

Scenes from the Battlefield.

With its usual enterprise Scribner's Magazine has a correspondent in South Africa and his letters are most interesting. Extracts from them give another view of the great struggle that is going on there. Among other things he writes:

Why Lord Methuen started from Orange River with so small a force of cavalry over a country which is peculiarly adapted to cavalry tactics, it is difficult to say. The Ninth Lancers were fairly worn out with scouting duty before they left the camp at Orange River, and were not fit to do more than the ordinary routine of divisional cavalry. There was a fairly large force of mounted infantry, but to say that they were irregular is putting it mildly, and many of them had to be left to do patrol work en route.

Possibly the meagre accounts of the enemy's force between the Orange River and the Modder strengthened the general in his determination to move immediately without waiting for the luxuries of cavalry and horse artillery. More probably still the composition of the flying column was due to the personal character of Lord Methuen, who is a hard-fighting man of what is called in America the "got-there" type, a leader who is not apt to spare his men if the end can be seen to justify the means. It may be, too, that he started with a little of the British inclination to underestimate the enemy; at least it is certain that he had not calculated upon their extraordinary mobility. He had been told that the enemy could not stand cold steel, which is doubtless true; he argued, therefore, that the bayonet was the best weapon for attack. Only one engagement was needed to show him that to order a bayonet charge is one thing, to carry it out against the Boer is another and totally different matter. It may sound like prophesying after the event to say here and now, after the march to Modder River that Methuen's division should never have started with so small a force of cavalry. But as a matter of fact the deficiency was much commented upon before the column ever left Orange River, and doubtless the general himself was most conscious of it.

Photographing a Fight.

Many people have had ideas of photographing a battle. A photograph of this battle would reveal nothing but a bare stretch of veldt with a line of willows and poplars in the background. Not a Boer could be seen, and even our own men were almost invisible as they lay there in sand-colored khaki, keeping a liberal five paces apart—only here and there where a slight undulation gave a precarious cover could one see the khaki backs clustered together like a swarm of locusts on the plain.

Personally, having been fortunate enough to find a small ant-hill for my head protection, I endeavored to take a few snapshots with a kodak, not because there was anything to take but in order to give some idea of the bare aspect of a modern battle-field, but I am free to confess that to let go the shutter and still keep one's head behind an ant-heap proved so difficult an operation that it was a pure matter of chance whether I photographed the veldt or the sky. The incessant whistle of bullets is not good for photography, though curiously enough, it encourages sleep. Many men dozed off that morning under the rays of a particularly insistent sun, only to be awakened by the bursting of a big shell or the repeated reports of a most disagreeable quick-firing gun employed by the enemy with equal impartiality against our firing-line and our hospital wagons. All the morning the one cheering note was the incessant reports of our own field pieces and naval guns. Early in the day the two field batteries had moved round from our extreme right and came up in the centre just a little to the east of the railway and did most magnificent work.

The Boer Mansers.

Anyone who walked upright within two miles of the river was a target for the Boer marksmen, whose Manser rifles seemed to have an enormous range. Some idea, perhaps, of this range may be gathered from the fact that in walking directly back from our rear line one had to traverse a mile and a half of veldt before the bullets ceased to throw up the dust in his neighborhood. It was obviously impossible to get stretchers up to the wounded

in the firing-line during the hours of daylight, though the men of the army Medical corps did everything in their power for the wounded who could be recovered. It was simply suicide to walk about for long behind our lines, for the Boers, during the whole day, never lost an opportunity of aiming at anyone who even got up and took a sitting position. From two to three the firing again slackened, and during the rest of the day the Boers, behind their trenches, only shot at definite marks, as if they, too, were afraid of their ammunition going short. About 3.45, one of their big guns opened again, just to the west of the railway, trying to reach our naval guns. The shots were quite harmless, for the Boers were using black powder and the white puff of smoke could be seen long before the shell came, giving anyone who was in the line of fire plenty of time to escape. Moreover, the smoke made a splendid target, so that our field-pieces got the range at once and very soon put the Boer gun out of action. Then they started on the east of the railway with a gun posted between the river and the station; but that, too, was very soon quieted by our shrapnel.

