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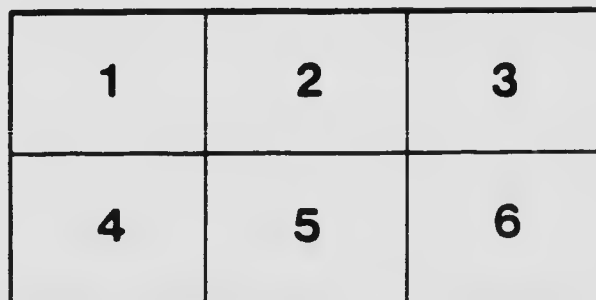
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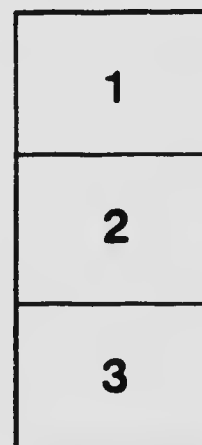
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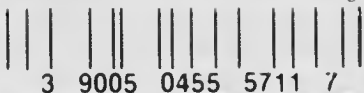


# LORD ROBERTS KG·VC

BY CAPT. OWEN WHEELER

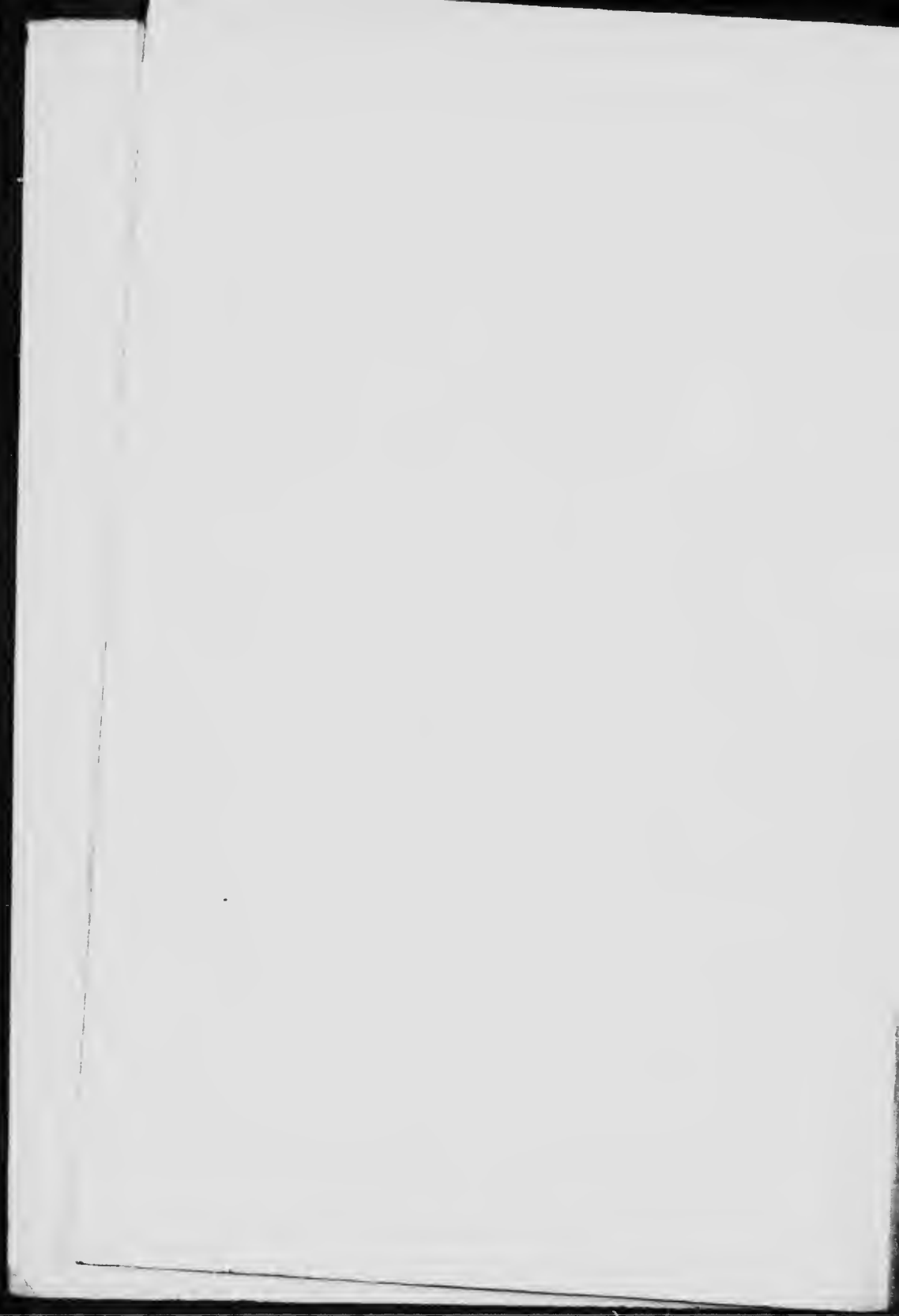


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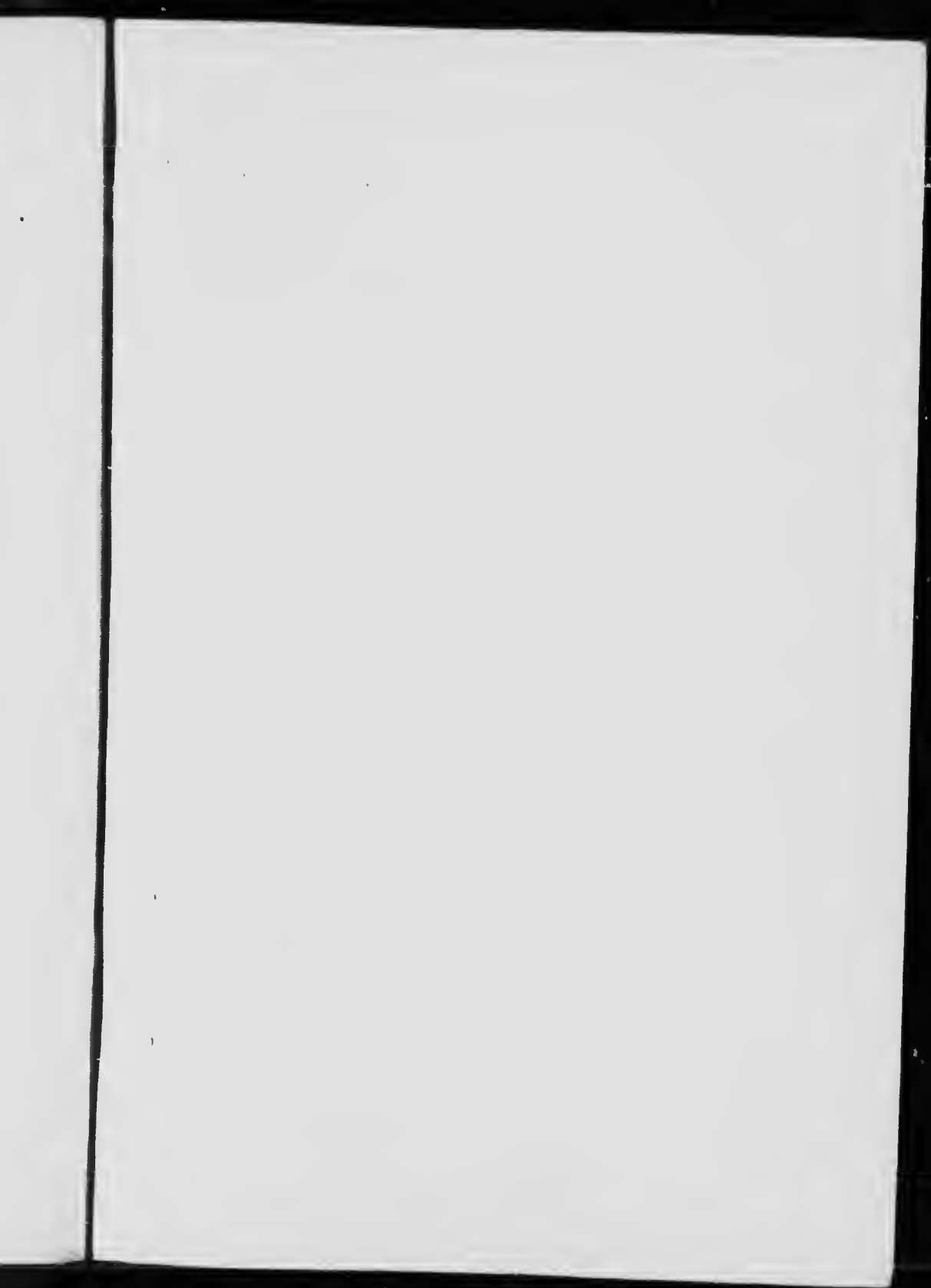
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LORD ROBERTS, K.G., V.C.







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FIELD-MARSHAL EARL ROBERTS, K.C., V.C., O.M.

*[Frontispiece*

# LORD ROBERTS

K.G., V.C.

BY

CAPTAIN OWEN WHEELER

*Author of "The Story of Our Army," "The War Office, Past  
and Present," etc.*

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# LORD ROBERTS

## K.G., V.C.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### EARLY BOYHOOD.

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE—IRISH EXTRACTION—BORN IN INDIA—  
PREPARATORY SCHOOLS—AT ETON—FELLOW-ETONIANS—BRIEF  
PUBLIC SCHOOL CAREER—SANDHURST—A STEADY WORKER—A  
YOUNG SOLDIER AT HEART.

THE boyhood of great men is rarely an entirely trustworthy index to their after careers. In the case of those who win fame by active deeds it is often a most misleading guide. Lord Roberts, it may at once be frankly stated, gave no evidence of being in any way out of the common until long after he had left school. In this record, therefore, his early days will only be lightly touched upon, and then, chiefly, for the purpose of alluding to one or two institutions and modes of life which are very

different now from what they were in the first half of the Nineteenth Century.

One has to begin at the beginning, however, and those who are fond of dates will doubtless be interested to learn that the future Field-Marshal was born on September 30th, 1832, not quite five years before Queen Victoria, whom he was afterwards to serve so well, came to the throne.

Both his father and his mother (a very beautiful woman) were Irish. The former, as we shall see, was a fine soldier of the old East India Company's Army, who afterwards became General Sir Abraham Roberts, G.C.B. Roberts was born at Cawnpore, which he was to revisit twenty-five years later under very tragic circumstances. He was brought home to England at the age of two, and, when two years later, his parents returned to India, they left their child, as many Anglo-Indian fathers and mothers are obliged to do, in the care of friends. Nowadays the separation is seldom a very long one. In the case of little Frederick Sleigh Roberts an interval of eight years was to elapse before he saw his father again.

Young Roberts seems to have been a delicate lad, but always full, as in later days, of grit and go, and having the bright, cheery disposition which is so

characteristic of the Irish nation. He started his education at two private schools, was then for a time at a Grammar School in Ireland, was transferred thence to the care of a Mr. Mills at Hampton, and finally went at the age of thirteen to Eton.

He was only at Eton a year, in the fourth form, and beyond taking a mathematical prize, did not distinguish himself in any way, and is merely mentioned in passing in the *Annals of Eton* as a "shy, retiring boy." He was never distinguished in after life for personal pushfulness; but when it came to soldiering he turned out to be a most forward individual, and certainly none of the various enemies opposed to him during his fifty years of campaigning found much trace of a "retiring" disposition in his strategy or tactics.

Roberts does not appear to have made any special friends at Eton, doubtless because his stay there was so short. In his Memoirs he only makes mention of two distinguished fellow-Etonians with whom he afterwards came in close contact. One of these was Tryon, afterwards Admiral Sir George Tryon, Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, who went down in his flagship, the *Victoria*, when it was rammed during manœuvres off Tripoli in 1893. He was a big, masterful man, as unlike Roberts as any one could be, except in point of ability and

courage. Roberts met him in 1868, during the Abyssinian Expedition, in which Captain Tryon was in charge of the transport arrangements afloat, and was indebted to his "old friend and Eton schoolfellow" for many a good dinner, and, what he appreciated more, many a refreshing bath. The other Eton acquaintance was Lyall, afterwards Sir Alfred Lyall, who went into the Indian Civil Service and distinguished himself greatly during the Mutiny, in the course of which Roberts met and had a good deal of friendly intercourse with him. Later these two, as high officials (Lyall as Foreign Secretary and Roberts as Commander of the Kabul Field Force) were still more closely associated and were always very good friends.

It is a rather interesting circumstance that the Eton career of Lord Roberts should have been very much like that of the Duke of Wellington. The Duke is often credited with saying that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton, but as a matter of fact his own stay there was, like that of Lord Roberts, quite short and undistinguished. He made no mark in games and contracted no close friendships there. Like Roberts, Wellesley was shy, but, unlike him, he had rather bad manners and was noted for "teasing, ungracious ways that made

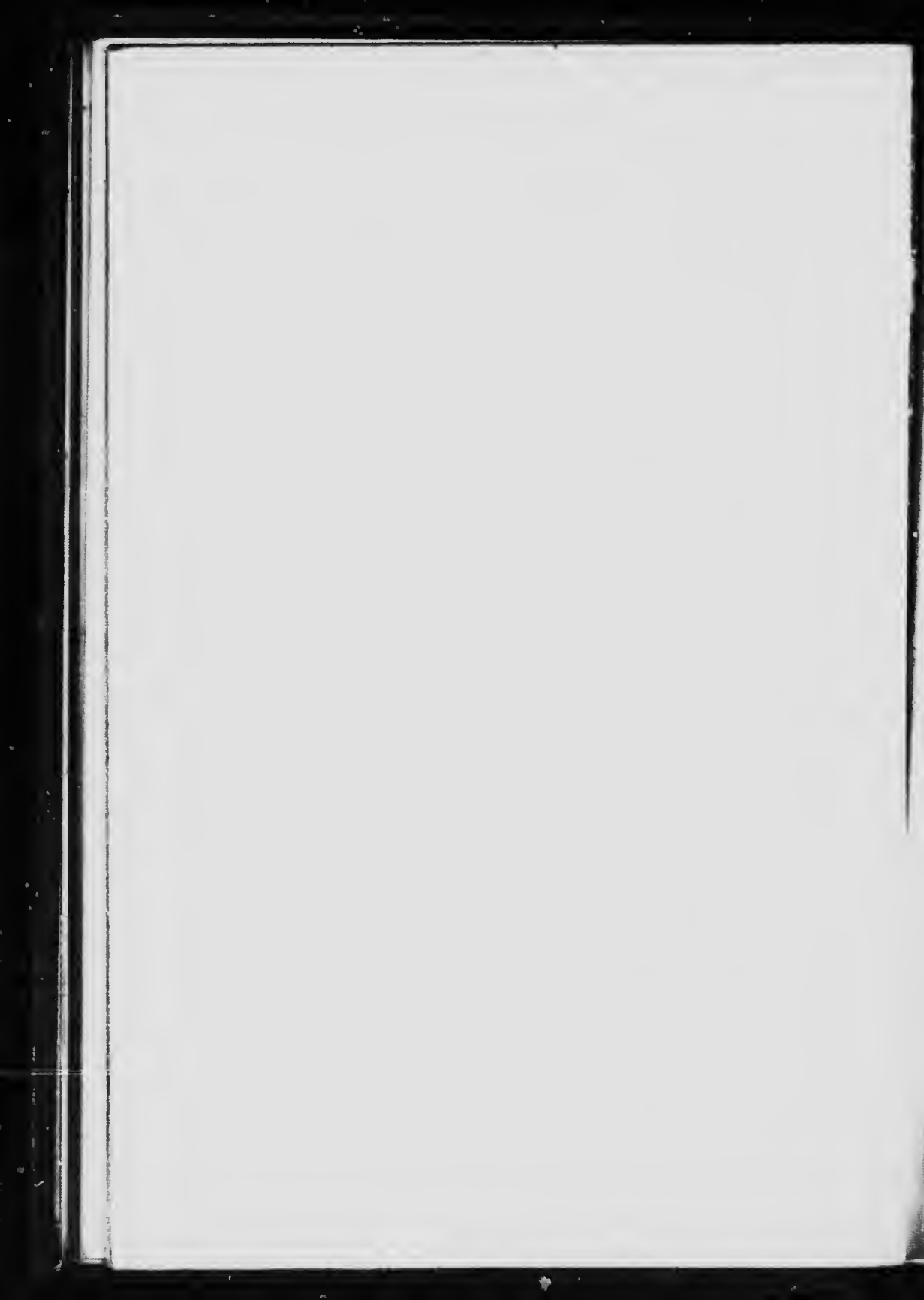


SAVING THE STANDARD.

The deed for which Lord Roberts was awarded the Victoria Cross.

Lord Roberts

1914



him unpopular, especially with ladies." Roberts, on the other hand, seems always, even as a youngster, to have been remarkable for his extreme politeness and anxiety not to offend or to hurt anyone's feelings.

Roberts left Eton at the end of the summer term of 1846, and in the following January was sent to the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, then a very different institution from what it is now. It seems strange to think that he was still in the first half of his fifteenth year, an age at which the average youngster to-day has hardly made up his mind whether in the last resort he will become a cowboy or a war correspondent, but is more or less happy in the thought that, failing other careers necessitating the objectionable preliminary of a competitive examination, these two professions will always be open to him. Yet one fancies that already this quiet, delicate little chap must have had at the back of his head an idea that he would make his mark in his father's profession, towards qualifying for which he had evidently been working as steadily and well as his rather varied experience of schools, public and private, had permitted. It would, perhaps, be wrong to say that at any time in his life Lord Roberts showed signs of an ambitious mind.

But whatever he did—and he did so much—seemed to indicate that, long before he attempted it, he had got the thing into his head, had made up his mind as to the best way of setting about it, and that, if it fell to him to carry the task through, he would somehow come out on top. That sort of character is not formed in later life. It may not get a chance of expressing itself during boyhood, but it is there. We may take it that when he left Eton Fred Roberts, apart from the fact that he was going to a military college, had no doubt at all as to his future. Such doubts did come to him, as a matter of fact, after he had joined the Army and was leading a dreary, unsatisfactory life as a junior subaltern, with no apparent prospects. But in January, 1847, he was probably a real little soldier at heart—very proud of his double military parentage (his mother, by the way, was a soldier's daughter, her father having been a major in the old 62nd Foot) and keen on preparing himself in every way to be, if not a famous general, at any rate an officer and a gentleman.



## CHAPTER II.

### LIFE AT SANDHURST AND ADDISCOMBE.

THE EAST INDIA COMPANY—ITS ARMY—WELLINGTON A " SEPOY GENERAL "—THE R.M.C., SANDHURST—ROBERTS AS A CADET—LIFE AT SANDHURST—AFFAIRS OF HONOUR—SPARTAN SIMPLICITY—DOUBTFUL DIETARY—THE CAVES—TRANSFER TO ADDISCOMBE—THE SCIENTIFIC CORPS—THE ADDISCOMBE COURSE—A DELICATE CADET—A USEFUL CURRICULUM—ROBERTS'S PASSING-OUT PLACE—A COMMISSION IN THE COMPANY'S ARTILLERY.

WHEN Lord Roberts was a lad the old East India Company was nearing the end of its long and wonderful career. For nearly two centuries and a half—its first Charter had been granted by Queen Elizabeth in 1600—it had been steadily growing in strength and influence until, although subject as regards higher questions of government to a Board of Control appointed by the Crown, it practically administered the whole of India through its officials, civil or military as the case might be. It had its own Army, quite distinct from the Regular

Army of Great Britain, and including a proportion of European infantry and artillery, as well as 21 native cavalry and 155 native infantry regiments. These were known as the Honourable East India Company's Service. In addition, the Company borrowed from the Home Army four regiments of cavalry and twenty-two battalions of infantry, which were known in India as "Queen's Troops." These details should be borne in mind, as they will explain a good deal of what will be dealt with later, not only in this chapter but in the record of the Indian Mutiny.

Roberts's father belonged, as we have seen, to the East India Company's Service, and at one time evidently intended that his son should enter the Regular Army, in which, although the pay was not so good, the promotion, provided one could pay for it (for in those days officers of the Regular Army generally bought their successive steps of rank) was much quicker. Besides, although the H.E.I.C.S. was undoubtedly a fine service, and produced some splendid officers, it was rather looked down on, because as a rule it meant commanding coloured instead of white troops—a distinction much sharper in those days than now. The great Duke of Wellington himself, although a King's Officer, was on his

return from India, where he had won the decisive battle of Assaye, almost contemptuously alluded to as a "Sepoy General," so strong was the feeling that soldiering at the head of native troops was something quite different from the command of a European army.

Whatever may have been Colonel Roberts's views on the subject, he sent his son first to the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, which was then, as now, a recognised preparation for a Commission in the regular cavalry and infantry, the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich (nowadays familiarly known throughout the Service as "the Shop"), being also as now, the stepping-stone to the Royal Artillery and the Engineers. The R.M.C., Sandhurst, is a fine building—to-day it is a great deal larger than it was then—standing in beautiful grounds close to the borders of three counties, Berkshire, Hampshire, and Surrey, and in the heart of a lovely moorland clad with heather and forests of pine. It had been opened at the beginning of the century by H.R.H. the Duke of York, who was then Commander-in-Chief, and the system was to send boys there on the Commander-in-Chief's nomination, the entrance age limits being from thirteen to fifteen, after at most a trivial qualifying examination.

We know little or nothing of Roberts's stay at Sandhurst, which only lasted a year and a half, and, like his time at Eton, was quite undistinguished. Doubtless he lived much the same life as his brother cadets, had the same grievances, played the same pranks, and underwent the same punishments. Of life at Sandhurst about this period a most interesting description is given in Sir Alexander Tulloch's *Recollections of Forty Years' Service*. General Tulloch was at the R.M.C. about five years later than Lord Roberts, but in that short time little of the routine would have been changed. The description given is so full and lively that I have ventured to transcribe it nearly in full, merely transposing some of the information given.

The cadets at Sandhurst in the middle of the last century numbered 180, formed into two companies commanded by elderly captains, the two being kept in separate wings of the College, with a view to prevent bullying. There was a Governor, usually a distinguished old General, who was only seen twice a year at the half-yearly visits of the inspecting authorities from London. There was also a Lieutenant-Governor, another old General who was occasionally seen, and a Superintendent of Studies, an elderly Colonel, who went round the class-rooms

about half-a-dozen times in the year. There was a large staff of instructors, as the College afforded an easy way of providing billets for a number of deserving officers who had fought in the Peninsular and other wars.

The uniform worn by the cadets was similar to the old uniform of the British Infantry. As General Tulloch says, the youngsters, ranging from thirteen to fifteen years of age, must have looked funny little objects "in their red swallow-tailed coatees and heavy shakos, with the great brass plate in front and scale-metal chin-straps. The forage-cap for ordinary wear was a stiff, broad-topped article about half the height of the shako; its internal capacity was very useful for carrying small articles, the little pocket in the coatee tails being of no use in that way. In those days the same clothing was worn summer and winter; and as for greatcoats, they were considered quite unnecessary for cadets, no matter what the weather might be. The equipment for parade or guard was of the same pattern as that worn in the Peninsular War—namely, two broad pipe-clayed belts, one over each shoulder, crossing on the chest, where they were kept in place by a large rectangular brass breastplate. One belt was assigned to the big black cartridge-box, the other to carry the

bayonet-scabbard by a stud attached to the belt just over the hips. A short Brown Bess percussion-musket and bayonet with blunted point completed the equipment.

“Drill only lasted an hour in the middle of the day, but it was of the most severe barrack-square type, with curious ancient formations—amongst others, that of sections of threes, doubtless a survival of the old three-deep line. ‘Handle cartridge’ and ‘bout’ (to bring the musket to the capping position) were words of command in the platoon (firing) exercise. The term ‘firelock’ was in regular use. ‘Bout’ was evidently a survival of the ancient ‘cast about your firelock’ (or matchlock) when bringing it up from the hip from the loading position with the butt on the ground. Biting the cartridge, although flintlocks had been abolished eight years before I went to Sandhurst, was continued for several years after I joined the Service. The word of command—‘Fire’—universally used, is probably a survival of the old matchlock word of command, ‘Give Fire,’ the preceding ones being, ‘Blow your match,’ ‘Cock your match.’”

The instruction at Sandhurst was a mixture of ordinary school and professional work—French, German, History, Geography, Latin, Mathematics, Surveying

and Fortifications, the last three being very well taught, although General Tulloch says that the cadets used to be amused at the antiquity of some portions of the teaching, as, for instance, the exercise in throwing hand-grenades. Funnily enough, this "antique" practice has come into fashion again, hand-grenades having been used with considerable effect both in the Russo-Japanese War and in the great World War.

"Almost despotic power was given to the masters, but only one, a very objectionable old Frenchman, who had the junior class, really exercised it vindictively. If an unfortunate boy, ignorant of French, had too many mistakes in his exercises, he was simply reported to the Superintendent of Studies for incorrigible idleness, which meant every afternoon for a fortnight in the "hole" writing impositions. The "hole" was a room containing a table and a chair, with waved-glass windows, which admitted light but could not be seen out of. Instead of the ordinary college dinner, the unfortunate boy got only bread and water, except on every third day, when he had a plate of meat. He was only released each night in time to go to bed. No investigation or inquiry whatever as to the truth of the instructor's report was made by the Superintendent of Studies, whose billet,

as far as work was concerned, must have been a perfect sinecure. Instead of sending for the cadet to see what a little talking to would do, or to hear what he had to say, as soon as the irascible instructor's report came in, the unfortunate boy, age about fourteen, was sentenced to a long spell of the 'hole,' to the detriment not only of his health but of his progress in other subjects, in which he might be giving the utmost satisfaction to his instructors."

There was no proper gymnasium, the old "gym" being apparently used for settling "affairs of honour" with the fists, a regular ring being formed and a sergeant attending to see fair play. There was no fagging, but there were various "customs," such as that which prevented a "John," or first-half cadet, from wearing his chin-strap down.

"The board and lodging of the cadets," says General Tulloch, "were of Spartan simplicity. Each room on the upper storey of the College had five cadets assigned to it, and was furnished, or rather unfurnished, very much like a soldier's room in the present day, five barrack bedsteads being placed along the wall. The bedding was rolled up during the day; what would have happened to a cadet who presumed to unstrap his bedding and lie down, except at night, has been forgotten, but he certainly



would not have done it a second time. A small compartment like a bird-cage and a canvas bag were given to each boy to hold his small articles and clothes. The rooms were not comfortable, the floor being sanded and the door being left wide open during the day. There were not even strips of carpet by the sides of the beds, and such luxuries as slippers were unknown. There were no dressing-tables, chests of drawers, or washstands—the basins were placed on the chairs, of which each cadet had one, and also a small tin foot-bath. For breakfast a cadet had a bowl of boiled milk, as much bread as he wanted, and a pat of decidedly nasty butter, which had to be macerated in some of the milk to make it palatable. Dinner consisted of a leg or shoulder of mutton for each table of ten cadets, with an unlimited supply of waxy potatoes in their skins, and as much bread and small beer as was wanted. The five seniors at the top of the table generally managed to get a good feed of mutton, but the mangled remains left by the boy-carver which came to the juniors were not particularly appetising. The second course on alternate days consisted of boiled rice-pudding, which was very fair, or baked plum-duff, known as 'stick-jaw,' so badly cooked that few could eat it. Such necessary articles of diet as green vegetables or

fruit tarts were quite unknown. On Sundays the cadets had ribs of beef instead of mutton. This was a great treat ; so much appreciated was it that the more voracious juniors used to go round the table on the chance of finding some of the ribs not entirely cleared of meat. The evening meal, tea and bread and butter of the usual description, was taken in the cadets' room , the tea and sugar being served out in bulk once a week. The feeding at the College was certainly not sufficient or suitable for growing boys, and had to be supplemented by the tuck-shops in the village, usually on tick. The high prices charged for jam and potted meats would rather astonish school-boys of the present time."

When the writer was at Sandhurst in 1879-80 there were still in existence in the more remote parts of the College ground certain caves which, so the legend went, had been dug by previous generations of cadets to serve as secret smoking-rooms. We who were of older growth, ranging from about eighteen to twenty-four, and could smoke whenever we pleased out of parade and lecture hours, used to regard these excavations with some contempt. But doubtless they gave the youngsters who dug and used them—very possibly young Fred Roberts was one—a good deal of "fearful joy" intermixed with

the discomfort with which early smoking is usually accompanied.

In June, 1848, Roberts left Sandhurst and was transferred to a preparatory military training establishment at Wimbledon, pending a vacancy in the East India Company's Military College at Addiscombe, near Croydon, to which his father had now decided to send him with a view to a future Indian military career. Addiscombe was an important institution, in which the East India Company always took a fatherly interest, and from which a large number of excellent officers were turned out. From the cadets trained at Addiscombe the whole of the officers of the East India Company's artillery and engineers, as well as a small number for the infantry, were supplied. The rest of the Company's infantry and all its cavalry were officered by direct appointment, on the nomination of one of the Company's Directors. These nominations were not difficult to obtain, and no doubt a distinguished officer like young Roberts's father could easily have had one had he wished. But he was evidently anxious that his son should have the most complete military education possible before entering the Army, and doubtless, too, thought that the lad's taste for mathematics pointed to his succeeding well!

in one of the two "scientific corps," as the artillery and engineers are commonly called, although nowadays there are few branches of the Service in which a certain amount of "science" is not extremely useful.

