side of the canal and disclosed the mistake.

At this stage I was intensely thirsty, and right glad was I to find that we were passing over a field of ripe tomatoes, beautifully red and ripe. A few of these were amply refreshing, being full of cool juice.

Just at this time I heard a voice shouting to me, "Oh, Major Hart, Major Hart, my master is killed!" and I saw a 60th Rifleman on horseback, whom I found was servant of Lieutenant Howard-Vyse. A few yards distant a surgeon had just placed a handkerchief over the face of a Rifleman lying flat on the ground. There was a pause in the action at this moment, so I ran to the spot, lifted the handkerchief, and saw the dead face of poor Howard-Vyse, my friend of all last year in Boerland. A large bullet wound was in his right thigh, and he must have speedily bled to death.

Meanwhile, the Marines were having a warm skirmish on the other side of the canal, and this went on till dark, when Sir Archibald, having found out all he required, ordered us to retire, and thus ended our skirmish of the 5th.

It was nearly dark when we began to retire, and I think we had about four miles to go before we reached Ramleh. As I had somehow lamed my horse, I put

up there for the night with my old friends the Rifles, and slept soundly on a shakedown in Colonel Ashburnham's room in a pleasant draught, and without mosquitoes.

My horse was all right next morning. I took an early bathe in the sea, at the now abandoned bathing-house of the Khedive, and returned to Alexandria, where I found a rumour had got about that I was "missing"—and for all I know it may have been telegraphed to some of the papers at home.

On the afternoon of Sunday the 6th, Howard-Vyse and three of our men were buried in the English cemetery here—a sailor, a marine, and a private of the Rifles, killed in the skirmish. I chose the place for the grave of poor Howard-Vyse, with whom only a few hours before I had exchanged a few cheery words as we rode out to action.

*Aug. 8th.*—To-day we strengthened our position at Ramleh by establishing a strong post, with 200 men and some heavy field-guns, at a place called Antunyades, that you will see marked on my sketch. This post is intended to make it impossible for Arabi to reach Alexandria by creeping with his troops along the edge of Lake Mareotis, under cover of the railway embankment, which would screen him from our Ramleh guns. Hitherto we have not had force enough to form this post, and we have always thought that Arabi might attack Alexandria some day or night by that way, and have been prepared to meet him at the ramparts, on the south side of the town, and we had strongly barricaded the gap that exists between the ramparts and sea on the south side with that expectation, but Arabi had never tried; now he cannot, and Alexandria from to-day may be considered secure from assault.



I went out to see the post formed at Antunyades. It is a pleasant suburb on the canal, with beautiful gardens, some public, some belonging to the Khedive, and some private, all railed in with very high iron railings, so as to be quite secure from trespassers.

The suburb is deserted very nearly, but the gardens are undisturbed and beautiful. Figs are now in, and abundant. I had made an early start for Antunyades without breakfasting, and I was right glad to find a fig-grove there, with an unlimited quantity of ripe figs within reach of the hand, on which I soon made a considerable breakfast.

. . . . .  
*On board the steam transport "Catalonia," off Port Said,  
 Aug. 20, 1882.*

MY DEAR MAY,—I embarked yesterday at Alexandria on board this ship, and started amidst a fleet of transports full of soldiers, with a fleet of ironclads in escort, with Sir Garnet Wolseley and the Headquarters Staff variously distributed in the ships, and we started for—he knows where! we do not.

At present we are at the entrance to the maritime canal, and but for some obstacle ahead we should not be entirely therein, but our destination is not divulged.

Sir Garnet yesterday divided his forces into two parts. One part he took with him on this movement by sea, and the other part he left at Alexandria under Sir Edward Hamley, confronting Arabi in the old position I have described in a former letter to you.

The troops Sir Garnet took with him are all that have yet reached the East of the 1st Division under Lieutenant-General Willis, namely, the 1st Brigade, or brigade of Guards, under the Duke of Connaught; and the two regiments, namely, the 50th and 84th, that

alone have reached the East as yet to represent the 2nd Brigade. Then there is with us also what is called the "Divisional Battalion" of the 1st Division, namely, the 46th Regiment; and besides we have the 3rd Battalion of the 60th Rifles, which belongs to the 2nd Division, and a very strong battalion of Marines. We have also some Mounted Infantry, the Household Cavalry, and some Artillery, and a proper proportion of the several military departments.

At Alexandria Sir Garnet left all that has arrived in the East of the 2nd Division under Sir Edward Hamley (except the Rifles above mentioned). So that he left at Alexandria most of the Highland Brigade, *i.e.* the 3rd Brigade, under Sir Archibald Alison, and the greater part of the 4th Brigade, under Sir Evelyn Wood, besides artillery, &c.

I had a very busy time at Alexandria up to the last, assisting Sir Archibald Alison. On Friday last, the 18th, the day before I embarked, Sir Archibald gave up the command at Alexandria (and Ramleh, which I always include when I speak of Alexandria) to Sir E. Hamley, and took command of the Highland Brigade. The troops in the town of Alexandria underwent a complete change that day; those quartered there either going on board ship, or else out to Ramleh, and new troops disembarking.

General Sir E. Hamley and staff were quite new to the place, and it fell to me, therefore, to put all square before night, and to explain the general situation to Hamley's staff.

This done, I got my orders to embark on Saturday morning, with some of the Headquarters Staff, on board the *Catalonia*. Right glad was I to get that order, for I had heard Hamley say to his chief staff officer, "We will keep Major Hart as long as we can." Naturally, I

wished to start with Sir Garnet's force, on my own particular duty. Well, next morning, Saturday, I with others of the staff embarked on board the gunboat *Cignet*, which was to put us on board the *Catalonia*. The *Catalonia* with the other transports laden, and the fleet in escort, had already anchored in regular formation outside the harbour. There was some delay in the start of the gunboat, and when we got out to sea we found the start had been made, and the *Catalonia* with the other ships was steaming away.

The *Cignet* not being so fast could not overtake her, so she signalled to Sir Garnet, who was on board H.M. despatch paddle-steamer *Salamis*, for instructions for us. The answer was, to get on board the *Catalonia* the first favourable opportunity. It was clear, then, that the ships would stop somewhere not far off. It was now about 1 P.M. The kindness of the commander and officers of the *Cignet* to us was extreme. They provided luncheon for us at once, and asked us down in turns to their little scrap of a cabin, so that we fared sumptuously; and owing to her small draught of water she stood close into the shore, while the ships stood far out to sea, and thus we passed close under the Aboukir forts, and I got good sketches of the principal ones.

Every fort flew a white flag, but the guns were all in position, and we could see Arabi's men standing by them. Those white flags are by way of meaning that the garrisons are friendly to the Khedive, but I doubt not that if it were not for the overwhelming force of ironclads afloat they would not be flying there, and that many a heavy shot would have been fired at the *Cignet*.

In the course of the afternoon we came up with the whole fleet of transports and ironclads, at anchor in regular formation in Aboukir Bay, far off the land,



which was only dimly visible, and we took leave of the kindly *Cignet* and climbed up on to the *Catalonia*.

The *Catalonia* is a large hired steam packet of the Cunard line, built for temperate and cold latitudes, and ill-adapted for this warm region. All looked very like an attack on the Aboukir forts ; the ships were in regular lines, and the ironclads had their topmasts lowered, ready for action.

But Sir Garnet's plans were not so easily made out by those who would discover them. I have my own idea of his plan, and I did not expect any action at Aboukir.

As darkness fell over us, signal was made, and away we all steamed again out to sea—northwards at first.

To several transports one ironclad is allotted, and she is in charge of them ; and when we move, she leads and we follow. A naval officer is on board every transport, and the captain, who is of course a civilian, has to go by his directions. The various ships are distinguished at night by the number of lights hung in different ways to their masts. The order, quiet, and regularity of everything is excellent. The string of ships, when daylight came, extended away beyond the horizon, of course, so that one could only see a portion of it. In front the *Superb* ironclad led the way, and the *Catalonia*, this vessel, followed. We have on board the 50th Regiment. About seven o'clock this morning we drew up together off Port Said. After a few hours' delay, caused, I heard, by a ship having accidentally gone aground in the canal, we began entering the canal.

Just before this an officer came on board, who told us that, in the night, Sir Garnet had passed some marines quietly and unobserved to Ismailia, and landed other marines at Port Said ; and that Ismailia had been taken possession of, with a small fight on the part of the marines against some of Arabi's troops ; that Arabi's governor

at Port Said had been taken prisoner, and that the Aboukir forts had surrendered to the British.

As we entered the canal we passed close by a French ironclad at anchor there. All her officers and crew cheered us heartily again and again, with much waving of hats, and we duly replied. I was glad to notice this goodwill towards us on the French part.

Now I want to say a little to you about the military geography of this part of Egypt that I think will make our operations in future quite clear to you. This north part of Egypt is called Lower Egypt, because the mouths, or lower part of the Nile, passes through it. To understand the military geography

of this part, I want you to imagine a parallelogram, with the shorter sides both about seventy miles long, running east and west, and the longer sides both about a hundred

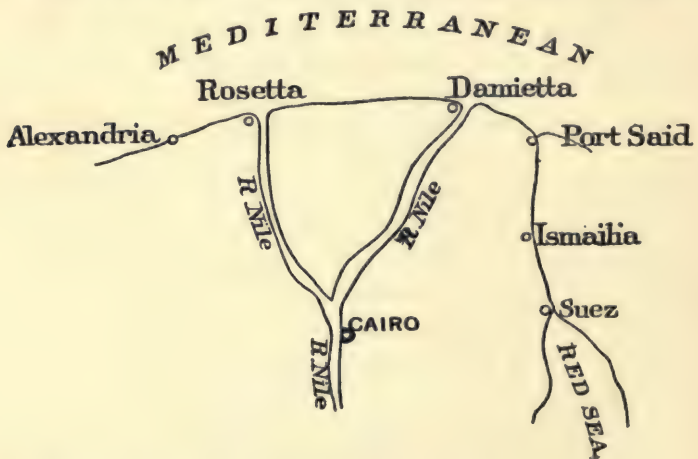


and ten miles long, running about north-west and south-east, just as I have drawn them here. Now, at the four angles I want you to put the four places Rosetta, Damietta, Suez, and Cairo. I want you to recollect those four places and their distances apart, as I have stated, namely, in round numbers seventy miles between Rosetta and Damietta, and between Cairo and Suez, and a hundred and ten miles between Damietta and Suez. Having fixed that in your memory, I want you to add the following particulars. At Cairo the Nile splits into two branches, one of which enters the Mediterranean at Rosetta and the other at Damietta. At Suez is the end of the Red Sea. Half-way between Suez and Damietta is Ismailia.

The maritime canal runs from Suez to Ismailia, and there bends due north and enters the Mediterranean at

Port Said. Port Said is about thirty miles to the south-east of Damietta, and Alexandria is about thirty miles to the south-west of Rosetta. These places and distances, as I have described them to you, are easily fixed in your memory, and if you will do so, I think our future movements and manœuvres will be very clear to you; you will quite grasp the object of them. I will not add any more details now to the sketch-map I have made for you.

You know that we have part of our force at Alex-



andria and the rest on the maritime canal, and you know that Arabi is strongly entrenched with an army close to Alexandria, barring the only route from Alexandria to Cairo; and you know how strong his position is from the previous sketches I have sent you, with details of the ground there. Such is our present position. At five o'clock this afternoon, not far from Port Said, we ran aground on the west side of the canal. It is now night, and all efforts to get the *Catalonia* off have failed.

