

THE SEMI-WEEKLY TELEGRAPH, ST. JOHN N. B., MARCH 2, 1901.

# WHEN LOYAL CANADIAN BLOOD WAS SHED FOR THE EMPIRE.

**Frederick Hamilton's Description of the Big Paardeberg Fight, Praising the Men From the Maritime Provinces.**



**GENERAL CRONJE,**  
Whose surrender was due much to the Canadians.

Wednesday was the first anniversary of the memorable battle of Paardeberg when Cronje, the "Lion of South Africa," was compelled to surrender and Majuba Hill was avenged largely through the gallantry of Canadian soldiers.

Although there will be no general observance of the occasion the devotion, heroism, dash and sacrifice of the volunteers in the triumph will live long in the memory of the country.

When the Canadian people awoke on the morning after the battle they were thrilled by the news of the achievement, but scarcely could they realize that their countrymen had taken so prominent a part in the war.

News details and only a partial list of the casualties came at first, but as the days advanced news came that the Canadians were foremost in the advance on the larger, the death trap in which Cronje had been crouching for days.

The first list of the casualties received in Canada was early on the morning of March 2, three days after the battle. This list was furnished by Frederick Hamilton, of the Toronto Globe, the correspondent who gave the two companies from the eastern provinces chief credit for forcing the surrender. In these two companies the casualties numbered six killed and 29 wounded.

**Killed.**  
F. W. Withers, St. John.  
J. M. Johnson, St. John.  
W. A. Riggs, Charlottetown.  
J. B. Scott, Moncton.  
J. Smevan, Halifax.  
G. Orman, Halifax.

**Wounded.**  
James Quinn, Fredericton.  
H. Leavitz, Fredericton.  
A. Simpson, St. John.  
F. W. Coombs, St. John.  
J. A. Harris, 82nd Battalion.  
H. E. Dunsmuir, Moncton.  
Ambrose Peckey, St. John.  
W. W. Donohue, St. John.  
F. W. Spangue, St. John.  
N. C. Bruce, Charlottetown.  
C. Hancock, Halifax.  
W. Downey, St. John.  
A. Parker, Halifax.  
Wm. Unkuf, St. John.  
O. Matheson, Newcastle.  
H. Gifford, Newcastle.  
H. Fradsham, Fredericton.  
F. W. Utton, Fredericton.

the defenders had some sort of outlying picket which reported our forward movement. It is understood that the order was passed to reserve their fire until our men were right upon them. The order, if such was issued, was obeyed almost to the letter. On the right G company was within 30 yards of the trenches. On the left C company was perhaps 80 yards away. The sinuous line was at distances from the trench varying between the two. The pick-and-shovel men were some eight or ten yards behind. Then the fire came. First one shot, then three, then the blast. It started opposite our right and travelled down the line like a fene-join. Volleys came, or rather one concentrated flame of magazine fire. Five shots the Mauser magazine holds, and after the first concentrated blast followed whilst the clips were being driven down into the magazines. Then it started afresh and continued unceasingly. The single-fire Martins went cracking on without a pause. It was an overpowering fire that came pelting upon our men.

We who were with those in the advanced trench knew first what happened upon the left. In a sense it may be said that the storm of fire beat back our attack. The scattered shot or two gave a merciful warning and our line went flat upon their faces. The first volley passed whistling and snapping overhead. Then the fire came lower and our men began to roll over as the bullets crashed home. The rear rank men flung themselves feebly upon their knees—the first stroke with the foot on the spade, the next on the knees, the rest lying down and appealing in deadly earnest. The advance was merely driven upon themselves, and that their line, thin at the start, now rent and scattered, was powerless against the dislodged trenchers. Fire from us disclosed our position, and our men largely ceased to fire. The Boers fired incessantly. By their flashes our men occasionally caught glimpses of the defenders' rifles resting on their low parapet, heads ducked low behind, only two hands up, working rifle bolt and trigger. Our fire was dominated here.