The course at Addiscombe lasted nearly two years. Roberts entered at the beginning of 1850 as one of a "team" of about sixty. Evidently he worked steadily, but his health at this period is said to have caused his people a good deal of anxiety, for he was subject to fainting fits, and it was feared that his heart might be affected. His subsequent career, in which, with the exception of Peshawar fever, there were very few sick-list intervals, and his capacity for standing any amount of physical or mental strain, show that whatever early weaknesses he may have suffered from, he grew out of them. At the same time much of his good health in after life was undoubtedly due to very careful and temperate habits. He was never anything but what is generally known as "a good fellow," and seems always to have enjoyed the brightness and sociableness of the various military messes of which he was a member, but he was very particular at all times, and made a point of keeping himself "in condition" quite to the end of his long and splendid life. An interesting and touching little anecdote

bearing upon this characteristic will be found in the chapter dealing with the South African War.

Life at Addiscombe seems to have resembled that at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, under present conditions, both studies and recreation being, of course, on a different level from that at Sandhurst, though many of the cadets at the R.M.C. must have been quite as old as the younger ones at Addiscombe. There was not quite such a plethora of instructors and administrative officers, and the Sergeant-Major appears to have been a person, from the cadets' point of view, of great importance. But the course was a practical one, and the instruction excellent. As already remarked, the Directors of the East India Company took a special interest in the College, and one of them always came down to present the prizes and to deliver an address for the special benefit of the outgoing "team."

Roberts passed out of Addiscombe at the end of 1851, ninth in his batch, and, as there were never more than a few vacancies available in the Engineers, he could only hope to be sent to the Artillery, which, judging from his later career, was more to his taste. In due course he was given a commission as 2nd Lieutenant in the East India Company's Bengal Artillery, dated December 12th, 1851; and on

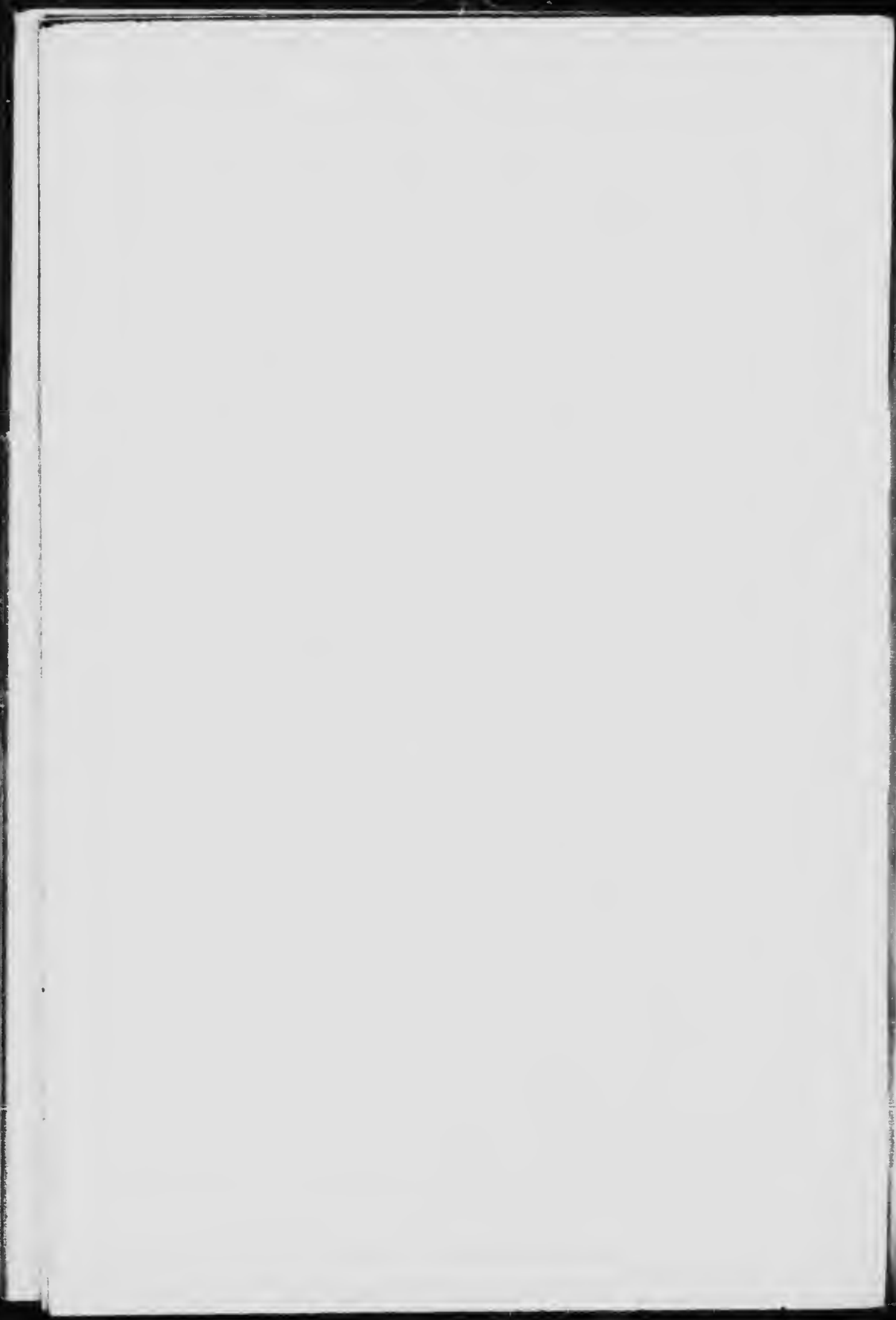
February 20th, 1852, he set sail from Southampton for Calcutta—a stripling not quite nineteen and a half years old, with his foot on the very lowest rung of the ladder to the top of which he was destined to climb, not only filling the highest posts in the Army, but in a variety of ways laying his country under an imperishable debt of gratitude and the deepest possible sense of affectionate regard.



THE SURRENDER OF CRONJE AT PAARDEBERG.  
From the drawing by R. CATO WOODVILLE.]

Lord Roberts.]

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## CHAPTER III.

### FIRST YEARS IN INDIA.

THE VOYAGE OUT—LIFE AT DUM-DUM—A DREARY TIME—  
GLOOMY REFLECTIONS—GOOD NEWS—CONTRASTS OF A SOLDIER'S  
CAREER—FROM CALCUTTA TO PESHAWAR—FATHER AND FRIEND—  
ROBERTS AS A.D.C.—A TRIP TO KASHMIR—GETS HIS JACKET—  
AN EAGER HORSEMAN—VISIT TO SIMLA—LEARNING THE LANGUAGE  
—A " B. P. " STORY—ROBERTS AS D.A.Q.M.G.—THE BUMP OF  
LOCALITY.

**R**OBERTS landed in India on April 1st, 1852, after a journey which had lasted five and a half weeks, but which can now be compassed in fifteen days. The route was by steamer—there was then only one a month—to Alexandria, thence by Canal boat and Nile steamer to Cairo, from Cairo across the desert for ninety miles in " a conveyance closely resembling a bathing-machine " to Suez, and from Suez by another steamship to Calcutta. The voyage was a cheery one, as almost any voyage is to a youngster in good health and with a new life

opening before him, but Roberts's introduction to his duties and his life at Calcutta generally was disappointingly dull. He was duly posted to a native field battery at the neighbouring station of Dum-Dum, and went through his laboratory course, but, apart from the interest he always took in his work, he had a wretched time. Calcutta was then both dreadfully unhealthy and unspeakably dull, at any rate for a young subaltern with no companions of his own age—all the available young Gunner officers had been sent to the recently-annexed Punjab or to Burma on active service—and with seniors who treated him with a curious lack of hospitality. Such a condition of things does not exist nowadays, and nowhere can a young officer join his corps without being made to feel at ease and given every chance to get over any feeling of loneliness or homesickness.

Lord Roberts afterwards wrote rather bitterly of his experiences at this period. He felt convinced, he says, that he could never be happy in India, and regarded with increasing gloom his prospects of promotion, which indeed seemed hopeless, for he was only a supernumerary Second Lieutenant in the Bengal Artillery, in which corps it was almost the invariable rule for officers to spend at least fifteen

years before getting their captaincies. After a cyclone which almost wrecked Dum-Dum and made it an even drearier hole than before, Roberts could stand the place no longer, and wrote begging his father, who was then commanding the Lahore Division, to try to get him sent to Burma. General Roberts replied that he expected soon to get the command of the Peshawar Division, and that, if he did so, he would arrange for his son to join him. This revived the youngster's drooping spirits, and he had not long to wait, for in August his marching orders came and he set out joyfully for Peshawar. "I had only been four months in India," he writes, "but it seemed like four years." He was never to spend such a gloomy four months in India again, and the contrast between the almost ceaseless activity of his subsequent career and that dreadful spell of dullness and despair at Calcutta and Dum-Dum is indeed curious.

There are many such contrasts in soldiers' lives, in which the unexpected is constantly happening, sometimes with happy results, sometimes with disappointing or even tragic ones. The writer remembers another very highly distinguished officer saying that at the beginning of the Afghan War he was lunching with Sir George Pomeroy Colley, to

whom he was bemoaning his hard lot, for he was only a very senior Captain of Artillery with no prospects, and so sick of disappointments that he had thought seriously of "chucking" the Service, while Colley, though comparatively young, had succeeded wonderfully and was sure of future speedy advancement. Within a year or two Colley lay dead on the slopes of Majuba, and my friend, having done splendidly on the staff in the Afghan War, was a Colonel and a C.B. So it was, as we shall see later, with Roberts.

The journey from Calcutta to Peshawar in those days was long and tedious, part being performed in a barge towed by a steamer, part in a pony carriage, and part—600 miles—in a palanquin. Roberts broke the journey by staying a few days with relatives and friends, and it was not until November that he arrived at his destination. The meeting of young Roberts with his father after a separation of eight years is better, perhaps, imagined than described. For both it must have been like the making of an altogether new acquaintance, but it is evident that the strangeness soon wore off, and that the father, now sixty-nine years of age, and the son of twenty, became the closest of friends with the shortest possible delay.

General Roberts had, as mentioned in the first chapter, a long experience of the wild tribes of the Indian borderland, and was able to tell his son much that was not only well worth listening to at the moment, but proved extremely useful to the younger man when he, too, became a General Officer whose duties in war and peace made the Frontier one of his most absorbing interests.

Young Roberts acted, as the sons of General Officers often do, as his father's Aide-de-camp, a post the duties of which vary a good deal according to the requirements of the General in question. Strictly speaking, an A.D.C. is supposed to be literally a help to the General in the field, and he generally is that on active service; but in peace he is more often employed in social duties, such as sending out invitations for the General's dinner-parties, looking after his guests, and so on. In Roberts's case the appointment was not allowed to interfere with his ordinary work as a Gunner officer, and, though he lived with his father, he had to perform his regimental duties strictly and regularly. This continued for eighteen months, when young Roberts took six months' leave to Kashmir, one of the loveliest places in the world, which once belonged to England but was sold by us for a miserable three-quarters of a million and is

now a flourishing native state. It is, however, "feudatory" to us, and supplies a useful contingent of "Imperial Service Troops" which has done good service in several wars and expeditions.

Returning to Peshawar in the autumn of 1854, Roberts in November, to his great delight, "got his jacket," in other words, was posted to a Horse Artillery Battery. The Bengal Horse Artillery, like the Royal Horse Artillery of to-day, was a veritable *corps d'élite*, both officers and men being the pick of the East India Company's service, while the uniform was even more gorgeous than that now worn by the R.H.A. The "jacket" was much the same, but white buckskin breeches were worn, and, instead of the busby, a brass helmet covered in front with leopard skin, and surmounted by a long red plume which drooped over the back like that of a French cuirassier.

Lord Roberts says of the troop to which he was now posted, that it was composed of a magnificent body of men, most of whom could have lifted him up with one hand. They were fine riders, and young Roberts soon became one, too, for with his accustomed thoroughness he at once set to work and did not rest until he had ridden in turn all the horses, some of them rather unmanageable animals, in the troop.

He mentions with some satisfaction that the trouble he took in this direction qualified him to ride in the officers' team of the regimental brake, which was drawn by six horses, each ridden by an officer postillion fashion. Not a great honour, we may think, for a man of twenty-two to aspire to, but to represent one's corps in any way *is* an honour which officers rightly appreciate for much the same reason as a boy is proud of his cricket or football colours.

In 1854-55 Roberts, having suffered a good deal from fever, was given sick leave and revisited Kashmir, returning over the mountains by way of Simla, which had not then become the regular summer capital of India, but was usually the residence during the hot months of some at least of the higher officials. Roberts's first visit to the place was memorable because he met there the Quartermaster-General, who was favourably impressed with him and soon after took the young horse gunner into his department, with gratifying results in the way of speedy advancement.

Indeed, Roberts might have become Deputy-Assistant-Quartermaster-General sooner than he did but for the fact that he had not passed the prescribed examination in Hindustani. His disappointment

took the shape of a prompt resolve to clear away the obstacle, and, engaging a munshi, or instructor in native languages, he shut himself up for two or three months, passed the examination, and in the autumn of 1856 entered, as D.A.Q.M.G., the Quartermaster-General's Department, in which he continued to serve almost interruptedly until 1878, when he left it as its head.

Lord Roberts was always in later years keen on the usefulness of a good knowledge of Hindustani. Sir Robert Baden-Powell tells a story of his first meeting with him, which illustrates this rather well. "It was at Simla," writes the Chief Scout. "I had just joined the Army, and was enjoying myself in all the glory of my new uniform at a ball. I had gone to the refreshment-room to get something for my partner, but I could not make the native waiter understand what I wanted, as I had not at that time learnt any Hindustani.

"A small but very polite officer alongside me kindly explained to the servant what I wanted. Then he said to me that, if I wanted to enjoy India, I ought to learn the language as soon as possible—I should get much more fun out of the country if I could talk to the natives. And he asked me my name and where I was staying.



"After thanking him, I thought no more about the matter till next day, when there arrived at my house a native teacher of languages, who said that Sir Frederick Roberts had sent him to give me some lessons!"

I will finish this chapter with another anecdote, this time in Lord Roberts's own words, showing how quickly he "tumbled" to his new duties as D.A.Q.M.G. Some of the troops at Peshawar were marching in the neighbourhood under the command of the Brigadier, and had come to an unsurveyed patch of country where there were no regular camping-grounds. It was Lieutenant Roberts's duty as D.A.Q.M.G. to go on ahead and look for suitable places for an encampment:

"On one occasion the best place I could discover was between two and three miles off the main road. There was no difficulty in reaching it by day, but I was afraid of some mistake being made when we had to leave it in the small hours of the morning, few things being more bewildering than to find one's way in the dark from a camp pitched in the open country when once the tents have been struck. It was my duty to lead the column and see that it marched off in the right direction; knowing how anxious the Brigadier was that the new ground

should be reached while it was cool, and the men be thus saved from exposure to the sun, I was careful to note my position with regard to the stars, and to explain to the officer who was under orders to command the advance guard the direction he must take. When the time came to start, and the Brigadier was about to order the bugler to sound the march, I saw that the advance guard was drawn up at right angles to the way in which we had to proceed.

“ The officer commanding it was positive he was right, and in this he was supported by Brigadier Cotton and some of the other officers ; I was equally positive that he was wrong, and that, if we marched as he proposed, we should find ourselves several miles out of our course. The Brigadier settled the question by saying I was responsible for the troops going in the right direction, and ordering me to show the way. The country was perfectly bare, there was not a tree or object of any kind to guide me ; and the distance seemed interminable. I heard opinions freely expressed that I was on the wrong road, and at last, when the Brigadier himself came up and said he thought I must have lost the way, I really began to waver in my conviction that I was right. At that moment my horse stumbled into a ditch, which

proved to be the boundary of the main road. I was immensely relieved, the Brigadier was delighted, and from that moment I think he was satisfied that I had, what is so essential to a Quartermaster-General in the field, the bump of locality."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE OUTBREAK OF THE MUTINY.

MUTINY A "PICTURE WORD"—ITS MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE—THE SEPOY REVOLT—TRAGIC YET INSPIRING—THE COMPANY'S ARMY—SLACK OFFICERS—INDIFFERENCE AT HEADQUARTERS—NATIVE GRIEVANCES—THE GREASED CARTRIDGES—NATIVE LOVE OF PLOTS—THE BAZAAR TELEGRAPH—THE CHUPATTIS—THE MEERUT OUTBREAK—A TERRIBLE SUNDAY—REBELS OFF TO DELHI—THE FLAGSTAFF TOWER—BUTCHERY IN THE PALACE—THE STORY OF THE MAGAZINE—SPLENDID HEROISM OF WILLOUGHBY—THE AREA OF THE MUTINY—SOME LEADING PERSONALITIES.

THERE are many words in our language which may fairly be called "picture words," because of the vivid pictures which even the passing use of them calls up. I think we may say that the word "mutiny" is one of these. You can hardly say it without thinking of some ugly episode in which men, often trusted men, have risen against their masters, and in many cases overpowered and killed them. Then very often there has come the terrible sequel, when the mutineers have found the tables

turned upon them, and sharp punishment exacted for the outrages they have committed, or tried to commit, in defiance of law, order, and discipline. It is generally, by the way, the last of these which has been violated, for the word "mutiny" is by common usage applied mostly to risings in which sailors or soldiers or other people subject to rigorous discipline are concerned, and it is because it is an offence against discipline that mutiny is always punished with peculiar severity. In the old days we used to have in our army a "Mutiny Act" in which the scale of punishments under this head was set forth. The old Act is no longer in force, but under the "Army Act" which has taken its place, the punishments can still be awarded, and the word "death" occurs pretty frequently in the list.

Of all the great mutinies in the world's history the Indian Mutiny, or, as it is sometimes called, the Sepoy Revolt, is by far the most tragic, the most deeply interesting, and, strange to say, the most inspiring. For the exceptional feature of this great and terrible event was that, apart from the ghastly record of broken faith and massacre, it produced a truly glorious succession of noble deeds, ranging from deeply touching instances of fidelity and devotion of natives, who, amid

a storm of threats and inducements, remained true to their masters, to superb examples of the purest heroism on the part of British soldiers and their splendid leaders. The tale of the siege and relief of Lucknow is one of the most thrilling in all our annals, and the names of Havelock, Outram, Nicholson, the two Lawrences, and Colin Campbell, will stand written in letters of gold on the long memory-roll of those who served their country grandly in the darkest hours of difficulty and danger.

The story of the Mutiny is so long and complicated that it can only be told here in outline and with special reference to Lord Roberts's connection with it. But it is essential to the proper understanding of the circumstances in which the young gunner officer, now serving on the Staff, won his Victoria Cross, and made himself otherwise a marked man, to have some idea of the way in which the Mutiny of the Indian Army came about and of the thrilling events which led up to the siege and capture of Delhi and the relief of Lucknow.

In a previous chapter I have said something of the old "Company's Army," but purposely postponed till now one or two details which had an important bearing upon the outbreak of the Sepoy Revolt.

Among these details is the fact that for a long time previously to 1857 the Company's Army had been getting into a rather bad state, more especially, perhaps, as regards the European officers, many of whom were becoming extremely slack and careless. Native regiments in India do not live in barracks, but in "lines" composed of mud huts, the officers living in bungalows apart, and often at a considerable distance from the lines. In 1856 a sepoy infantry regiment in Bengal consisted, apart from the European officers, of 1,000 privates, 120 non-commissioned officers called havildars and naiks (corresponding to our sergeants and corporals) and 20 commissioned native officers, known as subadars (captains) and jemadars (lieutenants). In a large native unit like this it is, of course, essential that the European officers should not only command but be in close touch with their men, taking an interest in their lives and especially in their grievances, and, whenever possible, helping to remove the latter by timely explanation, wise counsel, or prompt action. This is what in too many cases the European officers of the old Company's Army had grown too lazy or indifferent to do, with the result that, when disaffection crept into the ranks, it soon spread, and before long the whole Native Army was infected with a

complaint which if it had been taken in time might never have come to a head.

The authorities, too, at headquarters were a good deal to blame for what happened. They knew that a certain amount of trouble was brewing, and they had had some serious warnings. But they took it for granted that things would right themselves, and allowed matters to go from bad to worse without issuing the right kind of proclamations and taking other measures which would have helped to quiet the minds of the sepoy (" *sipahi* " is the Hindustani word for soldier) as to various fancied or real grievances.

These grievances need not be gone into here, especially as the more important of them are set out in all British history school books. A good many people who knew India well are of opinion that, if the belief of the sepoy that cow's fat and lard were being used to grease the new cartridges then being served out to the native Army—the flesh of the cow being hateful to the Hindus and that of the pig to the Mussulmans—had been promptly attended to, there would have been no real outburst. But others think that anyhow the native army was ripe for a mutiny, and, indeed, there had been a good deal of more or less open insubordination before the story of the greased



cartridges, with all sorts of wild additions, had spread wildfire all through Bengal. The amazing thing is that, not only were these warnings practically unheeded, but that British officers who had belonged for many years to the native regiments were taken by surprise when their own corps broke out into revolt. In some cases, no doubt, this was due to an almost touching belief in the loyalty and fidelity of the ranks, but one fears that in a great many instances it simply meant that the officers, living a life apart and taking little or no interest in their work or their men, were stupidly ignorant of what was going on under their very noses. The only excuse that can be found for them is that for the regimental officer the old East India Company's Service was anything but attractive.

All the best men were taken away to serve in Staff or other special appointments, or in posts the duties of which were of an entirely civilian character. Also the rate of promotion was so slow that captains of fifty were frequently to be met with, and, when Native and British troops worked together, the precedence enjoyed by the latter frequently enabled youngsters only a short time out from home to take command of men who had served in India for twenty years. Naturally, perhaps, in these

circumstances there was a falling off of professional zeal and activity.

What made matters worse was the fact that native Indians simply love all kinds of plots and intrigues, and the more secret and mysterious a thing is, the more strongly it appeals to them. Further, they have peculiar methods of communicating among themselves when anything special is happening or is going to happen. Some of these methods have never been quite understood by Europeans, notably the curious means by which news, afterwards proved to be authentic, gets about parts of India where no telegraph is available much more quickly than it can be carried by ordinary messengers. Various explanations have been given of this system of news transmission, but it remains a mystery, and sometimes a rather uncomfortable one, although nowadays Western methods of communication are generally sufficiently speedy for all military purposes. Indeed, it may almost be said that there is no greater safeguard against risings on a large scale than wireless telegraphy would be, and, if there had been anything of the sort in India in 1857, there is no doubt that thousands of lives would have been saved and a great deal of misery avoided.

In addition to what is sometimes spoken of as the

“bazaar telegraph” (an Indian “bazaar” is the quarter of a native town or village in which the various shops are collected) there is a queer custom in India, seldom practised and all the more significant because of that, of passing from village to village unleavened cakes called *chupattis*, usually with a view to preparing the country folk for some great forthcoming event. There had been native prophecies that in 1857, the centenary of the Battle of Plassy, the East India Company’s rule would come to an end, and, when early in that year it became known that *chupattis* were being swiftly circulated throughout Bengal, it should have been evident to the Government that the native population was in an excited state. But the Viceroy and his colleagues took no heed, and were even somewhat slow to action when mutinous outbreaks occurred in the neighbourhood of Calcutta. One such outbreak at Barrackpore was sharply dealt with, the ringleaders being brought to trial and hanged. Another explosion at Lucknow was more promptly checked by Sir Henry Lawrence, but it was then too late, and within a week the demon of revolt had been let loose, and another great military station, one of the largest in India, was ablaze.

On Saturday, May 9th, 1857, there was a great

"punishment parade" at Meerut, forty miles from Delhi, where three regiments of sepoy, two of infantry, and one of cavalry, were stationed, as well as the famous British cavalry regiment, the 6th Dragoon Guards, better known as the Carabiniers, two troops of Horse Artillery, and a battery of Field Artillery. Three days previously eighty-five men of the native cavalry regiment had refused to accept cartridges which had been served out to them, notwithstanding the fact that these were of the old pattern, in which grease was not used. The offenders were at once arrested, tried by court-martial, and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. On the Saturday seventy-four of the men—mercy having been extended to eleven on account of their youth—were brought on parade in the garrison, stripped of their uniform, put in irons, and taken off to jail.

On the Sunday afternoon, when the troops were parading for afternoon church—without their rifles, which nowadays in India they always carry on Church Parade, in consequence of what happened on that terrible day—there was a sudden alarm. In the native lines, which were a considerable distance from the barracks of the European troops, there had been awful happenings. The sepoy,

taunted by the native women in the bazaars for allowing their comrades to be imprisoned, had worked themselves up into a state of frenzy; the prisoners had been released, and the men of one of the native regiments had shot the colonel of another. After that the native soldiers simply went mad, sabring or shooting all the Europeans they came across, and setting fire to their houses.

The European troops, one is sorry to say, made a sad muddle of the situation, which, critical as it was, might possibly have been saved, at any rate at Meerut, by really swift and decisive action. In the case of the Rifles there was fatal delay in serving out arms and ammunition; in that of the Carabiniers the form of calling the roll was absurdly gone through, and the latter, in trying to find the native lines, lost their way. When at last they arrived they found that after their work of butchery and arson the sepoys had gone off, some, as it afterwards transpired, to Delhi, with the idea of inciting the native troops there to join in the revolt and to proclaim Bahadur Shah, the head of the old so-called Royal Family of Delhi and a descendant of the Mogul Emperors, Sovereign of Hindustan. Even when it became known that the mutineers were on the way to Delhi, where there were no European troops, the

military authorities at Meerut decided not to send the Carabiniers and 60th Rifles after them, but kept these regiments behind to guard the local barracks and treasury.

Lord Roberts himself defended this proceeding on the ground that the infantry could not have arrived at Delhi in time to have been of much use, and that it would have been futile to send on such a small body of mounted troops. But one cannot help thinking that, had he been in command at Meerut, he would have acted very differently, and that at the head of the force, whatever it was, that went to the relief of Delhi, would have been the gallant "Bobs."

At Delhi, of course, the situation in these circumstances rapidly became desperate. The British cantonment was on rising ground known as the Ridge, about two miles from the city, but in the heart of the latter was a great Magazine containing immense stores of ammunition. The General, in command of the station, on hearing that the rebels were approaching Delhi, ordered all the non-military European residents to assemble at a building on the Ridge known as the Flagstaff Tower, and made what dispositions he could with the native troops under his command. The Magazine remained in

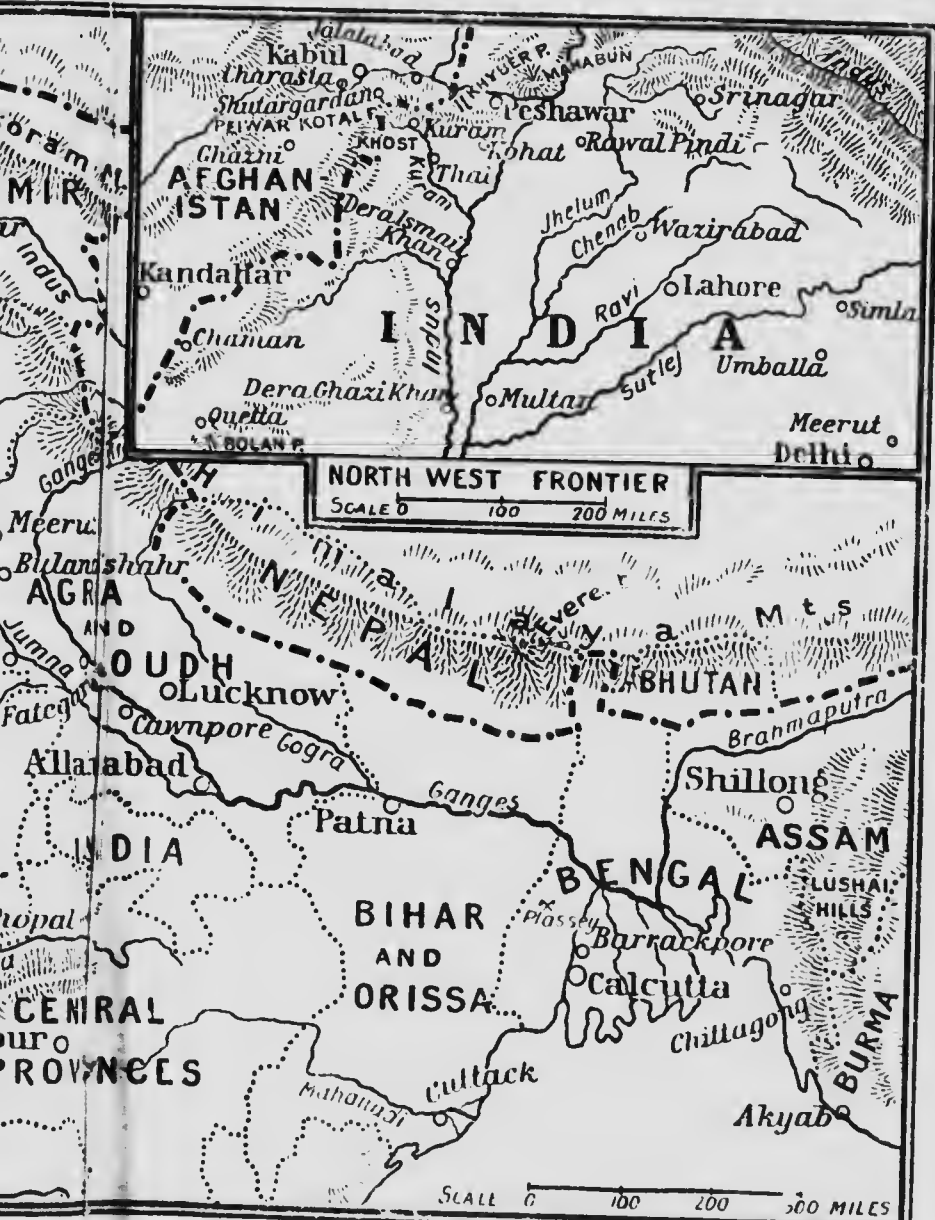




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NORTHERN INDIA AND





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charge of Lieutenant Willoughby, of the Royal Artillery, who had under him two other officers, six European non-commissioned officers, and some native gunners. All Monday morning and part of the afternoon the garrison waited in suspense, yet with every hope of the arrival of European troops from Meerut.

