

The Man With a Plan

Letter Written by the London Daily Mail Correspondent From Capetown.

Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener Perfecting the Plans of Campaign.

Capetown, Jan. 20. Capetown! But Lord Roberts is here; Lord Kitchener is here, and busy, sunny Capetown hardly knows itself for energy and bustle.

For the war—the real war—is just going to begin. Hitherto the war, though it has been going on for more than three months, has consisted chiefly of military operations conducted mainly by the Boers. But now we are about to commence operations on the English offensive.

Lord Roberts, at I said, is here, and so is Lord Kitchener. The presence of the one means that we now know exactly what we are about; the presence of the other that we know precisely how we are going to set about it. The one has a plan and a policy, the other has taken pen and ink and paper, and in a careful, laborious, English businesslike way is working out and perfecting the details.

This is a new order of things, and here in Capetown you at once recognize the change.

Previously we were treating the South African difficulty as the doctor used to treat influenza before he quite understood it—we were just

Treating the Symptoms.

There was Lady Smith, there was Kimberley, there were the invaded portions of the colony—each one we were attempting to relieve by special treatment, just as in the early days of influenza we used to take one powder for the headache, another drug for the aching limbs, and still another for the burning pain behind the eye. But now Doctor Lord Roberts has been called in, and while he may neglect to ease the inconvenience of the symptoms he will go to the root of the matter and attack the microbe.

There is an air of knowledge and resource about the new doctor, and now that he has come into the house the patient and his family feel that though the case, having got so long a start, is an awkward one, it is still easily amenable to good and careful treatment.

I do not know what sort of spirits Capetown was in before Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener arrived. I was not here to see. But from what I am told I gather that there was a good deal of unnecessary shouting. Capetown used to yell with the delighted enthusiasm of a political meeting every time a British gun went off. And every time a Boer trench was reported Capetown used to howl dismally and pull as long a face as if

The Building Society

had collapsed. As I have said I did not see it because I was not here. But as nearly as I can gather that was the case. Capetown used to be what it is now, joy over some immaterial British success or to be overwhelmed with despair by some inconclusive British set back.

By now—I think I remarked that Lord Roberts is here and Lord Kitchener is with him—Capetown has recovered its equanimity. I do not say that it is not watching the course of events with deep and anxious attention. Of course it is. But it does not get so wildly excited about immaterialities. It sees little or nothing of the commander-in-chief or of his chief of staff, but it seems as if by some unaccountable psychologic action these two men by their mere presence had imposed something of their own will and spirit upon the whole community. So Capetown, instead of vaporizing itself in exaggerated emotion or despair, is finding a vent for its calmer feelings in—what do you think? More Anglicano, in attending to its business. Shop-keepers who a month ago were sitting at the club waiting with tingling nerves for news are now selling portable camp furniture at mighty long prices.

It pleased me very much when I went about the town to see the prices they had the rapacity to charge. I went into a shop to price

A Canvas (Water-Bucket,

the value of which, if I know anything of the cost of the foot of rope that forms the handle and the strip of sail cloth that forms the pall, every one of them is a shilling. "Six and ninepence," said the shopman. You see he went a penny better than even the traditional lawyer for rapacity. I loved him for that. A month ago if I had wanted a canvas bucket I should have had to search the whole town for one. The shopkeeper was then so excited about the war that it would never have occurred to him that there was a market for camp equipments. But now—

"Canvas pails, sir? Certainly. We are selling these faster than we can get them. Yes, Six and ninepence."

That's business. When you see the British shopkeeper looking after his shop like that you feel that you can trust the British soldier to be looking after his end of the business. All Capetown is just working away at minding money out of the war. Things that soldiers want, things that soldiers think soldiers want, things that shopkeepers think soldiers want, things that they want—the shops of Capetown are full of them, and are doing a roaring trade in them at triple and quadruple and quintuple prices. Business!

I go down to the docks to the South Arm, which the military have commandeered as a landing-place for troops, and there a long range of great warehouses is full of military stores. I confess I am expecting to see an indignant scene of unsystematic muddle and red tape incapacity. Not a bit of it.

A row of big transports is lying alongside the long wharves. Gangs of niggers directed by Army Service Corps non-coms. are

Unloading Goods—cases of canned foods, bales of forage, boxes of biscuits, bags of flour, a thou-

sand and one things. And everything as it comes ashore is wheeled off to its own proper place in the long row of dock sheds, where, without a moment's delay, it is checked and tallied and neatly stacked. And outside the sheds on the other side from the wharf there are railway trucks standing, and articles of immediate need for the troops at the front, six or seven hundred miles up the line, are not put into store at all, but are wheeled through the sheds direct from the ship to the railway trucks. And calmly, without hurry or fluster, giving his orders quietly but shortly, a colonel of the A. S. C. moves about supervising and directing.