Aug. 21st.—This morning about seven I was put on board a steam transport called the *Osprey*, as she passed



the *Catalonia*, for the *Catalonia* was still stuck fast. Fortunately there was just room for other vessels to pass, which is rarely the case when a vessel sticks in the canal.

The *Osprey* was a small steamer full of provisions only, and I found her pleasant relief after the *Catalonia*, which was a dreadful ship. Fancy her being fitted all over with hot-water pipes in full action in this climate. They said they were meant for a cold climate, and starting at such short notice they could not cut off the hot-water pipe system. . . . I landed at Ismailia, where the Marines, Rifles, and a few other troops were already ashore. I had brought with me from the *Catalonia* such materials for my work as I could carry myself, and left servants, horse, and my kit behind, to follow whenever the *Catalonia* can be got off.

I have already begun a survey of our route to the front, towards Cairo, and in the course of it I came upon a post-office, where I have just stopped to conclude this letter to you, for it is just in time for the Brindisi mail.—  
With much love, dearest May, ever yours,

A. FITZROY HART.

## CHAPTER XI

### KASSASSIN

*Kassassin, 22 miles west of Ismailia,  
12th Sept. 1882.*

MY DEAR MAY,—Here we are all assembled the day before the battle, except Sir Evelyn Wood's brigade, which has to remain for the present at Alexandria, confronting Arabi's troops, in the position there at Ramleh that I have fully described to you. All the rest of us are here under Sir Garnet Wolseley, and days before this letter reaches you, you will have heard by telegram the result of to-morrow.

I told you of my arrival at Ismailia on the 21st of August. I had then to do such staff duty as happened to be most required at the time, and so during the 22nd and 23rd of August I was busy disembarking our troops from the ships anchored in Lake Timsah, as the expanse of water the canal joins at Ismailia is called.

On Thursday the 24th of August I started before day-break from Ismailia with our cavalry on a reconnoissance to the front, along the railway and canal—that is, the fresh-water canal. If you will look now at your map, you will notice the populated, cultivated region that lies in, and close to, what is called the Delta of the Nile—that is, the region between the two branching mouths of the Nile, and skirting their banks without. That region flourishes because it is watered regularly by the annual overflow of the Nile. Just let me mention here that the overflow of the Nile used to be considered in times past

miraculous in a country where no rain is, so the river was worshipped, and it is only of recent years that the cause was discovered. It is now known that the rise and overflow of the Nile in Egypt is due to the rainy season in Abyssinia. The torrents of rain that fall at that season on the hills of Abyssinia flow into the head-waters of the Nile, so that far, far away in Egypt the channel of the river cannot contain the floods that pour into it, and so it rises to overflowing, and fertilises Egypt in the Delta. Elsewhere, about Lower Egypt, you will observe there is desert—the Lybian Desert on the west, and the Arabian Desert on the east of the Delta.

Now notice how Ismailia communicates with the Delta. It communicates by a railroad and canal, running side by side westward, across the Arabian Desert. The canal is fresh water from the Nile, and by means of irrigation from it, cultivated patches occur along its banks. The distance from Ismailia to the region bordering the Delta is some thirty miles. Kassassin is twenty-two miles from Ismailia, so we are now in the midst of the desert, but after our battle we shall be almost out of it.

Well, on the 24th, I went, as I said, with the cavalry, General Drury Lowe being in command of it, along the route of the canal and railway. The railway is on the north side of the canal, and we rode on the north side of the railway.

When we had gone about six miles we came suddenly upon an outpost of Arabi's infantry in an Arab village. There were, I think, about two hundred of them. We seemed to take them by surprise, for they opened fire upon us, and then turned and ran as I have never seen men run in my life before. They had cause to run, for the cavalry, Horse Guards and Life Guards, were almost upon them in an instant; and had it not



been for the channels of irrigation in the environs of the village, that their chargers refused to jump, and the delays caused thereby, every man of them would have been killed or taken. I saw Colonel Ewart, who commanded the 2nd Life Guards, try to make his horse jump one of these wet ditches; but the horse only got his forelegs over, and his hindlegs dropped in the ditch. While Colonel Ewart was for a moment in this difficult position, a mounted trooper of his own regiment jumped right on his back, and the whole four fell over sideways into the water, Colonel Ewart being between the two horses. He lost his sword, and had an uncommonly narrow escape from drowning.

As soon as we had threaded our way through this cultivated patch we were in the desert again, with Arabi's men ahead in full view, scarcely half a mile off, flying for their lives. I never saw such a race for life, and withal they did not throw away their arms. We only overtook two small parties; one of four men was run down by the cavalry nearest me. Poor fellows, they were quite blown, but they kept close together as the cavalry came up, and would not surrender, even to our very superior numbers. They even fired a volley at us, but without hurt, though they were walking only a few paces from us; and one of them took a deliberate shot at me, but his bullet whistled high over my head. At last they were encircled and taken, but not before it had been necessary to fire at one of them, who was about to fire at us again. The shot wounded him in the hand, and then all laid down their arms.

Through our interpreter they told us that they had resisted to the last because they had all been told that the English would kill every prisoner taken. We know now that Arabi has caused this infamous lie to be circulated amongst his men to serve his own ends.

We had now got to a village called El Magfar, about three miles from a place farther off on the canal, called Tel-el-Mahuta. At Tel-el-Mahuta the enemy were entrenched, and had made batteries, and they opened fire with their guns. Two guns of ours came up by and by, and for the rest of the day there was a cannonade from both sides, with very little effect, for the shells go into the sand, and the splinters fly chiefly into the air. However, they killed two of our gunners with one shell, and several horses.

Sir Garnet Wolseley had come up, and some infantry, and reinforcements of cavalry and artillery joined us as soon as they could. Sir Garnet stood on the top of a small sand-hillock observing the enemy's position, &c., and we of the staff all stood by him. The first shell fired by the enemy passed close over our heads, and burst a few yards behind Sir Garnet's back.

The enemy was too strong for us to think of advancing farther with our present force. Sir Garnet had found out what he wanted to know, and so he returned to Ismailia. We bivouacked on the ground, where we were in a semicircle, with our backs to the canal.

Next day, after a slight cannonade (25th of August), the enemy evacuated Tel-el-Mahuta, and we entered. Tel-el-Mahuta is twelve miles from Ismailia. An advanced guard was pushed forward to a place called Mahsuma, five and a quarter miles farther, for it was found that in a panic the enemy had hastily abandoned that place, leaving a luggage train crammed with their clothing and equipment, but unfortunately no engine.

At Tel-el-Mahuta we found that Arabi had blocked the railway with a huge bank of earth across the line, in a cutting, and that he had dammed the canal by a huge mass of earth also. It was a heavy task to remove these

obstacles, and a most seriously difficult thing under the circumstances to send food enough on for the troops in advance.

In the emergency I was made Commandant of Tel-el-Mahuta, and I spared no effort to meet the difficulties.

Under the superintendence of engineer officers the railway obstacle was cut through in six days by parties of our soldiers working all day in gangs, and the canal dam was cut through in like manner in thirty-six hours.

Meanwhile the entreaties for food and forage from our force in front had been frequent, and I had only just barely been able to meet the difficulty by every means in my power, and every effort that could be made.

The Guards' Brigade did the work, slaving in turns all day long under blazing sun, with perfect goodwill and in excellent style. Besides cutting through the obstacles of canal and railway, I must tell you that there was the continual labour of unloading boats and trucks of provisions at one side of the obstacles, carrying these provisions to the other side, and then loading other boats and trucks with them.

On the 28th of August we had an alarm at Tel-el-Mahuta. A strong force under General Graham had moved on to this place, Kassassin, to take possession of the canal lock, and we heard heavy firing going on, and as the sun set, could see from the tops of our sandhills the flashes of guns and rifles at Kassassin, ten miles away from us. Of this we thought little, feeling sure our force in front was well beating the enemy, and so it was really; but after dark there galloped into our camp a breathless trooper of cavalry, who said that the Marine battalion had been "cut up," and that General Graham could barely hold his own.

General Willis, who commands the division, was still



at Tel-el-Mahuta, and hearing this account of the state of things in front, he started off in support with the brigade of Guards and every combatant at Tel-el-Mahuta, except myself and the sick.

It was for me as Commandant to do what I could for the safety of Tel-el-Mahuta, in case it should be attacked while the troops were away, so I set to work with the hospital corps men who attend the sick, and a "bearer company," who carry the sick and wounded, and we soon brought all the sick from the camp hospitals and laid them on a sand hill-top, and built a fort of sacks of biscuits round them. Then I placed the sick men's rifles at intervals round the parapet of the fort, with a supply of ammunition to each, and posted to each rifle one of the non-combatants of the hospital corps or bearer company who had been in a regiment, and therefore knew how to use it. There were about fifty sick men. Every possible vessel was now filled with water, and we were ready for attack.

General Willis soon found out that his assistance was not wanted in front, and turned back, arriving at Tel-el-Mahuta again early this morning with the troops he had taken with him.

On the 29th of August, both obstacles at Tel-el-Mahuta had been cut through. The great difficulty of supplying the front had thereby been got over, and I left the place to enter upon my special work of surveying and sketching the ground embraced in our operations.

I went back to Ismailia by train on the 30th of August, and slept on board H.M.S. *Tholia*, commanded by Captain Brakenbury, R.N., my old friend of the Zulu war, who commanded the Naval Brigade of Clark's Column in that war.

On the 31st of August, I began to survey from Ismailia the ground we had passed over, and on the 2nd of

September, I arrived here, having completed the work up to this place, now the very front.

On the 6th of September, Colonel Buller arrived here as Chief of the Intelligence Department, and took me to work with him.

We started on reconnaissance at three o'clock that night with General Wilkinson, who commands the Indian cavalry, and a small escort of cavalry, and we rode cautiously towards the enemy's works in front of us. We got up to about a mile and three-quarters from them before daybreak, and as day broke we made all the observations we desired, and got safely off before the enemy was ready to hunt us.

On the 8th, a reconnaissance in force was made on the other—the south—side of the canal by our troops, and we gained further information of the position we are now about to attack.

On the 9th of September, Colonel Buller and I started early on a reconnaissance together, but we were met by three regiments of Arabi's cavalry and had to turn back. More and more of his troops turned out, and came on to attack our position here.

I think he must have sent all he had, for his front seemed to me quite six miles long, from his right to his left.

We turned out all our force that was here then to meet him, and after a sharp action repulsed and drove him back.

I was able during the action, by reconnoitring in front, to give the Marine battalion some valuable information of the position and movements of the enemy and his guns that they could not have gained from where they were, and by acting on which they drove the enemy back from a strong position and captured two of his guns. Colonel Jones, who commands the Marine bat-

talion, in his report expressed his acknowledgment of what I had done for him in most generous terms. I was given privately a copy of what he said.

In doing this part I was shot in the left elbow, and my horse in the foreleg, but neither of us is more than temporarily injured. My bone was not touched by the bullet.

. . . . .



## CHAPTER XII

### TEL-EL-KEBIR

*Cairo, Sept. 19, 1882.*

MY DEAR MAY,—My last letter to you was written the day before the battle. The battle is over; and now I am at Cairo; the war over, and all waiting to hear when we are to go home.

Now I must give you an account of the fight. I should have written you an account before, had I not been busy all day surveying the ground and making a plan of the enemy's batteries and entrenchments. I completed the survey the day before yesterday, and I brought the sketch here yesterday from Tel-el-Kebir by train, and handed it to Sir Garnet, who received me very cordially, and the sketch went off for England yesterday with his despatches.