As we have seen, that hope was vain. The rebels arrived, but no European soldiers to hold them in check, and very shortly the native troops in Delhi joined the Meerut regiments, shooting down their own European officers. Then a butchery, worse than that which had taken place the previous day at Meerut, followed. Within the old Royal Palace at Delhi were several European officials and an English chaplain with his wife, daughter, and another young lady; all these were sought out and slaughtered. A number of other Christian men, women, and children were first thrown into the Palace dungeons and afterwards murdered in cold blood. A few European officers on the Ridge and the civilians in the Flagstaff Tower managed to escape and find their way to Umballa after terrible sufferings and privations.

The bright spot in the awful happenings of these terrible two days is the splendid behaviour of the defenders of the Magazine. My father, Mr. Talboys

Wheeler, tells the story in his *Short History of India* so graphically and yet so briefly that I cannot do better than quote his words:—

“ Willoughby and his eight associates had held out to the last, waiting and hoping for the coming of the Europeans. They had closed and barricaded the gates of the magazine ; and they had posted six-pounders at the gates, loaded with double charges of grape, and laid a train to the powder magazine. Messengers came in the name of Bahadur Shah to demand the surrender of the magazine, but no answer was returned. The enemy approached, and raised ladders against the walls ; whilst the native establishment escaped over some sheds and joined the rebels. At this crisis the guns opened fire. Round after round of grape made fearful havoc on the mass of humanity that was heaving and surging round the gates. At last the ammunition was exhausted. No one could leave the guns to bring up more shot. The mutineers were pouring in on all sides. Lieutenant Willoughby gave the signal ; Conductor Scully fired the train ; and with one tremendous upheaval the magazine was blown into the air, together with fifteen hundred rebels. Not one of the gallant nine had expected to escape. Willoughby

and three others got away, scorched, maimed, bruised, and nearly insensible ; but Scully and his comrades were never seen again. Willoughby died of his injuries six weeks afterwards, whilst India and Europe were ringing with his name."

Such was the beginning of the great Sepoy Revolt, which for a good many exhausting months was to keep a great part of India in a state of convulsion and alarm. The history of those months has been written in scores of volumes, from nearly every one of which it would be possible to select an incident or detail not recorded in the others. It is not to be expected that in this and the two following chapters I shall be able to do more than sketch lightly even such developments of the Mutiny as those with which Lord Roberts was personally associated. But, in order that the latter events may be more easily followed and understood, a few more facts may conveniently be stated here instead of in the more personal narrative.

Readers who know little about the geography of India should refresh their memories by studying the relative positions of Peshawar, Umballa, Multan, Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, and Cawnpore. Also the areas covered more especially by Bengal, Punjab, the North-West provinces and Oudh.

As we have seen, it was in Bengal, quite near to the capital, Calcutta, that the first symptoms of disaffection were noticed, and it was chiefly the Bengal Army which was concerned from first to last in the Revolt. There were in those days three Indian armies, one for each of the three great Presidencies, Bengal, Madras, and Bombay, and the Bengal Army provided the garrisons for the North-West Provinces, Oudh, and, to some extent, the Punjab. The Commander-in-Chief in India was General Anson, who died shortly after the Mutiny broke out, after making what Lord Roberts regards as worthy if not heroic efforts to deal with a position which became in a few days one of almost incredible difficulty and danger. In the Punjab, which had only recently been conquered, we happily had as Chief Commissioner and representative of British rule one of the greatest men, if not the greatest man, who has ever set foot in India, Sir John, afterwards Lord, Lawrence. Under him were other splendid soldiers, holding in some cases civilian appointments, among them the two Chamberlains, Herbert Edwardes, and John Nicholson. At Lucknow Sir Henry Lawrence, Sir John's brother, was stationed as Chief Commissioner of Oudh, and at Cawnpore General Hugh Wheeler was in military command. There were in the Punjab a

THE OUTBREAK OF THE MUTINY. 63

number of Sikh regiments whose loyalty never wavered and the famous corps of Guides. Up in the hills were several battalions of Gurkhas, one of which, formerly the Sirmur Rifles, made, as we shall see, a splendid name for itself in the Siege of Delhi, besides instituting a comradeship with the old 60th Rifles which has been kept up steadily and faithfully ever since.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SIEGE OF DELHI.

AT PESHAWAR—THE NEWS ARRIVES—JOHN NICHOLSON—A COUNCIL OF WAR—ROBERTS AS SECRETARY—PROMPT DECISIONS—A DISAGREEABLE INCIDENT—ROBERTS SUSPECTED—THE EXPLANATION—THE MOVABLE COLUMN—MUTINEERS BLOWN FROM THE GUNS—A DISARMING PARADE—ROBERTS ORDERED TO DELHI—BATTLE OF BADLI-KI-SERAI—THE RIDGE—CITY OF DELHI—BASTIONED FRONTS—THE GURKHAS—THE SABZI MANDI—ROBERTS ARRIVES—UNDER FIRE—WOUNDED—THE CITY WALL BOMBARDED—THE ASSAULT—THE KASHMIR GATE—DEATH OF NICHOLSON—A PLUCKY RECONNAISSANCE—ATTACK ON THE KING'S PALACE—HODSON SHOTS THE DELHI PRINCES—A GLORIOUS SIEGE—GURKHAS AND RIFLES.

**Y**OUNG Roberts, as we have seen, was at Peshawar when the Mutiny at Meerut took place. The telegram bringing news of the outbreak and of the march of the mutineers to Delhi came like a thunderclap upon the astonished garrison, which, in spite of rumours of disaffection which had been going about in the early part of the year, had no idea of the extent of the trouble. Luckily, there were



at Peshawar or near it three really great men well fitted to take charge of affairs in such an emergency, namely, Herbert Edwardes, the Commissioner of Peshawar; John Nicholson, the Deputy-Commissioner; and Neville Chamberlain, the Commandant of the Punjab Frontier Force. The first two, although holding civilian appointments, were, like the third, officers of the East India Company's Army, and the second was soon to prove himself a military leader of uncommon merit. John Nicholson was indeed an exceptional man. His influence among the wild Frontier tribes was extraordinary, and in some parts of the Borderland he was actually worshipped as a saint by a sort of sect who called themselves "Nicholseyns." He was a man of commanding and distinguished appearance, with a fine black beard, and at this time he was thirty-six years of age. One of his peculiar qualities was his wonderful gift of foreseeing just what the natives would be likely to do under any given set of circumstances, and it goes without saying that this talent proved of special value in the trying crises which so frequently occurred in the course of the Mutiny.

On the arrival of the news from Delhi the civil and military authorities at Peshawar promptly held a Council, at which Lieutenant Roberts and another

young staff officer attended to record the decisions reached. The most important conclusion was that the chiefs and people of the Punjab should be trusted, and asked to help the Government against the Hindustanis, of whom there were over 40,000 belonging to the Company's Army serving in the Province. As against these the British troops available numbered 15,000 only. As will be seen later, the Punjabis rallied splendidly to our assistance, and eventually not only did the Punjab remain loyal, but thousands of Punjabi and Sikh soldiers were sent to aid in the suppression of the Mutiny in Bengal, distinguishing themselves on scores of occasions by their grit and gallantry in the face of fearful odds.

Another decision was to form a movable column, under command at first of Neville Chamberlain, who was afterwards succeeded by John Nicholson, the idea being that this should hold itself in readiness to move swiftly to any spot which might be threatened by an outbreak such as the local authorities could not deal with. To this column young Roberts was appointed as Brigadier Chamberlain's staff officer.

A disagreeable incident took place with reference to the proceedings of this Council, and, as it was surely the first and last time that "Bobs" was

suspected of doing the wrong thing, I borrow the story from his own book. When the meeting was over Roberts was instructed to telegraph confidentially the decisions arrived at to Sir John Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, and other high officials. Later in the day John Nicholson came to Roberts's house and told him that somehow the proceedings at the Council meeting had become known and that it was thought he might indiscreetly have disclosed them. Roberts, of course, was most indignant at the suggestion, and, after some heated remarks, the two went together to the telegraph office, where the signaller, on being pressed, admitted that he had "blabbed" to a friend. "This was enough," writes Lord Roberts, "and I was cleared. The result to me of this unpleasant incident was a delightful increase of intimacy with the man for whom above all others I had the greatest admiration and the most profound respect. As if to make up for his momentary injustice, Nicholson was kinder to me than ever, and I felt I had gained in him a firm and constant friend."

This meeting was held on Tuesday, May 12th, and about a fortnight later Brigadier Chamberlain and Lieutenant Roberts joined the newly formed Movable Column at Wazirabad. Roberts remained

with it for about a month, during which time the Column performed excellent service at several important stations in the Punjab, where the sepoys showed signs of giving trouble. At Lahore it was discovered that the 35th Native Infantry intended to revolt, and Chamberlain seized the opportunity of making a terrible example of two men who had been found with loaded muskets. These were dealt with by drum-head court-martial—an old form of procedure only used on field service and other cases of emergency—found guilty of mutiny, and sentenced to death. In order to inspire awe in their comrades, Chamberlain decided that the wretched men should be blown from guns, and this terrible mode of execution, which was afterwards resorted to on several occasions during the Mutiny, was duly carried out. In the case of Mussulmans it was specially dreaded as, by the tenets of Islam, it entirely destroyed all chances of entering the Mahomedan Paradise.

At Multan the Movable Column assisted at a "disarming parade," two disaffected native infantry regiments being quietly surrounded and told to pile their arms. It was a ticklish performance, but was satisfactorily carried through, thanks to Chamberlain's wonderful coolness and courage. There have

been few if any braver men in our Army, and when, many years afterwards, the Queen bestowed on him the bâton of a Field-Marshal, it was felt that this great honour had seldom been more nobly earned.

On June 24th Roberts's connection with the Movable Column came suddenly to an end, all artillery officers who were not doing regimental duty having been summoned to Delhi, where their services were badly needed. After the terrible events of May 11th the authorities at headquarters at once decided that at all costs Delhi must be retaken, and a column was promptly formed for that purpose, which was to have been led by the Commander-in-Chief, General Anson. On the 25th the command passed to Major-General Sir Harry Barnard, who early in June reached Alipore, ten miles from Delhi, where he was joined by a brigade from Meerut and a siege train. His whole force then consisted of about 600 cavalry, 2400 infantry, and 22 field guns, together with 150 European artillerymen, chiefly recruits, and the siege train, consisting of eight 18-pounders, four 8-inch, and twelve 5½-inch mortars, a very feeble equipment even for those days.

Having been warned that the enemy intended to

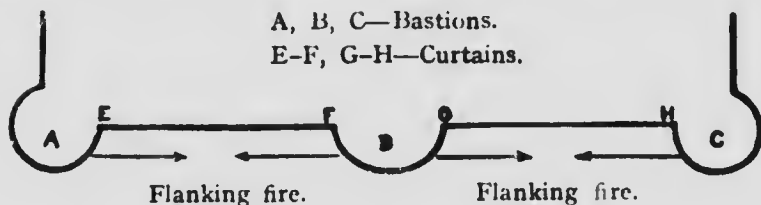
bar his approach to Delhi, Barnard advanced at midnight on June 7th, and at daybreak a brisk engagement took place at Badli-ki-Serai, five or six miles from Alipur. The mutineers were strongly posted and began the battle with a cannonade which did a good deal of damage. The native bullock-drivers of the siege-train then went off with their bullocks, and one of the wagons blew up. Things were looking rather ugly when Barnard ordered a charge, and the 75th Foot, now the 1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders, dashed at the enemy in splendid style, first carrying their artillery position and then, supported by the 1st Fusiliers of the Company's Army, engaging the rebel army with the bayonet. Meanwhile a brigade had passed round to the enemy's right rear, and the cavalry and horse artillery were threatening his left. Heavily punished and out-manceuvred, the rebels retreated in disorder to Delhi, leaving thirteen guns, two of them 24-pounders, in our hands, and, it is reckoned, 1,000 killed and wounded. Our own casualties were fairly heavy, 51 killed and 131 wounded, but the victory was a notable and important one. Not only did it prove that the British force could deal with a very much larger rebel army, but it enabled Barnard to push forward at once and occupy the famous Ridge.

from which all our operations against Delhi for the next three months were conducted.

The Ridge is quite a wonderful natural position. It rises to about sixty feet above the City of Delhi and is about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles long, stretching away to the north-east from a point about 1,200 yards to the west of the north-west corner of the city. The northern extremity of the position rests on the great river Jumna, thus rendering this flank secure. It was behind this end of the Ridge that the main British camp was placed during the siege. The Flagstaff Tower stood nearly in the middle, and between the Tower and the southern extremity of the Ridge was a stone building called Hindu Rao's House. About half a mile to the south-west was a sort of suburb of Delhi called Sabzi Mandi.

The city of Delhi was a huge mass of native buildings in a network of streets, occupying an area of four or five square miles, the eastern side resting on the Jumna and so being inaccessible to the besieging forces. The city was surrounded by a wall pierced by the Lahore, Ajmere, Turkoman, Delhi, Mori, Kabul, and Kashmir Gates. The wall consisted chiefly of what are known as "bastioned fronts with long connecting curtains," a "curtain" being an ordinary wall, while a "bastion" is a sort of

projection built out so as to allow of "flanking fire." Here is a diagram of a "bastion front" of the old sort (modern bastions are usually rectangular in shape and more elaborate in construction) from which it will be seen how the flanking fire is obtained.



This fire is needed in case the attacking enemy collect in the surrounding ditch, which at Delhi was 20 ft. deep and 25 ft. wide. The bastions were about 16 ft. high, and both bastions and curtains about 12 ft. thick. There were other works in the shape of martello towers at intervals, and a fort in front of the Ajmere Gate. Altogether the place was for those times quite strongly fortified, and the unfortunate thing was that the works had recently been much improved by a British engineer, Robert Napier, who was afterwards to become famous as Lord Napier of Magdala.

Inside the city the two most prominent objects were the great mosque known as the Juma Musjid and the King's Palace on the eastern side near the



river. From the latter to the Lahore Gate on the western side ran a famous street, mostly tenanted by silversmiths, called the Chandni Chauk.

For some weeks the British force on the Ridge, notwithstanding reinforcements—including the corps of Guides, which turned up "fresh as paint" from the Punjab after covering nearly 600 miles in twenty-two days—was really the besieged rather than the besiegers. Repeated attacks were made by the mutineers, more especially on Hindu Rao's House, near which two companies of the 60th Rifles, the Simur battalion of Gurkhas, and a couple of guns had been placed. These attacks were steadily repulsed, the Gurkhas covering themselves with glory by their determined gallantry. At first the mutineers hoped the Gurkhas would throw in their lot with them, and, as they were advancing on June 10th, they shouted out, "We are not firing; we want to speak to you; we want you to join us." "Oh yes," replied the Gurkhas, "we are coming," and then getting within twenty paces of the rebels they opened fire and killed nearly thirty of them.

A particularly violent attack from the Sabzi Mandi was made on the Ridge on June 23rd, the centenary of the Battle of Plassy, and at one time it seemed as if it would prove successful. The rebels

fought bravely, charging again and again, but the gallant defenders of the Mound Battery, against which the attack was particularly directed, held their ground manfully, and, after a day of fierce fighting, in which we had one officer and thirty-eight men killed and three officers and 118 men wounded (the enemy's casualties were over 1,000), the rebels were forced to retire. A picquet was henceforth placed in the Sabzi Mandi, which was the weak point in the British position, giving the mutineers just the sort of cover they wanted.

Lieutenant Roberts arrived in Delhi on June 28th, and the next day was told that he was to serve as Deputy-Assistant-Quartermaster-General (D.A.Q.M.G. "for short") with the Artillery, a staff appointment of a very comprehensive sort, some of the duties of which will be found indicated in chapter VIII. On the morning of June 30th Roberts was for the first time under fire during an attack made by the rebels on the Sabzi Mandi picquet and Hindu Rao's House, in which we had eight killed and thirty wounded. There was not much rest for those on the Ridge, and the same afternoon the young staff officer was out again with a reconnoitring column.

By this time the British force had been con-

siderably strengthened, and now numbered nearly 6,600 of all arms, a total which in the course of the next two and a half months was increased by about 3,000. The figure never rose to 10,000, while in Delhi there were 30,000 rebel soldiers, with a practically unlimited number of guns and stores of ammunition. For the next fortnight the fighting was almost incessant, and on July 14th there was a very brisk engagement, in the course of which Roberts was hit close to the spine by a bullet which would probably have ended his career but for the fact that it was checked by a leather pouch carrying pistol caps, which had somehow slipped round from front to back. As it was, the wound kept him on the sick-list for a fortnight, and for more than a month he could not mount a horse or put on a sword-belt.

In the middle of August the Punjab Movable Column, under command of Brigadier-General John Nicholson, arrived as a welcome reinforcement. By this time the Delhi Field Force was under the command of General Wilson, Sir Harry Barnard having died, and his successor, General Read, having been invalided. The fighting went on steadily, the British troops acting mostly on the defensive until, early in September, it was resolved, as fresh siege guns with ample supplies of ammunition had come

up, to carry the city of Delhi by assault. To that end batteries were prepared and fire was opened on one after another of the batteries of the enemy. Roberts, although on the staff, was posted to No. 2 battery, which was erected about 500 yards from the Kashmir Gate—the effective range of artillery in those days was, of course, not to be compared with that of modern guns—and early in the morning of September 11th the battery opened fire on the Kashmir bastion and the adjoining curtain. The enemy replied with a wonderfully accurate fire. “Immediately,” says Lord Roberts, “on the screen in front of the right gun being removed, a round shot came through the embrasure, knocking two or three of us over. On regaining my feet, I found that the young horse artilleryman who was serving the vent while I was laying the gun had had his right arm taken off.” For three days the pounding continued, and, practicable breaches having been made, the assault was ordered for daybreak on September 14th. It was to be made by five columns, three under command of Nicholson, who personally led No. 1 Column, a fourth under Major Reid, and a reserve column under Brigadier Langfield.

There were some inevitable delays, and the sun was well up when the British artillery fire suddenly



ROBERTS KNOCKED OVER BY A ROUND SHOT DURING THE SIEGE  
OF DELHI.

From the drawing by R. CALON WOODVILLE.

*See also*

*To face page 76*



ceased and Nicholson gave the signal for the assault. Two hundred of the 60th Rifles, who had been detailed to cover the advance of the first three columns, leapt forward with a cheer in skirmishing order, followed steadily by the assaulting troops. The mutineers on the parapets met the attack with a hail of musketry, but the gallant attackers pressed on into the ditch with their scaling-ladders, and, fighting fiercely, mounted the great ramparts, driving the rebel enemy before them.

A stirring episode of this splendid performance was the blowing up of the Kashmir Gate in order to make a passage for No. 3 Column, under command of Colonel Campbell, of the 52nd Light Infantry (now the 2nd Battalion Shropshire L.I.), who had under him 200 men of his own regiment and two native battalions. This column advanced towards the Kashmir Gate and halted while Lieutenants Home and Salkeld, of the Engineers, with eight sappers and miners, went quietly forward with powder-bags to blow up the gate, the ditch in front of which was now only spanned by a single beam. Under a hot fire the gallant little party, who were accompanied by a bugler of the 52nd, performed their perilous task, Home going first with the men carrying the powder-bags and Salkeld following with the others to fire

the charge. In placing the powder-bags in position Sergeant Carmichael was killed, and Havildar Madhu wounded, and, while trying to fire the charge, Salkeld was shot through the leg and arm. He handed the slow-match to Corporal Burgess, who successfully blew up the gate but was mortally wounded. Bugler Hawthorne sounded the regimental call of the 52nd three times, but the column heard neither it nor the sound of the explosion amid the din of the fighting. Luckily, however, Colonel Campbell had with no undue delay given the order to advance, and in single file the column passed over the plank-bridge and entered the city. By this time Nos. 1 and 2 Columns had come round from the breaches through which they had poured, and the three columns reformed as one inside the Kashmir Gate, and pushed forward. There were some heavy checks, and in endeavouring to force a narrow lane the gallant Nicholson fell mortally wounded. He was shortly afterwards found lying helpless in a doolie—a sort of native stretcher—by Roberts, who during the assault had been with General Wilson and had been sent into the city by the latter to see how the attack was progressing. Roberts collected some doolie bearers who took the dying leader to hospital, where nine days later he passed away. With almost



his latest breath he urged that at all costs the attack upon the city, which Wilson was inclined to abandon owing to the apparent hopelessness of success, should be pressed.

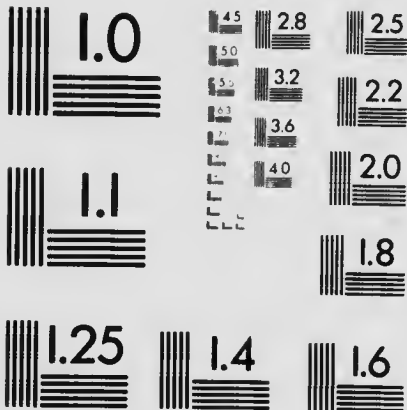
During the afternoon of the 14th Roberts, with two companions, Norman and Johnson, who afterwards, like himself, rose to great distinction, visited, at General Wilson's desire, every position occupied by the British troops within the city walls. Incidentally they and their guard were attacked by a body of the enemy, and a brisk little fight ensued, in the course of which Roberts's horse was shot under him.

During the next few days the attacking troops steadily forced their way through the city, stoutly opposed by the mutineers, until on the morning of the 20th they were near the main entrance to Delhi, the Lahore Gate, from which, as already noted, the Chandni Chauk led to the Royal Palace. This was still in the possession of the mutineers, and it was important to discover whether it could be taken in rear. Having captured some native tradesmen, Roberts and Lang, of the Engineers, made two of these guide them to a house looking out on the Chandni Chauk within fifty yards of the Lahore Gate, and from this point of vantage the two young officers quietly reconnoitred the position and satisfied



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themselves of the feasibility of an attack. A few hours later the troops were brought up and the Lahore Gate secured.

On September 20th the final attack was delivered on the King's Palace. The storming of this was entrusted to the 60th Rifles, to a party of which Roberts, who simply remarks in his own narrative, "at this, the last struggle for the capture of Delhi, I wished to be present," attached himself. The gate was blown open and the attackers rushed in, but there was little opposition, the King, with a small following, having fled to Humayun's Tomb, seven miles outside the city. By sunset on September 20th the British were again masters of Delhi. On the following day Roberts saw the old king of Delhi and also the lifeless bodies of his two sons and grandsons, whom Captain Hodson, of Hodson's Horse, had brought into Delhi and, fearing a rescue by the mob, had shot with his own hands, a deed of which, although held by many to have been justified by the circumstances, Lord Roberts speaks with grave regret and some repugnance.

The siege and capture of Delhi will always be regarded as one of the finest episodes in our military annals. Carried out under scorching sun, and to the accompaniment of terrible losses by disease, to say

nothing of casualties amounting to nearly 1,000 killed and 3,000 wounded out of a force which, as we have seen, never reached 10,000, it brought out in glorious relief the splendid qualities of endurance and cheerful courage for which the British soldier has always been famous. Not less conspicuous was the true-hearted gallantry displayed by the Sikhs, Gurkhas, and other loyal native troops. The latter had the happy effect of creating notable bonds of union, among which may be cited the historical friendship between the Sirmur Battalion of Gurkhas and the 60th Rifles. The former at the close of the siege made a special request that they should be allowed to wear the same uniform as their "brothers" in the 60th—a request which was granted, with the result that the 2nd Gurkhas to this day wear the same dark green with scarlet facings as the King's Royal Rifle Corps.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HOW THE V.C. WAS WON.

THE MUTINY AT CAWNPORE—THE WELL—HENRY HAVELOCK—ROBERTS AT BULANDSHAHR—A NARROW ESCAPE—ANOTHER AT AGRA—THE HIGHLANDERS—ON TO LUCKNOW—DEATH OF HENRY LAWRENCE—AT THE ALAMBAGH—A TICKLISH PERFORMANCE—THE ATTACK ON LUCKNOW—STIFF FIGHTING—THE RESIDENCY RELIEVED—DEATH OF HAVELOCK—BATTLE BEFORE CAWNPORE—MOVEMENT TO FATEGARH—ACTION OF KALA NUDDI—A STIRRING PURSUIT—ROBERTS WINS THE V.C.—BACK TO LUCKNOW—THE CITY CAPTURED—ROBERTS LEAVES FOR ENGLAND—A NOTABLE RISE—FIRST STAGE OF A GREAT CAREER.

**T**HREE days after Delhi had been occupied Lieutenant Roberts marched out with a column under Colonel Greathed in the direction of Cawnpore. Both at the latter place and at Lucknow there had been lurid happenings during the siege. At Lucknow the native garrison had mutinied and shot down their officers, and the Europeans, under the Commissioner, Sir Henry Lawrence, had been compelled to seek refuge in the

Residency, to the gallant defence of which I shall allude a little later. At Cawnpore there had been a horrible massacre of Europeans, including over a hundred women and children, whom a local native nobleman named Nana Sahib had promised to protect, afterwards causing them to be butchered in circumstances of the foulest treachery. The terrible story lies outside this narrative, but is mentioned in passing for reasons which will appear presently. In July General Henry Havelock marched from Allahabad on Cawnpore, and it was on learning of his approach that the infamous Nana Sahib ordered the slaughter of the women and children, whose bleeding remains were cast into the historic well. Havelock, after dispersing the rebels in front of Cawnpore, marched in, and when his men came to the well and beheld its awful contents, they almost went mad. For the rest of the Mutiny period there was no more effective spur to the tired British soldier, no stronger incentive to attack against odds, however great, than the words "Remember the women and children! Remember Cawnpore!"

After exacting such vengeance as was immediately possible at Cawnpore Havelock made an attempt to relieve Lucknow, but his small force was so weakened by fever, and the rebels were in such strength, that

he was forced to fall back. Havelock, it is convenient to mention here, was a veteran officer of the Regular "Queen's" Army, who had fought in several Indian campaigns and was noted for his strong religious views and rigidly abstemious habits. He was a pale, thin little man, very different in appearance from several of the other great Mutiny heroes, but the bravest of the brave, and, as a historian says, "burning with the aspirations of a Puritan hero."

Returning to Roberts, Greathed's column had only been four days on the march when they encountered a considerable body of the rebels at a place called Bulandshahr, and dispersed them after a stiff engagement, in which Roberts narrowly escaped being killed. He was riding a horse which had belonged to John Nicholson and which became greatly excited by the firing. In the thick of the fighting, which was of rather a rough-and-tumble order, Roberts saw a sepoy taking aim at him. He tried to ride the man down, but was prevented by the crowd; the sepoy fired, and luckily Roberts's horse reared and received the bullet in his head. Though badly wounded, the horse recovered and afterwards served his owner well, though probably never better than on this occasion!

In the course of the march the column came across





ROBERTS HAS A NARROW ESCAPE AT AGRA.

From the drawing by R. CALON WOODVILLE.

*Lord Roberts.*

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a fakir, or Hindu devotee, evidently under a vow of silence, who pointed to a small wooden platter which, on examination, proved to contain a hidden note from General Havelock, written in Greek characters, saying that he was on his way to Lucknow and begging anyone into whose hands the note might fall to come to his assistance. Before, however, this appeal could be responded to, another urgent note came from Agra, where later the column saw some serious fighting, being in fact rather badly surprised by the rebels. Here again Roberts had a narrow escape, being stopped by a dismounted sowar (trooper) who frightened his horse by waving a turban in front of his eyes and then made for Roberts with his sword. Roberts's revolver refused to go off ; he could not get at *his* sword owing to his horse's plungings, and thought he was done for when, to his relief, a man of the 9th Lancers came up and ran the sowar through the body.

From Agra the column, now under command of Hope Grant, marched to Cawnpore, where Roberts gazed with feelings of horror upon the scene of Nana Sahib's ghastly act of perfidy. Here for the first time the future Commander-in-Chief saw one of the Highland regiments, afterwards so closely associated with some of his greatest victories, and

was greatly impressed by its fine appearance, a truly striking contrast to that of the war-worn, travel-stained Movable Column. From Cawnpore Hope Grant moved out, taking with him four companies of the 93rd Highlanders, towards Lucknow, to which Sir Colin Campbell, who had just come out to India as Commander-in-Chief, was now proceeding in order to effect the final relief of the garrison. Between Cawnpore and Lucknow Roberts had another exciting adventure. He had gone forward with a brother-officer to look for a suitable site for the camp, when the pair suddenly found themselves intercepted by a large armed force. It was just touch and go, and only by riding hard and taking a long roundabout route was escape possible. At one point Roberts's horse stumbled and threw him into the river, from which he only struggled with difficulty, the shots of his pursuers coming thick and fast all round him. In the beginning of November the column arrived at the Alambagh, a garden-house about two miles from Lucknow, where it was joined on the 9th by Sir Colin Campbell, afterwards Lord Clyde.

Meanwhile Lucknow had been, in a sense, relieved by Havelock, of whose first unsuccessful attempt in August mention was made a short time back.