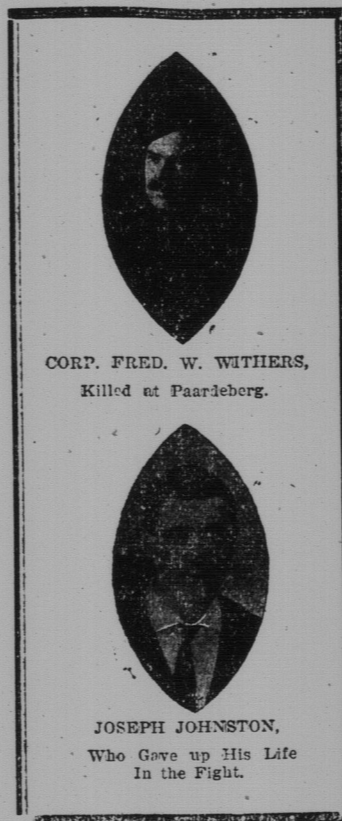
**The Word Retire.**

Then the word came to retire. Whence came it? No one knew. It was heard about the centre, and travelled down to our left. It was the only order which was heard by most of the men after leaving the trench. Col. Buchan, at the right flank of D, strove unsuccessfully to correct it, and finally found himself in a position to give the word. He did so authoritatively, and the men obeyed in twos and threes. It was not a fight. Our men backed away, kept low, threw up little clouds of dust. In the distance could be seen the trees in many cases the retreat was made at top speed. The wounded were carried back, and some could be seen tumbling and reeled, heedless of whether they belonged to the same company or not as their assistants. The officers were the last to quit the field, one, Lieut.-Col. Pelletier, had to be helped in, with a bullet wound in the fleshy part of the left arm.

Wild confusion reigned in those few minutes. The dawn had not yet broken, and as the line turned and made for the friendly trench the men lost sense of direction. Some sort of divergence seems to have taken place. A very large proportion of those on our left severed still more outwardly from the river in the retreat, and entered the trench on the extreme left, where it was lined by the Gordons. A number of our men, as a matter of fact, suffered from bayonet wounds, as the Gordons had their rifles, with bayonets fixed, leaning against the parapets, ready to impale those who came sliding into the ditch. Another stream of men came around by our right, found the river bank, and made their way back to safety through them. All this while the Boer fire flamed away, and the plain was alive with danger. For perhaps a quarter of an hour the fight went on, and then silence fell, broken by an occasional shot as the Boers saw some movement among our men or along our trenches; heeded, too, by some shooting on our right, the meaning of which we did not understand. Then, when all was over, the Slroppers vollied furiously.

**Looked Like Failure.**

To us in the trench it seemed like failure. A burst of firing, the air over us alive with the bullet. A wait; then a few men tumbling over the trench, crying that the regiment had fallen into a trap and half of its men were shot down. Such



cries, such impressions, will always fly when the word was passed once more. From that time on till the moment of fighting the advance was in perfect order.

Time had passed while this stealthy advance was being made. The start was made at 2.30 o'clock. The advance was nothing but rapid, the halt took time. And so it was close to 3 o'clock when the crash of fire came.

**Did the Boers Know?**

Perhaps the Boers knew about the advance. Our people are almost superstitious about Boer information, and often surmise that they know about our movements when their only reason is past success of Kruger's intelligence department. In this case it seems probable that about in the remotest parts of a battlefield, and we credited it not, though it chilled our hearts. Then the steady flow of retreating men came in, bearing their wounds; one poor fellow was dead when brought in. Surgeon-Major Wilson and Surgeon-Captain Fiset flew at their work with admirable celerity and coolness, and in a very short time had all wounds dressed and the men sent on their painful journey back to the collecting station, and thence across the river to the New South Wales hospital.

So much for the republic; that was all we in the trenches knew of the affair, except for a certain dim knowledge that some portion of the new trench was still being held, a piece of information to which, absorbed in our losses, we paid scanty attention. But it meant every thing.

company had heard the order to retire and had obeyed it; Lieut. Kaye, having aided a badly wounded man on the way, and in the confusion fetched up on the extreme left of our original advanced trench. Lieut. Jones was with his half company and managed to bring in two of the wounded. When the lull in the firing occurred a number of G Co. men edged by degrees to the right and found shelter in the dongas. Captain Stairs, with a moiety of his company, was there already; his men had, of course, participated in the ebb and flow of men which took place in the darkness. From this position a steady fire was kept up, thus covering the digging party, some 30 or 40 yards in rear. This kept up for about half an hour. Then Lieut. Macdonell gradually retired to the new trench, which now was in a remarkable forward state. Soon after Lieut. Jones, with a good number of G Co., who had been nearer the Boer trenches keeping up the fire, joined him. H Co. maintained its position on the right flank for some time and then came into the trench in turn. From that time the trench went on, G Co. digging, H Co. firing to cover the work. Daybreak found the trench well advanced.