Well, on the 12th of September (Tuesday), the day before the fight, Sir Garnet assembled all his generals, commanding officers of regiments, and certain staff officers. We met him at an appointed spot in the desert at four o'clock in the morning, and there he expounded to us in very brief, clear terms his plan of attack, that was to come off at daybreak next morning.

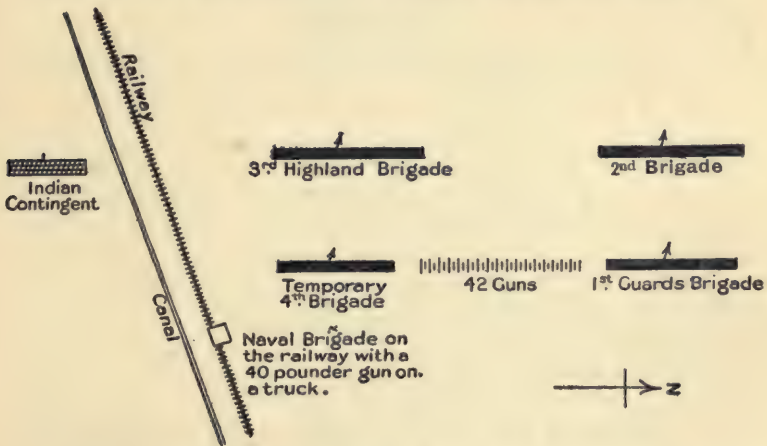
His army was to form up in two lines as I have drawn them here, facing west, towards the enemy.

The front line was to have the 2nd Brigade (General Graham's) on the right, and the Highland Brigade on the left, with 1200 yards' interval between those two brigades.

The second line was to be 1000 yards behind the first line, and the left of the second line was to be formed on the spot where Sir Garnet was addressing us.

On the right of the second line was to be the Guards Brigade; in the centre of the line forty-two guns; and on the left a temporary 4th Brigade, made up of the 3rd Battalion 60th Rifles and the 40th Regiment.

It was a temporary 4th Brigade, because the real 4th Brigade is at Alexandria, under Sir Evelyn Wood.



The position thus pointed out for us was on the plateau of the desert, on the north side of the canal, and about a mile from Kassassin towards the enemy.

On the south side of the canal, close to it, the Indian contingent was to advance abreast of us as best they could, either along the canal bank, or through the cultivated strip bordering the canal on that side. My sketch shows you their position. The north is to the right-hand of the sketch, and all ground on that side of the canal is bare desert; but the ground for about half a mile or more in width, on the south side of the canal, is irrigated

and cultivated, and thereby so soft that it is difficult and sometimes impossible for troops to pass, except by the canal bank.

Far away on our right, beyond the limit of my sketch, our cavalry was to advance in a grand sweeping movement round the enemy's left, and intercept, crush, or scatter them after we had forced them in front.

We were to strike our camp, and leave it, with all baggage, under a small guard at Kassassin. This was to be done at dusk, that it might not be observed by the enemy and excite his suspicion; and then we were to march out quietly, without any kind of noise, and take up our assigned places. No bugle was to be sounded, no march to be struck.

After that we were to lie still on the sand till 1.30 in the early morning, and then we were to march west, guided by the pole star, until we reached the enemy's entrenchments. This we should do about dawn; and then in line, with fixed bayonets, we were to charge straight at the enemy in his trenches, without waiting to fire a shot. These were the directions for the first line.

The second line was to follow us up, and give any support that the first line might require; while our guns, forty-two in number, were to be ready to knock any work to pieces that might defy our infantry.

The Indian contingent was to drive away any of the enemy that might be on that side of the canal, and thus cover our left flank; and they had with them some Royal Engineers with floating bridges, to establish communication with us across the canal at any time, if required.

Sir Garnet now desired us not to mention a word about his plan to anyone beforehand. He wished us all "God-speed," and we returned to camp for breakfast.



That night, the night of the 12th, as darkness fell over us, we all moved quietly into position, and lay down to sleep.

I had asked leave to accompany the 2nd Brigade (General Graham's) as an extra staff officer during the action; for it seemed to me that the 2nd Brigade would have the hardest task, and would probably meet on the left of the enemy's position a complication of works securing, or intending to secure, their left from being turned, and that all the ability of every available staff officer would be required there to guide the men attacking.

My proposition was well approved, so I went with the 2nd Brigade.

About midnight Sir Garnet came round to see if we were all ready in our places and knew our course; and he asked if I was there, and trusted to me, as I knew the ground best of those with the 2nd Brigade, to guide it in the proper course on the left of the enemy's works.

At 1.30 A.M., on the morning of the 13th, we rose and advanced through the darkness, keeping the pole star as closely as possible on our right hand.

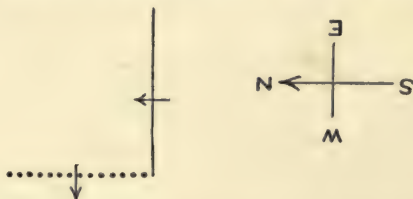
On the right of the Brigade, and therefore on the extreme right of the attacking line, was the 2nd Battalion of the 18th Royal Irish Regiment; next to them, on their left, was the 84th Regiment; then the 87th Regiment; and then the battalion of Marines—thus, Marines, 87th Regiment, 84th Regiment, 18th Regiment.

General Graham and General Willis marched at the left of the Marines, and gave the pace.

I must explain to you that General Willis commands the 1st Division, which includes both the Guards Brigade that was behind us in the second line, and the 2nd Brigade, and his chief duty therefore was to see that both brigades were moving correctly in concert.

The pace on the left of the Brigade was faster than on the right. This was the natural result of the circumstance that the left gave the course and the right had to conform to it—by no means an easy task in the dark ; so by frequent small changes of direction the right gradually fell behind the left. Several times I advised the generals to halt the left and give the right the chance of getting up, but they were anxious to push on without any delay, so the left was not halted.

From the time of starting we had about five miles to creep before we should reach the enemy's works, and about the time that I knew we must be very near them



the pole star was obliterated by clouds. Our guiding stars in front were also covered up, and I felt confident that the Brigade was quite out of its course, and had moved round by the quicker pace on the left, so as to face northwards. I pulled out my large surveying compass that hung round my neck. I did not expect to be able to see its bearing in the dim starlight ; but I *did* see it, and to my horror I found the whole Brigade in line deployed fronting *north* instead of *west*, and with its left flank therefore, as I knew, not far from the enemy's entrenchments.

If the thick line represents the enemy's line, the thin line will show you how the 2nd Brigade was at this moment, and the dotted line will show you how it ought to have been.

I galloped to the left of the Brigade and told the generals (Willis and Graham) that we must change front at once to the left, that the west was our left, and that we must be close to the works. They seemed astonished, but they gave me full confidence. I asked if I might mark the proper front, and General Willis told me to do so.

I called for two men from the left of the Marines, and I put them on the proper line, at a right angle to our present front. Hardly had I done so than a storm of musketry fire, with cannon shot at quick intervals, opened upon us in the darkness, close from the quarter where I had said the enemy's works must be. There could be no doubt, then, that I was right. The Marines wheeled regularly into the new line, and I galloped along the Brigade, directing the other three battalions to prolong the new line. This was done in the most orderly manner. Fortunately for us a slight rise of ground sheltered us from the enemy's fire.

Their entrenchments ought to have been on the top of that slight rise instead of beyond it, but by some error of theirs it was not so. Our new line was thus formed under cover, about five hundred yards from the trenches, in safety, while the air above us literally hissed with bullets.

It was barely daybreak, and the enemy, having discovered our attack, were firing as fast as they could into the darkness in front of them.

I now went to our extreme right, to the 18th Royal Irish, to assist them in getting round or through the enemy's left flank defences.

The Brigade advanced at the double in a series of rushes. In a few seconds the 18th reached the top of the rise in front, and I saw close before us a dense line of smoke, lightened up by multitudinous flashes. That was the enemy in his line of entrenchment.



It seemed to me as if everyone of us must be riddled with bullets, but still they hissed over our heads. Day was just breaking, and it breaks very rapidly in this region.

With a terrific cheer the 18th rushed forward at the line of flame. I rode with them, cheering with all my might. In a second or two we were close up, and I saw the white garments of Arabi's infantry behind the smoke and fire, a long thick line of men in white linen.

Another second and I expected a hand-to-hand encounter; but just as we were a few paces from the entrenchment the white line rose and retreated, part rapidly, part slowly, part with hesitation.

We closed on the trenches. There was a shallow, unfinished ditch on the outside next us; and our men crowded in, and as soldiers often will do at such times, they halted in this cover and fired into the retreating enemy. But this would not do. *Close* on our left, a hundred yards only off, or less, was a tall battery in the very line of entrenchment we had forced. It was full of the enemy firing into us, and it must be turned at once. I urged the men to advance; their officers did all they could, and I gave two leads over the trenches on horseback; but still the men clung a moment to the entrenchment. Probably they were quite blown, for they had shown courage enough to put all idea of fear out of the question. Long as the delay seemed at that critical time, it could have been only a very few moments.

Once more with a shout the 18th leaped forward and charged beyond the trenches. At that moment the battery close on our left fired a big gun in among us. I looked instinctively to see the hole the shot had made through us, but there was none; the shell must have passed clear over us, though fired at not fifty yards off!

And now the defenders of the battery rushed out to save themselves.

I shall ever remember the soldier in blue coat and fez cap, conspicuous in blue, where all others of his side were in white. I overtook him in rear of the battery, and he carried a rifle. He would shoot me if I did not shoot him. Such thoughts flash quickly through one's brain at such a time, more quickly than the time it takes to dip this pen in ink.

Still, in the midst of all this haste, I wished to give him a chance of his life. I would not shoot him if he would throw down his rifle, and I waved my revolver downwards, and signed as best I could to him to drop his rifle. Instead of doing so he seized my revolver by the muzzle as I sat on horseback, and with a devilish change of countenance tried to drag it out of my hand or me off my horse. In an instant I shot him full in the chest while he still held the barrel of my revolver.

And now we pressed on as fast as we could. Day had broken, and I could see we had forced the enemy's line of entrenchments and turned his batteries that were in that line. But close in front of us fled a multitude of men in white; they were Arabi's infantry, and we were mixed up with their stragglers, while their dead and dying lay all over the ground about us.

I was anxious now that the flying enemy should not have a chance of rallying, and so I got together as best I could those men who, having been foremost in the charging of the trenches, were some way in advance of the bulk of their regiments; and I found there were now with me men of the 18th Royal Irish, the 84th, and Royal Marines, and no doubt some of the 87th. These I got into line under their own officers; and shouting to them that we must not let the enemy rally, we went on; they at the double, I still on horseback. At intervals

we stopped that they might get breath who were on foot, and in those intervals we fired volley after volley at short range into the enemy's back, wherever his numbers were thickest; then we rushed on again, until at last it was clear that Arabi's army had melted away.

On our left was a line of low sand-hills, armed with batteries; and in these batteries, one after another, we saw our friends of the left attack appear, while as far as the eye could reach on the desert in front we saw the white figures of Arabi's infantry still running away.

All over the sandy plain at our feet, in front of us, behind us, and to right and left, lay the enemy's dead and wounded, their perfectly white linen clothing somewhere drenched with blood.

The regiments of the 2nd Brigade now formed up in regular order, and moved on down into the valley of the canal and railway to Tel-el-Kebir. That little town we found evacuated; but close to the railway station was Arabi's depot of supplies for his troops—corn, biscuit, firewood, and all kinds of equipment—which fell into our hands, and may be of value to the Khedive. Dromedaries too there were in great number.

