

Colonel Pilcher still further increased Canadian enthusiasm. Numerous meetings were held, at which it was declared, "We too are loyal Britons, and our patriotism is at its best when our country needs us most." Later on a second contingent of mounted men and artillery was accepted, and Lord Strathcona raised and equipped at his own expense a corps of 530 men, known as "Strathcona's Horse." In all, Canada sent some 2,820 picked men to fight in South Africa. Australia and New Zealand also lent their aid, and for the first time in history sons of the empire from all over the world fought shoulder to shoulder. Never before had Britons realized what the bonds of empire meant, and foreign nations looked on amazed.

During December 1899 General Buller made many gallant attempts to cross the Tugela River and relieve Ladysmith. The country beyond the river is one mass of rugged mountains, where a small force of well-mounted men can defy a whole army. Time after time Buller's men were driven back though they stuck doggedly to their task.

Early in February 1900 success began to reward British efforts in the west. General Cronje's force, which had entrenched itself on the steep banks of the Modder River, was fiercely bombarded, but held out for eight days. During the night of February 26, the Canadians and No. 7 Company of the Royal Engineers, under a heavy fire, dug a trench only eighty yards away from the enemy's position. In the morning the Boers found that the British troops in the newly-dug trench had them at their mercy. Cronje, therefore, was forced to surrender with four thousand men. This was the turning of the tide, for it was the first great blow struck at the Boer forces.

While Lord Roberts marched on to the capital of the Orange River Free State, General French relieved Kimberley after a siege of one hundred and twenty-two days. Meanwhile the defeats and disasters suffered by the Boers in the west began to tell upon them, and Buller was at last able to reach Ladysmith, which had held out for one hundred and nineteen days. The defence of Ladysmith is one of the most notable