In September Havelock, having fallen back on Cawnpore, was joined by General Sir James Outram, known as the "Bayard of India," who, being Havelock's senior, might, if he had chosen, have superseded him in the command. But Outram generously waived his rank, and the two generals fought their way together to the Lucknow Residency. The garrison of the latter had now been beleaguered for four weary months, losing in July, through the bursting of a shell, their noble head, Sir Henry Lawrence, whose dying counsel to his comrades was "Never surrender!" But Havelock's and Outram's arrival was rather a reinforcement than a relief, and for another two months the siege went on.

On Sir Colin Campbell's arrival at the Alambagh, Outram managed to communicate with him by means of a messenger named Kavanagh, a civilian who bravely volunteered to carry the letter, and succeeded in passing through the rebel lines disguised as a native. Outram, in his despatch, recommended an advance by way of a large park called the Dilkusha, and the grounds of a college known, after its founder, a French soldier of fortune, as the Martinière. These recommendations were afterwards, as will be seen, duly carried out.

On the morning of November 11th, Sir Colin

Campbell reviewed the column, which even now only contained some 600 cavalry, 3,500 infantry, and 42 guns. That morning orders were issued for the advance on Lucknow, but the actual start was not made until the 14th, when the Dilkusha and Martinière were occupied, the latter after some stiff fighting. The Martinière lay behind the Dilkusha, and it is curious to read in Lord Roberts's reminiscences of a gallop across the park that fine November morning, a herd of browsing deer bounding away in all directions at the rattle of the guns, and the routed sepoys flying down the slope leading to the College in the rear.

On the night of the 15th, Roberts had a most unpleasant experience. Sir Colin Campbell, wishing to bring up more ammunition from the Alambagh, which had been made a sort of depôt, asked him if he could find his way back in the dark, and Roberts, trusting to be able to secure the services of a native guide, readily undertook to do so. But the guide was not forthcoming, and Roberts, accompanied by some other officers, and two squadrons of cavalry and 150 camels, had to find his way as best he could. It was a ticklish performance, and the party very nearly wandered into the enemy's lines. Thanks, however, to Roberts's pocket compass, the task was

satisfactorily got through, and the next morning the ammunition was safely brought up to the Dilkusha. Sir Colin, who had become very anxious, was greatly pleased with his young staff officer, and the latter, much elated, went off to the artillery camp and breakfasted on a steak cut off a gun bullock which had been lately killed by a round shot.

Between the Martinière and the Residency lay several strong places, notably the Sikandarbagh, a walled enclosure in which some 2,000 rebels had collected. These were successively stormed on the 16th and 17th, the attack on the Sikandarbagh affording a wonderful example of heroic emulation, Highlanders, Sikhs, Punjabi Mahomedans, Dogras, and Pathans making a glorious rush to be first through the breach in the wall made by the heavy guns. The race was won by a Highlander, who was shot dead; he was followed by a man of the 1st Punjab Infantry, who was killed. The first to get through alive were two officers of the 93rd, and after them poured a mixed stream of British and loyal native soldiers. "A drummer-boy of the 93rd," writes Lord Roberts, "must have been one of the first to pass that grim boundary between life and death, for when I got in I found him just inside the breach, lying on his back quite dead—a pretty,

innocent-looking, fair-haired lad, not more than fourteen years of age."

There was another stiff fight for the possession of what had formerly been the officers' mess-house, the attack on which was bravely led by Brevet-Major, afterwards Lord, Wolseley. When the place was captured Roberts, with some assistance, planted a regimental colour on one of the turrets in order that Outram, who had been gradually pushing forward from the Residency, might see how far the relieving force had advanced. Twice the colour was shot down by the rebels, but Roberts managed to prop it up a third time, and it was not hit again. On the 17th, the Residency was relieved, and a memorable meeting took place between Sir Colin Campbell, Sir James Outram, and Sir Henry Havelock, which has been immortalised in a famous picture.

In the course of the next few days the women and children were safely got away, the Residency was evacuated, a force was left under Outram at the Alambagh, and on the 27th the relieving column, with the exception of one regiment, which had been transferred to Outram's force, set out on the return march to Cawnpore. The withdrawal from the Residency was a difficult and delicate operation, most skilfully carried out in the face of 50,000 rebel





A MEETING WITH OUFAM AND HAVELOCK.

From the drawing by S. Begg.

*Lord Roberts*

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troops. The satisfaction caused by its successful accomplishment was, however, sadly chequered by the death of the gallant Havelock, who was carried off by dysentery on November 22nd. There have been greater military commanders in our history, but Henry Havelock lives in the minds of his countrymen as perhaps the first and foremost of the glorious band of Mutiny heroes, a man whose religious feeling, personal courage, and tenacity of purpose seem to link him closely with the best of those who fought under Cromwell in the early days of Puritan England.

They buried the fine old hero in the Alambagh, within modern gun-shot range of the Residency which he had struggled so manfully to succour, and his entry into which, two months before, had formed one of the most touching and dramatic episodes in our military annals.

Cawnpore in the meantime had been sorely pressed. General Windham, a "Queen's" officer, who had won distinction in the Crimea, had been left in command by Sir Colin Campbell when the latter went to Lucknow, and had suffered a reverse in an engagement outside the city with a large body of rebels under the command of an extremely clever native scoundrel named Tantia Topi. Windham

was forced to withdraw into Cawnpore and sent an urgent message begging Sir Colin to hasten to his assistance. The Commander-in-Chief promptly responded and with his little army which, even with recent reinforcements, only amounted to about 5,000 infantry, 600 cavalry, and 35 guns, attacked the rebels, numbering 25,000 with 40 guns, on December 6th, and drove them helter-skelter from the neighbourhood. It must have been a most picturesque battle, fought as it was on a fine open grassy plain, with the British troops in their ordinary uniforms, the Highlanders—the Black Watch had now joined the 93rd—in their bonnets and kilts, marching as if on parade, and a Naval Brigade under Captain (afterwards Sir William) Peel, handling their 24-pounders as if they were playthings. There was a grand pursuit, too, when the rebels had turned and fled, nineteen of the enemy's guns falling into the hands of the pursuers, among whom was the Chief himself, and, needless to say, Lieutenant Roberts, D.A.Q.M.G. Two days later, in a separate engagement in which young Roberts played a prominent part, the rebels were again heavily punished and fifteen more guns were captured.

There was not much rest for anyone in those trying times, and on December 23rd, Sir Colin Campbell

moved out of Cawnpore towards Fategarh with the idea of opening up communications between the Punjab and Bengal. Roberts accompanied the force as D.A.Q.M.G. to Hope Grant, now Sir Hope and a Divisional Commander. On New Year's Day, 1858, information was received that the enemy had been seen in the neighbourhood of the Kala Nuddi or Black River, a tributary of the Ganges, by a bridge over which the route to Fategarh lay. On the next day the rebels were located at Khudaganj, a village just across the river, and a smart action ensued. It had got about that Sir Colin Campbell was inclined to favour the Highlanders, and the 53rd, resenting this, and resolving that they should have the honour of delivering the assault on Khudaganj, without waiting for orders from the Commander-in-Chief, commenced the battle with a furious charge, which Sir Colin, angry as he was, was compelled to support by pushing up promptly with the rest of his troops. As the infantry, moving in splendid style up the slope leading to Khudaganj, neared the village the rebels limbered up their guns and retired. Hope Grant, perceiving this, rode, with Roberts in attendance, to the cavalry, who were drawn up behind some sand-hills, and ordered them in pursuit. Off they went, Hope

Grant placing himself at the head of his own old regiment, the 9th Lancers, and Roberts riding with a squadron of the 5th Punjab Cavalry under Lieutenant George Younghusband. As they galloped along, charging the fugitives, capturing guns, and reforming in order to resume the pursuit, Younghusband turned to Roberts and proudly drew his attention to the fine manner in which the men of his squadron were keeping their "dressing." For nearly five miles the line of pursuing cavalry thundered on, and then, as the light was beginning to fail and the last of the flying bodies of rebels appeared to have been overtaken, the order was given to wheel to the right and form up on the road. At that moment Younghusband's squadron came upon a batch of fugitive sepoy who turned, fired at close quarters, and attacked with fixed bayonets. The gallant Younghusband fell mortally wounded, and one of his sowars was so fiercely attacked that he must have been killed had not Roberts gone to his assistance and slain the rebel. The next moment he saw in the distance two other sepoy marching off with a standard. After them rode Roberts, and, cutting down the standard-bearer, wrenched the staff out of his hand. As he was doing so the other man put his musket close to the young officer's body and

pressed the trigger. Luckily the gun missed fire, and Roberts carried off the standard in triumph. It was for these two acts that Roberts was given the Victoria Cross.

The column remained a month at Fatagarh, and then moved again by way of Cawnpore on Lucknow, the city of which was still in the hands of the rebels. Hope Grant was now placed in charge of the Cavalry Division, Roberts remaining with him as D.A.Q.M.G. There was smart fighting before reaching the Alambagh, where Outram had remained with a division since the Relief, and careful preparations were necessary before the siege of the city, twenty miles in circumference and containing 120,000 armed and desperate rebels, could be attempted. The Commander-in-Chief's forces, however, had by this time risen in strength to nearly 31,000 men, with 164 guns, and under him he had quite a number of skilful, resolute, and experienced commanders.

In outline, the plan adopted for the capture of the city was a main attack across the river Gumti on the east side, simultaneously with a flank movement on the north to be carried out by a division which was to cross the river by a bridge of casks below the Dilkusha, and to cross it again to the north

of the city, so as to take the enemy's first and second lines of defence in rear. The latter movement was carried out by Outram, with Hope Grant as his second in command, and Roberts of course, as Hope Grant's staff officer, took part in it.

The proceedings commenced on March 5th, and lasted, one way and another, until the 24th. They were finally successful as far as the occupation of the city was concerned, and included some notable fighting, but were somewhat marred by the escape of far too many of the rebels. Lucknow having fallen, Roberts, who had been greatly overdone and who really ought to have been on the sick-list long before, placed himself in the doctor's hands, and was ordered home on sick leave. On April 1st, the sixth anniversary of his arrival in India, he handed over his office to Wolseley, and five weeks later embarked at Calcutta for England.

Such was Lord Roberts's remarkable connection with the great Sepoy Revolt. It was a memorable association, including as it did a close and honourable participation in both of the two leading Mutiny episodes, the Siege of Delhi, and the Relief of Lucknow, and, in addition, service in a number of other actions, some of them of a very serious and hardy-contested character. How nobly the young officer



rose to the occasion can hardly be realised from the foregoing brief narrative, in which a number of interesting details have necessarily been omitted. But even the bald statement of his services and the manner in which they were recognised by his superiors is inspiring. In May, 1857, he had left Peshawar a junior gunner subaltern, well thought of and holding an officiating staff appointment, but quite undistinguished and with no war service. Ten months later he left Lucknow an experienced fighting soldier, recommended for the Victoria Cross, and with the promise of a brevet, and the certainty of continued employment in the most important department of the General Staff. More than all, he had made a troop of friends among the best Army men in India, and had secured the warm personal commendation of the leading military chiefs. From that time forward he was a marked man, and began rising rapidly, as we shall see, to the highest honours.

But it is particularly to be noted that in spite of all this, young Roberts evidently put on no sort of "side." An officer who met him at this period says he was just the same bright, cheery, spick-and-span youngster he had always been, intensely proud of his V.C., but not in the least spoilt by his truly wonderful success.

Thus ended the first stage of Roberts's military life, a stage in which scores of promising youngsters have come to grief, either through failing to make good use of their opportunities, or through allowing themselves to think too highly of such successes as they have achieved. Roberts made neither of these mistakes. Keen as mustard he did everything that came his way with an eagerness and thoroughness which his chiefs could not but appreciate, and yet, with it all, he remained not only a gay and genial comrade, but a quiet, steadfast, thoroughly well disciplined youngster, cheerfully subordinating himself to those above him, and quick to acknowledge any mistakes that he might commit. He was the same to the end of his life, but such qualities shine more brightly between the ages of twenty and thirty, because at that period they are so often hidden, even in those good men who, the older they get, and the more distinguished they become, grow more humble and careful of what they do and how they behave to those around them.

## CHAPTER VII.

### UMBEYLA, ABYSSINIAN, AND LUSHAI EXPEDITIONS.

HOME ON LEAVE—MARRIAGE—RETURN TO INDIA—END OF EAST INDIA COMPANY—THE VICEROY'S TOUR—AT SIMLA ON THE STAFF—A ROYAL ARTILLERYMAN—THE UMBEYLA PASS—THE CRAG PLOQUET—ROBERTS GIVES ADVICE—A CHOLERA CAMP—THE ABYSSINIAN EXPEDITION—WORK AT THE BASE—BREVET-LIEUTENANT-COLONEL—WHY ROBERTS LEARNT TELEGRAPHY—THE LUSHAI RAIDERS—THE ENGINEER AND THE BRIDGE—VONOLEL—D.Q.M.G. AND C.B.—TROUBLE WITH AFGHANISTAN.

**R**OBERTS, on his return home in the early autumn of 1858, went to Ireland, where his father, a hale veteran of 74, had settled down with his wife and invalid daughter. The young soldier had, of course, an excellent time, spending a good deal of the winter in the hunting-field, where we may be sure his pluck and fine horsemanship were fully appreciated. His people lived at Waterford, and it was here that Lord Roberts met his future wife, who accompanied him on his return to India in the following June. Shortly before he

came away he was present "by command" at Buckingham Palace, where, with others, he received his Victoria Cross at the hands of the Queen.

A very pleasant, and, in some ways interesting, but rather uneventful, period in Lord Roberts's career ensued. Shortly after his return to India he was entrusted with the arrangements for a sort of state progress which the Governor-General, Lord Canning, was to make through northern India by way of impressing the natives with the fact that the Mutiny was over and done with, and that the old East India Company's rule had given place to that of the Queen of England. For, by Royal Proclamation, on November 1st, 1858, it had been announced that the Queen had taken over the Government of India, and that henceforth her representative would be known not only as Governor-General but as Viceroy. It may be mentioned in passing that the natives have never taken kindly to the latter designation. They always speak of the Viceroy as Mulk-i-Lord-Sahib, which means "Lord of the Country." The Commander-in-Chief is generally known as Jung-i-Lord Sahib, or the "Lord of Battles."

Lord Canning's tour was very stately and impressive, and included visits to Cawnpore, Lucknow, Delhi, Fategarh, and other places which had

been the scenes of historic conflicts in the Mutiny. One can readily imagine with what interest and pride young Mrs. Roberts went over the numerous battlegrounds in company with her husband, who had borne himself, as there were plenty of friends to tell her, so bravely throughout that terrible time. He himself, you may be sure, had little to say about his own share in the fighting, but was chiefly concerned in giving credit to others. Still, even he could not help feeling a little uplifted and self-conscious, when he pointed out, as he doubtless had to do at his wife's insistent command—women are apt to be very imperative about such things—the spot where he won the V.C.

After the tour Roberts and his wife went to Simla with the Army Headquarters Staff, and remained there off and on for some years, Major Roberts, as he was then, being deputed each cold weather to arrange for a succession of Viceregal tours, all very interesting, but not quite so congenial to a fighting soldier as campaigning. As a matter of fact he had a considerable disappointment about this time in not being allowed to go with an expedition to China under his old chief, General Hope Grant. The Commander-in-Chief, Lord Clyde (formerly Sir Colin Campbell) had intended to send Roberts

on the staff of the expedition, but had forbore to do so as he thought the newly-married couple would not like being separated. But neither Roberts nor Mrs. Roberts was at all grateful, and the latter rather astonished the old Chief by speaking her mind to him on the subject, and saying he had done his best to make her husband regret his marriage. However, the grievance passed over, and, if Roberts's lines were for the next year or two cast in peaceful and pleasant places, he was to make up for it a little later by getting enough hard fighting to satisfy the sharpest military appetite.

In 1863 Roberts got a step in his department, and became an Assistant-Quartermaster-General. Three years before he had become a Royal instead of a Bengal gunner, the Bengal Artillery having been merged into the Queen's service, with the happy result that Lieutenant Roberts became a captain much sooner than he expected and consequently entitled to the "brevet" he had earned in the Mutiny. For, by the rules, an officer cannot be given a "brevet"—which is a step of special honorary rank—until he has become at least a captain. In Roberts's case, instead of having to wait, as he had at first expected, at least fifteen years before he ceased to be a subaltern, he became after only eight years'

service simultaneously Captain and Brevet-Major, and that, too, in the Royal, not the Company's, Artillery.

At the close of 1863 Roberts was suddenly called upon to take the field in an expedition which, although it does not figure prominently in our military annals, was really an important little campaign and productive of notable results in the way of hard fighting and personal bravery. Some years before a sect of Hindustani fanatics had established themselves on the other side of the Frontier and given a great deal of trouble along the borders of the Peshawar district. Driven out in 1858, they had returned and built themselves a new settlement on a spur of a mountain called the Mahabun, which lies to the right of the Umbeyla Pass, some sixty miles north-east of Peshawar. Here they once more began raiding the border and setting British authority at naught. In the autumn of 1863 a strong force was despatched against them in two columns, the more important one being commanded by General Neville Chamberlain, with orders to move by the Umbeyla Pass and the Chamla Valley beyond, so as to operate on the enemy's line of retreat. The country to the left of the Umbeyla Pass was inhabited by the Bunerwals, who were not expected to give any

trouble. Unfortunately, the Hindustani fanatics had persuaded the Bunerwals and their spiritual chief, the Akhund of Swat, that the British Government intended later on to annex their country, and consequently Chamberlain found his advance stoutly opposed. The position occupied by the British force, which consisted of 6,000 men, with 19 guns, soon became an awkward one. To the left was the Guru Mountain, to the right another range of hills, and on both of these Chamberlain posted picquets, that on the Guru being known as the "Eagle's Nest," that on the right as the "Crag Picquet." A desperate attack on the Eagle's Nest was successfully repulsed, but the Bunerwals showed no signs of giving in, and by this time tribesmen to the number of 15,000, had rallied to the Akhund of Swat's standard. Chamberlain stuck manfully to his position, which was attacked almost daily for three weeks, the enemy fighting with splendid bravery. Twice they actually captured the position known as the Crag Picquet, but it was retaken, in one case after an attack led by Chamberlain himself, who was so badly wounded that he had to give up the command. The assault and defence of the Crag Picquet furnished many instances of personal heroism, and gained for two officers, Brownlow and Keyes, who



afterwards rose to the ranks of Field-Marshal and General respectively, the Victoria Cross. But the situation became so doubtful that the Government of India thought it wise to depute two officers of the Headquarters Staff to proceed to the spot and make a report on what ought next to be done. One of these officers was the Assistant-Quartermaster-General, Major Roberts, the other Colonel (afterwards Sir John), Adye, also a Royal Artilleryman. These two soon "sized up" the situation and recommended a further advance, with the help of reinforcements, into the Chamla Valley, which was accordingly carried out. In the way lay a conical hill which was occupied in force by the enemy, who had further strengthened the position with stone breastworks called *sangars*. A splendid attack was made upon this by the 101st Fusiliers (now the 1st Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers), supported by the Guides, the 4th Gurkhas, and the 23rd Pioneers, and, after these gallant corps had climbed almost perpendicular heights amid a shower of bullets and huge stones, the enemy were dislodged and fled in disorder. A further defeat near the village of Umbeyla broke the resistance of the enemy, and in due course Malka, the stronghold of the Hindustani fanatics, was destroyed.

In 1865-66 Roberts again visited England, and on his return to India found himself posted to Allahabad, where shortly afterwards there was an outbreak of cholera. Cholera camps were formed, and Major Roberts, as A.Q.M.G., had to visit these daily. His brave wife usually accompanied him, and rendered noble assistance in preventing what is known as cholera panic by getting up entertainments in order to keep the men's minds occupied. It was a terrible experience and there were many tragedies. On one occasion Roberts had just got into his carriage after going round the hospital, when a young officer ran after him to say that a corporal in whom the A.Q.M.G. had been much interested, was dead. "The poor fellow's face," wrote Lord Roberts, "was blue; the cholera panic had evidently seized him, and I said to my wife, 'He will be the next.' I had no sooner reached home than I received a report of his being seized."

Roberts's next campaign was the Abyssinian Expedition of 1867-8 under Sir Robert, afterwards Lord, Napier of Magdala. In this a Bengal Brigade was included under Roberts's old friend and comrade-in-arms, Colonel, afterwards Field-Marshal, Sir Donald Stewart, and Roberts was appointed Stewart's A.Q.M.G. The object of the Expedition

was to punish King Theodore of Abyssinia for having imprisoned a number of European residents, among whom were several British subjects, and it was a wonderfully managed little campaign. Abyssinia is a very mountainous country, the roads were mere tracks, and the transport difficulties were enormous. But Lord Napier made every sort of useful preparation and brought his force successfully in April, 1868, to the Abyssinian rock-capital of Magdala, which he carried by assault. King Theodore's body was found within the walls—he had committed suicide—and the prisoners were duly released. Roberts was not fortunate in this campaign as regards actual fighting, for, on arrival at Zula, the port of disembarkation, he was told off to remain there as senior staff officer. But he did excellent work in supervising the embarkation and disembarkation of men, animals, and stores, and the success of the transport arrangements was largely due to his energy and powers of organisation. It was at Zula, which is on Annesley Bay in the Red Sea, that Roberts met his old Eton schoolfellow, Captain, afterwards Admiral, Sir George Tryon, who was in charge of the naval trans. ports. When the campaign was over Major Roberts was selected by Lord Napier to carry home to the Duke of

Cambridge, then Commander-in-Chief, the despatches announcing the successful termination of the Expedition, and a little later his name appeared in the *London Gazette* for promotion to a brevet Lieutenant-Colonelcy.

On returning to India he found himself once more posted to the Headquarters Staff, in a new grade, which was not long afterwards abolished, that of First A.Q.M.G. This meant another spell of residence at Simla, and in 1870 he found himself again under Lord Napier of Magdala, who had been appointed Commander-in-Chief in India. During the winter of that year Colonel Roberts, notwithstanding the high position to which he had risen, "amused himself," as he says, by going through a course of telegraphy. His reason was characteristic. In the Umbeyla campaign the telegraph clerks had all been laid up with fever and the field telegraph office had to be closed in consequence, as no one else could either read or send messages. Roberts therefore determined that on the first opportunity he would learn enough of telegraphy to make him independent of trained assistance should occasion arise.

In 1871 Colonel Roberts was deputed to make all the arrangements for, and to accompany, an expedition into the Lushai country, situated between

Burma and South-Eastern Bengal, the borders of the great tea-growing district of Cachar. The Lushais had from time to time raided the tea-estates, and had at last carried off a little European girl, Mary Winchester, whom they kept : prisoner. The expedition, which was carried out by two columns, one operating from Cachar, the other from Chittagong, proved a most difficult business. Roberts accompanied the Cachar column, which had to make its own roads through a succession of hill-ranges clothed with dense forests, to which hardly a ray of light penetrated, and intersected by rivers and water-courses, some of which had to be hastily bridged. About one of these bridges Lord Roberts in his memoirs tells a good story, which would be only spoiled if not quoted in full :—

“On my telling the young Engineer officer in charge of the sapper company that a bridge was required to be constructed with the least possible delay, he replied that it should be done, but that it was necessary to calculate the force of the current, the weight to be borne, and the consequent strength of the timber required. Off he went, urged by me to be as quick as he could. Some hours elapsed, and nothing was seen of the Engineer, so I sent for him and asked him when the bridge was to be begun.

He answered that his plans were nearly completed, and that he would soon be able to commence work.

“In the meantime, however, and while these scientific calculations were being made, the headman of the local coolies had come to me and said, if the order were given, he would throw a good bridge over the river in no time. I agreed, knowing how clever natives often are at this kind of work, and thinking I might just as well have two strings to this particular bow. Immediately numbers of men were to be seen felling the bamboos on the hillside a short distance above the stream ; these were thrown into the river, and as they came floating down they were caught by men standing up to their necks in water, who cut them to the required length, stuck the uprights into the river-bed, and attached them to each other by pieces laterally and longitudinally ; the flooring was then formed also of bamboo, the whole structure was then bound together by strips of cane, and the bridge was pronounced ready.

“Having tested its strength by marching a large number of men across it, I sent for my Engineer friend. His astonishment on seeing a bridge finished ready for use was great, and became still greater when he found how admirably the practical woodmen had done their work ; from that time, being

assured of their ability to assist him, he wisely availed himself when difficulties arose, of their useful, if unscientific, method of engineering."

Notwithstanding all difficulties, and some opposition on the part of the enemy, the column pressed doggedly on until it received information that the Chittagong column had secured some of the captives carried off by the Lushais, including Mary Winchester, and that the campaign was thus virtually over. But it was thought desirable to press on to the village of the Lushai chief, Lalbura, and to receive the submission of the tribesmen there. This meant another five days' march, luckily unopposed, which ended in quite friendly intercourse between the Lushais and the punitive expedition. The Lushais were amazed and delighted at the telescopes, burning-glasses, revolvers, and mountain guns of the invaders, but most astonished at the whiteness of their skins, as revealed by a closer inspection, for, judging by their bronzed faces, the Lushais had imagined that the English soldiers were as dark as themselves. It was, by the way, after Lalbura's father, Vonolel, a famous warrior, that Lord Roberts at a later date named a favourite charger which he often rode on great public occasions.

On his return to India Roberts, now Deputy-

Quartermaster-General, and a C.B., again took up his work of Headquarters, and for the next year or two was largely occupied with questions concerning Afghanistan, our relations with which were becoming somewhat strained owing to the doubtful attitude of the Amir, Sher Ali, who was evidently intriguing with Russia, and inclined to be unfriendly to the Indian Government. This, as we shall see later, bore fruit in complications ultimately leading to a war in which Roberts leapt at a bound to a great reputation, not only as an officer of great personal gallantry and departmental capacity, but as a notable commander of an army in the field.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### ROBERTS AS QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL IN INDIA.

THE MEANING OF QUARTERS—THE Q.M.G.—IMPORTANT DUTIES—  
THE INTELLIGENCE BRANCH—DANGEROUS AND DIFFICULT WORK—  
ROBERTS IN HIS ELEMENT—RECEPTION OF THE PRINCE OF WALES—  
GREAT CAMP AT DELHI—GOOD-BYE TO LORD NAPIER—THE  
EMPRESS OF INDIA—IMPERIAL ASSEMBLAGE—GORGEOUS SCENES  
—A CONTRAST—ROBERTS'S PERFECT ARRANGEMENTS—COMMAND  
OF THE PUNJAB FRONTIER FORCE—THE PIFFERS—RECALLED TO  
SIMLA—CHARACTERISTIC ZEAL.

**I**N January, 1875, Colonel Frederick Roberts became Quartermaster-General-in-India, with temporary rank as Major-General. I daresay that in these enlightened days every schoolboy knows what a Quartermaster-General is and does, but, on the chance that there may be a few youngsters as ignorant on the subject as I was before I entered the Army, I will say a few words about this very interesting military appointment, which in Roberts's time was, for reasons which I will explain presently, still more interesting and important than it is to-day.

It is a common mistake to suppose that the drilling and training of troops, and leading them in battle, are almost the whole duty of those entrusted with the higher command of an army. Again, quite a number of people are under the impression that such matters as the movement and housing and feeding of forces, however necessary, are just routine business which can be easily despatched by underlings of no particular standing. But in reality these are things that matter very much indeed, and for centuries the fact has been recognised in all the great armies of the world. The result has been in our own case the appointment of special officers, and special departments, to look after all matters connected with the transport of troops, as well as with their, so to speak, board and lodging. Now, for a very long time it has been customary to speak of the place where a soldier lives in peace as his "quarters," and, though we usually talk of quarters as being distinct from camp, the latter really only means that the men are quartered under canvas instead of in barracks. In a regiment there is an officer who is specially charged with the care of all that pertains to the cleanliness and general upkeep of the men's quarters, whatever they are, and who in addition superintends the issue of food and takes charge of the regimental

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stores. He is called the Quartermaster, and in every company there are Company Quartermaster-Sergeants who act as his assistants.

If such a small unit as a regiment requires a Quartermaster it is easy to understand that the Quartermaster-General of an army is a very important person indeed. As a matter of fact he is, after the Commander-in-Chief or the Chief of the General Staff, as the case may be, one of the two most important officials of the whole Army, and his duties are so extensive and various that he has under him a large department, part of it under his immediate direction at Army Headquarters and part scattered throughout the great Army Commands. Thus at home we have at the War Office in Whitehall a Quartermaster-General—called Q.M.G. "for short"—who has under him a number of Directors, each of whom looks after some branch of the work which the Q.M.G.'s department embraces. But, apart from these, there are Assistant, and Deputy-Assistant, Quartermaster-Generals at Aldershot and all the other great military centres. The system has been altered from time to time, and the duties of the Quartermaster-General's department have varied considerably, more especially during the last five-and-twenty-years. But the Q.M.G. has always

been one of the great staff officers of the Army, and his department has always had, and always will have, a very large share in maintaining the efficiency and promoting the comfort and well-being of the troops.

The Quartermaster-General's department in India, to which, as we have seen, Roberts had belonged ever since the days of the Mutiny, was certainly the most interesting and in some respects the most important of all the Indian Army departments. It dealt with the distribution of the different units of the Indian Army, and with all sorts of questions relating to military stations, which in India are known as "cantonments." But, apart from all this, the Quartermaster-General had to do much of what is now done by the Chief of the General Staff, to collect and compile information likely to be of service in time of war, and to assist very materially in the preparation of plans of operations. In 1875 the Intelligence branch of the Quartermaster-General's Department was not yet fully formed, but an immense amount of quiet work was being done by specially-selected officers, some of whom travelled at the risk of their lives among little-known parts of the Indian Borderland, bringing back information regarding the country and the people which was after-

wards knotted into shape and printed in the form of convenient little books such as could quickly be circulated to commanders and others in the event of its becoming necessary to send an expedition to that part.