All day long the Boers had used very little shrapnel, having but small quantities of that commodity, so that their shell fire was not nearly so destructive as it might have been. I doubt if they had more than six, or, at the outside, eight, big guns; but they were managed by the German Albrecht, who kept his men splendidly in hand. Using common shell, they only fired when they had a definite target, and their marksmanship was admirable.

AS SEEN FROM THE RANKS.

Member of the Inniskilling Regiment
Writes of Buller's Defeat at Colenso.

A letter received a few days ago by a New Yorker from a cousin in the Inniskilling Regiment in South Africa describes, without giving the name, Gen. Buller's first attempt to cross the Tugela. The letter is dated Frere Camp, Jan. 1, and is in part as follows:

"Our brigade, consisting of the Connaught Rangers, Dublin Fusiliers, the Border Regiment, and ourselves was on the left flank and centre. Our regiment was on the extreme left, and we were marched to within a thousand yards of the Boer position, in column, before a Long Tom let fly a shell at us. We were ordered to lie down, and, after a bit, the word to extend was given. My company was on the left of the lot, and I think we must have doubled at least a mile before we got extended and lay down, the shells and shrapnel hurrying us up.

"We lay on the side of a hill, right opposite the Boer position, without any kind of shelter, at a distance of between 800 and 900 yards. I raised myself on my elbows and watched the duel which began between our artillery and the enemy's some of the shells passing over my head, but most to the centre and right flank. It was a grand sight, the guns flashing all kinds of colors; and high columns of white smoke rose every place the lyddite shells burst from our naval guns. The roar of the big guns and the continual rattle of the Maxim and Nordfeldts, &c., were tremendous. I could see perfectly where our shells burst, as there was hardly any

smoke except from the Boer guns, on each side of which the shells landed without putting them out of action.

"I had come to the conclusion that the main body of the enemy was on the other side of the hills, as I had not seen one of them, except a squadron of horse who galloped toward the fort from the river, after the first shell was fired, and narrowly escaped our shells. I was waiting till our guns had silenced the Long Tom and we could get our pontoons fixed and cross the river, when I heard a rattle of musketry right in front of me, and the bullets began to whiz over my head. I looked in front and right and left, but could see no enemy, and, not knowing that the Boers had trenches at the base of the hill, I was puzzled and thought the fire came from the top of the hills opposite. There was nothing to do but lie as flat as we could, but, after a bit, an officer gave the order to fire at a plantation on the left, where he imagined the enemy were hidden. We blazed away for some time at random, but soon gave it up as waste of ammunition, and lay down again, several fellows getting hit while firing. The sun was blazing hot, and scorched me through the khaki, and between that and the bullets buzzing by ears I felt very uncomfortable, and longed for the word to advance, retreat, or anything but lie like a dummy target for an unseen marksman, expecting a bullet through the head every second. At about 2 o'clock we got the order from the general to retreat, having been under fire since 5.30 that morning. We had to retire half a mile to get to the top of the hill, and I felt so stiff and weak from lying so long in the sun that I could not double any distance, and had to walk the best part of the way.

