

# Seven Hundred Miles for a Priest.

It was the 25th of February, 1900, the eighth day since the grim Boer commandant, General Cronje, had been surrounded by the British forces in the Modder River. He had some 4000 troops all told, whilst Lord Roberts had 50,000 men. Some of these were composed of crack Canadian and English regiments. Lord Roberts' artillery consisted of 150 pieces. After the third day of the grand defense of General Cronje and his heroic band, the British General determined to crush him at all hazards. On the south bank of the river he placed in position, at a range of 2000 yards, the Eighteenth, Sixty-second and Seventy-fifth field batteries and two naval twelve pounders. On the north bank, and encircling the whole river, were placed the Sixty-fifth Howitzer battery, the Seventy-sixth, Eighty-first and Eighty-second field batteries and three naval 4.7 inch guns. A terrible scene followed.

The British guns simultaneously poured shot and shell on the Boer position, which was about a mile square. The Lyddite shells raised great clouds of green, mauseous smoke which filled the bed of the river, while shrapnel burst on the edge and down the sides of the river banks, into which the burghers had burrowed, and from tunnels they had dug, they often poured a return fire which laid many a British soldier low. On that day alone the British lost 800 men in killed and wounded.

Thus the long line of British batteries belched forth death the whole day long, and on each side of them lay two battalions of infantry, whose Maxims sounded petty beside the roaring big guns. There were many dumb animals, oxen and horses in that whirlpool of shot and shell, and many Boer women with suckling babes and many tiny tots, and many gray-haired men, but that did not stop the firing, not even during the night. The earth shook under the detonation of the fearful cannonading and the soaring grape shot and the bursting shells crossing each other and bursting in the midst of the Boer laager made a pyrotechnical display never to be forgotten by those who witnessed the fearful battle of the Modder River. The stubborn resistance of Cronje at first angered, then awed Lord Roberts.

One of the Shropshire regiments contained some Irish sharpshooters. That night the Shropshires were ordered to relieve the Gordons. They crawled on their stomachs to the trenches. But somehow one of the rifle bullets of one of the Boers found its mark. Shot through the abdomen, a young Irish Shropshire sergeant ceased his crawling and lay helpless. His comrades dragged him by his feet slowly and painfully to the rear, where the white tents of the Red Cross each decorated with the symbol of mercy, shimmered in the flickering light of the assault.

"It's a blamed treacherous wound," said the cool surgeon as he examined the man; "he may live three days and a little longer, but there is no curin' him." Gently the nurses placed him on a cot. The poor man heard the blunt surgeon's remarks. He knew his time had come, and amidst the terrors of war and the bleak veil there arose in his mind the green fields of Ireland and

the stillness of his little parish church and the benign face of the Soggarth Aroon, the dear priest. And he repeated to himself the lines of Banim, so full of deep tenderness:

"Who, in the winter's night,  
Soggarth Aroon,  
When the cold blasts did bite,  
Soggarth Aroon,  
Came to my cabin door,  
And on my earthen flure  
Kneelt by me sick and poor,  
Soggarth Aroon?"

II.

The head nurse had been admitted to Lord Roberts' field tent. He was about to retire. Standing upright at the small table, he listened attentively to what the nurse had to say. "Sergeant Mc— will not admit that it cannot be done, my lord. He knows that the next Catholic priest is seven hundred miles away. But he says he cannot believe that you would refuse the request of a dying man. We have fought with him on every possible ground. He will not listen." The British general looked to the ground in silence. "What shall I say, my lord, to the man?" insisted the nurse. Lord Roberts went to the opening of the tent. "Call Engineer Headly," the general said to the orderly, who was waiting outside.

A trim, wiry, stocky little man appeared, bronzed like a Florentine statue, with eager eyes, restless and keen, and stood at attention.

"Headly, is the train in readiness?"

"It is, my lord."

"How long will it take you to race to Kimberley and back?"

"Four days, my lord."

"Call Captain MacDonald."

The orderly saluted. Tall and with quick steps the captain entered. "What of the last reports of the condition of the road?" asked General Roberts.

"The last telegrams indicate, my lord, that the road is well guarded and up to this hour no break is reported."

"Engineer Headly, you will proceed to Kimberley at once."

Then Lord Roberts sat at a small writing table and dashed off a few lines. "Give this to Major Dudley." And then the men saluting, the nurse bowing, left the tent of the commanding officer. Soon the light in Lord Roberts' tent was extinguished.

Half an hour after, the men in the trenches heard between the lulls of firing the whistle of the train, as it sped out of the camp into the night on its long way to Kimberley. "There must be something doing," said one to another. "Never heard of such a thing before," spoke a burly ambulance man, the red cross sewed to his left arm, as he bent over a still form, with glassy eyes, and lifted it upon the stretcher.