It is difficult to explain in few words how curiously fascinating this sort of work is, and what a tremendous influence it may have upon the success or failure of a campaign. When we hear that an expedition has been set on foot in India to punish such and such a tribe for having, perhaps, raided a Frontier station or committed some other outrage, we think as a rule only of the fighting part of the business, and often picture the commander of the force simply feeling his way into the enemy's country, much as the captain of a ship in an uncharted sea feels *his* way by constant soundings. But as a matter of fact nowadays, and for many years past, expeditions across the Indian Frontier have almost always been provided beforehand with maps and little books containing all the information it has been possible to collect regarding that particular piece of country, and, until recently, it was in the Quartermaster-General's department that the difficult and sometimes extremely dangerous work of exploration was done, which enabled these maps and books to be

prepared. Some day, perhaps, it may be possible to tell the story of the old Q.M.G.'s department in India, and to relate a few of the really romantic adventures which befell officers making what are known as "reconnaissances," often in disguise, and almost always at very great risk. But in any case the world will never know one tenth of the splendid work which has been done "secretly and confidentially" in order that our Indian troops might not go, so to speak, blindfolded into war.

General Roberts was, of course, no stranger to his new post, the duties of which he had as a matter of fact been discharging for some months past in what is known as an "officiating" capacity. I mention this little detail because I daresay many of my readers have relatives in the Service, and have from time to time heard that they were "officiating" as this, that, or the other, without knowing in the least what it meant. The term is used when a man holding one appointment acts for another man holding a higher appointment. Thus as far back as 1872, Roberts had been what is known as Deputy-Quartermaster-General, and in 1874 he was appointed to "officiate" as Q.M.G. But it was not until January, 1875, that he was given—to use another official term—the substantive appointment, in which,

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of course, he was already quite at home. As usual, he threw himself into his work with great zeal and thoroughness, and when, a good many years afterwards, I myself joined the Intelligence branch of the Quartermaster-General's department, there was quite a little library of books which had been prepared under General Roberts's directions, and hundreds of copies of which were printed in readiness for distribution the moment a campaign was ordered.

But Intelligence work, though the most interesting, was not by any means the only work which the Quartermaster-General in India had to do, and in the autumn of 1875 General Roberts was specially busy at Delhi making preparations for a great Camp of Exercise to be held there in honour of the then Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward VII., who was about to pay a visit to India. H.R.H. landed at Calcutta in December, and came to Delhi early in January. His camp and that of the Commander-in-Chief were pitched, Lord Roberts tells us, on the ground occupied by the British Army during the siege of Delhi in the Mutiny, and among the troops which were posted on the historic Ridge to await the Prince's arrival were three Rifle Corps, the 60th Rifles, 2nd Gurkhas, and 1st Punjab Infantry, which had taken part in the recapture of

Delhi. One can imagine the satisfaction with which the Quartermaster-General made this arrangement, and how pleased and interested he was when the Prince, on arriving near Hindu Rao's House, immediately under which the 2nd Gurkhas were drawn up, stopped and warmly complimented the regiment on 'he gallant service it had performed at this point twenty years before.

It was at the end of this year that Roberts bade farewell to his former chief in the Abyssinian Expedition, Lord Napier of Magdala, who for some years had been Commander-in-Chief in India. The Napiers are one of the famous soldier families of Great Britain, and Lord Napier of Magdala was a very fine member of it. He was originally in the old Bengal Engineers, which were afterwards merged into the Royal Engineers, and he used to say with pride that when he came to India as a youngster he had nothing but his sword. Before he left it he had commanded an army in the field, had been made a peer of the realm, and had risen, as we have seen, to be Commander-in-Chief. He was a good friend to Roberts, and the latter speaks of his "dear old chief" with much respect and affection.

In the autumn of 1876 General Roberts had once more to make preparations for a great ceremonial



event at Delhi, namely, the proclamation of Queen Victoria as Empress of India. If you look at the "head" side of a penny you will see on it at the end of the superscription the words IND. IMP. which I need hardly tell you stand for Indiæ Imperator or Emperor of India. But it is only since January 1st, 1877, that this splendid Imperial title, the Indian equivalent of which is Kaisar-i-Hind, has been borne by British sovereigns, and the occasion of the Proclamation at what is known as the "Imperial Assemblage at Delhi" was rightly and wisely marked by a very magnificent and imposing ceremonial. Something similar took place when King George and Queen Mary visited India at the end of 1911, but the "Delhi Durbar," as it is sometimes called, of January 1st, 1877, had a special interest as being the first time the Princes and Chiefs of all India came together to acknowledge and pay homage to their supreme British ruler.

Lord Roberts, borrowing, as he admits, from the official history of the Durbar, written by my father, gives a very interesting account of the ceremonies on this great occasion, and says that the magnificence of the Native Princes' retinues can hardly be described. In particular, the elephant-trappings were of the most gorgeous and sumptuous description,

the howdahs "veritable thrones of the precious metals, shaded with brilliant canopies," and the " housings " of cloth of gold or scarlet and blue with gold and silver embroidery. " The war elephants belonging to some of the Central India and Rajputana chiefs formed a very curious and interesting feature. Their tusks were tipped with steel ; they wore shields on their foreheads, and breastplates of flashing steel ; chain-mail armour hung down over their trunks and covered their backs and sides ; and they were mounted by warriors clad in chain-mail and armed to the teeth." That was only a few decades ago, and it is safe to say that many of the Indian Princes present at the Imperial Assemblage thought in their hearts that these old-world trappings were really of great military value. They know better now, and quite a number of Indian Princes, instead of keeping up warriors clad in chain-mail, maintain well-drilled Imperial Service troops, excellently turned out, armed, and equipped, units of which have served with distinction side by side with those of the British and Indian Regular Armies.

General Roberts's preparations for the Imperial Assemblage were so excellent that everything passed off without a hitch, and when he himself subsequently visited all the camps and talked with every one of

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the assembled Princes and Nobles, he had the satisfaction of hearing on all sides expressions, not only of intense loyalty to the newly-proclaimed Empress of India, but also of profound satisfaction with the splendid smoothness with which the whole great ceremony had been conducted. Young people who hear of these wonderful historical gatherings are apt to forget the tremendous labour and forethought which are involved in making them a success, especially in a country like India, where the assemblage of over sixty important ruling Chiefs and nearly three hundred nobles of distinction, with their large retinues, as well as of thousands of troops, means a mass of work and worry, with the constant possibility of something going wrong and of fearful confusion in consequence.

In 1878 Roberts held for a few months a post which in its way was even more interesting, because more full of active employment and possible excitement, than the Quartermaster-Generalship. This was the command of the famous Punjab Frontier Force, which no longer has a separate official existence, but in those days was the most remarkable military organization in India. It consisted of picked cavalry and infantry regiments, and service in it was considered specially honourable

as it was, even in peace time, of a very strenuous and sometimes risky character. The duty of the "Piffers," as those belonging to the P.F.F. were called, consisted chiefly in keeping watch and ward over the long stretch of Indian Borderland, along which some of the most turbulent and warlike tribesmen in the world were gathered in a succession of unruly and sometimes rascally clans. Time after time parties of these scamps would cross the Frontier into British territory, raid a village under British protection, and do their best to get away across the border unnoticed. But in numerous cases the posts of the Punjab Frontier Force, consisting perhaps of only a small body of troopers, would be forewarned of the raid, and would either prevent it or intercept the raiders as they were endeavouring to make good their escape. Sometimes quite important little actions took place in this way, about which the public heard little or nothing, but which frequently involved some very stiff fighting and the emptying of a good many saddles. Men and officers constantly engaged in this sort of work naturally become extremely hard and efficient, and the Punjab Frontier Force was about as fit and well-conditioned a body as it is possible to conceive, and one upon which, in any sort of Frontier expedition on a

large scale, it was customary for the authorities to draw freely.

It was to take up the command of this notable force that General Roberts, accompanied by his wife, went in March, 1878, to Abbottabad, a little hill station 4000 feet above the sea-level, but he had only been there a short time when he was told that the Viceroy wanted him to spend the summer at Simla. It was characteristic of his zeal and thoroughness that, instead of letting things slide until it was time for him to return to headquarters, he sent Mrs. Roberts to Simla, and spent the next two months in inspecting every regiment of the Punjab Frontier Force and every post occupied by it—"a most interesting experience," he writes in his book, "which I thoroughly enjoyed." But it must have been hard work, too, as the posts are many and often far apart, and, in April and May the Punjab is not the most pleasant place in the world in which to spend long days in the saddle, moving from one little post to another, often with extremely little in the way of creature comforts. It was in such cases that Lord Roberts's splendid fitness helped him to make light of much which many men would consider downright hardship.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE STORMING OF THE PEIWAR KOTAL.

THE AFGHANS—TREACHEROUS PEOPLE—SHER ALI AND LORD MAYO—RUSSIAN JOY AT KABUL—BRITISH MISSION STOPPED—WAR—ROBERTS AND THE KURAM VALLEY FORCE—A FIRST COMMAND—THE PEIWAR KOTAL—ALMOST IMPREGNABLE—A TURNING MOVEMENT—CAPTURE OF THE SPINGAWI KOTAL—A PRECARIOUS POSITION—DEVOTED ORDERLIES—THE PEIWAR KOTAL CARRIED—BIVOUAC AT 9,000 FEET—A NOTABLE PERFORMANCE—THE SHUTARGARDAN PASS—THE KURAM VALLEY PACIFIED.

AT the close of Chapter VII. a hint was given of the coming trouble in regard to Afghanistan, a country which from time to time has been for several reasons the cause of a good deal of anxiety to the Government of India. One reason is that it is inhabited by warlike tribes among whom there are numerous fanatics always ready to preach opposition to the great ruling Power in India. Another is that Afghans are for the most part a thoroughly untrustworthy people. "Never trust

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an elephant, a cobra, or an Afghan," runs a native proverb, and the record of our dealings with Afghanistan and its Amirs, as its rulers are called, contains several instances of treachery of the foulest and most barefaced description, one of which will presently come under our immediate notice.

We had had trouble with the Afghans in 1841, when a British force had been cut up in the Passes and only a single survivor of 4,000 fighting men found his way to Jalalabad. The next year two avenging armies marched to Kabul, blew up the bazaar, recovered the prisoners, and retired, leaving an able chieftain, Dost Mohamed, at the head of the kingdom. Dost Mohamed was succeeded as Amir in 1863 by Sher Ali, who had a very dappled time before he could establish himself firmly on the *guddee* (literally, cushion), as the "throne" of an Eastern ruler not of kingly or imperial rank is called. Indeed, he was actually deposed by his brothers Afzal and Azim, and the former's son, Abdur Rahman Khan—of whom we shall hear more presently—was his persistent and dangerous enemy. But in 1868 Sher Ali managed, with the help of his son, Yakub Khan—with whom also we shall meet again a little later—to recover the Amirate, and for eight or nine years there was comparative peace on the Afghan border.

During this period the Government assisted Sher Ali with large sums of money and presents of arms and ammunition, and at the famous Umballa Conference in 1869 Lord Mayo, who was then Viceroy, made a great personal impression upon Sher Ali, a strange man of impulsive and passionate nature who required very tactful handling. After Lord Mayo's assassination in 1872 Sher Ali did not get on so well with the Indian Government, and a little later he began intriguing with Russia, which about that time was making great strides in Central Asia, evidently with a view to an ultimate invasion of India. It is doubtful whether the fault was wholly Sher Ali's, as he was in a difficult position, with the Russian advance almost touching the northern borders of his kingdom. He would have continued our friend had we agreed to recognise his favourite son as his heir, and to support him against Russian aggression. But Lord Mayo's successors would not give these undertakings, and Sher Ali accordingly decided to treat with the great northern Power.

In 1878 it was reported that Sher Ali had received in state at Kabul a Russian envoy, and the Government of India at once informed the Amir that they, too, proposed to send a Mission to Kabul under General Sir Neville Chamberlain. They also in-



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timated that, unless this Mission was given free passage and a safe conduct such as had been accorded to the Russian envoy, they would consider that an open act of hostility had been committed. The Mission duly proceeded to the Khyber Pass and was met at Ali Masjid by an Afghan General who declined to allow it to proceed any further. This, of course, meant war.

The military arrangements made by the Government were as follows: three columns were formed, one known as the Kandahar Field Force under Major-General Donald Stewart, which was to advance towards Kandahar from Sukkur on the Indus; the second under Major-General Frederick Roberts, which was to advance from Kohat into the Kuram Valley, and was to be known as the Kuram Field Force; and a third, the Peshawar Valley Field Force, under Major-General Samuel Browne (the inventor, by the way, of the "Sam Browne" belt worn by officers on field-service), which was to clear the Amir's troops from Ali Masjid and the Khyber Pass generally.

Roberts was naturally delighted at getting the command of one of these three little armies, though the Kuram Field Force was only half the size of the Kandahar column, and less than half that of the

force under General Sam Browne. Moreover, it was really too weak for the work it had to do, and before starting, Roberts had to obtain a reinforcement, which was only granted him after a good deal of fuss and delay.

Even with this the Kuram Field Force, when it advanced from Thal on November 16th, 1878, numbered only 1,345 British and 3,990 native soldiers, with thirteen guns. This was supposed to constitute a division of two brigades (a latter-day division at war strength numbers some 20,000 of all ranks), and was composed of the following corps : F Battery, A Brigade, Royal Horse Artillery ; one Squadron 10th Hussars ; G Battery, 3rd Brigade, Royal Artillery ; the 2nd Battalion, 8th Foot ; a wing of the 72nd Highlanders ; the 12th Bengal Cavalry ; No. 1 Mountain Battery ; 7th Company Bengal Sappers and Miners ; 2nd and 5th Infantry, Punjab Frontier Force ; 5th Gurkhas, P.F.F. ; 21st and 29th Punjab Infantry ; and 23rd Pioneers.

Such was Lord Roberts's first important command in the field, a mere handful, judged by the standard of subsequent great wars, but containing some splendid material and admirably staffed, to say nothing of having a head who, although inexperienced

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in the actual leadership of a considerable force, was a past master in the art of organization, had studied the art of war with the utmost zeal and thoroughness, and was widely respected by and popular with both British and native troops, if only by reason of his personal gallantry and all-round soldierliness.

Thal lies on the Kuram River 100 miles south-west of Peshawar, and about 120 miles south-east of Kabul. The Kuram Valley is about 60 miles long, and Kuram, which was then in Afghan territory, is about 50 miles north-west of Thal. Beyond Kuram a spur of the great Sufed Koh, or White Mountain range, closes the Valley, and this spur is crossed by a pass the highest point of which lies 9,400 feet above the sea, and is called the Peiwar Kotal. Advancing to Kuram, where an advance depôt was formed, Roberts learnt that an Afghan army, consisting, it was said, of 18,000 men, was moving into position on the Peiwar Kotal with the intent to offer a strong resistance.

When he came to reconnoitre the Peiwar Kotal, Lord Roberts says that his heart sank within him, so impregnable did the position seem. From the head of the valley a mountain rose abruptly to a height of 2,000 feet, with only a narrow, steep, and rugged path running up it. On either side of this path were

spurs "jutting out like huge bastions," from which an overwhelming fire could be kept up on the flanks of an attacking force. A frontal attack was therefore out of the question, as far as the capture of the Peiwar Kotal was concerned, and the only hope lay in a turning movement on the enemy's left. It was discovered by reconnaissance that there was a practicable route round this flank by another Kotal, called the Spingawi, which was also held by the Afghans, but not in any great strength, and Roberts accordingly decided to make the real attack on this side and to lead it himself, leaving one of his Brigadiers, General Cobbe, to make a feint attack in front, while another small feint was carried out on the enemy's right by some levies under command of Major Palmer, a Bengal Cavalry officer, who afterwards became General Sir Arthur Palmer, and Commander-in-Chief in India.

Roberts took with him for the turning movement four guns of his Horse Artillery Battery, the wing of the 72nd Highlanders, the Mountain Battery, the 2nd and 29th Punjab Infantry, the 5th Gurkhas, and the 23rd Pioneers, a total strength of under 2,300 men, with only eight guns, leaving little more than 1,000 men with five guns for the feint frontal attack.

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The little force moved out with great secrecy at ten o'clock on Sunday night, December 1st, making its way in the teeth of a bitterly cold wind over the rocky bed of a mountain stream to the foot of the Spingawi Kotal. At the outset there was trouble, some treacherous Pathans in the 29th Punjab Infantry firing signal shots to warn the enemy. But of course there was no going back, and at the streak of dawn the column came in touch with the Afghans, who fired into it. Instantly the Gurkhas, led by Major Fitz-Hugh, charged, with the Highlanders in support, and a couple of mountain guns came into action, not, however, before their gallant commandant, Captain Kelso, had been shot dead. Two lines of entrenchments were carried in quick succession by the Highlanders and Gurkhas, and, a third position commanding the head of the pass having also been rushed "without a perceptible pause," the Spingawi Kotal was won. But the main position on the Peiwar had still to be negotiated, so Roberts pressed on. Unfortunately he became separated from the greater part of his force, who had taken a wrong turning in the forest, and for a time he was in a very precarious position, as the only regiment at hand was that containing a number of Pathans, who had already shown they were not to be

trusted. The Rev. J. W. Adams, the Chaplain to the Force, who later won the V.C., eventually succeeded in finding the missing troops, but it was a very anxious period of suspense, during which Roberts's native orderlies, of whom he had six, two Sikhs, two Gurkhas, and two Pathans, behaved with touching devotion, keeping close round the General and doing their best to protect him from the enemy. When he was actually hit in the hand by a spent bullet he looked round quickly in the direction from which it had come, and there he saw one of these fine fellows, a huge Sikh, standing with his arms stretched out in the hope of screening his master more effectively.

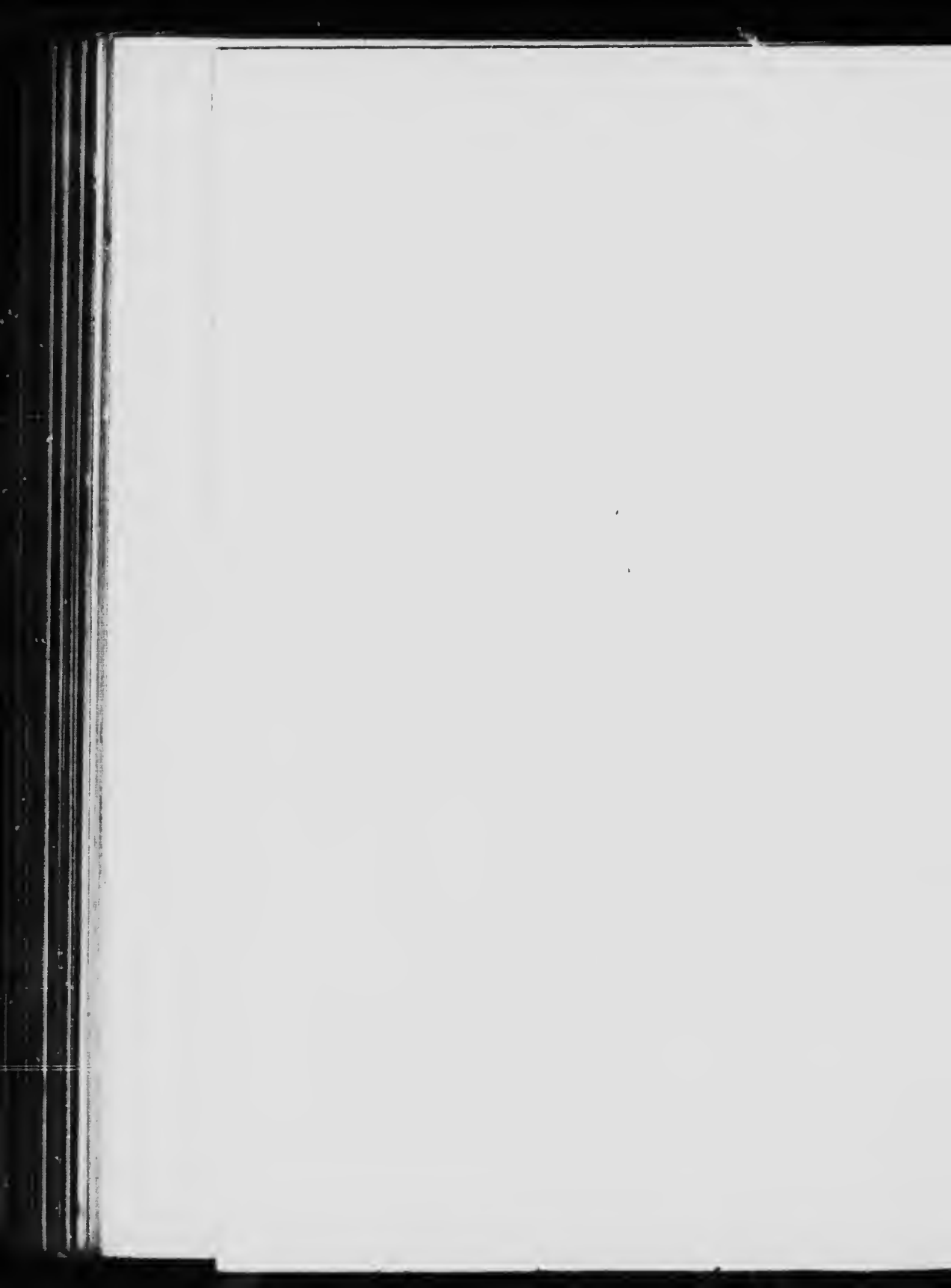
Before reaching the immediate approach to the Peiwar Kotal there was some stiff fighting, as the enemy had discovered how numerically weak the British troops were, and had moreover succeeded in checking the frontal attack under General Cobbe, who had himself been severely wounded. Again, between the enemy's main position on the Peiwar Kotal and Roberts's force there lay a strongly defended hill, to the left of which was a sheer precipice. On the right, however, Roberts to his delight found there was a way round which would enable him almost to take the Peiwar Kotal position in the rear.



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*Lord Roberts]*

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Along this accordingly he dashed forward with such troops as remained after occupying the position already won, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing the now alarmed enemy moving off in confusion, pursued by the cavalry under the gallant Hugh Gough, another V.C. hero of the Mutiny, who afterwards rose to be full General and Keeper of the Crown Jewels in the Tower, a post of high honour only given to veteran officers of great distinction.

It was night before the little force could get to the Kotal, and the troops accordingly bivouacked on the mountain slope 9,000 feet above the sea level, with the thermometer marking twenty degrees of frost, and with very little available food. "But," writes Lord Roberts, "spite of cold and hunger, thoroughly content with the day's work, and with my mind at rest, I slept as soundly as I had ever done in the most luxurious quarters, and I think others did the same. At any rate, no one that I could hear of suffered from that night's exposure."

The young General—he was only forty-six—had every reason to be satisfied with the work of the past twenty-four hours. When the Peiwar Kotal was actually reached the next morning the position was found to be one of enormous natural strength, and the Afghans had made such excellent arrangements

for defending it against a frontal attack that any attempt in the latter direction must have been hopeless. Roberts had the satisfaction then of knowing that his bold turning movement had been the only possible chance of success. He had moreover captured this important stronghold in the teeth of fierce opposition with a loss of only two officers and eighteen men killed and three officers and seventy-five men wounded. The Afghan commander, it was ascertained, had under him eight regular regiments of the Afghan Army and eighteen guns, together with numerous hordes of armed tribesmen. He was so confident of his superiority that he had been on the point of attacking the British camp when Roberts fell upon him, causing him to retreat hastily to the neighbouring Shutargardan Pass, after suffering heavy losses and leaving all his guns and many warlike stores in the hands of the victors.

The news of the storming of the Peiwar Kotal created a great sensation both in India and at home, and, moreover, usefully impressed the Afghans and the border tribesmen with the fact that the "Sirkar," as the British Government is called by the natives, "meant business" and was well equipped for the purpose of carrying out its intentions. But the Frontier, once aroused, does not easily settle down,

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and, notwithstanding the decisive success achieved, the remaining months of winter were busy ones for the Kuram Field Force and its commander. Roberts's first step was to push forward in person to the Shutargardan Pass, which was 11,000 feet above the sea, and from which a fine view of the country stretching away to the immediate neighbourhood of Kabul could be obtained. The Afghans, it was found, had evacuated this Pass also, but there were still a good many troublesome tribesmen in the Kuram Valley whom it was desirable to pacify, and here and there rather vigorous action was necessary. The force which Roberts had under him was too small for the work in hand, and was badly provided with transport. His energy and determination, however, triumphed over all obstacles, and the amount of really useful work done in the Kuram by this handful of good soldiers under their resolute and untiring leader was quite wonderful.

Sometimes there was fighting hardly less severe than that which had taken place on the Peiwar Kotal, and almost more troublesome. For the tribesmen seemed to have a habit of rising "as if by magic out of the ground" and surrounding small bodies of troops, which occasionally had considerable difficulty in dealing with them. A case of this

kind happened at Khost, whither Roberts had gone with a very small column to depose the Afghan Governor. The latter surrendered without any fuss, but the tribesmen collected in thousands and quite a brisk little action ensued, in which the 5th Punjab Cavalry under Hugh Gough again distinguished itself. Notwithstanding the heavy odds, the tribesmen were severely punished, and 100 prisoners and 500 head of cattle were taken.

By the end of February the Kuram Valley was thoroughly pacified, and the communications through it greatly improved, with a view to making a further move towards Kabul if necessary.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE ADVANCE TO KABUL.

TREATY OF GUNDAMUK—CAVAGNARI GOES TO KABUL—ROBERTS'S GLOOMY PRESENTIMENTS—AT SIMLA—A FATEFUL TELEGRAM—MASSACRE OF THE CAVAGNARI MISSION—MEASURES OF VENGEANCE—ROBERTS AND THE KABUL FIELD FORCE—HIS STAFF—YAKUB KHAN—A TROUBLESOME COMPANION—ARRIVAL BEFORE KABUL—BATTLE OF CHARASIA—SEAFORTHS AND GURKHAS—WHITE OF THE 92ND—ENCAMPMENT AT KABUL—VISIT TO THE RESIDENCY.

**M**EANWHILE a good deal had been happening in other directions. General Sam Browne had entered the Khyber Pass and taken Ali Masjid, and General Donald Stewart had marched to and occupied Kandahar. Sher Ali, on hearing of the defeat of his troops, had fled to Turkestan, with the idea of laying his case before the Czar and obtaining the help of Russia, and his son Yakub had assumed authority as Amir of Afghanistan. The Government of India tried to enter into negotiations with Yakub, and a treaty was signed at Gundamuk in May, 1879, but the understanding arrived at was

only partially satisfactory, and in July a Mission, under Major Cavagnari, a well-known Frontier Political Officer, was despatched to Kabul. The Mission proceeded to the Afghan capital by way of the Kuram Valley, and Robert, with some fifty officers, marched with it to within a short distance of the Shutargardan Pass. He mentions in his Memoirs that at a farewell dinner given by the Mission to him and his staff he was asked to propose the health of Cavagnari and his comrades, but felt quite unable to do so, as he was firmly convinced that the Mission was a mistake, and was filled with gloomy forebodings as to the fate of those taking part in it. How fully justified was this anticipation will be shown by the tragic sequel.

The Mission having proceeded on its way, General Roberts, who had received a new appointment as Frontier Commissioner, left the Kuram Valley for Simla, where he was warmly received by the Viceroy and numerous friends and learnt that his great services had been rewarded with the thanks of both Houses of Parliament and the Knight-Commandership of the Bath. He was settling down to his new duties when, between one and two o'clock in the morning of September 5th, 1859, he was awakened by his wife, who said that a telegraph message had been

wandering round the house for some time calling out that he had a message, but that no one had answered to him. That shows it was Lord Roberts's own messenger.

I got up, went to the telegraph office, and, taking the telegram from the man, I took it to my dressing-room and opened it. It proved to be from Captain Conolly, the British Officer in Afghanistan, dated the 17th September. The contents confirmed what my worst fears—fears I had only acknowledged to myself—had been only too fully realized. The telegram ran:

One Melaladin Ghilzai, who says he is in the service of Louis Cavagnari's secret service, has just returned from Kabul, and solemnly informed me yesterday morning the Residency was surrounded by three regiments who had mutinied for their pay, they having guns, and being joined by a portion of six other regiments. The Embassy and escort were defending themselves when he left about noon yesterday. I hope to receive further news.

"I was paralyzed for a moment, but was roused by my wife calling out, 'What is it? Is it bad news from Kabul?' She had divined my fears about Cavagnari, and had been as anxious about him as I

had been myself. I replied, ' Yes, very bad, if true. I hope it is not.' I woke my A.D.C., and sent him off at once to the Viceroy with the telegram. The evil tidings spread rapidly. I was no sooner dressed than Mr. Alfred Lyall arrived. We talked matters over, I despatched a telegram to Captain Conolly, and we then went off to Lord Lytton.

" Early as it was, I found the Council assembled. The gravity of the situation was thoroughly appreciated, and it was unanimously decided that, should the disastrous report prove to be true, troops must proceed to Kabul with the least possible delay to avenge or, if happily incorrect or exaggerated, to support the Mission.