"The firing was bad enough before, but it was simply child's play to the fusillade that opened on us as we retired—Long Tom, howitzers, and machine guns, all joining in, and the bullets fairly hopped around us. We had nearly two hundred rounds of ammunition in our pouches, behind, which impeded our progress greatly. The latter were uncovered and shone in the sun like heliographs, and make a grand mark for the Boers, several fellows getting shot through them. I made for a Kaffir kraal near the top of the hill, and lay down for a breather behind some prickly pears that inclosed it. I then got behind the kraal with a crowd of others, but a few shells burst close to us, and scattered us again. I looked back several times to see if the enemy were following us, in hopes that I might get a shot at them, as I felt mad at being peppered at so long without retaliating; but they kept well in the trenches, and their rifle carry four miles. After I got over the hills and out of their sight I felt comparatively safe, though the shells followed us nearly back to camp, and did a lot of damage, especially to our baggage wagons and artillery. Eleven of the guns having to be spiked and abandoned to the enemy, over fifty of the gunners being captured. The enemy had to abandon them, too, as our naval guns soon dispersed them; so they lay between the two of us till the artillery got some of them back that night.

"I got down into a gully by the river, with what were left of my section, and we filled our water bottles and had a drink, and then lit our pipes and had a good smoke and rest, a shell screaming by us occasionally. We picked up with our company by degrees, and formed up under Major Saunders, who told us that the right flank had taken Colenso Bridge while we were drawing the fire; but, if they did so, they lost it again that night. Our losses altogether were about nine hundred killed and wounded, one hundred of whom were of our regiment, the Dublins over two hundred and fifty, and the Connaughts heavily, too.

"The troops were disgusted and mad at having been led into such a trap, and no wonder. The Dublins actually tried to swim the river near the centre of the list, but a lot got drowned, the Boers having put barbed wire down the middle of it. The naval brigades were the only braves who did any execution; and their lyddite shells killed a great number in the trenches. The Boers sent in a flag of truce in the evening, asking for an armistice for twenty-four hours, to bury their dead. A Father Matthews, an army chaplain, who had fallen into their hands with the Glosters, was released and came with them; and he told our O. O. that the Boers must have lost between two and three thousand, and that the trenches were filled with dead and wounded. The Boers themselves own up to thirty casualties, but our papers have put it down as 800, which, I dare say, is nearer the mark.

"I cannot make out the General's idea in bringing a large force of infantry into such a position, where they were practically useless; and exposing them to fire for nothing. We could not possibly charge the trenches

as the Tugela River is very wide and deep, and the pontoons could not be fixed on account of the heavy fire from the guns. The only theory I can form is that he thought the enemy had evacuated the position, as our naval guns had been shelling them the whole day before we advanced, without any reply from their guns; and they say that our native guide told us, and swore that the enemy had retired. Anyway, he made a bolt after the first shot was fired at us, and was promptly shot by one of the General's staff."

THE BOER CAPITAL.

Defences the Boers Have Raised at Bloemfontein and Pretoria.

Pretoria is the objective point which Gen. Lord Roberts has in view. Bloemfontein is on his direct route to the Transvaal capital and is also an important prize which he hopes to seize on his journey. It remains to be seen how effectively the Boers will contest his efforts to capture these cities.

Bloemfontein stands all exposed on the high plain or veldt with no natural barrier to the west between it and the advancing British forces. The surrounding country is dry and unfertile. Stones thickly strew the plain outside the town and clumps of grass and low brush somewhat relieve the monotony of the almost level plain. In the town are many trees that partly hide from view most of the low, white buildings forming the larger part of the city. The official residence of the President is a fine building, but it is only two stories in height with room enough above, under its hip roof, for an expansive attic. No gunner outside the town can make it his special target. The capital, on the contrary, has an imposing tower and this building, with two or three schools and other structures similarly adorned, are the only edifices that attract attention as the city is approached from the direction whence the British forces are coming.

A little stream, at times almost waterless, flows through the city on its way to the Modder River. The streets are laid out with much regularity and the town covers quite a large area considering that its population is less than 4,000.

Though the town is naturally wide open on the side which the British are approaching, it is overlooked on the east and north-east by a long ridge 200 or 300 feet above the level of the plain. This ridge is one to one and a half miles from the outskirts of the city; and a little beyond the northern end of the ridge rises a kopje, a little lower in altitude. From these points of vantage the only good view of the town may be obtained; and on these elevations were reared the fortifications which the burghers of the Free State constructed, long ago, during the period of their serious differences with the British Government.