The work had been bloody enough, G had left four dead men in a row just in front of the Boer trenches. It had another slightly in the rear and two were dying in the trench in rear. It had two wounded men, one, Wardell, with a mortal hurt. It also had all their wounded in four corporals were hurt, three unto death. C had lost Page, and old Governor General's Body Guard man, a stretcher-bearer, one of those who stuck to Captain Arnold's side, his name has been specially mentioned in Col. Otter's despatches for devoted courage. Another was badly hurt, seven others were slightly wounded, several who were scratched not reporting their hurts. If G Co., as already noted, had come off scot free.

Daylight comes in these winter months; perhaps about 5 o'clock. It brought a new scene. It was a panorama of the eastern Canadians—a Boer surrender.

**LIEUT. C. W. McLEAN.**

The Young St. John Officer Recalls Memorable Incidents of the Day.

You ask me to relate in remembrance the most striking incident of the memorable 27th of February. This would be a most difficult task. There was a panorama of striking incidents. It is scarcely necessary to recall the noble behavior of the men on the night of the 26th or the morning of the 27th. I think the first volley from the Boer trenches, which came like a flash of lightning, illuminating the field for an instant, and the scene after daylight over, sooty, waxy, and frequently splashed with struggling growths of soddy-looking green grass; while over all arches a sky of the most intense deep liquid blue, flecked with clusters of clouds that resemble giant puffs of steam, which have failed to disperse.

About midway through the valley winds a narrow line of underwood trees and thorny bushes, that threads the valley in a series of enormous curves as far as the eye can see. This marks the course of the Modder River, and constitutes the general appearance of the now historic Paardeberg region.

The struggle of the 18th of February, 1900, had been fought—Kilburn's frontal attack, and the wild assault of Smith-Dorrien's brigade against Cronje's long lines of the Modder River, and completely the general appearance of the now historic Paardeberg region.

Unable to retreat farther, headed off at this point by Kruyer's cavalry, and now surrounded by a cordon of machine guns, and a steadily contracting circle of trenches, with the outer wall, on all sides of his position, a huge camp of many regiments, Cronje's army of over 4,000 men, was making his last light, with the option of unconditional surrender or destruction.

From the British observation balloon, which hung like a gigantic brown bubble in the sky directly over the Boer laager, but moored high enough to be beyond the reach of hostile shots, was scanned down their every movement to the sweating, dusty gunners and from the circle of elevated gunners the slanting streaks of fire shot converging together formed a maelstrom of death in the deep river bed of the Modder.

Sometimes a crouching, cautely figure could be seen darting between the bushes and rocks and with desperate audacity attempt to answer with his Mauser to the crashing roar of the belt of artillery; and somewhere among the trees could be heard the monotonous talking of their pompoms as they strove to reply. The days were long, and finally a white flag fluttered upon the bank of the bank, and a Boer, climbing over, advanced on one, slowly waving it. He was ragged, bearded and gaunt. He was met by Lord Kilburn with an interpreter. "Commandant Cronje would surrender," announced the envoy, "but wants conditions."

Agree the days of death and nights of unceasing vigilance recommenced. The trek cattle of the Boers, killed by the bombardment, were flung into the river which, swollen by heavy rains, bore them swiftly along until, becoming stranded on shallow bars or the shore, they lay in groups, gradually festering. The Boers' Majuba day was approaching and Lord Roberts, in the expectation that the Boers might attempt to break through or receive assistance from Doubet on this important day of Boerdom, redoubled his precautions. Cavalry scoured the country for miles about, companies of infantry pa-

Telegraph Staff Member Who Was in the Firing Line Writes of That Gallant Dash Upon the Boer Trenches.