The same afternoon I started back over our field of action to survey the lines and position. You can imagine that there were dreadful scenes there; but this letter is already so long that I will keep all descriptions of the field except the entrenchments till my next.

I send you a plan of the entrenchments sketched from my survey. The shading along the ink line shows you which side is the front of the entrenchment. You will see that there were twenty batteries, and that nine of these, from No. 1 to No. 9, lie in almost a straight line from south to north, three and a half miles long; the right of the line being No. 1 Battery on the canal, where



a dam had been made, and the left being No. 9, far out in the desert.

The right flank was secure from any turning movement on our part, for it rested on cultivated ground, where guns cannot pass, owing to the softness of the



soil ; and in case Sir Garnet were to have marched round his left flank beyond No. 9, it seems clear that the line of works 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 was prepared along the hill-top there to meet him, with the additional line 14 and 15 to strengthen it. So it is clear now that the works could not have been turned, and that Sir Garnet's direct attack was the best possible.

The enemy's lines appear to me ably planned, for they secured his retreat either to the west or over the canal to the south; but I found them occasionally very defective in detail, and consequently often weak in places where, without more labour, they might have been strong.

Fortunately for us, no obstacles of any kind were placed in front of his works, and the ditch outside his entrenchments was at most 4 feet deep and 6 feet wide.

My survey, with details of all the batteries, has just gone home, as I said, with the despatches, and no doubt you will be able to get a printed copy soon from Adair House.

*Headquarters, Abden Palace, Cairo,  
7th Oct. 1882.*

MY DEAR MAY,—In my last letter I gave you an account of the fight at Tel-el-Kebir, and now I have to give you some description of the scene after the fight was over.

The whole army, very soon after the position was stormed, arrived on the ground near the railway station, where, if you look at the sketch I sent you last time, you will see is also the bridge over the canal. By that bridge, and thence probably along the south bank of the canal, Arabi escaped from the field and went to Cairo. The fugitives of his defeated army fled, some westward into the desert, where they had a bad time with our cavalry, which had swept round to cut them off; others swam the canal, and others fled over the bridge. Once on the south side of the canal they were safe.

The step from barren soil to fertile land is very sudden at the canal. On the north side is desert, and

desert only—sand and gravel as far as the eye reaches to north and east and west, up to the water of the canal. On the south, from the very bank of the canal, begin luxuriant crops, irrigated from the canal—cotton, maize, millet, rice, dates, and many other things, all in profusion, skirting along the canal in a belt of varying width, from a mile only to several miles wide of the canal, according to the extent of level surface; and then with the rise of ground beyond there reappears the arid desert.

Once in the cultivated region Arabi's men were safe, for scattered about through the numerous villages, and their arms thrown away, they were lost among the peaceable tillers of the soil; and thus Arabi's army dissolved and was gone—gone everywhere, yet not to be seen anywhere.

On the middle of the bridge, on the west side, Sir Garnet took up his position, and having dismounted, he received there the verbal reports of his generals as to their several parts in the action, while the troops rent the air with cheers.

In a very short time Sir Garnet's telegram had gone to England, our cavalry had started at utmost speed to save Cairo, and the troops at Tel-el-Kebir had taken up their positions for the time. Ransacking the enemy's camp now gave the soldiers a turn of interesting change of occupation. The British soldier does this in a rough-and-ready sort of way. If a box is locked he smashes off the lid, and then turns the box upside down at a little distance above the ground, so that the contents fall out all about him. He takes a casual glance at the heap, and usually finds nothing that he cares to take; then he goes on in like manner. If there is a sack, he would not be bothered untying it; he slits it up with his knife and drags out an armful of the interior, as a sort



of sample, to determine him whether he need look in further.

But the real adept looters are the Indians! Our Indian troops never seemed to have done overhauling the litter that strewed the ground. Seated on their heels, they would examine separately every rag in a heap, and finishing with a small selection appropriated for their own use, they would go on again and again, as long as time and stuff existed, searching, examining, and selecting and chattering.

I crossed the bridge to see the village of Tel-el-Kebir, which lies about half a mile south of the bridge. All the inhabitants it seemed had fled, except three. One was an old and venerable-looking Arab, whose handsome features were set in the gravest sadness, as if he had quite resigned himself to Allah's will. He shook his head as I came up to where he sat, and pointed with his stick to a foot deformed or maimed, as much as to say, "I have not been among those who fought, for I could not."

Besides that man I saw only two other people—a middle-aged man, who sat with a look of complete indifference to what was passing, and by his side a girl, who sobbed as if her heart would break. So my look at Tel-el-Kebir was a sorrowful one. But the scene soon brightened. We protected the village from molestation by not allowing our men across the bridge, and we opened, under military protection, a market for the natives to sell us fruit and vegetables, and so they soon came crowding in from concealment; and having seen the British lion, and then talked to the British lion, they were next emboldened to help themselves to loot, out of the very jaws of the British lion, and then not even to fear when he growled! In fact, they crowded in among us in such numbers, picking up whatever they could of

the leavings of Arabi's men, that for the safety of our own things we had to hunt them away with horsemen again and again.

It was still early when I next started back to begin my survey in the lines we had stormed.

I had over three miles to ride before I reached the spot where, with the extreme right of our line of attack, I crossed the entrenchments.

All the way the ground was strewn with dead and dying of what had so recently been *the enemy*. It was a distressing sight to see so many wounded men drenched in their own blood, under the now blazing sun, craving for help, where help at present was impossible. But it was still more distressing to see those whose wounds, more dreadfully severe, left them without strength to ask for help, and who, if they made any sign, only pointed to their mouths in mute supplication for water.

Our doctors had lost no time in doing their duty, and our ambulance and bearer corps had been set hard at work. Our own wounded, of course, received first attention.

Hospitals for dressing wounds were formed in places on the scene of conflict, and there our doctors worked hard.

All wounded Egyptians who could possibly walk were directed to these places, and as fast as means were available the others were carried in.

The fight was on the morning of the 13th, and I think that by the close of the 14th all the bad cases that could be discovered were brought in and dressed, and that by the close of the 15th no wounded were left unattended to.

Of course, no doubt, many Egyptians must have died of their wounds before they could be succoured, though every effort was made to treat the worst cases first.

As I went along, I saw in one of the enemy's batteries

(No. 18 Battery in my sketch) fourteen men dead in a space of four yards square! But there were more dead and wounded in and close to the battery I have marked No. 7, than at any other spot on the field. Not only were the Egyptians lying there all about, but in the ditch on the rear side of the battery, the west side, lay literally a heap of dead, among which were two severely wounded men, still alive. The ditch was not more than 5 feet deep and about 8 feet wide at the top, and I can only conclude that the unhappy creatures had crowded in there wounded, in their efforts to escape, and then died there. I shall never forget the picture that ditch presented. Among the dead was a young Egyptian woman of comely features, and short black hair curling over her forehead. She was in the ordinary blue dress of a peasant, and sat in an easy attitude, her back resting against the side of the ditch. Dead men lay tumbled against her in a heap on both sides, and at her feet was the dead body of an old man with very grey hair. It was very remarkable that amidst so many distorted visages, and eyes open in death, her face alone was perfectly calm and her eyes closed, just as if she slept. She was, however, quite dead, though no wound was apparent.

It was so extraordinary that she should have been there that I wondered whether perhaps she was the daughter of the old man at her feet, and had brought him some necessaries the evening before, and then perhaps, rather than go back alone, if it were late, had stayed with her father in the battery for the night, little knowing it was to be the night of our attack.

Before I reached the spot two of our officers had already preceded me with as much water as they could carry, and had moistened the lips of I know not how many wretches lying in agony on the ground. They



had been down in that horrible ditch, and had lifted the dead bodies off the bodies of the two wounded Egyptians there, and given them water to drink. These two officers were Captain Walker of A Battery, 1st Brigade Royal Artillery, and Veterinary Surgeon Boulter, both strangers to me. It seems to me impossible to conceive a much nobler instance of charity than the action of these two men in the first moment of their freedom from duty after the battle, thus starting off to alleviate the suffering as much as they could. The following day I found them both out again; and this time they had brought a water-cart with them, and could leave a bottle of water to every wounded man.

I did a long day's work surveying, and at the close I saw them still busy doing their voluntary work of goodness. Probably the suffering those two men alone relieved was immense in quantity. May their cup of cold water hereafter receive its reward!

I am now going to describe a curious case to you, not because I desire to describe, or you to read horrors for horror's sake, but because the case is so extraordinary.

In the front entrenchment, between the batteries I have numbered 7 and 8, I saw amongst the wounded Egyptians one man who had been so severely wounded in the face that the whole of his face hung loose, and both eyes were gone. I should have supposed that under such a wound the man would sink rapidly and soon die; but not so in this extraordinary case, as you shall hear.

The two good Samaritans had already visited this man and given him drink, and left him a tin bottle full of water; and every minute or so I noticed that the wretched man felt for the bottle, and then very firmly poured a little of the water into his wound by the forehead. The water ran down between his face and his

skull, and came out through a hole or slit under his chin. Then he would compose his head on his arm, and put a piece of garment over to keep off the flies—those plagues that double the misery of the wounded.

My heart ached, May, as I looked at this poor creature. Nothing could be done for him that day—the day of the fight; but the next day he was brought into camp, and then the whole of his face had dropped off! I assure you that his eyes, nose, cheeks, lips, and chin had totally disappeared, and yet that man was hardy compared to most of the wounded in the hospital tent. His tongue and teeth were uninjured, and his brain had not been disturbed, so he would get up if he wanted anything, and ask for it, and make himself understood. I took an intense interest in the poor creature—his horrible wound was by far the most horrible sight I had ever seen; and at least once a day I went to see how he did. I made him a nice bed, and got him a comfortable pillow for his wretched head, and day by day he got better.

All our doctors worked day and night at more important cases, such as cutting off limbs to save life; and they seemed to me very successful, for generally directly after the smashed limb was off the patient showed wonderful signs of relief and ease, and it was even difficult to get them to remain still, so ready were they to move about at once, even on one leg!

The doctor told me that there was no immediate necessity to attend to the man without the face, as he was going on all right. They had examined the relics of his eyes, in hopes of being able to save or recover sight in one, but found it quite destroyed.

They told me there was on record only one such case, that of an officer of ours in the Crimea, and that he had died of the wound. I hope this case will be recorded, and that we shall hear if the unfortunate man recovers.

On the 15th of September, I finished my survey of the enemy's lines of entrenchment at Tel-el-Kebir, and I telegraphed a description of them to Sir Garnet, who had gone on to Cairo.

On the 16th, I surveyed the ground between Kassassin and Tel-el-Kebir that we had advanced over, and on the 17th completed my plan of the whole.

On the 18th, I went by rail to Cairo, and handed my sketch to Sir Garnet. He gave me a cordial greeting, and I dined with him that evening.

I saw the faceless man shortly before I left Tel-el-Kebir; he was sitting up with a piece of boiled meat in one hand that he bit at occasionally, but with a cup of coffee and sop that he seemed to prefer. I was told that he had always a good appetite and ate plentifully. I believe he has been brought to the Egyptian hospital in Cairo, and so I shall make inquiry for him.

My work here is now done, and unless anything else is given me to do, I may any day get my orders to return home. There seem to be officers enough for all that remains to be done in the various offices, so I do not expect to remain many days longer.