"We have no more stores here," he says; "that we think it is prudent to keep in reserve. Nearly everything as it is landed now goes straight up to the front. The captain here is working 18 hours a day, and is not sorry for himself, are you, captain?"

"No, sir," says the grave, grey-headed officer of the wholesale; "it is all going through very smoothly."

Business! In one of the sheds there are boxes and cases and barrels and parcels of a thousand sorts, shapes and sizes. These are all presents and comforts, luxuries, necessities and advertisements for T. N. M. at the front.

It seems at first glance a hopeless confusion, but when I come to look about I find that all the things are sorted out according to brigades and regiments; that at De Aar are together in one section, and those for the regiments at Modder in another, and that with each consignment of stores going to each military centre is a large consignment, as possible of presents from home goes too.

In the hurry and bustle and bigness of war some confusion might be expected and excused. But there is no confusion about the A. S. C. This is business—hard, systematic, systematic, English business. A transport comes in and as the men come marching down the gangway I expect to hear harrowing tales of discomfort and bad feeding. Not a bit of it. He has had a lovely voyage, he says, and the junk was "a bit of all right." He is shown where to put his kit down, and sits about on packing cases, and writes letters home, and has tea with the ladies of the Tommy's Welfare Fund. And an hour or so later, when he has been fed, I see him comfortably packed in railway carriages going off up country cheering as he goes.

Business! Good practical business. I seek an opportunity to get a glimpse of the general manager of this great business—undertaking at his work. I am told to be there at ten minutes past nine.

I arrive at five minutes past nine and wait in an outer office for what seems an hour. I look at my watch and find it is eleven minutes past nine. I begin to doubt, when I remember that my watch is half a minute fast. It is exactly ten minutes past nine when a door is opened and my name is called.

I go into a long room in which are several desks like the desks in the manager's office of a great railway company. And at each desk, bending over piles of papers, sits a high officer.

And at the end of the room, at a table which commands a view of all the rest of the room and all the other desks, sits a big, dark, stern man with a heavy moustache, intent upon papers. Before he looks up I have time to note the telephones and neatness and orderliness of the arrangement of the table. When he does look up he keeps his finger on the paper in front of him, marking the place where he left off.

I begin to tell what I have to say. He looks at me with very keen bright grey-blue eyes, and before I have said a word he seems to know all the rest, including that which I had planned artfully to lead up to. In ten words he says something which he wants to know, and hears what I have to say, remarking that he is very busy, and before I have quite realized that I have shaken hands and said good morning, he is bending down again over his papers, deep in a calculation at the point where he left off.

Lord Kitchener—for it is he—engaged, they tell me, in reorganizing the transport system.

Think of that—in time of war, in the midst of a campaign, he is doing for himself what the whole of Pall Mall would have struggled at for years in times of peace. But he thinks it is necessary, he knows that he can do it, and no one seems to have the slightest doubt that it will be a very advantageous thing to do. And I observe that of the men immediately around him many, down to the merest subordinates, are men whom he has trained and tried himself at the other end of Africa to know what he wants and to do what he wants.

The head manager has brought his sub-managers along with him just as Sir Thomas Lipton or Sir Weetman Pearson or any other

Big English Business Man would do if he had a big new scheme to carry out.

Business—big, businesslike business! I go elsewhere, to a house near the houses of parliament, to a camp where recruits are training, to a ship from which artillery is being landed, to a hospital where wounded men are lying, and everywhere I seem to come across a little grey-headed man with a very compact, well-knit figure and a resolute walk and a resolute look and very keen eyes. And wherever he happens to be people turn round and look at him as he passes and hurry back for another look, and are so impressed that they almost forget to cheer. And wherever he goes, with his alert step and his grave, strong look, confident purpose and resolution he seems to be spread around. He looks so thoughtful; everything he does seems so thoughtful, so well considered, part of a definite scheme.

I get a glimpse of him, alone in a big office room. It is a very small matter to him which I want to run before him, I am thinking. But he does not seem to think so. To him no detail seems unimportant. He considers it rapidly but thoughtfully, gives a decision and a reason for it, and then, that subject dismissed, remembers to say something on a subject that is very close to the heart of every Daily Mail writer and every Daily Mail reader too.

Lord Roberts is the man with a plan, the man who knows what he is going to do, and is taking every step necessary to do it. And the colonists, who were getting very anxious, are, since he has been among them, fuller of enthusiasm

The Soldier and Death

Some Emotions and a Contrast—A Victoria Cross Hero's Wager.

A Six Hundred Miles Journey From Capetown to Orange River.