"What did you hear?" asked his companion, coolly examining his helmet through which a bullet had just whizzed. "Why, His Bobs (meaning Lord Roberts), has sent Headly with his train seven hundred miles to get a priest for Sergeant Mc—, who is expected to die within a few days; just the engine, the tender, and a coach, and Headly is ordered to make the run of his life." The other ambulance man only gasped and shook his head. They were nearing the hospital tents with their burden. "How is Sergeant Mc—?" they asked of the assistant surgeon, who, when he saw the ambulance men coming, drew back the tent flap for them. "Sleeping like a child," he responded, "and that ever since he heard the good-bye whistle of Headly's train."

III.

Among the intrepid Boer generals no name was more feared by the English army than that of the Commandant Christian De Wet. Young and fearless, wily and resourceful, gifted with the magnetism which made his men do his bidding with enthusiasm, he inflicted more harm by his daring night attacks to the British than the other Boer generals combined. He it was who would derail the supply trains at unexpected places, and taking from the cars what suited him, would burn the rest. He was to be found cutting into the flanks of the moving army and taking hundreds of prisoners at a time. He would conceal himself in a road that crossed a deep nullah, and so well were his forces hidden that the leading scouts passed over the drift without discerning them, and not until the wagons and guns were entering the drift did the Boets show themselves. They then opened fire and many of the drivers and artillery horses were at once shot down at short range, guns were captured, and the Queen's best cavalry regiments put to flight.

He hadly reached Kimberley in safety. He was on his return to the Modder River with a single passenger, a Catholic priest, the chaplain of the Fusiliers at Kimberley, quite a young man, the idol of his soldier boys. The news of his train's singular trip had sped on before them, and wherever the engine stopped either to take on water or for the engineer to telegraph, the soldiers on guard looked inquisitively through the windows of the coach to see the Catholic priest for whose coming "Bobs" had sent a special train.

They saw him, a man of military and resolute bearing, calmly eyeing them, silent and composed. For he had with him, nestling closely to his beating heart, the blessed sacrament. It was past midnight and within a few hours they would reach the out-posts of General Roberts' army.

The squad of men guarding both entrances of the coach fell to the floor like so many logs as the train came to a sudden standstill. A fusillade of shots rang out into the night air, and a confusion of voices, rough and shrill, was heard. Before the men could gather themselves from their arms, the coach was filled with bearded burghers.

Then a voice was heard, clear as the metal ring of a bell, but in badly accented English, saying: "You show me the priest and I let you pass. But by — if it is not so I shoot you on the spot." Headly was dragged through the throng, and back of him, towering like a giant, a revolver in his hand, came De Wet, the Boer general. "Here, sir, is Father George, the chaplain of the Fusiliers, let him answer for me," exclaimed the engineer. "Stand back, men, do you hear, stand back!" cried De Wet, as he held a lantern on high and let the light fall full on the face of the priest, who seemed neither startled nor dismayed.

"I see you are a priest," said De Wet. "Did Lord Roberts send for you to attend a dying man at the Modder River?" "He did, sir," was the answer of Father George. "He may be a spy; he may have valuable papers on his person," remarked one of De Wet's men in Dutch. De Wet turned on him like a tiger: "Get thee out of here, and all of you. This train shall pass, and woe to him who will molest this man or not obey my orders." And the burghers knew Christian De Wet's temper. Pell mell they scrambled out of the coach. "The Lord, our good God, be with you, Father, and bring you safe to the end of your journey," spoke De Wet as he uncovered and held the priest's hand a moment in his iron grip and then vanished into the darkness, as the train puffing and hissing moved again over the rails towards its destination.

IV.

A wild shout went up among General Roberts' men as the train, the whistle screeching incessantly, reached the camp. General Cronje had surrendered two days before, and he and his men were witnesses of the pandemonium that reigned when it became known that Headly had arrived. Sergeant Mc— received the sacraments of the dying with his senses unimpaired and with a devotion and gratitude towards God that was truly edifying. A few hours afterwards he died, and in the dead of night he was buried.

"Slowly and sadly they laid him down,  
From the field of his fame, fresh and gory;  
They carved not a line, and they raised not a stone;  
But they left him alone with his glory."

—G. D. H., in The Messenger.

First Volume of Catholic Encyclopedia.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, of which the first volume has reached us, will, when completed, consist of fifteen volumes, of 800 pages each, with 2000 maps and illustrations. It is edited by Charles G. Hebermann, Ph.D., LL.D., Edward A. Pace, Ph.D., D.D.; Conde B. Pallen, Ph.D., LL.D.; Thomas J. Shahan, D.D.; John J. Wynne, S.J., with numerous co-workers.

It is the first work of the kind to be printed in the English language, and will present its readers with the full body of Catholic teaching; not only precise statements of what the Church has defined, but also an impartial record of different views of acknowledged authority on all disputed subjects.

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It differs from the general encyclopedia in omitting facts and information which have no relation to the Church, and records all that Catholics have done for the intellectual and artistic development of mankind. It is enabled to do this by enlisting the services of the foremost Catholic scholars—and some other specialists in every part of the world, to contribute articles in the condensed form that appeals to the man of action with the accuracy that satisfies the scholar.