I hear the Headquarter Staff will probably be broken up about the 20th inst., so then most likely I shall embark for England. . . . I remain, dear May, ever yours,

A. FITZROY HART.



## CHAPTER XIII

1883 TO 1899

COLONEL HART spent most of 1883-4 with his regiment between Aldershot and Gibraltar, and in December of 1884 he went with it to India.

The opening of 1886 found him at Sultanpur, near Delhi, as Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General of the 1st Division Southern Force at the Camp of Exercise. When these manœuvres were over he returned to Rani Khet, where his regiment was stationed, and at the end of the year he moved with it to Allahabad.

In the Queen's birthday gazette of 1887 he was made Companion of the Bath. The following October, having had a year's leave at home with his family, he returned to his regiment at Allahabad, just in time to march with them from there to Calcutta. The next autumn he came home again on three months' privilege leave, and the day after his arrival at Dover he was suddenly taken ill with blood-poisoning from Indian malaria, with serious complications, involving simultaneously inflammation of the lungs, rheumatic fever, pleurisy, and abscesses—the pent-up collection of years in India, for during the time he had lived in that country his health had been invariably good.

It was touch and go, but in the end his excellent constitution prevailed, and after a grim fight with the great enemy for three months he was pronounced convalescent.

In June 1891 he became Lieutenant-Colonel commanding the 1st Battalion of the East Surrey Regiment, but he was still on sick leave, and this was further extended over the hot weather in India, so that he actually took up command of the battalion at Dum-Dum in November.

In April of the next year his elder son Arthur joined

the battalion. This was a great joy to him, for he and his son were close friends, and were in many respects more like brothers than father and son.

Three years later Arthur Hart became Adjutant of the regiment, so that for the last year of his father's command their work was very much together. But India and life in India he always cordially disliked. Writing to a friend he says :

“ My wife and children are in England ; I have never brought any of them to India. It is sad for me, but supremely good for them. I have never had a day's ill-health in my five years spent in India, yet I say unhesitatingly that India is a pernicious country for our race to inhabit. I do not judge from exceptional cases of endurance or failure, but from the generality. And I say that at worst the country is ruinous to mind and body, and at best that it is destructive to very young people ; and as to elders, that it is injurious to men and withering to women.

“ There is a very common pride which exalts Indian life, but it is the pride of those who choose to praise what they have had to endure.”

On the 25th of June 1895, on the expiration of his four years in command of the battalion, he returned home on half-pay, and in a letter to one of his sisters he says :

“ Every day I rejoice in thinking I return no more to India ; and I shall be glad when my son is out of it too. It was a great pleasure to me to command a fine battalion. It is the pleasure a good whip feels in driving a good team. The exercise of a great accomplishment is unspeakable joy. But I was tired of transportation ; it has served its useful purpose to me, and now I want no more of it. I do not intend to serve abroad again, except for war.”

After being a year on half-pay he was appointed brigadier to a Militia brigade for autumn manœuvres at Aldershot, and in 1896 Assistant Adjutant of the Belfast District. He had hardly taken up this appointment when one frosty day in January, in taking a short cut from the barracks, which entailed climbing a wooden paling, he slipped from the top and fell heavily to the ground, where he lay for some time unable to move and nearly frozen. At last some small boys found him and went for assistance, and it was found that he had fractured his right hip. During the two months that he was laid up, as he lay upon his back, with a five-pound weight attached to his foot to prevent the limb from shrinking, he employed himself coaching his elder son, Arthur, who was still adjutant of his regiment in India, for the Staff College. Sheets of correspondence on various subjects were prepared and despatched by each mail, and each week a corresponding number arrived to be corrected and sent back. This great interest, added to his invariably good spirits, did much to help his quick recovery. He loved to compare himself to a jockey riding a good horse; and his satisfaction was great when next year his son's name appeared in the list of successful candidates for the Staff College. After about ten months spent in Belfast he was made Major-General, and given command of the 1st Brigade at Aldershot. This move arranged things very nicely for his family, for by an extraordinary stroke of luck it brought them all together—his elder son to the Staff College, and his younger son, Ronald, to the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, and afterwards to Woking, where he joined the 2nd Battalion East Surrey Regiment.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE BOER WAR, 1899-1902

WHEN the South African war broke out in 1899, Major-General Hart was given command of the 5th Brigade (the Irish Brigade), which consisted of the—

1st Battalion	Inniskilling Fusiliers.
1st	„ Connaught Rangers.
2nd	„ Dublin Fusiliers, and
1st	„ Border Regiment.

His staff were Major McGrigor, 60th Rifles, Brigade Major, and Captain Hon. St. L. Jervis, 60th Rifles, A.D.C.

General Hart and his staff started from Liverpool in very bad weather, and proceeded to Queenstown, where they took on board the 1st Battalion Inniskilling Fusiliers, and other details. Queenstown gave them a hearty send-off. In a letter General Hart says :

“The send-off from Queenstown was the most splendid demonstration I ever saw. . . . On leaving Queenstown we entered a tremendous gale. The captain went off his course to help us with the horses, but we lost five out of six, and poor dear Paddy was the first. In spite of extra precaution to secure him at Queenstown, he was chucked fairly head over heels backwards between two horses, and I had to have him shot. Isn't that sad! Four others did not survive much longer, including McGrigor's and Jervis's, the Colonel's and the Adjutant's of the Inniskillings.”

They reached Cape Town on the 30th of November, and there received orders to steam on to Durban.

On the 14th of December Sir Redvers Buller sent for his generals and their staffs, and personally explained to them his instructions for his plan of attack on the following day.

The main attack was to be delivered by the 2nd Brigade against the entrenchments on the Colenso kopjes north of the iron bridge. The 6th Brigade was to take up a position where it could protect the right flank of the main attack, and "to Major-General Hart's brigade (the 5th) had been assigned a special rôle; it was ordered to cross the river at the 'Bridle Drift,' immediately west of the junction of Doornkop Spruit and the Tugela, and subsequently to move down the left bank of the river towards the Colenso kopjes. The Commander-in-Chief hoped that this supplementary crossing would be accomplished before the central attack was delivered, and that the 5th Brigade would thus be able to render substantial assistance in the assault on the bridge, even if General Hart did not succeed in passing his battalions across the river. Sir Redvers anticipated that he would, in any case, be able at least to cover the left flank of the main attack by engaging the enemy on the western side."<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, next morning, the 15th of December, at 4.30 A.M., the Irish Brigade started from its camping-ground to attack "one of the strongest natural positions in the world—a mountain range and a river at its base."

Hart was provided with a sketch-map and a Kaffir guide. The map was defective, for the drift marked on it was unfordable by infantry, and the Kaffir guide disappeared when the first shots were fired, and was seen no more.

At this attack upon Colenso Heights the Irish Brigade bore the brunt of the fighting. It has been said of them "that amid that army of valiant men there were none who held such a record. Their rushes were the quickest, their rushes were the longest, and they stayed the shortest time under cover. . . . To Hart and his brigade were given the task of clearing the way to Ladysmith."<sup>2</sup>

But they had suffered very severely when the order

<sup>1</sup> Sir Frederick Maurice, K.C.B., *History of the War in South Africa.*

<sup>2</sup> Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War.*

to retire reached them. They had lost 25 officers and 528 men killed, wounded, or missing. In consequence of this heavy casualty list their commander suffered some adverse criticism; but his own account of the action, given in one of the following letters, will throw light upon some points perhaps somewhat obscure in the various histories of the war. The first of these letters, written shortly after the battle, is a very important one, and the Editor gives it with certain reservations, which are entirely of a private nature, and which do not in any way affect the context of the narrative.

General Hart kept a copy of this letter himself, to which he appended the following note :

*Nota bene*

This is a duplicate of the original letter, an exact transcription, therefore, by myself of the original by myself, without alteration of anything, even of a stop. The original is carefully preserved.

The letter was commenced on the 26th December 1899, eleven days after the Colenso engagement, was continued on the dates given within, and was concluded on the 2nd January 1900.

Thus spread through eight days of the events described, it records deliberately circumstances that were then fresh in my memory.

It was intended, it will be observed, to be produced in case of my death in the impending fighting; it has therefore almost the solemn reliability of a dying declaration.

Examining the letter at the present date when, after the war, I have been again all over the ground, I find only one inaccuracy in the letter, and that is where I say on page 17 that the kraal was in fact "on" the Tugela bank. The foreshortening made me believe so at the time, but I have since found that it was quite



three hundred yards short of the bank, *i.e.* south of the right bank and nearer to us.

A. FITZROY HART-SYNNOT.

8th April 1903.

*Frere Camp, Natal.*

*Tuesday, 26th Decr. 1899.*

MY DEAR —

I was very delighted (so was Ronald) to get, two days ago here, your numbers 1 and 2 dated respectively Naauwpoort 28 Nov. and Arundel (Colesburg) 15th Dec. for it was the very first news we had of you in Africa, and although I might infer you were neither killed or wounded I could not be sure accident or illness had not occurred.

Your letters are most interesting and were enjoyed as well by McGrigor and Captain Dallas, 16th Lancers, who was given me as "Assistant Staff Officer" and joined my train at Maritzburg, on my way to the front, and is one of the very nicest and most capable staff officers I ever came across, never varying in his amiable temper, full of zeal and energy and abundantly intelligent. . . .

Extraordinary events have occurred here. How Buller's action and complete defeat will be judged at the bar of sound military opinion we shall see hereafter. You must be very careful how you repeat anything I tell you about it until the war is over, but I wish you to know my views about it. . . .

*27th Decr.*

Well, after long preparation and great public expectation, his attempt to force the line of the Tugela has come off and resulted in severe defeat.

The plan of attack and the way in which it was carried out, were in my judgment extremely bad.

Before us was one of the strongest natural positions in the world,—a mountain range and a river at its base—while behind the river the enemy had been for months fortifying that position.

Upon that formidable position two weak attacks, a couple of miles apart, were launched and both were withdrawn directly they were seriously engaged; neither being supported or pushed home.

The right attack was with Hildyard's Brigade upon Colenso bridge: the left attack was by my Brigade upon a drift (ford) of the same Tugela.

Barton's Brigade, posted behind Hildyard's, was to be prepared to meet a counter attack on our right: Lyttelton's brigade was to support either or both attacks as might be desirable.

It resulted that Lyttelton sent off two battalions towards the right attack, and only his two remaining battalions attended to me, and were so far back that *they were never of any use to me at all*, and only a few of their leading men ever got within range of the enemy's distant fire (probably casual shots not intended for them) and they never fired a round at the Boers. I know not why I received no support from Lyttelton.

It is a question which sooner or later I should like to hear answered.

*29th Decr.*

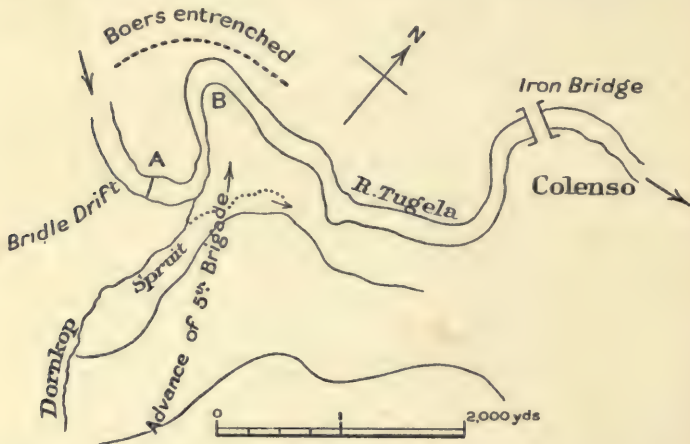
The day before the action on the 14th Dec. Sir Redvers Buller sent for the five Generals, Clery, Barton, Lyttelton, myself and Hildyard, also Lord Dundonald commanding the mounted troops, and Colonel Long commanding the Artillery, and the Captain R.N., and, at his quarters assembled round his map, explained his plan. . . .