**WILLIAM J. RAYMOND,**  
One of G Company, now of The Telegraph staff.

To the Boer the name Paardeberg means Hone Mountain. At least that is what it meant to him before February 27th, 1900; but it is open to conjecture as to just what significance the name has had to him since.

A beechy, breezy valley, not many miles in width, nor in length, bordered here and there on either side with low lying ridges of boulder-strewn land, or towering soddy "koppies," and each end fading away and broadening out into a steady brown stretch of veld that ceases up occasionally into sharp, craggy peaks, or clear level summits, the land is crisp, parched, and of a somber, sunburned, sallow, brownish hue, dotted with an 2.30; sandy, sooty, waxy, and frequently splashed with struggling growths of soddy-looking green grass; while over all arches a sky of the most intense deep liquid blue, flecked with clusters of clouds that resemble giant puffs of steam, which have failed to disperse.

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trooled the summits of the neighboring koppies, while the remorseless lines of rifle and fire were drawn all the tighter around Cronje's command.

Included in the 18th Brigade of General Smith-Dorrien and under the personal command of Colonel Otter, the Royal Canadian Regiment was ordered in from a range of koppies, which they had been occupying, and took up a position in a British trench that faced a system of Boer trenches which were dug parallel with and leading out from the river. Between the two positions lay a level stretch of veld that, apart from a few clumps of bush and a dead bullock, was devoid of cover.

This was at dusk on the evening of the 26th of February.

The regiment knew its orders and felt prepared for the accomplishment. The trenches ahead were filled with dogged, desperate, watchful men, whose vision was constantly roving over the ground before them and the undulating line of loose soil that told the position held by their foes.

The brief African twilight fell and gave place to the gloom of starlight. The hours passed, and it seemed that the row of silent, blanketed figures which lay along the trench were sleeping.

The motions, alert sentries posted at intervals in the trench, anxiously awaited the beginning of the movement. Midnight came, two more hours passed, and with their ending the resting forms were suddenly awakened. Two long lines immediately formed up, the front with rifle magazines charged and the men staring a few paces apart; the rear with bayonets in the sheath, rifle slung on the back; one man carrying a pick and his neighbor a spade, and standing the same distance apart. A few moments of hurried bustle, and a whispered caution—and both lines clambered over the earthworks, each member with a hand outstretched, reaching the steepest nearest him and then looking with slanting gaze into the gloom ahead, the whole battalion moved swiftly forward.

This was continued for perhaps five minutes and suspense for perhaps five minutes when from the left sounded a metallic clatter—one of the companies had strode into a row of cans strung on were along the ground by the enemy. Instantly following came a single firing shot, and a second later the blackness in front broke into a ragged, leaping wave of flame that raced back and forth along the whole Boer position. A noise like a hail storm on a tin roof wanted from it and the same noise was heard among the Boers. Canadians lunged themselves on the turf. I saw one partially rise again and attempt to retire, but in doing so he fell, as if he had tripped over a root or stone. He lay quiet, and after the surrender was found shot through the heart.

The Gordons lay in the rear in support. With their aid the incense was suppressed for over two hours, at the same time the construction of the entrenchments continued so that, when daylight eventually came, an uneven, rugged line of earth, about 50 yards away, faced the Boers. Over the deadly spaces of ground in front seven forms were lying prone; some were upon their feet, some were motionless. Behind the newly made trench were a regiment of burlesque, war-worn men, wearing the same hodge upon their helmets and colored caps, were busy attending to the wounded comrades and more firmly building up their protection. The dawn became clearer; the stars paled; then presently a white flag was seen to wave from behind the nearest Boer trench. Somebody among the Canadians shouted "they're coming in," and the sound of his voice had scarce died away when unannounced, haggard figures climbed from over their entrenchments and with hands unraised walked forward to surrender. The British had won.



**LIEUT. KAYE,**  
of G Company.

**LIEUT. FRED. C. JONES,**  
of G Company.

**LIEUT. WELDON McLEAN,**  
Now of Imperial Army.

## THE NEW BRUNSWICKERS OF GALLANT G COMPANY.