" Sir Samuel Browne's force had been broken up, Sir Donald Stewart was in far-off Kandahar, and his troops had, all but a small number, left on their return march to India; the Kuram force was, therefore, the only one in a position to reach Kabul quickly, and I was ordered to proceed at once to Kabul and resume my command.

" As a preliminary measure, Brigadier-General Massy, who had been placed in temporary command during my absence, was directed to move troops to the Shutargardan, where they were to entrench themselves and await orders, while Stewart was



directed to stop all regiments on their way back to India, and himself hold fast at Kandahar."

Further telegrams confirmed Captain Conolly's dreadful news. The Mission had been overwhelmed and every member of it massacred, after a gallant defence in which a hundred or more Kabulis had been killed.

No time was lost in getting the machinery of vengeance to work. A new "Kabul Field Force" was promptly formed, consisting of four regiments of cavalry (9th Lancers, 5th Punjab Cavalry, 12th Bengal Cavalry, and 14th Bengal Lancers), a battery of Horse and a battery of Field Artillery, two mountain batteries and two Gatlings, and two brigades of infantry. The 1st Brigade, commanded by Brigadier-General Herbert Macpherson, V.C., consisted of the 67th Foot, 92nd Highlanders, and 28th Punjab Infantry. The 2nd Brigade, commanded by Brigadier-General T. D. Baker, comprised the 72nd Highlanders, 5th Gurkhas, 5th Punjab Infantry, 3rd Sikhs, and 23rd Pioneers. The Cavalry was commanded by Brigadier-General W. D. —better known from his gallantry in the Crimea as "Redan"—Massy, and the Artillery by Lieutenant-Colonel B. L. Gordon. As his Chief of Staff Sir Frederick Roberts had a very notable fighting

soldier, Colonel, afterwards Major-General, Sir Charles Macgregor. It was mentioned above that the first news of the massacre of the Mission was received at Simla in the small hours of September 5th. Some idea of the speed and energy with which Roberts got to work may be gathered from the fact that in the afternoon of the 6th he was on his way to Umballa, where he found his Staff awaiting him, and less than a fortnight later Baker's Brigade was entrenched on the Shutargardan, and final preparations were being made for a general advance.

In the meantime the new Amir, Yakub Khan, had been doing his best to screen himself from any complicity in the massacre, and was professing the most friendly intentions. But it was discovered, nevertheless, that he had been trying to rouse the tribes and country people against us, and accordingly Roberts, when he arrived in the Kuram, treated his Highness to some pretty plain speaking, and intimated clearly that anyhow he and his force intended to march to Kabul with a view to enacting vengeance for the murderous attack on the Mission. Yakub Khan did all he could to delay the advance, even going so far as to meet Sir Frederick on the other side of the Shutargardan and beg for time in which to restore order amongst his troops and punish those who had

taken part in the massacre. But Roberts was, of course, inexorable, and, accompanied by the treacherous Yakub, pushed on towards Kabul, leaving a mountain battery and the 3rd Sikhs and 23rd Punjab Infantry—which had been added to the force—to guard the Shutargardan. This proved to be a wise precaution, for the force had hardly moved on October 2nd when the enemy assembled in force on the crest of the Shutargardan with a view to “business.” Colonel Money, a cool, determined soldier, who was in command, promptly stormed their position and sent the Afghans helter-skelter down the hill.

By the time he had reached the neighbourhood of Kabul Roberts’s little army amounted to no more than about 6,600 men. Meanwhile the Afghans had been making feverish preparations, and were kept well aware of the movements and weakness of the Field Force by Yakub, whose presence in the British camp was a source of constant annoyance and danger. On October 5th, the force arrived at a little village called Charasia, with a range of high hills in front of it, behind which, at a distance of ten or twelve miles, lay the city of Kabul, with its crowded suburbs, Gardeh and Deh-i-Afghan, and, at its south-east corner, the fort known as the Bala Hissar, in which

the Mission had been massacred. The enemy was already gathering in the hills and Roberts would gladly have attacked then and there, but, owing to lack of transport, Macpherson's Brigade was still a march behind. As a matter of fact, things had not really improved the next day, when Roberts was forced to attack the Afghan position with only 4,000 men and eighteen guns.

The Battle of Charasia was a most spirited engagement. The main position was on a ridge which ran from 1,000 to 2,000 feet above the level of the plain, and was fronted by a succession of sandy hills of which the enemy could make excellent use for purposes of defence against an enemy advancing from the level country round Charasia. Roberts commenced operations by a reconnaissance which led the enemy to believe that he was going to attack through a gorge on their left, and they accordingly concentrated their forces in that direction. He then, while continuing to feint to the left, sent General Baker with the 72nd Highlanders, a detachment of the 12th Bengal Cavalry, 300 rifles of the 5th Gurkhas, and 200 of the 5th Punjab Infantry, two mountain and two Gatling guns, and a company of sappers and miners, to carry out the real attack by an outflanking movement to the right. Later this

column was reinforced by 450 men of the 23rd Pioneers and three Field Artillery guns. Roberts reserved a mere handful for the feint attack near a gorge on the left and the protection of the camp. For the former, however, he was fortunate in having at hand a portion of the 92nd Highlanders detached from Macpherson's Brigade under the command of Major, afterwards Field-Marshal, Sir George White, of Ladysmith renown.

Difficult as the task before them was, and heavy as were the odds against them, both British forces carried all before them with triumphant success. It was shortly before noon that Baker's column, after working round to the right, came out into the open and delivered its attack, and then the fight immediately became fast and furious. Included in the enemy's position were some almost inaccessible peaks, the fire from which swept the slopes up which the British troops had to advance. The enemy were dislodged from these peaks mainly by the persistent gallantry of the 72nd Highlanders—now the 1st Battalion of the Seaforths—supported by the 5th Gurkhas. Roberts was watching the movement closely from the camp, and particularly noticed one man "pushing up the precipitous hillside, considerably in advance of everyone else, and apparently

regardless of the shower of bullets falling round him." He made inquiries afterwards, and found that this cool and daring soldier was a young Irish private—a good many Irishmen have served in Highland regiments—named MacMahon, who was afterwards given the Victoria Cross.

Shortly after 2 p.m. the general advance was sounded and Highlanders, Gurkhas, and Punjab Infantry surged on in an irresistible wave, carrying the Afghans' main position in the face of a stubborn resistance. Meanwhile the 92nd Highlanders had done splendid work under Major White, who at one juncture displayed wonderful personal gallantry. With two others only he climbed a fortified hill held by a large number of the enemy, and, when his comrades were exhausted, he went on alone and shot the leader of the enemy. For this he was subsequently awarded the V.C. But of course, White's small party of men could do no more than keep the left wing of the Afghan army occupied. The rout of the latter came later when Baker's force, having smashed the Afghan right and centre, swung round and caught the enemy's left on the flank, White energetically co-operating, with the result that by evening the Battle of Charasia was won and the whole Afghan army was in flight.

During the next two days Roberts made strenuous efforts to cut off the enemy's retreat, but, thanks to the nature of the country and the smallness of the British force, they managed to give Baker, who had been sent ahead for the purpose, the slip. They left, however, their camp standing, and twelve guns fell into our hands. The road to Kabul also was now open, and, three days after the Battle of Charasia, the British force encamped within a mile of the Bala Hissar. The latter was visited on the 11th by Roberts, who found the floors of the Residency, the scene of the massacre of Cavagnari's Mission, covered with bloodstains, and amidst the embers of a fire a heap of human bones. The walls, closely pitted with bullet-holes, gave proof of the determined nature of the attack, and the stoutness of the resistance. For this outrage a measure of vengeance had already been exacted, but there was more to come.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE MARCH TO KANDAHAR.

ROBERTS ENTERS KABUL—NEW MILITARY ARRANGEMENTS—THE SHERPUR CANTONMENTS—RALLY OF THE AFGHANS—PADRE ADAMS, V.C.—MACGREGOR SAVES THE GUNS—DEFENCE OF SHERPUR—ARRIVAL OF SIR DONALD STEWART—BRITISH DEFEAT AT MAIWAND—PREPARATIONS FOR KABUL TO KANDAHAR MARCH—STEWART'S NOBLE CONDUCT—A MODEL OF ORGANIZATION—ROUTINE OF THE MARCH—THE BATTLE OF KANDAHAR—A SPLENDID VICTORY—MURDER OF HECTOR MACLAINE—ROBERTS A G.C.B.—APPOINTED C.-IN-C., MADRAS—STARTS FOR HOME.

**B**Y the middle of October, 1879, within, that is, a few days of the Battle of Charasia, and less than six weeks after the receipt of the fateful telegram announcing the massacre of Cavagnari's Mission, Roberts had made a state entry into Kabul and issued a Proclamation imposing a fine upon the city as a punishment for the outrage, and announcing the appointment of a Military Governor and the establishment of British courts. A day or two later





PROCLAMATION OF MARTIAL LAW AT KABUL.

*Lord Roberts*

*[To the page 150]*



he received despatches conveying the Queen's warmest satisfaction with his achievement and informing him that he had been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General, with the command of all the troops in Eastern Afghanistan, amounting to 20,000 men and 46 guns. This last addition to his honours, while adding to his responsibilities, did not increase the force under his immediate command, which still only included the troops he had brought with him from the Kuram and which, as already explained, consisted of a weak division of two brigades under Macpherson and Baker. But the army of Eastern Afghanistan was henceforth to consist of two divisions, the second under Major-General, afterwards Sir Robert, Bright, and both to be under the supreme command of Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Roberts. These details may seem a little tedious, but in reading the record of any campaign it is always important to get into your head how the higher commands are distributed. Otherwise one is apt to be dreadfully muddled by the passing mention of names which cannot be readily fitted into their right places.

Another event about this time was the abdication of Yakub Khan, which was quite voluntary, but might well have become a necessity in any case,

for he was a treacherous and cowardly creature ; though it could not be proved that he actually instigated the attack on the Embassy, he certainly made no effort to avert it. Another important step was the opening up of a fresh line of communications with India through the Khyber Pass, which was being held by part of Bright's Division. Simultaneously the force which had been left under Colonel Money to guard the Shutargardan Pass, and which had been again attacked by the tribesmen (happily without success) was withdrawn, thus severing the old line of communications through the Kuram Valley. Afghanistan was now held by two main forces, one in the west under Sir Donald Stewart at Kandahar, communicating with India by way of Chaman and the Bolan Pass, and one in the east under Sir Frederick Roberts, with headquarters at Kabul and a line of communications through the Khyber Pass to Peshawar.

On November 1st Roberts moved with his 1st Division into the Sherpur cantonments, formerly occupied by the Afghan army. These lay about a mile north-east of the city of Kabul and were enclosed on three sides by a strong and lofty loop-holed wall and on the fourth by a ridge known as the Bimaru heights. The perimeter, or total distance round the

wall and heights, was four and a half miles. It was thus a very difficult place to defend with a small force, but on the other hand there was ample accommodation in the enclosed space for men, animals, and stores.

Meanwhile the Afghans, temporarily stunned by the Battle of Charasia and the British entry into Kabul, had recovered themselves to some extent, and had begun to collect in large bodies with a view to surrounding and overwhelming the British force in Sherpur. Roberts hoped by rapid and concerted movements in the Chardeh valley, through which the Kabul River runs, to dash up this gathering before it could assume dangerous proportions, but, owing to misunderstandings the operations miscarried, and Roberts had the mortification of being compelled, after a fierce struggle, to retire into Sherpur with, moreover, his hold on Kabul city lost, and his line of communications severed. The fighting which led up to this unfortunate result produced some notable incidents, in which three Victoria Crosses were won. The first was earned by the "Padre," Adams, the chaplain whose good services in the attack on the Peiwar Kotal were mentioned in Chapter IX. Seeing two of the 9th Lancers struggling under their horses at the bottom of a

12-foot ditch which formed part of the defences of a village called Bhagwana, Adams, who had already saved another wounded lancer, jumped without a moment's hesitation into the ditch and, being a very powerful man, managed to drag the two lancers clear of their horses. The Afghans were so close to the ditch that Roberts, who was at hand, called out to the Padre to look after himself. Adams paid no attention until he had pulled the two almost exhausted soldiers to the top of the slippery bank. Major Hammond of the Guides, which had recently joined the Sherpur garrison, won another Cross in the desperate hand-to-hand fighting during the final retirement; and Captain Vousden the third, for charging with only twelve troopers of the 5th Punjab Cavalry into some 400 Afghans and dispersing them after inflicting heavy losses.

At one point of the fighting four Horse Artillery guns had to be abandoned, but the next day Colonel Macgregor, the Chief of the Staff, with some other Staff Officers, and a few Gunners, Lancers, and Gurkhas, managed to recover them and bring them into Sherpur, where they were made fit for use the following day, to the unbounded delight, we may be sure, of the Artillery, to whom the loss of guns is like the loss of his ship to a sailor.

Roberts retired into Sherpur on December 14th, and for ten days his force was cut off from communication with India, and liable to attack from a tremendous gathering of tribesmen, who at one time must have numbered fully 100,000. Brigadier-General Charles Gough, with one of Bright's brigades, was coming to his assistance, but did not arrive until after the danger was over, and meanwhile the cooped-up little army went through an anxious time. Snow lay on the ground, and, as already explained, the defences, though strong, really needed more than 7,000 men to hold them effectively. Luckily, however, there was, thanks to Roberts's foresight, plenty of food and ammunition, the position was strengthened and further protected by "abattis"—obstacles formed by branches of trees pegged down and pointing outwards—and wire entanglements, and, when the enemy on December 23rd delivered their great attack, they found the garrison well prepared.

The attack was delivered before daybreak, and at first it was impossible to distinguish the advancing enemy, who were firing heavily into Sherpur. The mountain guns accordingly fired "star-shells," filled with a mixture of magnesium powder which ignites on the bursting of the shell and will light up quite a

large area of country. In this case the enemy were disclosed up to a distance of a thousand yards, and the defenders were enabled to check a series of most determined assaults, in the course of which the enemy often got as far as the abattis just outside the walls and trenches. With an hour's lull, the action lasted from 7 a.m. till 1 p.m., and was mainly decided by a flank attack, which was launched at just the right moment, causing a considerable body of the enemy to break up, with the result that the remainder lost heart and at last turned tail. Roberts promptly sent his cavalry in pursuit, and by nightfall the neighbourhood of Sherpur was clear of the great gathering of hostile tribesmen which had so seriously threatened the very existence of the British force. Communication was at once established with General Charles Gough's brigade and with India, the British Military Governor of Kabul was reinstalled, the Courts re-opened, and fresh defensive works constructed with a view to making the British occupation more completely secure.

Lord Roberts tells an amusing story of his old native servant Eli Bux in connection with the defence of Sherpur. Just when the fight was at its hottest, and the General was receiving every few seconds reports from the various officers commanding, Eli



Bux, utterly regardless of all the firing, came up and solemnly informed his master that his bath was ready!

During the next three months there was not much fighting in any part of Afghanistan, but arrangements were made to recognise Abdur Rahman, the cousin of Yakub Khan, as Amir of Afghanistan. At the end of March Sir Donald Stewart left Kandahar for Kabul, where he was to take supreme command of an amalgamated army known as the Northern Afghanistan Field Force, Roberts retaining command of his two divisions, and the command of Stewart's Division passing to Major-General Hills. Stewart's Division was replaced at Kandahar by troops from the Bombay Presidency under Lieutenant-General Primrose. Sir Donald himself, after fighting a highly successful action at Ahmed Khel on April 19th, arrived at Kabul early in May and was warmly welcomed by his old friend and comrade-in-arms, Sir Frederick Roberts.

Plans had hardly been formed for the pacification of Northern Afghanistan when the startling news arrived that Ayub Khan, a younger brother of Yakub, had collected an army and completely defeated a brigade commanded by Brigadier-General Burrows at Maiwand, and was besieging the troops under General Primrose at Kandahar.

Stewart and Roberts lost no time in dealing with this most serious and unexpected development. With Stewart's approval, Roberts sent a telegram to Headquarters urging that a force consisting of three regiments of cavalry, three mountain batteries, and nine regiments of infantry should be despatched at once, with himself in command, from Kabul to Kandahar, in order to deal with the grave situation which had arisen. Sanction being obtained, the force was at once organized, and, when complete, consisted of just under 10,000 soldiers of all ranks and 18 guns, together with 8,000 hospital, transport, and other followers, and 2,300 horses and gun-mules. The Cavalry Brigade, under Brigadier-General Hugh Gough, comprised the 9th Lancers, 3rd Bengal and 3rd Punjab Cavalry, and the Central India Horse. The 1st Infantry Brigade, under Brigadier-General Macpherson, was made up of the 92nd Highlanders, 23rd Pioneers, 24th Punjab Infantry; the 2nd Infantry Brigade, under Brigadier-General Baker, contained the 72nd Highlanders, 2nd and 3rd Sikh Infantry, and 5th Gurkhas; and the 3rd Infantry Brigade, commanded by Brigadier-General Charles Macgregor, included the 2nd Battalion 60th Rifles, 15th Sikhs, 25th Punjab Infantry, and 4th Gurkhas.

It will be seen that Roberts made a point of

employing corps which had served with him throughout the war, but he was also fortunate in being allowed by Stewart to take his pick of the latter's divisions. Indeed, the noble manner in which Stewart waived his own claims and assisted his junior to fit out the Kabul-Kandahar Field Force, at some detriment to the strength and efficiency of his own command, recalls the splendid self-denial which Outram displayed in the Mutiny when he stood aside in favour of his junior, Havelock.

Apart from the grand material of which it was composed, the Kabul-Kandahar Field Force was a model of perfect organization in regard to transport and supply, taking, of course, into consideration the by no means perfect resources available. A certain quantity of supplies was taken with the Force, as it was known that great difficulty would be experienced in procuring foodstuffs along the route, but the management was excellent, and although, as was very necessary in the case of a force doing such hard work, the men were well fed from start to finish, the column arrived at Kandahar with three days' supplies in hand.

The Force moved into camp outside Kabul on Sunday, August 8th, 1880, and on the following

morning the great march from Kabul to Kandahar began.

The details of the march itself are chiefly interesting from the professional standpoint, and will not be dealt with very closely here. The following extract from Lord Roberts's own narrative usefully describes the order of the march, and gives an excellent idea of the wonderful precision and method with which a great movement like this can be carried out when the guiding spirit is a master mind.

“On the march and in the formation of the camps the same principles were, as far as possible, applied each day. The ‘rouse’ sounded at 2.45 a.m., and by four o'clock tents had been struck, baggage loaded up, and everything was ready for a start.

“As a general rule, the cavalry covered the movement at a distance of about five miles, two of the four regiments being in front, with the other two on either flank. Two of the infantry brigades came next, each accompanied by a mountain battery ; then followed the field hospitals, ordnance and engineer parks, treasure, and the baggage, massed according to the order in which the brigades were moving. The third infantry brigade, with its mountain battery and one or two troops of cavalry formed the rear-guard.

"A halt of ten minutes was made at the end of each hour, which at eight o'clock was prolonged to twenty minutes to give time for a hasty breakfast. Being able to sleep on the shortest notice, I usually took advantage of these intervals to get a nap, awaking greatly refreshed after a few minutes' sound sleep.

"On arrival at the resting-place for the night, the front face of the camp was told off to the brigade on rearguard, and this became the leading brigade of the column on the next day's march. Thus every brigade had its turn of rearguard duty, which was very arduous, more particularly after leaving Ghazni, the troops so employed seldom reaching the halting-ground before six or seven o'clock in the evening, and sometimes even later."

There was no fighting during the march, and very little happened beyond the almost ceaseless plodding forward. At one stage Roberts was attacked by fever and had to be carried in a hospital doolie. This left him so weak that at the end of the march he could only ride for short periods. His spirit was, however, indomitable, and, as after events proved, he was fully capable, even in that enfeebled state, of leading his splendid little army to victory.

On the morning of August 31st the Kabul-Kandahar

Field Force marched into Kandahar, on the other side of which Ayub Khan's army was in position. The distance from Kabul was 313 miles, and this had been covered in 23 days, including a halt—a wonderful performance considering the nature of the country and the time of year. But as a military operation its importance lay, of course, in the sequel, the smashing defeat inflicted the very next day on the Afghan besieging force.

The Battle of Kandahar was a very swift and thorough performance. It consisted of a front attack in force by a village called Pir Paimal, coupled with a threatening movement on the enemy's left

The main attack was made by the 1st and 2nd Brigades, with the 3rd in reserve, while the feint was carried out by troops belonging to the former garrison of Kandahar under Lieutenant-General Primrose. In the front attack the 72nd Highlanders specially distinguished themselves, but had the misfortune to lose their gallant commander, Colonel Brownlow. By noon Pir Paimal was in the possession of the British force, and, another important position having been stormed by the 92nd Highlanders under Major White, supported by some of the 2nd Gurkhas and 23rd Pioneers, the enemy broke and fled, leaving their enormous camp standing, together with thirty-

two pieces of artillery, including two of our guns which had been captured at Maiwand.

A painful discovery was made in the abandoned camp, the body, namely, of a gallant young British officer, Hector Maclaine, of the Royal Horse Artillery, who had been taken prisoner at Maiwand and had been foully murdered that morning by the enemy.

Having utterly crushed Ayuḅ Khan, Roberts, ill as he was, swiftly made all the military arrangements necessary, and then went to Quetta to "pick up." On his way, as a supplement to many messages of congratulation on his great achievement, he had the gratification of learning that he had been given the Grand Cross of the Bath and had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army.

As Quetta did not benefit him as much as he expected, Roberts applied to be relieved of his command in Afghanistan, and on October 12th he started for India en route for England. This chapter cannot be better concluded than with another short extract from Lord Roberts's *Forty-One Years in India*:

"Riding through the Bolan Pass, I overtook most of the regiments of the Kabul-Kandahar Field Force marching towards Sibi, thence to disperse to their respective destinations. As I parted with each

corps in turn its band played 'Auld Lang Syne,' and I have never since heard that memory stirring air without its bringing before my mind's eye the last view I had of the Kabul-Kandahar Field Force. I fancy myself crossing and re-crossing the river which winds through the pass ; I hear the martial beat of drums and plaintive music of the pipes ; and I see Riflemen and Gurkhas, Highlanders and Sikhs, guns and horses, camels and mules, with the endless following of an Indian army, winding through the narrow gorges, or over the interminable boulders which made the passage of the Bolan so difficult and wearisome to man and beast."



## CHAPTER XII.

### COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF IN INDIA.

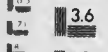
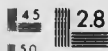
GREAT WELCOME IN ENGLAND—AN INTERESTING COMPARISON—  
ROBERTS SENT TO SOUTH AFRICA—RETURNS TO INDIA—THE  
MADRAS ARMY—LEVELLING UP—THE RAWAL PINDI DURBAR—  
ROBERTS MADE C.-IN-C. IN INDIA—A NOTABLE APPOINTMENT—  
ARMY HEADQUARTERS—GOING ON TOUR—A FLYING CAMP—CAMPS  
OF EXERCISE—BOBS BAHADUR—EXPEDITION TO BURMA—THE  
DEFENCE OF INDIA—REGIMENTAL INSTITUTES—IMPERIAL SERVICE  
TROOPS—FORTY-ONE YEARS—END OF INDIAN CAREER.

AS may be imagined, Sir Frederick Roberts, the hero of the Kabul to Kandahar march, received a tremendous welcome at home, to which in his Memoirs he alludes with that delightful simplicity that always marks his reference to any of the numerous honours accorded to him. But he goes on to say that it surprised him to find that people seemed to think much more of the march than of the advance to Kabul the previous year, which he himself considered the better performance. As he points out, the latter was undertaken with a very small



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force against a large and well-organized Afghan army, which, if the slightest hesitation had been shown, would have been swollen by thousands of tribesmen, with the result that the little column would certainly have been overwhelmed. In the Kabul-Kandahar march, on the other hand, Roberts had a force capable of holding its own against any Afghan army that could be opposed to it. There were other differences, but this alone shows how wrong the public were in their estimate of the two performances. Lord Roberts adds a useful and interesting pointer to the way in which such mistaken judgments sometimes arise. He suggests that in the case of the march there was a glamour of romance about the sudden disappearance into the dark, as it were, of 10,000 men, with the result that for nearly a month nothing was heard of them except vague rumours. This naturally produced a feeling of tension, and a proportionately great feeling of relief and appreciation when the force suddenly emerged and won the Battle of Kandahar.

Be this as it may, Roberts was the idol of the hour ; and when in 1881 the disaster at Majuba, in which a British force under Sir George Colley was badly cut up, called for action on the part of the Home Government, they sent out " Bobs," as he was now

beginning to be generally called, as Governor of Natal and Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in South Africa. But it was, as he himself says, a wild-goose chase. While Roberts was on his way, Mr. Gladstone patched up an inglorious peace with the Boers, and Roberts returned after spending only twenty-four hours at Cape Town. Later in the summer he attended the German Manœuvres as the guest of the Kaiser, and in November, 1881, returned to India to take up the Commander-in-Chiefship of the Madras Army.

The old Presidency Armies, as they were called, have long since been abolished, and now there is only one great Indian Army, divided into two Commands, Northern and Southern, the Indian corps being recruited as far as possible from the fighting races, the great majority of which are to be found in the north. In 1881 the Madras Army was in a bad state, a large proportion of the men, though well-disciplined and intelligent, being utterly unwarlike. They served on, too, until they were quite old, and even the recruits were allowed to marry, with the result that a Madras regiment on the march in the course of changing stations was a sight to throw any keen soldier into a fit of depression. In the ranks were grandfathers with their hair dyed, and in rear of the

column came enough women and children to stock a fair-sized town. It must have nearly broken Roberts's heart to have such a command after leading Sikhs and Gurkhas to victory, but he characteristically set himself to do all that was possible in the circumstances. In particular, he took advantage of the natural intelligence of the Madrassi to improve the system of musketry training, and he introduced a rule forbidding recruits to marry or, if married, to have their wives with them. In these and other ways he considerably levelled up the Madras Army, but even he could not do what only became possible later when Lord Kitchener swept away all traces of the old system and made the Southern and Northern Armies practically equal in the matter of all-round fighting efficiency.

In 1885 we were very nearly at war with Russia owing to her steady advance towards India and her actual violation of the Afghan frontier at Panjdeh. There was a great "Durbar," or Conference, at Rawal Pindi, at which the Amir Abdur Rahman was present, and which Lord Roberts, who was to have command of the first of two Indian Army Corps which were to have been mobilised had things come to a head, also attended. It was an impressive gathering, for every one expected, and almost every

one hoped for, war, and it was felt that Abdur Rahman was likely to prove a better ally than any of his immediate predecessors had been. But the trouble blew over. Lord Salisbury came into power and took up such a determined attitude in regard to hostile encroachments in Central Asia, that Russia, as Lord Roberts puts it, ceased to play the "game of brag," and a mixed Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission proceeded to mark out a central Asian frontier, a step beyond which would mean war without much further formality.

Meanwhile the gratifying news had been imparted to Roberts that, on the retirement of his old friend Sir Donald Stewart, who for the past five years had been Commander-in-Chief in India, he was to be given the appointment. After a hurried run home, he returned in November, 1885, to enter upon the last stage of his great Indian career, which had commenced as a gunner subaltern rather less than 34 years before. He was now a Baronet and a G.C.B., and the post to which he was succeeding was, next to the Commander-in-Chiefship at home, the most important to which any soldier could aspire. It meant authority over an army containing some 70,000 British and 150,000 Native troops, and, in addition to military duties and responsibilities, a seat upon the Viceregal Council,

which is charged with the higher administration of the Government of India. It was a truly splendid and grandly-significant post which had been finely filled by a number of great men, among whom may be mentioned Eyre Coote, Abercromby, Lake, Charles Napier, Colin Campbell, Napier of Magdala, and Donald Stewart. Yet not one of these took up the duties after a fuller and more useful preparatory training than Roberts, and not one left on it a nobler and more enduring mark.

The life of a Commander-in-Chief in India is very different from what it is probably imagined to be by the great majority of people. Even more than the old Commanders-in-Chief whom we used to have at home before the Army came to be administered by an Army Council, he is largely an "office man," his time being taken up by settling big questions of policy rather than by taking any very intimate part in the everyday life of the Service of which he is the head. As mentioned above, the Commander-in-Chief in India attends the meetings of the Viceregal Council and records his vote on a number of subjects which are only indirectly of military interest. On appointed days he receives his great staff officers, the Chief of the Staff, the Adjutant-General, the Quartermaster-General, and so on, who bring to him



all the more important matters connected with their departments in order to obtain his approval of what they propose to do in regard to them. In addition, he has his own Office, in which more especially all questions relating to higher appointments and commands are dealt with by his Military Secretary.

Where the Commander-in-Chief and his staff are there is what is known as Army Headquarters, and ordinarily "A.H.Q." is located for about six months from April to September, at Simla, the Himalayan hill-capital of India, and for the rest of the year in Fort William, Calcutta. More particularly at Simla the Chief dispenses a great deal of hospitality, in the course of which he generally contrives, without seeming so to do, to get a pretty fair personal knowledge of officers on duty at Headquarters, or on leave, who are "shaping well" for future advancement. In much of what belongs to the social side of his great office the Chief is helped by his aides-de-camp, of whom he generally has three or four, usually very smart youngsters who can ride, shoot, or play games all day and dance all night, but who somehow, at one time or another, almost always make their mark as good soldiers.