The details for my action were quite clear. I was shown on the official map, of which this scrap is an extract, a drift marked "Bridle Drift" at A, which I was told I should be led to by a trusty Kaffir, who lived close by it.

He joined me the evening before and I consigned him to my official colonial guide, Mr. Norgate, who

translated to me what the Kaffir said, which was, that the drift was *below* the junction of the Dornkop Spruit and nowhere else; this did not agree with my marked drift on the map. I had however, been assured by Mr. Murray, Sir Redvers Buller's colonial intelligence man, that I could confidently rely on the Kaffir.

Later on, orders in type for the attack were issued by General Clery, in accordance with what Sir Redvers



Buller had said; for Sir Redvers Buller had said that Clery would command (it is difficult to see how Clery could be said to command when Sir Redvers Buller was present all the time, and issued all the principal orders on the field of action).

In General Clery's orders <sup>1</sup> it is said distinctly in these

<sup>1</sup> 2. It is the intention of the General Officer Commanding to force the passage of the Tugela to-morrow.

3. The 5th brigade will move from its present camping ground at 4.30 A.M. and march towards the Bridle Drift, immediately west of the junction of Doornkop Spruit and the Tugela. The brigade will cross at this point, and after crossing, move along the left bank of the river towards the kopjes north of the iron bridge.

Orders by Lieut. General Sir Francis Clery, K.C.B.,  
Commanding South Natal Field Force.



words—"It is the intention of the General Officer Commanding to force the passage of the Tugela to-morrow."

Observe *that*. Not his intention to feel for the enemy; no reconnaissance in force; no instructions to jib or hold hard if the position were found strongly held, but a distinct intention "*to force the passage of the Tugela.*"

In short *that* was the cue on which I was to act, and please note that fact as it determined my subsequent action. Two Batteries under Parsons were given remarkable orders, I copy it here:—

"The 2nd Brigade Division R.F.A. will move at 4.30 A.M. following the 4th Brigade, and will take up a position whence it can enfilade the kopjes north of the Iron Bridge. This Brigade Division will act on any orders it receives from Major-General Hart."

You will see that this artillery was thus both under my orders and not under my orders! Also that it was away far from me, at first behind the Brigade that was behind me (the 4th Lyttelton's).

It was given a distinct programme in which I was not even consulted and yet it was ordered to act under my command! What an extraordinary order that order I have quoted above is!!

It was too late to ask any questions, nevertheless I had distinctly understood from Sir Redvers Buller's mouth at the personal interview above described, that this artillery would prepare the way for my attack, and I counted on its doing so, though not mentioned in that wonderful order; and it did so as you will hear presently.

At 4.30 A.M. I advanced on the Tugela position as ordered, directed by the Kaffir, Mr. Norgate being with him. The arrow shows approximately my course.

In due time I reached a spruit answering to the Dornkop spruit, but it took the way I have marked in

red,<sup>1</sup> and not as in the map; and as I did not recross it in my advance, it must have joined the Tugela somewhere to my right of the B. loop of the river.

The Kaffir's assertion, which I mentioned to you, that my drift was *below* and not above the confluence of the spruit, was not therefore in accordance with my crossing this spruit, and I presumed he had not understood what "above" and "below" meant, for I was taking his direction, and moreover, my official map and instructions were consistent with crossing the spruit.

Its bed, where I came upon it, was rather deep and rocky, so that wheels could not pass; I therefore got the infantry over; and sent Dallas with the machine guns and other wheeled transport, to get over by the nearest practicable place.

The Dublin Fusiliers crossed the spruit first, deployed and advanced on the Kaffir's line to cover the passage of the rest. The remainder, Connaught Rangers, Border Regt. and Inniskilling Fusiliers then formed up in mass of quarter columns behind the Dublin's screen.

I had fully instructed my Colonels that the Dublins would advance to the Tugela, line our bank at the drift and cover the crossing of the Rangers, who would deploy on crossing the drift and cover the passage of the rest.

In accordance with this, the Dublins advanced.

Up to this, my front and left flank had been covered by 500 Cavalry under Burn-Murdock, Royal Dragoons, and an officer (young Pitt) having come to me for further orders, I told him to tell his Commanding Officer to collect his Cavalry and take care of them in rear for the good work I hoped to require of them later on.

To my great annoyance, on reaching the Tugela loop A. the Kaffir still pointed on, and up the loop B. I

<sup>1</sup> The red line mentioned above is shown in the printed map by a dotted line.—EDITOR.

therefore consulted Mr. Norgate, who conferred with the Kaffir and told me the Kaffir affirmed that the drift, and the *only* drift, was up at loop B.

This was serious news, for the loop B. was tactically the wrong bend of a river to force in presence of the enemy. I must either go on or go back. But I had no authority to go back. My orders received were plainly that Sir Redvers Buller intended to *force* the passage of the Tugela.

I therefore proceeded, hoping I should be able to do so.

Soon the first gun was fired, it was a shrapnel from beyond the loop B. and burst short of us.

*Jan. 1st, 1900.*—I had observed Parsons' batteries ere this moving on my right some way off on a parallel slope divided from mine by a depression, and coming into action in very good style, as it seemed to me. You will remember that I said he had received his instructions to open the attack for me, independently of me, *i.e.* by orders from Head Quarters, and he did so. When he had well engaged the enemy, I advanced the infantry attack, having deployed into line to the left, the three battalions above mentioned, that were in mass behind the covering battalion.

2nd Bn. Dublin Fusiliers, Covering Battalion.

1st „ Connaught Rangers, First line.

1st „ Border Regt. Second „

1st „ R. Inniskilling Fusiliers, Third line.

In this deployment, I became unpleasantly aware . . . without any order from me to do so, they all deployed into *single* rank; they thus doubled the front I meant them to take up. This entailed great disadvantages:—the battalions were out of full control of their Commanding Officers, being too extended to hear his voice through-out, therefore I could not handle them just as I wished;



and further, deploying in this style to the left, the left flanks of battalions got behind the loop A, when I wanted all to be prepared to advance up the loop B.; and the Commanding Officers going away so far to the left, got out of touch with me.

I was greatly vexed, . . . but proceeded to make the best of it.

I personally ordered forward all of the 1st line that were opposite the loop B. The ground in the loop was flat and covered with short, dry grass, and generally no cover at all.

The Tugela visible from A. to B. ran slowly (if at all) between banks about 15 feet above the water; the river was a few yards wide.

I did not see the water further than about B. but the rising ground just beyond B. and to our right of B. indicated a necessary bend in the river as in the map.

At this time I think Parsons had drawn off the Boers' artillery fire, as I cannot remember more than little of bursting [shells] just then on us. Not a Boer or a sign of him or of his place of concealment was visible.

The infantry had advanced only a little way, when a tremendous rifle fire was poured into us from our front, and a considerable rifle fire from our left front. There was no smoke and not a sign of the enemy himself, or even a horse, but the streaks of dust as the Boer bullets showered in, grazing the ground, plainly showed where they were, by a process of interpolation.

The infantry lay down flat. Fire was new to them. . . .

About this time too, the Boers began an artillery fire from the mountain top some four miles off to the west, and their shells from the big guns fell with excellent aim amongst us, but did very little damage. I did not see one bad shot from those guns; all the shells,

I believe, fell in the loop B, but they fell so vertically that they went into the ground, and sent a column of stuff, chiefly dust, straight up into the air.

Nevertheless they alarmed our inexperienced soldiers greatly. Still they held their ground. There was no retreat, but they lay flat, and to a great extent were deaf to every effort of mine to go on.

I could see officers here and there urging on the advance; and all this was so far successful that a slow advance was made. Here and there men with better nerves pushed on. There was no panic, and once when I said to a lot of men who were deaf to my commands to advance—"If I give you a lead, if your General gives you a lead—will you come on?" they answered quite cheerily with their brogues "We will, sir," and up they jumped and forward they went.

Time and experience are necessary to make men go well under fire.

Meanwhile the Boer fire was hotly maintained; casualties were increasing. My A.D.C. Jervis, had disappeared (I found afterwards that he had been hit in the left upper arm by a bullet, smashing the bone), Captain Dallas had not rejoined me from his important task of getting the maxims, &c., over the spruit, as I mentioned above.

I had only McGrigor left: he worked excellently; we had both dismounted when the rifle fire opened upon us.

I had very soon to reinforce the 1st line with the 2nd and then with the 3rd, and thus we forged slowly ahead.

The Kaffir disappeared directly the first shots were fired and was not seen afterwards, but Mr. Norgate a civilian gentleman, not called upon by his engagement to risk his life, kept near me under that heavy fire, in

case he could be of any use to me ; very gallant, patriotic conduct that I hope will be recognized well ; and poor fellow, an hour or two after he ruptured himself helping to carry a wounded man.

McGrigor suggested to me to try a drift near A., and I approved the trial as a forlorn hope of getting over there, for I had seen the water and it looked still and deep.

He went off, and before long returned drenched ; he had tried to wade over, but got out of his depth and had to swim out.

Again and again I looked back to see if any sign of Lyttelton's Brigade coming to reinforce me was visible, but there was no sign of him back into the far distance.

All my battalions had now got mixed in the firing line except those left halves, or part of them, that I told you got behind the loop A. by extending to single rank when they ought to have remained in double rank.

Looking back, I could see them crowded there over my left shoulder, and I sent McGrigor to get over to the right all he could.

He came back and said Colonel Thackery was coming. And presently I met Colonel Thackery leading up a lot of his men in a cheery way, ready to do anything. I sent him over to reinforce my right (He commands the Inniskillings).

Still no sign of Lyttelton's Brigade. I had not another man behind save those lost to me at the river near A, but we were forging slowly on.

Mr. Norgate had pointed out to me a kraal far up the loop B. near the river, in fact on its bank to my left as I looked into the bend B. ; and some of the covering battalion had actually reached that kraal.



The drift I sought was at that kraal according to the Kaffir's assertion, translated to me by Mr. Norgate.

At this stage Colonel Stopford, Sir Redvers Buller's Military Secretary, rode up to me and said he brought Sir Redvers Buller's order to me to retire, and that my retirement would be covered by artillery and the 4th Brigade (Lyttelton's).

I therefore gave the order to *retire slowly*, and almost immediately a tremendous fire from our artillery (Naval and Military) passed over my head, and shells rained into the positions the Boers apparently occupied, though no sign of them was ever visible.

Under cover of this fire we retired slowly. There was here and there an attempt to double back, but I drew my sword and stretched out my arms and ordered a halt at once; and then retirement again when the rear-most men retiring were up.

Thus, more or less mixed, the retirement was continued and, finally, the 5th Brigade rallied on the position of our last encampment, while the Bearer Company worked hard at the wounded.

When we had retired leisurely, quite out of range of any but very distant and very trifling long range fire of the Boers, we passed through two battalions of the 4th Brigade under Lyttelton, posted on a range where they were of no use to us whatever.

I consider that our artillery alone covered our retirement and so effectually that counter attack, if it was thought of, could not be attempted by the Boers.

The casualties killed, wounded and missing were 25 officers and 528 men, total 553.

