

A week later the little detachment entered the valley in which the Afridi villages lay. The work had been fatiguing, for the country was very rough, and the mules that carried the guns met with such difficulties that the infantry had to turn to and improve the paths, if paths they could be called, for they were often little better than undefined tracks. As the expedition moved up the valley the tribesmen opened on them a distant fire, but scattered after a few shells from the mountain-guns were thrown among them. The fortified houses, however, were stubbornly held, and indeed were only carried after the guns had broken in the doors or made a breach in the walls. During the attack on the last house a shot struck Captain Bullen in the chest and he instantly fell. When they saw this the Pioneers dashed forward with a howl of rage, carried the fort and bayoneted its defenders. The doctor of the party at once examined the wound and saw that it would probably be fatal.

"Patch me up, Lloyd, so that I may get back to camp and see my boy again," the wounded man whispered.

"I will do my best," the doctor said, "but I doubt whether you will be able to stand the journey."

The Pioneers, after setting fire to all the houses in the valley, started at once for home. Captain Bullen was placed on a stretcher and four men at a time carried him down, taking the utmost pains not to jolt or shake him. His face was covered with light boughs to keep off the flies, and everything that was possible was done to conduce to his comfort. The doctor watched him anxiously. His condition became more serious every day. As they neared the camp a messenger was sent down with a report from the native officer of what had happened, and the Pioneers all came out to see their favourite officer brought in, and stood mournful and silent as he was carried to his bungalow.