The one great relaxation in the life of a Commander-in-Chief in India is going on tour, or into

camp, or combining the two. In the cold weather, that is between September and April, either before or after his annual stay at Calcutta, the Chief always goes on some sort of tour of inspection, attended, as a rule, by the principal members of his staff, and the amount of ground he goes over in these rounds is quite wonderful. Sometimes he only travels by rail and other ordinary modes of transit, and then he is "met at the station" with, of course, a certain amount of fuss, and "put up" by the General Commanding, or other big man of the district. After that there are ceremonial parades and often a *levée*, at which all the officers in the place duly pass before the Chief and "make their bow," the senior native officers presenting the hilts of their swords to be touched by the "Lord of Battles," and often receiving from him a gracious inquiry as to the circumstances in which some special decoration was won.

But the pleasantest form of Commander-in-Chief's tour is that which is performed in what is known as "Flying Camp," when his Excellency—all the members of the Viceregal Council are called that, or more commonly H.E. for short—moves under canvas from place to place, much as if he were leading an army, but a great deal more comfortably, not to say luxuriously, than he would under those

conditions. The writer once had charge of the Commander-in-Chief's "flying camp" during a tour lasting about a month, and a very interesting and instructive experience it was. As the Chief at the time was that grand old soldier, Sir Donald Stewart, Lord Roberts's life-long friend and immediate predecessor, it may be taken for granted that, when "Bobs" made similar tours, very much the same procedure took place.

People at home have no idea of the elaborateness and perfect organization of these "flying camps" in India. In the first place the whole camp equipage for the Chief and his staff is double. This enables a camp to be pitched and ready for occupation the best part of a day in advance, so that, when H.E. leaves one camp and drives or rides to the next, everything is ready for him, tents, furniture, and even the travelling flag-staff, on which the flag is run up the moment H.E. arrives. Then everything is on a splendid scale, even the junior officers having large tents arranged on either side of a regular "street," at the far end of which is the special camp equipage of the Chief, consisting of, first, a huge reception tent, fronted by a "shamiana" or canopy and divided into three rooms, then a great sleeping tent, also with compartments, and finally an enclosed space

with kitchen and servants' tents. The rooms are carpeted and quite solid furniture is carried. In fact, everything is carried out as if the residence were to be for weeks or months instead of, as a rule, for just twenty-four hours.

Of course, when the Commander-in-Chief makes a tour of this kind he is accompanied by an escort, which in this case consisted of a troop of Indian cavalry and four companies of Indian infantry. Then there were the camp followers, including a little army of *khaiassis*—men especially trained in handling tent equipage—and a quantity of special transport. For the camp under my charge I had 49 elephants, some 200 camels, and 50 bullock-carts. It may readily be imagined that the passage of the Commander-in-Chief through some of the less frequented parts of India caused considerable commotion.

Very different from "Flying Camps" are "Camps of Exercise," such as a memorable one which Lord Roberts attended at Delhi almost immediately after he took over the Chiefship. In the operations, of which Delhi was the centre, 35,000 troops were assembled. They were divided into two opposing forces which were originally placed 150 miles apart. After various minor movements they advanced, and,

coming into contact, fought a mimic battle, and then marched past the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief. Just after this "Camp of Exercise" the writer had the honour of being personally presented to Lord Roberts, and, like everyone else who ever came in touch with him, was profoundly impressed with the singular mixture of dignity and kindly simplicity which put everyone at his ease with the Chief, but also made one feel that his double nickname, "Bobs Bahadur" (Bahadur means "lord" or "master" and is perhaps still better translated in this connection by the slang term "boss") was not without a certain real significance.

Lord Roberts's career as Commander-in-Chief in India was not marked by any notable war, but there were several expeditions, notably one to Burma, the pacification of which by Sir George White was a long and troublesome business, at one time rendering the Commander-in-Chief's presence on the spot desirable. Needless to say, his long experience and sound judgment had the effect of smoothing all difficulties and producing order and tranquillity where formerly there had been almost constant disturbances, varied occasionally by tragic outrage. Lipling has written several ballads and stories with reference to this period, of which "On the Road to

Mandalay" is perhaps the best known, and "The Storming of Ling-tung-pen" by a company of British soldiers "mit nodings on" the most entertaining.

But, though Lord Roberts's fighting days in India were over, he was able to lay, and he laid, the country and its army under an imperishable debt of gratitude by a series of wise measures and reforms, to the scope and permanent value of which it is impossible to do justice in a book like this. Three of the more important developments with which his term as Chief was associated may be briefly glanced at, namely, the improvement of the defences of India against any possible attack from the north (now no longer likely, but then a very real risk); the introduction of the "Regimental Institute" into the British Army in India, and the formation of the Imperial Service Troops.

With regard to the defence of India, there used to be a strong feeling in favour of constructing powerful forts near the Frontier, something after the style of the great entrenched camps like Belfort, Verdun, Metz, Strasburg, and others which have for years guarded either side of the Franco-German border. Roberts had little sympathy for such projects. Some defensive works were undoubtedly necessary,

but he believed more in mobile armies, and accordingly his policy was to improve the communications, both by road and rail, by which such armies could be hurried to the points where they were most wanted.

Lord Roberts was a very true friend to the British soldier. Assisted by Lady Roberts, he had already done much to level up the Army hospital system in India by arranging for a supply of trained nurses, but by introducing the "Regimental Institute" he touched the life of the soldier at the core. Almost as long as we have had an army, regiments have had "canteens" at which the men could buy beer, but in the old days these were very badly managed, and this led to a great deal of unnecessary drunkenness and consequent crime. By adding refreshment and recreation rooms to the canteen, and putting the whole "Institute" under a much better system of management, Lord Roberts paved the way to still further improvements, with the result that in every Regular unit to-day there are facilities for reading, recreation, and refreshment which would surprise most civilians by their completeness and excellence.

Lord Roberts was not the originator of the Imperial Service Troops, but he was largely responsible for the early success of the movement. Formerly, as has been mentioned previously, the Rulers of Native

States used to keep up "armies" of their own, and dangerous, undisciplined rabble these mostly were. Under the Imperial Service Troops scheme the Chiefs were invited to keep up much smaller forces of thoroughly trained and disciplined soldiers, who could be relied on to work satisfactorily in combination with the Regular Army of India in any campaign in which such assistance might be desired. The Imperial Service Troops were to be trained and equipped under British inspecting officers, and in times of peace they were to be entirely at the disposal and under the orders of the various Rulers. The latter welcomed the scheme, which has proved a magnificent success, contingents of these troops having been employed in several campaigns, notably in the Great European War. The Chiefs vie with each other in making the equipment and efficiency of their contingents all they should be, and in some instances, more particularly the Jodhur Transport Train and the Bikanir Camel Corps, results have been obtained which it would be hard to surpass in any army in the world.

In 1893, after two extensions of the usual period, Lord Roberts's tenure of the Commander-in-Chiefship in India closed, after a total service in the country of forty-one years. "No one can, I think, wonder,"



he says, "that I left the country with heartfelt regret. The greater number of my most valued friendships had been formed there." But "Bobs" would not have been "Bobs" had he not characteristically added, "from almost everyone with whom I had been associated, whether European or Native, civilian or soldier, I had experienced unfailing kindness, sympathy, and support; and to the discipline, bravery, and devotion to duty of the Army in India, in peace and war, I felt that I owed what ever success it was my good fortune to achieve."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE IRISH COMMAND.

PEERAGE AND OTHER HONOURS—LORD ROBERTS'S MEMOIRS—THE RANK OF FIELD-MARSHAL—PINING FOR WORK—CHANGES AT HEADQUARTERS—ROBERTS GOES TO IRELAND—ALWAYS A WORKER—REGIMENTAL RIFLE MEETINGS—TROUBLE WITH THE BOERS—WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA—INVASION OF NATAL—BATTLE OF TALANA HILL—BATTLE OF ELANDSLAAGTE—ISOLATION OF LADYSMITH, KIMBERLEY AND MAFEKING.

ROBERTS, as we have seen in the last chapter, left India finally in 1893. The previous year he had been raised to the peerage under the title of Baron Roberts of Kandahar, and in addition he was now a G.C.B., a G.C.S.I., and a G.C.I.E., these letters signifying the highest ranks—Knight Grand Cross in the first case, and Knight Grand Commander in the other two instances—of the Orders of the Bath, the Star of India, and the Indian Empire. As was natural, he was received on his return with the respect and appreciation due to his

great services, and the country was happy in the thought that it would be distinctly better off, in the event of any great national emergency, than it was in the days not so very long past when it used to be the fashion to speak of Lord, then Sir Garnet, Wolseley, as "our only General."

Lord Roberts himself, when the warmth of his welcome home had abated, settled down quietly to two years of leisure, during which he wrote that singularly captivating book, *Forty-One Years in India*, from which anyone who attempts to write a life of Lord Roberts is compelled to borrow freely, and which may be described as one of the most delightful pieces of autobiography ever produced. It is in parts rather solid reading for boys, for whom details of Indian Frontier policy and large questions of administration can have little interest. But it is a book which after leaving school they ought to be glad to possess, for there is a mass of really valuable and interesting information about soldiering packed in it, together with many bright anecdotes, all told with a simplicity and directness which are infinitely attractive, more especially having regard to the great eminence of the teller. The book was not actually published until the beginning of 1896, but it was chiefly in the interval between 1893 and 1895 that it

was written, and the circumstance is characteristic of a man, who, when he was supposed to be, and really ought to have been, enjoying a well-deserved rest, was always doing something either useful or calculated to interest and instruct.

In May, 1895, Lord Roberts rose to the highest rank in the Army, that of Field-Marshal, a very special distinction which is conferred outside any question of seniority in the Service. The recognized number of Field-Marshals is eight, including two who are promoted from the list of General Officers of the Indian Army, but the number is sometimes exceeded by the special appointment of a foreign monarch or a royal prince. Field-Marshals wear a special uniform, the full dress of which includes white buckskin breeches, and they carry as the special mark of their rank a bâton, a relic, presumably, of the old days when a Marshal in the field would give the direction in which his troops were to advance by waving his bâton. It used to be the rule that no British General could be promoted to Field-Marshal unless he had commanded an army in the field, but of late this rule has been relaxed. Still, the rank is a very great distinction indeed, and it is impossible for any British soldier not of royal birth to become a Field-Marshal unless his record has been

of quite exceptional importance. Of course, in Lord Roberts's case the promotion was a foregone conclusion, but even he had to wait for it until he was sixty-three years of age and had had forty-three years' service in the Army.

After these two years of leisure—as far as military duties were concerned—Lord Roberts began to pine once more for the active life of his profession, and it goes without saying that the Government and the War Office were very willing to find him congenial and fitting employment. But it is not always easy to place a great General, who has already filled one of the very highest posts in the Service, in the right kind of appointment, and it was some little time before Lord Roberts could be suitably provided for. The opportunity came in October, 1895, when a great upset took place at the War Office, owing to the resignation of the Commander-in-Chiefship of the Army by the Duke of Cambridge. The latter, who was Queen Victoria's cousin, had held the Chiefship for nearly forty years, and a good deal of pressure had to be brought upon him before he would consent to make way for a younger man. The matter, however, was at last arranged, and Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley, who had been Commanding the Forces in Ireland, was appointed to succeed him, thus

leaving vacant a post which Lord Roberts could accept without any loss of dignity, and which, being like Wolseley an Irishman, he was peculiarly well qualified to fill. Moreover, the Irish Command is always regarded as being a little more free than the other Home Army Commands from War Office interference, and partly, perhaps, for that reason, is generally held by an officer of the highest rank.

But of course, even the Command of the Forces in Ireland is a very different thing from the Commander-in-Chiefship in India, and many men in Lord Roberts's position would have been thoroughly bored with the change of life, and have sighed for the splendid surroundings and varied responsibilities which "Bobs" had left behind him two or three years before. But that was never in his way. Soldiering of any sort was to him as the breath of his nostrils, and the essential part of his soldier's creed was that soldier's work, whatever it was, had to be done with a man's might and main. He certainly could not fairly be called a "hustler" and he was always a believer in mixing work, play, and rest, if not in equal, at any rate in fair, proportions. But he never "took it easy." Work with him *was* work, and whatever he did was done thoroughly, with the whole

of his vast experience packed into his manner of doing it.

Of course, in regard to "reforms" Lord Roberts as General Commanding the Forces in Ireland, was in a position very different from that which he had occupied as Commander-in-Chief in India, more especially seeing that Lord Wolseley, whose views on a good many subjects were not those of his brilliant junior, was in supreme military authority at Army Headquarters in London. But, as already explained, he enjoyed a certain measure of independence, and this he used, among other things, to improve the shooting of the troops throughout the Irish Command. He had always, particularly when Commander-in-Chief in Madras, displayed the greatest interest in musketry—to which artillery officers naturally do not always attach the highest importance—and was especially keen on promoting rifle-meetings at military centres and among regiments, with very happy results. For a well-conducted rifle-meeting promotes not only good shooting but also good feeling among all ranks, and many pleasant incidents have arisen out of these gatherings. Nowadays they are largely concentrated, so to speak, in a few great meetings, such as that of the Army Rifle Association, which precedes the National Rifle

Association's Annual Meeting at Bisley, and is the recognized musketry fixture for the Regular Army.

Lord Roberts was in the fifth year of his tenure of the Irish Command when, without much warning the Second Boer War, which is now almost universally known as the War in South Africa, burst upon the country. For a long time trouble had been brewing in the Transvaal—the country beyond the Vaal River, then in the possession of Dutch settlers, who had come to be known as Boers—owing to the treatment of the Uitlanders, or non-Boer white residents, by the Transvaal Government. This had led in 1895 to a Uitlander rising, followed by the famous Jameson Raid. Ever since the Boers had been making warlike preparations, in the hope of repeating their success in 1881 at Majuba Hill when, as was mentioned in Chapter XII, they defeated Sir George Colley, Roberts being subsequently sent out to South Africa, but swiftly recalled. In the autumn of 1899, in view of the increasing stiff-neckedness of the Boers, the British Government deemed it wise to take certain precautions in the way of reinforcing more especially the garrison of Natal. On October 9th the Transvaal Government, at the head of which was President Kruger, brought matters to a head by suddenly presenting Great Britain with



an ultimatum making a series of absurd demands, and declaring that, if a satisfactory answer were not received by 5 o'clock on October 11th, this would be considered tantamount to a declaration of war. War followed as a matter of course. The Boers commenced concentrating forthwith in the neighbourhood of Laing's Nek and Van Reenen's Pass, through both of which are roads running through the Drakensberg mountains that form the western and north-western boundary of Natal. Their main plan was to invade Natal from the north-west and to sweep down upon Ladysmith, the British military headquarters in Natal, in the hope of compelling its surrender before reinforcements could arrive. The idea was then to hurry on towards Durban, the port of Natal, and, so to speak, drive the English into the sea.

The British Government, though unprepared, attempted to stem the threatened invasion by pushing forward a force under General Symons from Ladysmith to Dundee in north-west Natal. The first engagement of the war took place on October 20th at Talana Hill, near Dundee, and in this the Boers were defeated. General Symons, however, was killed, and the next day the Boers appeared in greater strength with heavy artillery. General Yule, who

had succeeded General Symons, in the face of this pressure was obliged to retire towards Ladysmith. Meanwhile Sir George White, who was in command at Ladysmith, had been threatened by a Boer incursion from the west, and had fought two actions at Elandslaagte (October 21st) and Rietfontein (October 24th) which had served to divert the enemy from cutting off Yule's retreat. At Elandslaagte the troops were under the direct command of Major-General, now Field-Marshal, Sir John French, who in that remarkable little action gave striking proof of the great qualities of leadership that have since made him one of the two or three most famous soldiers of his day. It was a stirring fight, the Boers being posted on a long hog's-backed ridge which was stormed in gallant style by the Devons, Manchesters, and Gordon Highlanders, the rout of the enemy being completed by the 5th Lancers, who gave a notable illustration on this occasion of the effectiveness of the lance in pursuit.

But these efforts did not avail to prevent the isolation of Ladysmith, which was now in a state of siege, a similar fate having overtaken Kimberley and Mafeking in the west. By the beginning of November, 1899, the opening stage of the South African War was practically completed, and it cannot be said that the

conclusion reached was to our advantage. Such successes as had been gained had been dearly won, and a somewhat serious reverse had been suffered at Nicholson's Nek, near Ladysmith, where nearly a thousand British troops had been made prisoners. Ladysmith, Kimberley, and Mafeking had been cut off, and the Orange Free State had thrown in its lot with the Transvaal. Troops were being hurried out from England with all speed, but nearly a month would have to elapse before any appreciable force could be put into the field.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE CALL TO SOUTH AFRICA.

RISING TO THE OCCASION—MOBILIZATION—WHAT IT MEANS—  
THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE—THE HON. F. S.  
ROBERTS—THE BLACK WEEK—MAGERSFONTEIN, STORMBERG,  
AND COLENZO—LOSING THE GUNS—GALLANT EFFORTS FOR  
RECOVERY—YOUNG ROBERTS KILLED—THE APPEAL TO LORD  
ROBERTS—THE VETERAN SAYS "YES"—A TOUCHING EPISODE—  
KEEPING IN CONDITION.

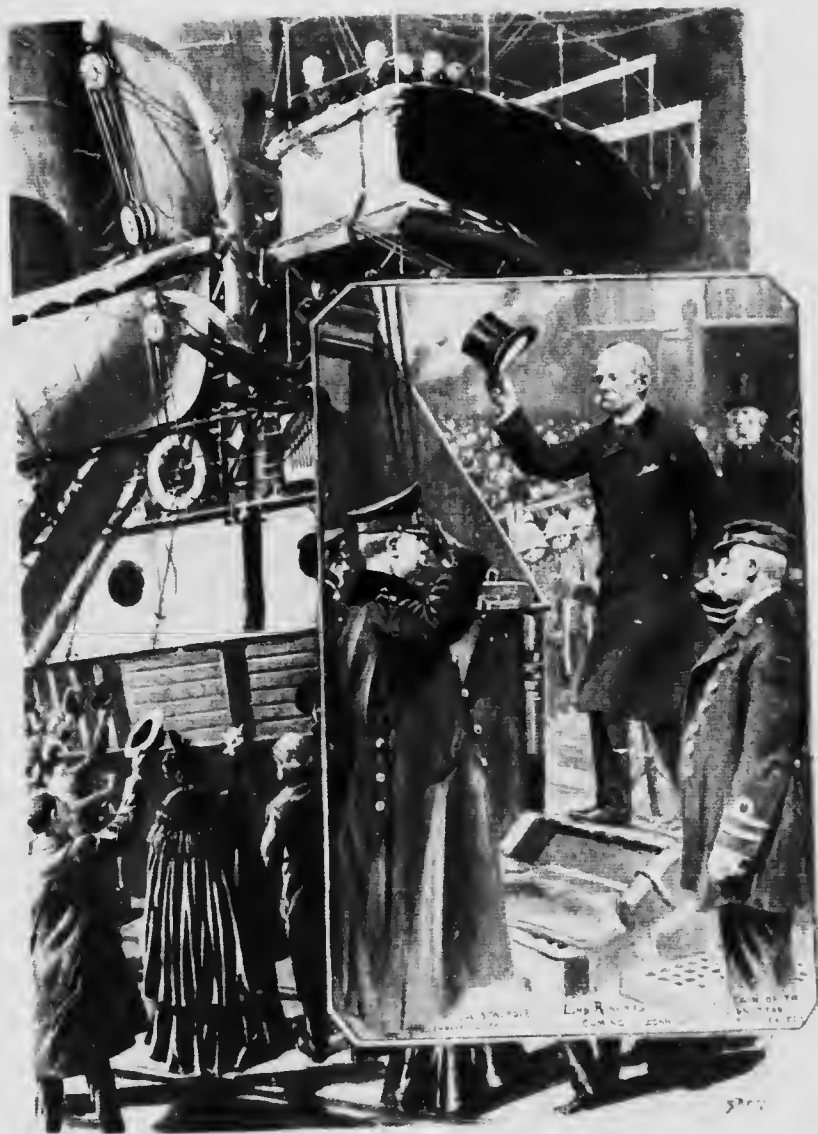
**M**EANWHILE the Government at home were taking the steps necessary to meet the situation. As far back as August the War Office had worked out the details of a scheme of mobilization, by which is meant the completion of units such as regiments, battalions, and batteries for war by bringing them up to their war establishment in the matter of men, horses, and stores. As almost all the more important armies of the world are arranged on lines which render mobilization necessary in a great warlike emergency, a few words concerning

the process may be interesting, more especially as the term is sometimes quite wrongly used.

The basis of most military systems nowadays is short service in the Regular Army—service “with the colours,” we usually call it—followed by a term, or terms, in one or another kind of reserve. With us the soldier as a general rule serves seven years with the colours, and then passes to the reserve for five more, during which he is liable on an emergency to be called back, notwithstanding the fact that he may be comfortably fixed in a civilian employment. This enables regiments, battalions, batteries, and companies of the Regular Army to be kept during peace time at a lower strength than is necessary for war purposes, because, when a war breaks out, and a Proclamation is issued calling up the reserves, gaps in the ranks can easily be filled from the trained men who come trooping back to the colours. As we ordinarily have over 100,000 men in our Reserve, a “general mobilization,” one, that is to say, calling out the whole Reserve is not ordered unless the emergency is really great, since to take that number of men away from their civilian tasks means considerable inconvenience all round. But from time to time it has to be done, and the arrangements for doing it are now so perfect that the whole process works smoothly.

Briefly, what happens is this. It is generally known some time beforehand whether war may be expected, and "posters" are prepared setting forth the Royal Proclamation that the Reserves are to rejoin the colours, and these are distributed confidentially to the various military centres. Every soldier on leaving the colours and passing to the Reserve is provided with an Identity Certificate, and attached to this is a travelling warrant to his "place of joining," the military station, namely, at which he must report himself in the event of a mobilization. There is also attached a P.O. for 3s., advance of pay, which can only be cashed when the Proclamation calling up the Reserves has been issued. When the Sovereign has signed the authority for the Proclamation it is sent to the War Office, which immediately telegraphs the order to mobilize to the different centres. In an hour or two the posters are out all over the country, the reservists see them, and repair to their place of joining, where they are medically examined and, if passed as fit, receive their uniform and equipment, taking their places in the ranks as trained soldiers with the least possible delay.

In the case of the South African War the order for mobilization was issued on October 7th. The Royal authority was received at the War Office at 11.45 a.m.,



LORD ROBERTS EMBARKING FOR SOUTH AFRICA.

*Lord Roberts*

*Lord Roberts*





and, within half an hour, the Districts had been warned by wire, and in most of them the posters summoning reservists to the colours were out by 2 p.m. The Reservists responded promptly to the call ; the War Office and the Admiralty transport officers worked splendidly together ; on October 20th the first infantry transports sailed ; by October 31st the embarkation of 27,000 men, 3,600 horses, and 42 guns had been carried out ; and by December 4th troops to the number of 47,000 had been landed in South Africa.

The Expeditionary Force first sent to South Africa consisted of an Army Corps of three divisions and a Cavalry division, the whole under the command of General Sir Redvers Buller, V.C., who had served with considerable distinction in South Africa, Egypt, and the Sudan, and was then Adjutant-General at the War Office. The first division was commanded by Lord Methuen, the second by Sir C. F. Clery, and the third by Sir W. Gatacre. The commander of the Cavalry division was Major-General, now Field-Marshal, Sir John French.

Why, it will be asked, was the command of the whole Force not offered to Lord Roberts, who twenty years before had been sent out to South Africa on a wild-goose chase, and was now our most

trusted and popular general? The only answer is that he was thought to be too old and his rank too high for the command of a single Army Corps in the field. So he was not asked, and the country later had bitter reason to regret the circumstance. His son, however, Lieut. the Hon. F. S. Roberts, went out with the Expeditionary Force as A.D.C. to Lieutenant-General Sir C. F. Clery, commanding the Second Division. This fine young officer was now 28 years of age and, like his father, was an old Etonian. At the age of 19 he had joined the King's Royal Rifle Corps—the old 60th Rifles, which had done such excellent service on various occasions under Lord Roberts—and he had already taken part in three Indian Campaigns. Latterly he had been serving as his father's A.D.C. at Dublin. One can imagine the high hopes with which he went out to the front in this great war, and the mingled feelings with which the veteran Field-Marshal bade farewell—alas! for ever—to his gallant son.

It does not come within the scope of this book to give any detailed account of the South African War previously to Lord Roberts's participation in it. It is a sorry record, and the "black week" of December, 1899, will long be remembered as containing one of the most striking series of disasters and mistakes in

our military history. On the arrival of the Expeditionary Force, Lord Methuen's Division was sent to relieve Kimberley, and, after throwing back a Boer attack on his line of communications at Enslin, he suffered a serious repulse at Magersfontein (December 11th), where the Highland Brigade lost their General, "Andy" Wauchope, and about a third of their strength. Meanwhile General Gatacre had made an unsuccessful attack on Stormberg (December 10th) and had been compelled to retreat after suffering heavy losses. But the worst was to come. Sir Redvers Buller had himself gone to Natal with the greater part of his force in the hope of relieving Ladysmith. In order to do this he would have to cross the Tugela River, the line of which was strongly held by the Boers. On December 15th he made a special effort to effect the passage at Colenso, 12 miles south of Ladysmith, and was badly defeated, losing over a thousand men and guns.

The loss of the guns at Colenso has a particularly painful interest for readers of this story. The artillery was under the command of an extremely brave and distinguished officer, Colonel Long, who held the view that guns are best pushed up close to the enemy, and who on this occasion dashed forward and came into action with 1,100 yards of the Boer

entrenchments across the river. A terrific rifle and shrapnel fire was opened on the British batteries by the enemy, with the result that soon only four men were left to each gun, and the batteries became hopelessly isolated. Later some splendid efforts were made to save the guns. Buller told his A.D.C., Captain Schofield, R.H.A., to try to bring them away and Schofield called for volunteers. Among those who offered were two Staff Officers, Captain Congreve and Lieutenant the Hon. F. S. Roberts. Schofield reached the guns and managed to recover two, but on the way Roberts fell from his horse, mortally wounded through the body, and Congreve, too, was hit in the leg by a bullet which killed his horse just at the edge of a little ditch behind the spot where the guns were. Seeing Roberts lying helpless in the open under a heavy fire, Congreve, wounded as he was, crawled out fifty yards to bring him in. He was joined by Major Babbie of the R.A.M.C. and between them they carried Roberts to a place of comparative safety. But he was beyond all hope, and that awful night the cable flashed to Lord Roberts, not only the news of his country's bitter humiliation, but that of the loss of his only and dearly loved son.

In the end, 11 guns in all had to be abandoned. For the gallant attempt to save them six Victoria Crosses



TELEGRAPHIC RESCUERS ATTEMPT TO RESCUE THE GUNS AT COLONSO, AND IS KILLED

From the drawing by SIDNEY PACLEY.

Cont. Kofort

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were awarded, one being granted posthumously to Lieutenant Roberts.

The news of the Battle of Colenso came as a great shock to people at home, and it was felt that an immediate supreme effort must be made to wipe out, as far as possible, the memory of such a serious reverse. In those dark days the minds of many turned instinctively to Lord Roberts, notwithstanding the crushing personal blow which he himself had suffered. It was felt that, but for this terrible bereavement, there could be no question that, in spite of his age, he was the one man whom everybody could trust to put things right and to bring this unfortunate business to a fitting conclusion. But—and it was a big “but”—how could a man of his years, so sorely stricken, be expected to rise to such an exacting occasion, to thrust all personal considerations aside and throw himself into the conduct of a great campaign in an overseas country in which he had only spent twenty-four hours, and the military situation in which was already seriously compromised?

The Government, with Mr. Balfour at its head luckily did not hesitate. They asked Lord Roberts if he would undertake the great task that had to be performed, and he, with that simple readiness he

always showed whenever a question of duty arose, said "Yes."

There followed an episode, which the writer has narrated in print before, but which even now is probably not at all generally known. Mr. Balfour, in his capacity as Prime Minister, sent for Lord Roberts, and with great delicacy asked him if he felt sure that at his age he could bear the fatigue which the discharge of such heavy responsibilities on active service under by no means ideal conditions would involve. The veteran replied: "I thought that perhaps you might want me, and for nineteen years I have been keeping myself in condition." That has always appealed to the writer as an extraordinarily touching and inspiring incident. It makes a succession of strong and vivid mental pictures, the thought of this grand veteran, now on the threshold of his seventieth year, watching with clear eyes the progress of the great conflict over the sea, noting sorrowfully the mistakes made, and hoping eagerly for an improvement. Through it all we see him thinking that "perhaps he might be wanted" and, accordingly, still "keeping himself in condition" physically for undertaking duties such as no ordinary man of three score years and ten could hope to perform for long without breaking down. And



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then the call to duty under circumstances so terribly pathetic, and the simple, prompt response of the bereaved father to the national appeal. There are few finer episodes in our history, the writer thinks, and it seemed almost a foregone conclusion that so grand an effort should eventually be crowned with glorious success.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE MARCH TO BLOEMFONTEIN.

ROBERTS LANDS IN SOUTH AFRICA—NEW ARRANGEMENTS—  
LORD KITCHENER CHIEF OF THE STAFF—THE SITUATION—LORD  
ROBERTS'S PREPARATIONS—WORKING UP THE TRANSPORT—  
ALTERED TACTICS—NEW PLAN OF CAMPAIGN—LEAVING THE  
RAILWAY—ARRIVAL AT MODDER RIVER—RELIEF OF KIMBERLEY—  
CRONJE GOES TO PAARDEBERG—UNSUCCESSFUL ATTACK—ROBERTS  
ON THE SCENE—TREMENDOUS BOMBARDMENT—CRONJE'S SUR-  
RENDER—ANNIVERSARY OF MAJUBA—RELIEF OF LADYSMITH—  
ADVANCE ON BLOEMFONTEIN—BATTLE OF POPLAR GROVE—  
ENTRY INTO ORANGE FREE STATE CAPITAL.

