

column. Now with all humility I venture to say that I do not think that that is so. If I set forth the reasons for my opinion, it may at least lead others to consider the question under different aspects from those under which they have hitherto treated it. Who actually thought out the conditions of the the movement we hardly at present know. Sir John Willoughby is said to have been the military advisor of Dr. Jameson. In my judgment, if Sir John Willoughby thought out the method of the advance, he has shown a very considerable capacity for the application of sound principles to peculiar circumstances. If Dr. Jameson was the real author of the movement, then I think that he deserves similar credit. In the first place, it must be remembered that in order that a concentrated force shall be able to take advantage of its superiority against three separate columns, it must be strong enough to be able to crush one of them, to break up its organization, and destroy it as a military force before the body so attacked can be supported by others. Secondly, it must be in a position such that it can reach one of the columns before that column has joined another. Even on the large scale, in considering the proposed invasion of France in 1815, Wellington laid it down as a maxim that the several armies of the allies advancing against Napoleon were perfectly safe as long as each of the bodies on which he was able to direct his attack was strong enough to hold its own against him. The common sense of that statement is so obvious that it is curious how often it is forgotten in discussing military operations.

I now turn to the consideration of the actual movement as it was made. Practically the real invading force, so far as Dr. Jameson and Sir J. Willoughby were concerned, was at first divided into two columns. The third column consisted of the Imperial troops, supported by a large body of native auxiliaries. It was very well able to hold its own against any force that was likely to be brought against it, and from the nature of the country through which it had to pass it was difficult for the enemy to approach this column before such pressure had been brought to bear by the other two columns as would necessarily draw off attack from it. As it in fact had very little share in the operations till Buluwayo was reached, the real question of interest concerns the other two columns, and their movements I now propose to consider.

In the first place, it is to be noted that an admirable system of scouting had been carried on prior to the advance of the two columns. The ground had been so thoroughly searched to such a distance in front that it had been ascertained that there was no enemy within several days' reach of the column, and that if they advanced from the two positions in which they were placed at Charter and Victoria they could reach a point of junction at the Ironstone Mountain, out of reach of the enemy's attack. It was much easier and quicker to move in separate bodies for the purposes of the march to this point, and, in view of the information thus obtained, there could be no risk in such a movement. Next note the constitution of the columns. Each was provided with sixteen waggons. By careful training each of the columns had been taught to be able, when on the march, to form an oval laager within six minutes. As soon as the two forces from Victoria and Charter had joined, they moved in two parallel columns, each being formed with two waggons abreast. The two columns of waggons kept at a distance from one another of 150 yards. The greatest caution was observed in the conduct of the march. If incidents occurred,

such as are common in South African movement, of a waggon from any cause breaking down, the whole force was halted or checked till the mischief had been repaired, so that the regularity of the formation was never broken. Between the two columns of waggons, with each of which there were some 280 well-armed burghers, there marched a native contingent of 500 Mashonas and a certain number of diemounted burghers. The natives had been trained, whilst each column was forming its oval laager, to cut down branches of prickly pear such as were everywhere available. With these the natives formed a strong abattis which closed the front and rear of the opening between the two ovals. When the whole defensive laager was complete, the Salisbury column of waggons formed the right oval, the Victoria column the left, the front and rear connecting them was closed by the abattis. The machine-guns and 7-lb. field-guns were distributed in assigned positions between the waggons, from beneath which the burghers were able to fire with their own repeating rifles in such a way as to cover the whole front. Even in the days of Boer invasion of Zululand, long before a breechloader or a repeating rifle had been heard of, a laager, much inferior to this, had proved altogether unassailable by the most gallant natives. With the advantage of Maxims, Gardiners, and Nordenfelta, and with repeating rifles, it was certain that the fire would be so deadly that no increase in the numbers of natives, that could be brought to attack it, would do more than add to the extent of the target for these terrible weapons, provided the laager could be placed in such a position that there was range for effective fire. As had been proved by prior colonial experience, and as might be judged as a matter of common sense, the only danger of defeat by the natives lay in the possibility of the columns being caught on the march whilst the oxen were still in the waggons, and while there would be no defensive position from which to pour out an effective fire. That danger was amply provided against in several ways. In the first place, by the distant scouting, which had been carried on by mounted parties detached from the columns for four or five days at a time, general information had been obtained as to the whereabouts of the enemy. Throughout the march mounted scouting parties moved five miles ahead of both columns. An advance guard of forty men marched one mile ahead a rear guard of similar numbers, and flanking parties each also of forty men moved at a distance of about a mile from the columns. Thus it was impossible that the column should be attacked without ample notice: and as six minutes only were required to change from the formation of movement to the formation of defence, it is difficult to see what risk the column ran in any emergency. As might have been seen beforehand, and, as the event proved, victory was certain, if only the column was laagered before it was attacked. So easy was the method adopted for forming the laager, that there was no inconvenience in taking up the defensive position whenever the halt was ordered, either by day or by night. All that was necessary was that the two leading waggons in both double columns should turn in towards one another; The two rearmost waggons doing the same, the other waggons widening out right and left so as to extend the oval; the machine guns being then run into their positions. The horses were then tethered to three or four parallel lines of cord running the long way of the oval, and the oxen and gun-mules strongly tethered between the two ovals.