Rensburg Camp, Feb. 2. We were in the train from Capetown on the way up country—that wonderful train which starts from Capetown at 9 o'clock every night for the front, and nightly carries away a full load of healthy, high-spirited, sanguine Englishmen.

Though they have the sanguine temper of their race—they bid good-bye to the friends who come to see them off with all the joyous exuberance of spirits with which an Englishman always sets forth into the unknown—they have a share of the commercial prudence of the race also.

They take only single tickets, because they will rest with the side which can bear the fatigue of sitting still longest. The Boers are good sitters—I fancy they must have a dash of the Dorking in their compositions.

General French has patience, too, and a purpose, and as long as the Boers are shut up in those hills the colony and the main railway line behind us are safe from mischief.

But just starting here is very tiresome. That is the worst of war; it has such dreary longueurs. Yesterday's only incident was the killing of two scorpions in a tent. To-day has no promise of any incident whatever; and the sun is pouring down on the burning brown dust, and—oh dear, how hot it is! It only seems, thing would happen.

We do not count as incidents the little exchanges of shells which pass at long range between our 15-pounder on the top of the high, steep rock mountain called Coles Kop and the gun in the enemy's position across the plain. We let off a few shots every early morning just to find out what is doing over there, and the Boers send a few back just to wound our feelings.

For the gun they use 15-pounders—the gunners captured from Gatacre on that unhappy day at Stormberg, and the shells they throw with it are British shells bearing the Woolwich marks.

Our officers and Tommies pick up the shattered fragments of the exploded missiles, and grind their teeth and use words of wrath.

Presently the incident arrives. Some one comes and says that Captain Kenna, V. C., in the course of a discussion has offered to bet that he will ride from headquarters to Coles Kop and climb to the gun position at the top of the hill within an hour. The wager has been taken up, and, whoever wins, the proceeds are to go to one of the soldier funds. It is generally regarded as a good bettable thing.

Coles Kop is a good eight and a half miles as the crow flies. It is a mile further by the road we have to go to keep out of range of the Boer advanced position. The road is very bad, strewn in parts with

Neck-Breaking Stones,

and at the end of the nine miles ride there is Coles Kop to climb on foot, and that to an average man in condition, is, climbing his hardest, a good half-hour's toil. Still it is a good bet, for Captain Kenna is a splendid horseman and a fine athlete, as well as a V.C. Any way, it is a relief from the monotony of the long, featureless days.

We go to see the rider start, and I try to recall where I have seen him before. He goes off at a great lick across the railway embankment and round the base of the kopje and over the neck into the plain from which the road to Coles Kop leads off to the left.

Then as we watch him we all cry together, "Why, he is taking the short cut." That is so. Instead of taking the track to the left, which leads under safe cover to the back of the hill, he is going to the front of the hill by a straight line across the suicide plain, directly in front of the hill on which is posted the Boers' quick-firing Vickers-Maxim, which the soldiers call the "ten-a-penny."

"Won't they just; of course they will," said one of the rider's comrades; "but precious little Kenna cares whether they shoot at him or whether they hit him."

It seemed a foolhardy, unnecessary thing to do, I thought; and I said as much, but the soldier:

Did Not Seem To See It.

That was what Kenna made the bet for, they said; just for the sake of a decent excuse to take a ride across the mouth of the ten-a-penny.

Well, he rode across, and for some unknown reason the Boers let him go, never fired a single shot at him, which took a good deal away from the satisfaction he had in winning his wager. For he finished the ride and climbed to the top of the hill in the wonderful time of forty-nine minutes. Then out of the lightness of his heart he gave the Boers another chance, and rode back to camp the same way he went. Again they took no notice of him, and he felt that although he had won the wager he had wasted the morning.

"It isn't at all wonderful," some one said later, "that Kenna is a V.C. The only wonder is that he isn't dead a dozen times. The man is absolutely indifferent to death."

Death! The word somehow reminded me where I had seen him before. The V. C. who was absolutely indifferent to death was the same tender-hearted officer who had been so moved by the death of the Dutchman at the railway station. CHARLES E. HANDS.

Orange River, Feb. 12.

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since Dutch spies abound everywhere throughout the colony he was perhaps a spy, and was travelling in the train to work some ill to the soldier fellow passenger, who were now looking with compassion upon the swollen heap of his mangled body. But they did not care about that. The man was dead, or as good as dead. Poor fellow! poor, poor fellow! What a shocking affair.

The officer I had noticed before took as much trouble in the matter, and was as deeply grieved as if the man had been his own brother. When the train was ready to start again we all took our seats, and were very quiet, and thoughtful and impressed, and the officer I have spoken of made sympathetic arrangements for a telegram to be sent to him up the line as to the poor fellow's later condition.