That afternoon or next day I met Sir Redvers. I think he rode to my camp—and I talked over the events of the fight. Not a disagreeable word passed between us. I told him how the men lay down and how difficult

it was to get them on; but I took a cheerful view of it, ascribed it to first experiences of fire, and said they would do much better next time.

At 1 A.M. in the early morning of the 17th I marched my Brigade back here (Frere) from Chieveley, followed by Lyttelton's, and encamped on our former ground. Sir Redvers also moved his Head Quarters back here.

On the 20th, *i.e.* five days after the fight, I was at Head Quarters copying my official report, of which I had not had time to take a copy.

Sir Redvers said: "How are you, my dear Hart?" and offered me a brandy and soda, and said pleasantly that he wanted to speak to me before I left. I finished my report and went to his room in the railway station master's house. He was alone. To my surprise he began to censure me about the losses I had suffered on the 15th. As he spoke he worked himself up into angry tones. It was impossible to reason with him. He paced up and down the room and spoke in such an extraordinary way that I wondered if he was quite in possession of his senses.

He asked me why I had attacked such a position; why I had tried to cross a ford without having first found it; and why I had not sent a company alone up to B. instead of pouring troops into the loop; why I had sent no orders to the artillery and so forth.

It was useless to tell him I was ordered to force the river; that I was instructed to pin my faith to the Kaffir's guidance; that a Company could not have lived five minutes alone in that loop; that I sent no orders to the artillery because he had given them their first orders; and that I had no need afterwards to send Parsons any order; and could not have sent it if I had wanted to.

His replies were inconsequent and illogical and wild: besides being most unjust to me, who had made my best

effort to carry out his purpose. And the interview ended. Seeing that reasoning was impossible and that argument only made him worse, I said as little as possible.

Why this outburst did not come until five days after the fight, during which time I had seen him daily, I do not know. . . .

On the 22nd, two days after the above interview, I waited on him, as I usually have done daily, or nearly daily, in case he might want to see me. He sent for me to his room and alone told me his intention to send me in command of my brigade and other arms, to a certain important forward position, with certain objects, all of which I will not divulge, for prudential reasons, lest by any chance this letter might get to the enemy and enlighten him. I only mention it to say and show that, as he did not mention the subject of our last interview, and was going to employ me in this way, I might well suppose that the matter had dropped.

Judge of my surprise when, next day, on my going to see him on the subject of my next move, to find him sitting in a gloomy state, alone as before, and to hear from him that he had written a letter asking for me to be deprived of my command, but was not going to send it; he spoke sadly and quietly at first; but he got a little excited as he went on to blame me again for the heavy losses in my attack; and especially when he said everyone was talking about it and the papers were full of it.

I said I saw the papers regularly and that I had neither heard nor read any remarks against me.

*Jan. 2nd.*—He said he did not know what my Colonels thought of it, that he had not asked them.

I said I had heard nothing against myself. He replied, "How could you?" and I answered "It would



be sure to come round to me, my Staff would tell me what was being said."

What I had heard—right and left—but I did not tell Sir Redvers Buller so—was . . . wonderment why, having decided to force the passage of the Tugela, two brigades only made any attack and two took practically no part in the action!

He deplored the loss of life: so do I. I could only say "I am very, very sorry," and he softened then and said—"I know you are, my dear Hart," and he concluded by saying these words viz.:—"I am not going to say anything more about it."

But—what extraordinary behaviour to me! The alternations of trust in me and abuse of me! The successions of storm and calm. The unreasoning outbursts upon me, with intervals of days of confidential use of me! How is such conduct to be read as emanating from a man quite in his senses? In the midst of his anger he gives me a forward command with a force of all arms; not yet come off, so I must not even give you an idea of it or commit any of it to paper: but it suffices to tell you, it is of a most important kind. Is abuse of my troops handling consistent with that?

In consequence of his remark above, about my Commanding Officers, I at once called upon them for a report in writing of their parts in the action. They reached me speedily, and not a word is to be found ascribing, or connoting, defeat or casualties to my transactions.

I have attached those reports to a duplicate of my own report, and sent them in with the Staff diary, which we furnish at the end of each month.

Of course I cannot mention or hint to you what we are going to do next; but I may tell you that, whatever it is, I shall support Sir Redvers Buller with heart and brain to victory, with the best efforts I can make,

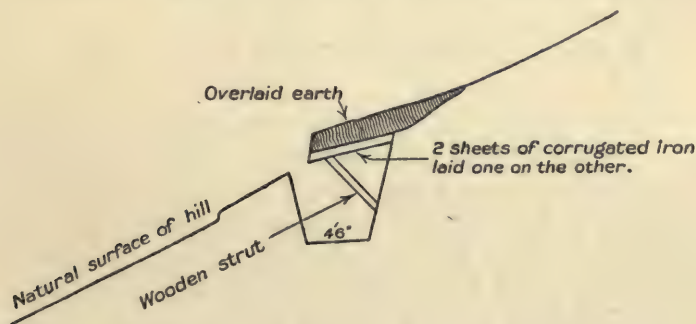
regardless of the outrageous things he has said to me.

Please God, I shall survive it and prove my ability, but if not, I should not like to leave my side of this story untold, and therefore I confide it to you . . . in this letter, and to . . . who will read it before I post it . . . feeling assured you will go on and prosper, until we have united this lovely country, this matchless climate, this wealth of nature into one great South Africa under the British flag, happy and free.—I remain, yours &c.

A. FITZROY HART.

*P.S. 2nd Jan. 1900.*—A Kaffir who was impressed by the Boers to work at their entrenchments which we attacked, escaped to Estcourt where he related his experiences to the 1st Btn. R. Dublin Fusiliers, who reported them to their 2nd Battalion here, under me.

The section of their usual hill-side entrenchment as constructed upon the Kaffir's description is like this.



What a capital section for their trenches! (May the Lord fill them with water from above.)

No wonder we could not see their entrenchments. The Kaffir says the Boers have side escapes and clear

out under artillery fire, re-manning the trenches when our infantry mask our artillery.

Also they stand upright to fire (no doubt resting their rifles on the crest).

A. F. H.

In consequence of some statements made by Sir Redvers Buller to the Royal Commission, published in the *Times* of the 29th August 1903, General Hart-Synnot wrote the following letter :

*To the Editor of the "Times"*

SIR,—I have read to-day in the *Times* of the 29th inst., with reference to the battle of Colenso, that Sir Redvers Buller said to the Royal Commission as follows :

“As the guns were getting into position I noticed that the 5th Brigade were advancing beyond the position that I had allotted to them, and sent at once to stop them. My messenger was delayed by bad ground, and the brigade, continuing to advance, came under fire. Very shortly afterwards they received from me an order by a second messenger to withdraw at once out of range.”

Allow me to say, with full respect due from me to Sir Redvers Buller's military rank, that this statement is incompatible with facts. There was no such position allotted to my brigade, nor was it withdrawn out of range on account of any unauthorised advance.

I was given by Sir Redvers Buller a place of departure, a time to start, a route of advance, and a point of attack. The place of departure was my camp, the time to start 4.30 A.M. The point of attack was marked on a hand sketch-map which he gave me ; it was a ford represented near the elbow of a Tugela loop trending



towards the enemy—that is to say, the loop was salient as to us, re-entering as to the enemy.

For my route I was given, by his Colonial adviser, a Kaffir, who was to lead me to this ford. In reply to my queries, I was emphatically assured that I might pin my faith to this Kaffir, that he lived at the ford, and would take me unerringly to it, and that I should find it fordable.

Sir Redvers Buller's orders, given first verbally by himself, were soon after issued in writing, and are public. The original sketch-map and orders are before me now.

The brigade started, and moved according to those orders. On approaching the position of the map-indicated ford, I was astonished to learn from the Kaffir that there was no ford at all anywhere there, and that the only ford was at the tip of the loop, even as he pointed and averred under searching interrogation. This was the man who was to lead me to the ford by which it was said the Irish Brigade could cross the river that I had received Sir Redvers Buller's unqualified order to force.

At this stage the enemy, quite invisible, opened with shell, which fell short of us. The brigade was accordingly deployed, and advanced in fighting formation into the loop as I directed, heading for the Kaffir's ford.

The enemy's fire encountered in the loop was warm; it was cross-fire from three directions of invisible entrenchments on the farther bank, and bombardment from the hills. There was no cover; still the Irishmen forged slowly and surely ahead in short rushes, lying flat between to send back much lead where they thought lead came from, and always gaining ground.

The leading men had got to 300 yards from the Kaffir's ford when Colonel Stopford rode up to me in the middle

of the loop and said Sir Redvers Buller had sent him to say he could see we could not do it—meaning force the passage of the Tugela—so the brigade was to retire, and Sir Redvers Buller would cover its retreat by artillery fire. This was done. There was no question of having advanced beyond any allotted position, no corrective recall out of range.

Since the war I have learnt, by personal inspection of the ground, that no ford ever existed at the place marked on the sketch-map; and I have been told by my antagonist, General Botha, that the water at the Kaffir's ford at the time was up to a man's armpits at least. The Tugela, therefore, was unfordable by infantry in action that day, and the Kaffir was a delusion.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

FITZROY HART-SYNNOT, *Major-General,*  
*ex-Commander of the 5th (the Irish) Brigade.*

*Ballymoyer White Cross, Co. Armagh,*  
*August 30, 1903.*

The part which General Hart took with his brigade at the operations of the Tugela Heights and Spion Kop is fully described in another letter.

*Spearman's Hollow Camp, near the Tugela, facing Spion Kop*  
*from the south, at three or four miles distance.*  
*1st Feb. 1900.*

MY DEAR —, I arrived in this region on the 27th January with my brigade, after a night march and retirement over the Tugela, having been for seven days and seven nights continually under fire, no tents, and the men without overcoats or blankets; so I need not tell you we got inside our tents again with gratefulness, and not a word was heard that night, nor a sentry's

challenge, for we all slept like dead men, and no one troubled a sentry.

The net result is that we have once more to chronicle a complete defeat. . . .

I fought on the 20th, and took a strong hill position successfully from the Boers at a cost of 365 officers and men.

I advanced next day, and took a further position from them at a cost of only 37; and then I wanted to go on—all my men did too—and finish the job by crowning the heights now but a few hundred yards before me, with pretty easy going in front of me, and all the difficult ground now behind me; but my hands were tied.

I was sent repeatedly positive orders not to advance without orders on any account, but simply to hold my ground. I did so.

Sir Redvers came up to me next day. . . .

I asked him to let me advance. He suggested that I should lose a great many men. I said, "Perhaps so, but I see no reason why." I said I was confident of taking the position, and was sure the Boers were weak in front and bluffing.

Ronald (who has been constantly with me) suggested the bluffing to me. He remarked how ostentatiously they kept on riding along the sky-line, whereas when strong they never showed themselves. Probably fifty men rode fifty times across our view, and made themselves thus do duty for fifty times fifty. . . .

From the 21st to the 26th inclusive I remained in the open, holding that position, and every day the Boer fire grew stronger.

They kept it up day and night. On the 23rd they opened artillery fire upon us for the first time, and fired our own captured shells into us, for we picked up the pieces marked W.D. 15 Pr.