Now not only were the two columns with their small number of less than 300 men

each safe under this arrangement against any attack that could be made upon them, but they were much safer than larger bodies would have been. A large force of several thousand men would have required hundreds of waggons. A long column of many waggons could not have been laagered without great delay. Therefore the risk of such a force being caught on the march, or caught unprepared, as our troops were at Isandlwana, would have been indefinitely increased. To me it seems that the method which was adopted against the Matabele would have equally succeeded against the Zulus, and that the vast numbers of troops that were employed in the earlier stages of the contest against Ketchwayo not only added unnecessarily and enormously to the expense of the campaign, but involved unnecessary risks which would have been avoided by the employment of a smaller force perfectly equipped, thoroughly trained in the use of their weapons and accustomed to the simple operations employed in the Matabele campaign. If I am right, very great credit attaches to the organiser of the expedition, and he ought to be unearthed, in this sense, that we want to know who the man was, whether Dr. Jameson or Sir John Willoughby, who so clearly saw through the conditions that were to be involved in the fighting of the campaign as to apply to them exactly the methods that were necessary for success.

Nor is that all. It seems to me that if the statement of facts which I have here set forth be correct, then it follows that the Matabele campaign was, in no wise whatever, as has been alleged, a brutal massacre, in which those who enlisted in the warfare could tell beforehand that they are going to have a simple walk over without serious risk of heavy loss. It depends, as the success of military operations generally does, upon the skill of the leader, the confidence of his men in him, and the perfection of the training given to them adapted to the particular circumstances of the case. If, as those who knew nothing of Dr. Jameson or Sir John Willoughby beforehand were naturally inclined to suspect might be the case, they had shown themselves incapable of organising and leading such an expedition, the burghers who embarked in it would almost certainly have been massacred by the by no means despicable enemy against whom they advanced.

It is usual in the judgment which is formed by people at home of the success of any of our campaigns, to take for granted that if everything has gone well then the enemy must have despicable. My own conviction is that in this instance, as in many more, the skill with which the operations have been conducted causes the rapid and comparatively bloodless success, and has thereby left an impression of feebleness or want of will on the part of the enemy, which is altogether out of keeping with what we have known of them in part African history. A very slight error in judgment on the part of the leaders of the expedition would have left a very different impression of the fighting qualities of the Matabele, who were a particularly warlike offshoot from the tribe which taught us at Isandlwana what formidable antagonists they could do.

Of course, the moment any misfortune occurs, everybody is disposed to say that it was a great mistake to have incurred the risk from which is resulted. I cannot, however myself, see that it was a mistake, after the complete defeat of the Matabele, to send out comparatively small parties in pursuit of the king. General experience has shown that when once the spirit of a warlike tribe has been broken, the former warriors are very little disposed to take advantage of the small numbers at