I have been here in camp for a day or two in point of time, though it seems months. For there is absolutely nothing doing, and the hours are very long in the sunshine.

The military situation has reached a deadlock. General French has crowded the Boers back into the fortress hills around Coleskop, and on their front and on either flank we occupy other fortress hills.

But between our positions and theirs is a wide stretch of open, level, grassy plains, to attempt to cross which would mean suicide for either.

So we are sitting looking at one another, and it seems that the final advantage will rest with the side which can bear the fatigue of sitting still longest.

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once, in days gone by, when the lore of wild western adventure was still unforgotten, setting out to trace certain footstep through the snow. I followed them from her father's house down a lane, lost them at a crossing, picked them up again quite easily, pursued them in the virgin snow across a field, to a shed where I found they belonged to the village policeman and a game-keeper.

So in my best and most keen-eyed days I was not a great success as a long since forgotten.

But with ease and accuracy I have tracked the British soldier six hundred miles northward from Capetown. Certainly, the operation was to a certain extent simplified by the circumstances that I travelled over the same single line of railway by which the soldier have been carried to the front. But that is merely a coincidence.

If there had been no railway and I had had to walk, I should have had no difficulty in tracking the troops.

For the line of main advance is clearly marked with a broken bottle or ten feet, an empty metal tin every ten yards, a bad ration biscuit tin every ten yards, a sardine or pate-de-foie-gras tin every now and then to indicate that the troops were accompanied by

A Due Proportion of Officers.

There is a terrible picture somewhere in which desolation, destruction, sorrow and death are represented together with cultures as marking the trail of an army. Perhaps something of that sort may be seen later on when Lord Roberts's column begins its march through the Orange Free State. But up to now the advance of our great civilizing army calls for the activities rather of the chiffonnier than the vulture.

And at every railway station where the great trains stop long enough to afford a glimpse into the lives of the people we see, not weeping widows and imploring mothers, but smiling, white-teethed negro girls selling grapes warm from the sun, happy little nigger boys doing a great trade in filling up water-bottles, and dainty mothers standing in the shade of their shanties surrounded by such swarms of little black plumpies that you think surely the year must come round quicker in the sunshine here than in the slow north.

In the course of progress this country should be surprising in the great stage of civilization which is represented in the United States by the tramp and the touring tragedian who make their way from town to town by following the railway lines on foot, I am afraid they will find it difficult and hazardous walking. The pedestrian barstomer who, after a successful appearance at De Aar, opens for a short season only at the Imperial theatre, Orange River, will want at least a day to pick the bits of broken bottle glass out of his toes. If the South African tramp should share his American colleagues' fancy for collecting empty tomato and meat cans

He Will Find Happiness Indeed.

The cans are so thickly strewn on both sides of the single way for six hundred miles that a year or two hence it will not be surprising to read the prospectus of the Karroo and Orange River syndicate formed for the purpose of working the incredibly rich deposits through the midst of which, by a fortunate chance, the main northern railway line has been built.

Of course, troops have been going up for a long time, and going up in great numbers. But making allowance for all that, you certainly get the notion from looking out of the window that Mr. Atkins is not doing so badly in the matter of food. So long as his appetite keeps up there is not much to worry about.

Bully beef tins are numerous enough to indicate that he gets plenty of good plain food when he is travelling. And there are enough small tins of various relishes, to say nothing of empty jam pots, to suggest that from somewhere or other he is getting his share of delicacies. And as to bottles—well, it is a thirsty country, and, as an Irishman put it, "small blame to any man so long as he drinks all he can get."

As the train rushes along you hear every few minutes a bottle shatter as it strikes some wayside bolder. Sometimes, when they fall soft in the sand, they do not break, and then you see them, carried by the impetus given to them by the moving train, go jumping and tumbling and somersaulting along in an amusing fashion.

My train came to a standstill just outside Orange River station, and looking out of window, I saw lying in the dust the familiar tin of a particularly Choice Kind of Egyptian Cigarettes.

Near it were several cigar ends. An unbroken bottle bore a champagne label. I caught sight of an Appaloosa and a lime-juce bottle. And the ground was thick with little tins. Evidently some soldiers who knew something of the science of living had been here, and I wondered who they might have been.

We drew up after a sufficiently long wait at Orange River station, and there were troops in the familiar khaki, but wearing it with a different air to the general run of soldiers. They were different altogether.

They were taller and more slenderly built, their features were smaller and more clearly outlined. And instead of helmets they wore slouch felt hats, or the turned-up side of which were of forty-nine minutes. Then out of the lightness of his heart he gave the Boers another chance, and rode back to camp the same way he went. Again they took no notice of him, and he felt that although he had won the wager he had wasted the morning.

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