We have only recently heard that the Boers have built an elaborate system of earthworks for the defence of their town, but very little information on this matter has come to hand. There is every reason to suppose that the old fortifications on the ridge and the kopje have been placed in the most effective condition possible. If the Boers of the Free State intend to make a hard struggle to keep their capital the guns on the ridge may be used most advantageously to keep the British from closely approaching the town; but with guns of equal range the British may easily throw shells into the town and be out of reach of the cannon on the ridge behind it. In brief, the line of defence around Bloemfontein must be mainly a system of earthworks such as those that kept the Boers out of Kimberley during a siege of nearly four months.

The conditions are very different at Pretoria. Nature and science have made the capital of the Transvaal a very strongly fortified town. Unless the Boers have had enough war by the time the British come within view of the hills around Pretoria, there is little doubt of their ability to make a stubborn last stand at the capital. The hills that hem in Pretoria on all sides are crowned with seven forts of much strength all built under the expert advice and direction of European military engineers. Two of these forts were completed between 1894 and 1896 and five of them have been built since the Jameson raid. They command every approach to the city. It may perhaps be unfortunate for the Boers if the British are acquainted with all the details of these forts and it is said that complete plans of them were in the possession of the British war office before the war began. There was a great deal of mystery about the work, but according to British authority two English engineering officers worked as navvies in order to get an opportunity thoroughly to acquaint themselves with the construction and plan of the forts; and information was also obtained from other sources. However this may be, the British have no doubt that the forts were elaborately and strongly constructed. They are alike in their chief ex-

ternal features. They were built of masonry with casemates on the outer faces and their armament included much heavy ordnance and all the fifteen centimetre Cresset and rapid-fire guns that the Boers desired to place in position. The London Daily Mail, in some recent appreciative remarks on these fortifications said:

The forts are certainly elaborately furnished with all the requirements of modern warfare. Piles of sandbags are stacked up to the level of the encircling walls. A powerful searchlight in each fort is capable of sweeping the surrounding country for many miles. Telephones are laid between the forts and the Government buildings in Pretoria. There are large stocks of mules (maize) ready for the eventuality of a siege. There is said to be communication by means of underground passages between the forts and the ammunition stores and magazines. Lastly, it is presumed that the approaches to the forts are mined in various directions.

Events will show whether the forts were despoiled of their armaments to meet the needs of the Boer cause in their investment of Ladysmith, Kimberly and Mafeking. For all that is known to the contrary every gun that was mounted around Pretoria is still in position, and there is no reason to doubt that this beautiful little city among the hills is prepared to stand a prolonged siege.

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Mr. G. W. Parks, once near the dark grave, but rescued and saved by Paine's Celery Compound after failure of his doctors, sends the following letter:

"While at sea I was taken sick, which compelled me to abandon my work and seek home and rest. I consulted the doctors who pronounced it typhoid or slow fever. I suffered severely from night sweats, and cold chills during the day. Added to this I was extremely nervous, which weakened me and reduced my flesh until I was a mere skeleton. This continued until last winter, when my wife and friends began to despair of my recovery, as the medicines I took produced no good, and I was gradually growing worse."

"Through the influence of the Rev. C. M. Tyler, I was induced to give Paine's Celery Compound a trial, and I can truly say it worked wonders. The first bottle gave me great relief, and five bottles completely cured me. I gained thirty-two pounds in three weeks, and am now strong and healthy. I would urge the suffering everywhere to give Paine's Celery Compound a trial."

The Problem of Polygamy.

"I'm sorry for Mr. Roberts of Utah," said Mr. Meekton thoughtfully.

"The idea!" exclaimed his wife.

"I can't help it. The thought of that man having to go back to all those homes and break the news to all those wives, who were expecting to be in Washington society this winter—it's positively tragic!"

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