It is not exclusively a church encyclopedia, nor is it limited to the ecclesiastical sciences and the doings of churchmen. The general reader who goes to it for specific subjects will find in addition information of the broadest scope and value in its summaries of results on the entire cycle of Catholic interest and doctrine, and on all subjects directly and indirectly related to the Catholic Church in every department of human knowledge.

All matters of importance are, of course, exhaustively treated. One of importance, uppermost in the public mind to-day, for instance, is treated in part as follows:

Adulteration of Food (Lat. adulterare, to pollute, to adulterate). This act is defined as the addition of any non-conditional substance to a food, such substance not constituting a portion of the food. Even this carefully-worded definition is not perfect. Some kinds of salt provisions have so much salt added that some of it has to be removed by soaking, to render the food edible, yet this does not constitute adulteration. Adulteration of food has long been practised. It is mentioned in the case of bread by Pliny, who also says that difficulty was experienced in Rome in procuring pure wines. Athens had its public inspector of wines. England and France early passed laws to guard against the adulteration of bread, and as far back as the days of Edward the Confessor public punishment was provided for the brewers of bad ale. The legal status of adulteration is largely a matter of statute, varying with each governmental body which attacks the subject. Food is declared adulterated if there is added to it a substance which degrades or injuriously affects it; if cheaper or inferior substances are substituted wholly or in part for it; if any valuable or necessary constituent has been wholly or in part abstracted; if it is colored or otherwise treated, to improve its appearance; if it contains any added substance injurious to health. These are examples of statutory provisions. Political considerations, such as the desire to protect the food-producers of a country, may affect legislation. Thus adulteration may be so defined as to include foreign products, which otherwise might be treated as unobjectionable. Food-preserved have a very extensive use, which often constitutes adulteration. Salt is the classic preservative, but is also a condiment, and is seldom classed as an adulterant. Salicylic, benzoic, and boric acids and their sodium salts, formaldehyde, ammonium fluoride, sulphurous acid and its salts are among the principal preservatives. Many of these appear to be innocuous, but there is danger that the continued use of food preserved by their agency may be injurious. Extensive experiments on this subject have been performed by the United States Bureau of Chemistry and by the German Imperial Board of Health, among others.

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Irish International Exhibition at Dublin Will Open in May

The Irish International Exhibition to be held in Dublin will open in May and continue during the summer months.

The scope of the exhibitions will be Irish and international in the widest sense. Exhibits will be classified under thirteen different sections. Not only will the arts, industries and manufactures of Ireland be especially displayed, but there will be exhibits of the manufactures, industries, resources, machinery and its appliances, science, art, archaeology, etc. of all nations.

The Executive Council, realizing the great advantages which must accrue to Ireland from such an exhibition attended by vast numbers of visitors from all parts of the world, is determined to make such a representative display of Irish products as never before has been attempted in the country.

An exhibition such as this to be held will display the many opportunities which exist in Ireland for the investment of capital. It will place before the world her industrial manufactures and products; will show the remarkable progress they have made in a few years, and what further development they are capable of.

Outside the purely business aspects of the exhibition, the amusement of the visitors will be amply catered to. Musical entertainments, vocal and instrumental on a high class will be provided. A large concert hall is being built. Special concerts devoted to Irish music will be given, and the best instrumental bands of Great Britain have been engaged. Other amusements of a novel character—water chutes, switchback, etc., will be provided; and the creature comforts of extensive dining, tea and refreshment rooms.

In addition to all these attractions within the exhibition, there are the further attractions of the city and country. Dublin and Ireland have these to offer in profusion. Ireland cannot boast of such natural features as the mighty Alps of Switzerland or Italy, or the rivers, canons and mountains of America; but she has entrancing scenery peculiarly her own, and fresh and balmy climate, unequalled greenness of vegetation.

The main entrance to the exhibition will be at Ballsbridge, on the tramway line from the city to Dalkey, and will open into a Celtic court where will be placed some of the Irish industrial exhibits. There will be other entrances on the south side of the park, to the vicinity of Donnybrook.

Directly opposite the main entrance will be the principal building, consisting of a central octagonal court, 215 feet in diameter, surrounded by a corridor opening into four radial wings, each 164 feet long and 80 feet wide. Over the centre of this building will be an octagonal dome, 80 feet in diameter and 150 feet in height. Around this building—as shown on the block plan—will be grouped a number of pavilions for the British, foreign and colonial exhibits—motor cars, electric lighting, gas lighting, Irish industries, machinery and power houses; also extensive dining, tea and refreshment rooms, and the other buildings usual in such an exhibition.

A fine art gallery, in which it is proposed to install a collection of modern art of Ireland, will be erected. The building will be of special fireproof construction, and the utmost precautions will be taken to insure the safety of the pictures and other art exhibits which are in course of collection.

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The president of the exhibition is the Marquis of Ormonde, and among the vice-presidents are the Most Rev. Dr. Healy, Archbishop of Tuam; the Marquis of Waterford, the Earl of Pembroke, the Earl of Kenmare, the Earl of Desborough, the Earl of Meath, the Earl of Drogheda, Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal and the Lord Chief Justice of Ireland. James Shanks, J. P., is secretary and executive officer.



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