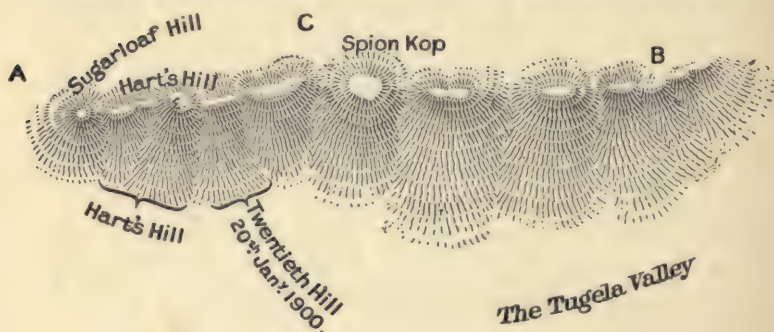
Splendid work was done by our artillery. From



heights behind us they watched me vigilantly, and never let the Boers get off more than three or four shells without silencing them. Then, after an hour or several hours, the Boers would try again, and again our artillery would find them out and drop into them.

On the night of the 24th the attack on Spion Kop was made from the right of our forces (I was the left). My part was to use my judgment in opening fire hard to draw off attention, but on no account was I to move.

Spion Kop is the mountain predominating the range



Scale A to B, five or six miles.

of hills we were seeking to capture. Spion Kop is part of the range.

The range is about six miles long, and Spion Kop about three or four miles away on my right front.

The above is an *idea* of the hills. Spion Kop is, I should say, perhaps a thousand feet above its base, and Hart's Hill about three hundred feet lower.

You will see that the line I took on the 20th, now named "Twentieth Hill," and to the left of it a horseshoe hill, now called "Hart's Hill," which I took on the 21st, and held in person up to the night of the 26th, when I was ordered to evacuate and recross the Tugela.

What was called the "Left Attack" embraced all the

heights from Twentieth Hill to Sugarloaf, the western termination of the range; and I was told to take command of all troops on the heights of the left attack, so that I had a variety, from Hart's Hill to Sugarloaf.

On the morning of the 20th attack I had to send a battalion away to support artillery, and sent the Connaught Rangers, who were nearest the guns, and was told to take under my command the York and Lancasters and the Lancashire Fusiliers (of the 11th Brigade), already on outpost at the foot of Twentieth Hill.

Finding them there, I said I would not deprive them of the privilege of front place, and arranged that they were to attack abreast, followed by my three battalions (remaining to me) in three successive lines.

After the action of the 21st the Lancashire Fusiliers left me, as I had to send a battalion to reinforce what was called the "Right Attack," though no right attack had yet come off, and I sent them as nearest the road that way.

Poor fellows, that circumstance cost them dear, I believe, for I hear they lost heavily in the subsequent attack of Spion Kop.

Thus I had in the horseshoe (Hart's Hill) the Borders, the Dublin Fusiliers, the Inniskilling Fusiliers (less three companies with artillery), and the York and Lancasters; and, taking up the command of the hill, had also under me at Sugarloaf the Devons, East Surrey, West Yorks, and the Queen's; but these four were soon reduced to *two* battalions, regularly relieved by the other two.

I took up my own place with the troops in the horseshoe, and defended the craggy crest.

A precipitous ravine separated me from Sugarloaf, and so I was glad to find I could do all I wanted there by signal, and save my old legs the climbing.

I improved the East Surrey position, and got a *very* useful rough sketch-map from Treeby by request, and very quickly. Indeed, it was by that plan I improved Harris's position, which had been ordered him by somebody else.

I have now pretty well filled in the details of the sketch of events I gave you in the first sheet of the letter. The incidents were many, and hereafter I may tell you many I must pass over now.

The horseshoe was about three hundred yards in diameter, and the ground within sloped rather steeply to the rear, with slippery grass, on which I cut paths for foothold, and small loose stones. The crest was provided with rocks, which we improved.

When the Boer shells struck these rocks, large pieces of rock were flung down the slope, and were greeted with shouts of "Look out!"; so all got out of the way, I think, in time.

On the 24th all the Inniskilling Fusiliers were withdrawn from me, and for a day or two three companies of the Borders, to help on the right attack, so I had three battalions, about, to hold the horseshoe.

Casualties occurred at intervals, but by careful precautions and the great help of our artillery from elsewhere, we managed to keep them down to an average of about ten to fifteen a day.

The young officer<sup>1</sup> who bound up Jervis's<sup>2</sup> arm on the field on the 15th December was killed by a shrapnel, three bullets of it entering his head, when he was far down the rear slope of the horseshoe.

One morning, I hope I caught the Boers napping. Knowing their habits of retiring at night and their wagons behind the hills, I began at daylight with a tre-

<sup>1</sup> 2nd Lieut. Garvey, Border Regt.

<sup>2</sup> A.D.C. to Major-General Hart.



mendous fire, with side-sights at 2800, and aim over the crest in front. Those bullets would drop on an area of from about one and a half to three miles from us. I kept it up for over an hour, and I hope it rained bullets upon many an unsuspecting, unprotected bivouac. Anyhow, the Boers kept comparatively quiet all the rest of that day. They admit to have lost severely in front of the position, and my Natal guide tells me he expects we shall hear hereafter that this fire was felt keenly.

Now I must tell you how we came to be fighting on those hills.

Sir Charles Warren was in command, and ordered by Sir Redvers to go for Ladysmith via Acton Holmes, *i.e.* turning the Sugarloaf end of the range while he (Buller) attacked at Potgeiters.

We were not far on our way when Warren called a council of war. I have never had anything before to do with such an institution, and hope I may not again. . . .

The night attack was stated in Field Army Orders to be under the command of General Coke. I don't know details of what occurred there. I only know that Spion Kop was assaulted and taken and evacuated with much loss, and that the day after I was ordered confidentially to retire from the hill at 10 P.M. on the 26th.

I set to work with all available men, and marked only two routes back from the horseshoe (now called Hart's Hill), one on each of its spurs, picked out the loose stones, improved bad places, piled boundary marks of stones on one or both sides of the roads, and especially biscuit tins; and these biscuit tins proved extremely efficacious, for the roads had to bend about, the night was very dark, the guiding officers on foot found it sometimes difficult to see the track and stone boundaries, but could always see a biscuit tin, even on horseback.

I gave written orders for the retirement from Sugar-

loaf, and at 10 P.M. two of my three horseshoe battalions began to move down.

The York and Lancasters, who happened to be on duty in front that night, held the firing line, when suddenly, about 10.5 P.M., a tremendous Boer infantry fire burst out, but none of their bullets came our way; they appeared to be engaged on our right front.

It was raining steadily, and there was much fog; so I had already fixed bayonets, and given orders that not a yard of ground was to be given up till I gave orders. I said I would make a proper military retirement in due time, but would have no skedaddle.

The York and Lancasters all stood quietly to their arms, ready to reinforce the firing line, and I called back half the Border Regiment.

We fired obliquely at the flashes of the Boer rifles, and in about half an hour all was silent again, cold and wet.

The men, having no overcoats or waterproofs or blankets, were drenched and shivering, as we put out all our fires as soon as what seemed to be a night attack upon us commenced. I shook from head to foot with cold.

Retirement then proceeded; and when I got the preconcerted signal that the two battalions were massed at the foot of the hill, I sent down half the York and Lancasters, and at an interval followed them with the remaining four companies, with which the colonel and I moved; and thus we completely evacuated the position.

Next, we recrossed the Tugela by the R.E. pontoon bridge, finishing by daybreak.

Brigades, &c., were reformed; and here we are, preparing with the rest of the forces for the next adventure!

. . . . .

So much for my history. Now let me turn to yours

and tell you how delighted I have been with your last two letters, containing in the former the account of your successful attack on the Boers and capture of their men and horses; the latter the account of your raid round to their rear, and the amusing account of the scene amidst their ladies and children. It was refreshing in our reverses to hear of such success with you. I assure you that I cannot describe the interest and enjoyment with which I read those letters, and I congratulate you with all my heart. . . .

I enclose several letters for you that have been sent to me, and received since I recrossed the Tugela. What a lot I have had to do with this river!

In 1878-9 I was encamped at its mouth on the sea-coast, crossed there to go to Echowe, returned there, and waited there for months to relieve Echowe.

Then in 1879 I went with a column to the "Middle Drift" of the Tugela, in getting submission of the Zulu chiefs about there.

In 1881 I went to that most wonderful place in the Drakensburg Mountains, the source of the Tugela, accompanied by one native only—a place very few men have ever reached and many have tried to reach. And in 1900 here I am again, busy with the Tugela.

Wishing you God-speed, I remain, yours, &c.,

A. FITZROY HART.

*P.S.*—Let me just mention that the other day here Sir Redvers assembled the troops, and naming me and the troops under me, said he was unable to find words to fully express the satisfaction he felt at what we had done in the seven days' and nights' fighting, and so forth. Thus he has given me in the course of a few weeks a full measure of blame and a full measure of praise. . . .



He then read us the Queen's kindly telegram to him, and the troops gave her Majesty three cheers most vigorously.

A. F. H.

When, on the 28th of February, the long siege of Ladysmith was at length raised, Hart moved to the Orange River Colony with a column, to assist at the relief of Wepener. Subsequently, in the operations which followed, he commanded various columns of all arms, including the "Potchefstroom Column" of some fame.

At the end of the war he received the C.M.G., the Queen's medal with five clasps, and the King's medal with two clasps.

## CHAPTER XV

1902 TO 1910

IN 1902 General Hart's wife inherited from her brother the estate of Ballymoyer in County Armagh, and he then assumed by royal licence the additional name and arms quarterly of Synnot.

He returned home from South Africa on half-pay in 1902, accompanied by his younger son, who had acted as his A.D.C. since Captain Jervis had been wounded at Colenso.

In 1904 General Hart was compulsorily retired for age. If he was disappointed at not being re-employed, he made no complaint, but philosophically accepted the reward meted out to him for thirty-eight years of strenuous service. Indeed, he thoroughly appreciated the idea of his first long holiday. He says :

“The delights of country pursuits, the emancipation of my time from military control, a stock of good health and a scarcity of sorrows are four excellent things ; in short, they are four by honours in the new deal which follows my expulsion from the army. I call it expulsion, because I call a spade a spade. . . .

“My style of fighting was condemned above . . . but my style of fighting was not condemned below. My reward, and it is the greatest of rewards a general can gain, is that I acquired the trust and, I have reason to think, the attachment of all who served under me in battle. Nobody can deprive me of that ! And the Japanese are proving me right. . . .

“It delights me to see my principle of war being so admirably exercised by the Japanese. The principle that

if you want to win a battle you must *go on*. It is a simple rule that no consideration must stop you going on. . . . Kuroki, when he heard of his men's great repulse in their grand attack, sent this message: 'Reinforce and attack again before daylight.'

At Ballymoyer Hart-Synnot found plenty of scope for his vigorous nature. He was up at seven o'clock every morning, summer and winter, busy with axe or spade; not only directing his men, but working as hard as any one of them. Time had but little impaired the energy of his youth.

In 1910, though apparently in his usual health and spirits, a slight accident made it necessary for him to consult his physicians, who advised a small operation. This was done successfully on the 25th of April, and for some days all went well; but on the 28th unforeseen complications of an alarming nature arose, and on the evening of the 29th he died from the effects of the operation, in the presence of his younger son and elder daughter.

On his return from the South African war his tenants met him joyfully and drew his carriage home. Eight years later they came again *en masse* to meet him—this time to pay their last respects by following the gun-carriage which, escorted by deputations from the regiments which had formed the "Irish Brigade" in the South African war, bore his remains to their last resting-place.

Thus, on the 4th May 1910, in a grave lined with primroses, which the school-children had picked, he was laid to rest at Ballymoyer on his sixty-sixth birthday.



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