**L**ORD ROBERTS accepted the chief command in South Africa on December 17th, 1899, and on January 10th, 1900, he landed for the second time at Cape Town, to resume, as a historian of the War neatly puts it, the task which he was not allowed to finish in 1881. The forces in the command had by this time been greatly increased, and Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Divisions had been formed under the command of Major-General Lyttelton, Sir Charles

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Warren, and Major-General Kelly-Kenny respectively. On Lord Roberts's appointment orders were given for the formation of a Seventh Division under Sir Charles Tucker, and a little later an Eighth Division under Sir L. Rundle, and a Ninth Division under Major-General Colville, were sent out. In addition, contingents had been furnished by the great Overseas Dominions, and a number of corps of a new force called Imperial Yeomanry were being collected and despatched, to the accompaniment of a great deal of patriotic enthusiasm. A special corps was also raised by the City of London, called the City Imperial Volunteers, or C.I.V.'s, which afterwards did excellent service. Meanwhile the Militia had been "embodied," in other words called up for service, and a number of Volunteer battalions — the Volunteers had not then been replaced by the present-day Territorial—supplied picked companies for service with the Regular Battalions with which they were associated.

Apart from these new formations, the Government took a very important step by appointing as Lord Roberts's Chief of Staff, Lord Kitchener of Khartum, who in 1898 had succeeded, after years of patient waiting and skilful preparation, in smashing the power of the Mahdi and restoring peace and order

in the Sudan. Lord Kitchener has since risen to such supreme eminence that the outline of his career is known to almost everyone. Even at that time he was regarded with the greatest respect as an "Organiser of Victory," and it was generally felt that in sending him out to act as Lord Roberts's right-hand, the Government had done all that was possible to put the right men in the right place at this critical juncture.

The above is, of course, a mere outline of the preparations made, but it should be kept in mind, as without a knowledge of these details some of the succeeding narrative might prove confusing and would certainly be lacking in interest.

When Lord Roberts arrived in South Africa the situation was as follows: Ladysmith was still holding out and Redvers Buller was about to make another attempt to relieve it. Mafeking also, under Colonel (now Lieutenant-General) Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scout movement, and Kimberley, under Colonel Kekewich, were also offering a stout resistance to the close investment with which they were being harassed. Lord Methuen with the First Division was still on the Modder River a little to the south of Kimberley, and close to the scene of his recent defeat at Magersfontein. Gatacre

with the Third Division was at Sterkstroom in the north-east corner of Cape Colony, not far from Stornberg; and French, who with the Cavalry Division had been doing excellent work since he left Ladysmith under the seat of the last train that the Boers allowed to leave the beleaguered town, was at Colesberg, rather more than 100 miles to the north-west of Sterkstroom.

It will be seen, then, that Roberts was in the position of a man called in to complete a game of chess in which there are plenty of pieces still left on the board, but most of them either badly placed or in positions of considerable danger. It was a truly difficult and embarrassing situation, and the way in which he handled it is one of the finest things in his great career.

His first care was to improve the existing position with a view to making things as safe as possible until he himself should be able to advance and strike a decisive blow. With that end in view he instructed both Methuen and Gatacre, who were pining to wipe out the memory of their recent failures, to act for the present on the defensive. He himself and his staff in the meantime set to work to create out of the mass of miscellaneous units available a strong and mobile Field Force, including a considerable portion of

mounted men, and provided with an adequate amount of the right sort of transport. It will be remembered that in the Afghan War, Lord Roberts paid very close attention to transport and supply, and Lord Kitchener had also in the Sudan shown himself a past master in these tremendously important branches of modern warfare. Between them these two great experts completely re-organized the existing transport methods, creating a system of mule and ox companies, each of the former carrying the baggage and two days' food and forage for a whole brigade of infantry (four battalions, with a bearer company and field hospital) while the ox companies carried the ammunition, etc., for the artillery.

Very important instructions, too, were issued to the commanders of the larger units with a view to avoiding some of the more costly mistakes which had hitherto marked the conduct of the war. In particular they were to abstain from frontal attacks, such as that which had caused such terrible casualties in Methuen's force at Magersfontein, and to resort as much as possible to enveloping and flanking movements. Few could speak with greater authority on such a point than Roberts, whose flank attack on the Peiwar Kotal had been a splendid example of the

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capture of an apparently impregnable position by a skilful turning movement.

But over and above all this was the development by Lord Roberts of a new plan of campaign. This he was forced by circumstances to modify somewhat, but the principle remained the same, namely, to leave the railway which runs up northward from Cape Town to Kimberley at a point between Kimberley and the Orange River, then to strike across the Orange Free State to the capital, Bloemfontein, and thence to march northwards to Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal. The plan was thoroughly characteristic of "Bobs" and reminds one of the bold strategy upon which the famous Kabul-Kandahar march was based. For, like that bold performance, it was calculated to have other consequences besides those directly indicated. Incidentally, Lord Roberts intended to relieve Kimberley, and to give battle to the Boers under Cronje, who had been holding up Methuen at Magersfontein. But he also foresaw that, by pointing a pistol, so to speak, at the Boers' head, he would make them release their grip upon Ladysmith, which Buller was still making ineffectual and costly efforts to relieve, crossing and re-crossing the Tugela so often that he came to be known rather uncomplimentarily as "the ferryman."

Having recalled French from Colesberg and made certain other dispositions, partly with a view to concealing his main plan, and partly with a view to preventing the Boers from reinforcing Cronje, Lord Roberts arrived on February 8th at Modder River, the troops at his disposal amounting in all to about 45,000 men, of whom about 30,000 combatants subsequently took part in the invasion of the Orange Free State. The force was composed of the First, Sixth, Seventh, and Ninth Divisions, the Cavalry Division, and various additional mounted units, including Colonial Contingents and the C.I.V.

As news had come from Kimberley to the effect that the civilians there, with Mr. Cecil Rhodes at their head, had been talking of surrendering, Lord Roberts determined to make a prompt effort to relieve the town by sending the Cavalry Division on ahead. On the evening of February 10th he and Lord Kitchener visited the camp of the Division, which had been warned to be in readiness to start the next day, and Lord Roberts addressed the Brigadiers and Commanding Officers as follows:—

“ I have asked General French to call you together, as I want to tell you that I am going to give you some very hard work to do, but at the same time you are to get the greatest chance cavalry has ever had.



I am certain you will do well. I have received news from Kimberley from which I know that it is important the town should be relieved in the course of the next five days, and you and your men are to do this. The enemy have placed a big gun in position and are shelling the town, killing women and children, in consequence of which the civilian population are urging Colonel Kekewich to capitulate. You will remember what you are going to do all your lives, and when you are old men you will tell the story of the relief of Kimberley. My intention is for you to make a *détour* and get on the railway north of the town. The enemy are afraid of the British cavalry, and I hope when you get them into the open you will make an example of them."

What followed as regards Kimberley may be told in a few words. On February 12th General French struck away to the east of the railway with the Cavalry Division, and, having first secured the passage of the Riet River, passed round to the north and, avoiding Cronje's left flank, crossed the Modder, captured some of the enemy's laagers, and relieved Kimberley. He had been followed up to the Modder River by the Sixth Division, and was now able to clear away the Boers to the south. The relief of Kimberley was one of the finest things in the war,

and raised French at once to the highest eminence as a leader of mounted troops, dashing and courageous to the last degree, but also extremely level-headed and resourceful. He showed later that he could direct a great force of all arms as Commander-in-Chief of the British armies in the Great War, but probably he himself has always looked back with peculiar satisfaction to the four crowded days in which he carried out Lord Roberts's general idea of relieving Kimberley by a *détour*, and succeeded with his comparatively small mounted force in doing what Methuen with his infantry division and a fair proportion of cavalry and guns had failed to do in six weeks.

Cronje, who had been holding up Methuen along the Modder River, was completely upset by the rapidity of French's movements, and in nervous haste he suddenly evacuated Magersfontein at midnight on the 15th, and moved off bag and baggage towards Bloemfontein, some 90 miles to the east. Meanwhile Lord Roberts, with the main body of his force, had also struck across country, and, on hearing that Cronje was retreating, he ordered Kelly-Kenny, who with the Sixth Division was some way ahead, to go in pursuit, he himself following with all possible speed. Working for about



WRITING DISPATCHES IN A TRANSPORT WAGGON DURING THE SOUTH  
AFRICAN WAR.

From the drawing by R. CATON WOODVILLE.

*Lord Roberts*

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## THE MARCH TO BLOEMFONTEIN. 209

35 miles along the right bank of the Modder, Cronje came opposite to Paardeberg, a hill overlooking the river, crossed over to the left bank, and laagered, digging himself in securely. To his assistance came De Wet, another Boer general, afterwards famous as a cavalry leader. De Wet took up a position on "Kitchener's Kopje," some three miles to the south of the left bank of the Modder, and two other neighbouring kopjes were occupied later by Boer Commandos, under Steyn of Bethlehem (not the President of the Orange Free State) and De Beer.

Lord Roberts, being unfortunately detained by illness, sent Lord Kitchener forward with instructions to deal with the situation, and the latter now virtually took command of the Sixth and Ninth Divisions, which by this time had arrived south of Paardeberg, although strictly speaking he was junior to both Kelly-Kenny and Colville. What followed on February 18th was a very unfortunate and costly proceeding. Kitchener's plan was a simple one, involving a preliminary bombardment of the laager, followed by a frontal demonstration by the Sixth Division and two flanking attacks, the one on Cronje's left flank being carried out by the Mounted Infantry, while the Ninth Division attacked his right flank from the west. French's cavalry, having in the

meantime been summoned from Kimberley, were told to occupy the hills to the north of the river in Cronje's rear.

It sounds a shipshape plan, but it failed in execution from a variety of causes into which there is no need to enter closely here. Lord Kitchener is thought to have been too impetuous, and his orders seem to have been imperfectly understood. The result was a good deal of confusion, which was complicated by the entrance upon the scene at critical moments of De Wet, Steyn, and De Beer. The Boers behind their entrenchments suffered little from either the bombardment or the infantry attacks, and by nightfall on February 18th the Battle of Paardeberg had ended in a British repulse with over 1,200 casualties.

Lord Roberts, being now convalescent, at once hurried up, and during the morning of February 19th arrived at Paardeberg anything but pleased with the manner in which things had been muddled. As the casualties had already been so heavy, he would not risk another frontal attack but quietly drew a cordon round Cronje's laager and awaited his surrender, meanwhile bombarding his trenches as heavily as his somewhat scanty supplies of ammunition allowed. De Wet was ejected from Kitchener's Kopje and

his own back, when he returned with reinforcements. Cronje held grimly on, although inside his laager he had, in addition to the 4,000 fighting men of his force, a number of women and children. These Lord Roberts had offered to take away, but the offer had been rejected by Cronje, whose behaviour throughout was that of a fierce animal suddenly trapped and sullenly resolved not to give in until compelled to do so by sheer necessity.

At last all hope of relief had passed, the conditions inside the bombarded laager had become absolutely unbearable, and at sunrise on February 27th, the anniversary of Colley's defeat at Majuba Hill in 1881, the white flag of surrender was hoisted by Cronje, and 3,400 Boers became prisoners of war.

The next day Lord Roberts moved further along the south bank of the Modder River to a place called Ofontein, where the army rested for seven days after its recent strenuous work on very short rations. For, when he broke away from the railway, Lord Roberts knew well that his men must go short of supplies for some little time, but he also knew that with him as leader, the troops would cheerfully submit to any privation necessary for the carrying out of plans that, humanly speaking, could be relied on to produce a speedy and effective victory.

Meanwhile the mere fact of Roberts's advance towards Bloemfontein had lessened, as he knew it would, the pressure upon Ladysmith. The story of the siege of that place lies outside the scope of this narrative. It is sufficient to say that, after one or two more failures to relieve the beleaguered town, the defence of which was very gallantly and skilfully conducted by Sir George White, Buller found the barrier between him and Ladysmith weakening, and, having crossed the Tugela, he stormed Pieter's Hill, the main Boer position between the river and Ladysmith, on the same day that Cronje surrendered at Paardeberg. On the day following, Lord Dundonald, with 300 men of the Imperial Light Horse and Natal Carabiniers, was sent forward, and, finding the enemy had retreated, marched into Ladysmith, the news of the relief of which, after a siege of four months, was naturally received with great rejoicing at home.

Returning to the army of the Modder halted at Osfontein, Lord Roberts had, as we have seen, smashed Cronje and brought about directly or indirectly the relief of Kimberley and Ladysmith. With his army rested and refreshed, he marched on to Poplar Grove, some 12 miles north-east of Osfontein, and there encountered De Wet with a strong force



of Boers, to encourage whom both President Kruger and President Steyn had arrived from Bloemfontein. The Boer position was extremely strong and, to use Lord Roberts's own words, "cunningly arranged with a second line of entrenchments," but the British troops had sufficient numerical superiority to enable an enveloping movement to be attempted, and, if this had been carried out satisfactorily, it is probable that the whole Boer force would have been captured. Unfortunately there were misunderstandings and delays, and the Boer was a master hand in slipping out of difficult corners. The Boers were nearly surrounded, but managed to retreat without much loss, and practically all that was effected by the Battle of Poplar Grove was the retirement of the enemy from a good position and the advance of the British Army a stage nearer Bloemfontein.

Before reaching the capital of the Orange Free State, Lord Roberts was once more opposed, this time by one of the ablest of the Boer generals, Delarey, who took up strong positions commanding the roads to Bloemfontein, notably at Driefontein Hill. The brunt of this action fell upon Kelly-Kenny, who with the Sixth Division expelled the enemy from the ridge they were occupying, and thus removed

what was virtually the only remaining obstacle to the first stage of the advance to Pretoria.

On March 13th Lord Roberts, at the head of a cavalcade a mile in length—consisting of French's cavalry which had, as usual, been operating considerably ahead of the main body—entered Bloemfontein in state, receiving the submission of the Mayor and other officials and taking possession of the town in the name of the Queen. On the Presidency building a Union Jack was run up, which had been specially made by Lady Roberts, and the ceremony generally was rendered worthy of the occasion. A pleasant incident connected with the entry into the town was a characteristic little speech by Lord Roberts to the Guards' Brigade in which he said that, owing to a slight mistake, he had not been able to march into Bloemfontein at their head. "But," he added, "I promise I will lead you into Pretoria."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### PRETORIA AND AFTER.

OCCUPATION OF BLOEMFONTEIN—REGRETTABLE INCIDENTS—  
SANNAH'S POST AND REDDERSBURG—TWO GENERALS SENT HOME  
—RELIEF OF MAFEKING—THE BOERS START GUERILLA WAR—  
ADVANCE ON PRETORIA—GRAND SIMULTANEOUS MOVEMENT—  
CROSSING THE VAAL—ANNEXATION OF ORANGE FREE STATE—  
OCCUPATION OF JOHANNESBURG—FLIGHT OF KRUGER—A FEW  
HOURS' SIEGE—OCCUPATION OF PRETORIA—WHAT ROBERTS HAD  
ACCOMPLISHED—BATTLE OF DIAMOND HILL—PACIFICATION OF  
THE TRANSVAAL—ROBERTS'S CAUTION—MODERN GENERALSHIP  
—BRUTALISING TENDENCIES—HUMANITY—SOME USEFUL RESULTS  
—ROBERTS LEAVES SOUTH AFRICA.

**B**LOEMFONTEIN was, as we have seen, occupied in the middle of March, 1900, but it was not until the beginning of May that Lord Roberts found himself able to continue the march to Pretoria. There were several sound reasons for the delay. In the first place there was a good deal of sickness, and the horses were greatly exhausted by the trying and continuous work they had been called upon to perform, more particularly under French, who never spared

horse or man in carrying out his extensive and always vigorous operations. Lord Roberts was hampered, too, by muddles into which his subordinates contrived to get themselves, not through any real military incapacity, but because they had not realised as yet the character of the enemy, and were not sufficiently familiar with the conditions of warfare in a country so unlike any of which they had had previous experience. Two such reverses were suffered by Broadwood and Gatacre at Sannah's Post and Reddersburg. To neither is it necessary to refer in detail here, as they lie outside the scope of our main story, but mention of them is appropriate because they illustrate a point in Lord Roberts's character which must not be overlooked. He was very kind, and usually very patient, even when his cherished plans were frustrated by the mistakes of his subordinates. But, as one writer puts it, his blue eyes could at times blaze with passion, and, where he thought anything like incompetence or negligence had been proved, he was not slow to make his anger felt. In the case of the Sannah's Post affair he sent Colville with the Ninth Division to Broadwood's assistance, and Colville at the critical moment did not display the judgment and energy which were necessary to retrieve what was really rather a serious little disaster,



AN ADVANCE OVER THE SOUTH AFRICAN VELD.

*Lord Roberts.*

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if only because it heartened the enemy at a time when they were badly discouraged. Lord Roberts doubtless spoke his mind to Colville on the subject, but took no active steps until, later, Colville again failed to do what he might have done, and Lindley, which he might have relieved, fell into the hands of the Boers. Lord Roberts would not pass over a second mistake and Colville was sent home for having twice shown a "want of military capacity and initiative." A similar fate overtook Gatacre—General "Backacher" as the men called him, from his propensity for long marches and hard work—by reason of Reddersburg. His former reverse at Stormberg could not be forgotten, and he was relieved of his command and sent back to England, his place being taken by Major-General Chermiside.

Incidentally Lord Roberts during his stay at Bloemfontein had to arrange for the relief of Mafeking, which was being defended in gallant style by the resourceful "B. P." who, as a historian of the war remarks, "eked out his slender stock of men and instruments with tricks and devices that might have been employed at the siege of Troy," but which were none the less extraordinarily successful. "When asked to surrender to avoid further bloodshed, he replied that the only blood hitherto shed was the

blood of a chicken in a compound . . . .The besiegers were allured into determined attacks upon dummy trenches, deceived by bogus orders shouted for their information through a megaphone ; alarmed by the sudden appearance of cavalry within the lines, for did they not see the glint of lances? The lances were weapons that had been forged in the railway workshops, and carried round, as it were in a parade before the footlights by a body of supers making a gallant show upon the stage."

The siege of Mafeking lasted 213 days, and during that time a column under Plumer strove bravely but ineffectively, to raise it. The arrangements, however, finally made by Lord Roberts enabled a relief column under Colonel Mahon to relieve the town on May 17th, and London has seldom witnessed such scenes of wild transport as those which were enacted on "Mafeking night," which have since added the word "maffick" to the English language as a term expressing utterly unrestrained and irresponsible rejoicing.

While at Bloemfontein Lord Roberts must have had a good deal of anxiety, apart from the mishaps at Sannali's Post and Reddersburg and the question of the relief of Mafeking. It was one thing to say "Forward to Pretoria," and another thing to be sure



that this was the best policy in the new circumstances which had arisen. For, although the occupation of Bloemfontein had had a great moral effect, and many of the Free State Boers had taken an oath of neutrality and returned to their farms, the fighting spirit of the nation was by no means dead, and the success, more especially of De Wet at Sannah's Post, had raised its drooping spirits considerably. After the British capture of Bloemfontein it had been resolved by the Boer Federal Syndicate, with the two Presidents, Kruger and Steyn, at their head, to continue the war on "guerilla" lines, in other words, to operate here, there, and everywhere in small and very mobile bodies, striking a blow wherever possible, and "clearing out" before any substantial loss could be inflicted on them. During the halt of the British force at Bloemfontein these methods gradually came into being, and, as it turned out, were successful in prolonging the war for more than two years, for twenty months, indeed, after Lord Roberts himself had left South Africa. By some it was thought that Lord Roberts would have done better to make the advance on Pretoria in a much more deliberate fashion, making sure of every step and crushing the enemy piecemeal as he went along. But "Bobs" was convinced—and, it is now generally thought,

rightly convinced—that the balance of advantage lay in pushing on directly to the capital of the Transvaal, and occupying both it and the neighbouring mining town of Johannesburg with as little delay as possible.

The plan of the advance was impressive. At the time it was framed Sir Archibald Hunter with the newly-formed Tenth Division was at Kimberley, away to the west. Also to the west, but not so far, was Methuen with the First Division at Boshof. In Natal, a long way off to the east, was Buller, with 45,000 men and over 100 guns. Roberts's idea was a grand simultaneous movement of converging columns, he himself leading the central one, with a column under Ian Hamilton, now commanding the Eleventh Division, thrown out to the right to fill the gap between himself and Buller in Natal. The plan was not carried out in its entirety, largely owing to Buller's delay in clearing Natal of the enemy, but it was a fine conception, and a notable example of that breadth of mind, coupled with splendid confidence in those under him, which was the keynote of Roberts's strategy.

Lord Roberts left Bloemfontein on May 3rd, his immediate command consisting of the Seventh Division under Tucker and the Eleventh under



THE BRITISH ARMY CROSSING THE VAIN RIVER

*Lord Roberts.*

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Pole-Carew, together with four corps of Mounted Infantry. Driving the Boers before them, the column advanced steadily, crossing the Vet and Zand rivers without much difficulty, and on the evening of May 10th bivouacking in front of Kroonstadt. Here the Boers were expected to make a stand, but French, who had now come up with his cavalry division of three brigades, carried out a turning movement to the left, which so scared the Boers that they retired hastily, the Free Staters and the Transvaalers splitting up to look after their respective countries, with the result that thenceforward there was no organized co-operation between them.

On May 12th Lord Roberts entered Kroonstadt, where he was obliged to halt for some little time because he was depending for his supplies on the railway, much of which, including all the bridges and culverts, had been destroyed by the Boers in their retirement. Reconstruction was therefore necessary, and rapid marching would only have meant that the supplies would have to be brought up a long distance in carts from the railhead, or furthest point to which trains could be run.

On May 22nd Lord Roberts left Kroonstadt, and on the 24th (Queen Victoria's birthday) French, who had been ranging ahead, crossed the Vaal River into

the Transvaal. Lord Roberts seized the occasion for issuing a Proclamation annexing the Orange Free State to Her Majesty's Dominions under the name of the Orange River Colony, which it now bears - truly "a suitable birthday offering from a distinguished soldier to his Sovereign."

Five days more of almost uninterrupted progress brought the advancing forces to the great gold-mining centre, Johannesburg, before which the Boers had taken up a fairly strong position. This was simply surrounded by Lord Roberts, who himself approached the city from the east and sent French and Ian Hamilton round to the south and west to complete the envelopment. On May 30th the representatives of the Boer Government agreed to surrender the city, and on the next day our troops took peaceful possession.

What seemed to be a much more formidable task now lay before Roberts and his army. Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal, lay some 30 miles to the north of Johannesburg, and not only was the capital defended by four powerful forts equipped with modern guns, but in it and the immediate neighbourhood were collected over 4,000 Boer soldiers, for whose safety keen anxiety was naturally felt. The Boer troops in the capital were under one of the

both the enemy's generals Botha and altogether it seemed probable that Pretoria would prove a very hard nut to crack.

Looking, the more effect of Lord Roberts's advance had been considerable. The Boer Executive Government had taken flight; Kruger had slipped away with a view to escaping ultimately from the country by way of Delagoa Bay; the forts were emptied and a general Botha was left to take up a position on a hill about a mile south of the city and do his utmost to sustain a coming attack.

The long-talked-of "siege" of Pretoria only lasted a few hours. The Boers were dislodged from their position with little difficulty on June 4th and that evening an officer was sent into the town with a flag of truce demanding surrender. After negotiations, lasting only a few hours, the surrender was arranged, and at 2 p.m. on June 5th the British troops took possession of the capital of the Transvaal at a cost, and leaving Bloemfontein, of less than 500 casualties, of which only 61 were fatal.

The Boers had carried off some of their prisoners, but some were left in Pretoria, and the majority—about 3,000—had been collected at Waterval 12 miles north of Pretoria, where they were being watched by the Boer General Delarey with 2,000 burghers and

some guns. Under the nose of this considerable force some squadrons of cavalry on June 4th dashed round and liberated the captives, thus filling the cup of Lord Roberts's triumph to the brim.

Lord Roberts's entry into Pretoria did not by any means end the operations in South Africa, and was not even the final episode of his own connection with the war. But it was the real crisis or turning-point—for that is the classical meaning of the word "crisis"—of the campaign in every sense, strategical, political, and moral. Both the Boer capitals were now in British possession, and the fortifications, on which hundreds of thousands of pounds had been expended, had been utterly unable to stem the British advance. British strategy had been triumphantly vindicated. The Boers had been out-manœuvred and thrust back, and they had learnt that, even in a class of warfare to which he is unaccustomed, the British soldier becomes, after a few lessons, an exceedingly ugly customer to deal with. Henceforth there was to be plenty of fighting of a sort, but the worst was over. By "the worst" is meant the possibility of further real humiliations, such as those which had befallen us at Magersfontein and Colenso through the inability of commanders to perceive that even British bravery and discipline cannot com-





LORD ROBERTS AND LORD KITCHENER ENTERING PROTORIA

From the drawing by SUSSEY PYLE.

*Lord Roberts*

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pensate faulty generalship in cases where the enemy holds a really strong position and makes no mistakes. For this result, too, the credit belongs almost solely to Lord Roberts, but for whose self-sacrificing intervention we might have gone on making fresh blunders and throwing away many thousands of valuable lives.

In order to render his occupation of Pretoria complete and secure Lord Roberts found it necessary to move out 16 miles to the east to Diamond Hill, where Botha with 6,000 men had taken up a position astride the railway to Delagoa Bay. Botha, knowing how fond Lord Roberts was of turning movements, had pushed out his flanks until his front was nearly 25 miles in length. This made it difficult for Roberts, who, having sent away a number of troops under Kitchener to quell disturbances in the Orange River Colony, had only 16,000 men with him, to carry out any effective envelopment, and the Battle of Diamond Hill (June 12th) in which our casualties were 176 and the enemy's—as reported—only 24, was not a very glorious victory. The desired result was, however, attained, for during the night the Boers abandoned their strong positions and simply faded away.

What followed during the next six months need not be told in any detail here. It was a stormy period,  
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during which a quantity of miscellaneous fighting was got through by the various British forces, of which there were now several operating in different parts of the country, all to some extent under the general direction of Lord Roberts, but all left more or less to the individual control of their commanders, most of whom fully justified the confidence reposed in them. By the beginning of October Lord Roberts considered that the Transvaal had been sufficiently pacified to justify its annexation, and on the 11th it was duly proclaimed, with appropriate ceremony.

Before striking away, as we shall do almost immediately, from the course of events in South Africa, the opportunity may be taken of saying a few words with reference to one feature in Lord Roberts's conduct of the war as to which there will always be different opinions, but a clear statement of which may be useful in clearing away a certain amount of misunderstanding. There is no doubt that many soldiers think the war would have been over sooner if Lord Roberts had been a little less afraid of incurring heavy casualties and a good deal more severe when he gained unmistakably the upper hand of his opponents. It is possible that, as regards actual facts, they are right, but whether that proves that Lord Roberts would have been right in acting

just as his stern critics think he ought to have done admits of a little friendly argument, and the discussion conveys rather an interesting lesson, whichever view you take, unless you are hopelessly bigoted.

I am afraid it is an established fact that nowadays, in the great majority of cases, old generals are a mistake, and that one of the chief reasons for this is that they are apt to think too much of the cost of victory. For a considerable time past most of the leading Generals—and by this I mean just now those upon whom actual leadership chiefly devolves—in the British Army have been comparatively young. The French, on the other hand, had at the beginning of the great World War a number of quite old Generals, and most of these they found it necessary to put on the shelf during the first six or eight months. This happened not only because these senior officers had not kept themselves abreast of the times, but also because in some instances they lacked the hardness of heart which, it is rather painful to have to admit, is a very serious qualification in a modern military leader. The French have a proverb to the effect that you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs, and the latter-day General has to keep on saying this or something like it to himself so often that in the end he can hardly help wondering

whether he is not becoming rather a brute. The consolation, of course, is that he is expending some lives in order to save many more, and in order to gain results which may be of unspeakable benefit to his country. But think what it means to a man of feeling to know, as a General often must know, that he is sending hundreds of splendid fellows to almost certain death, and that, alas! there is no certainty, perhaps only a bare chance, that the sacrifice may be of any use. Boys, perhaps, cannot appreciate at all accurately the different ways in which a man looks at a situation of this kind when he is, say, forty, and when he is, perhaps, five and twenty years older. But there is a very decided difference, and it has to be taken more and more into account with each succeeding war.

Lord Roberts was, maybe, in some cases unduly anxious to avoid casualties which a younger General might have incurred with, perhaps, beneficial results in the way of shortening the duration of the hostilities, and so in the long run saving many lives. But there are certain considerations which must be borne in mind, and are apt to be slurred over, in connection with this particular war. It was one in which a great nation was punishing a small one, and before Lord Roberts appeared on the scene several

younger and very vigorous Generals had tried what are known as "Algerian tactics"—*i.e.* frontal attacks without regard to possible casualties—on the Boers with very little success. We had suffered heavily, and while, no doubt, by suffering a good deal more we might have overwhelmed the Boers in a shorter space of time—though this is by no means certain—the infliction of such tremendous losses on the great British Empire by the small Boer nation would have had a very grave effect not only upon the British public, but upon a none too friendly Continent.

There was also, perhaps, greater need for Lord Roberts to husband his resources than there was for Sir John French to husband his in the great struggle on the Western Front in the World War. He had, it is true, larger forces at his disposal than those of his enemy, but the latter were slippery to the last degree, and to carry out really successfully his strategy of envelopment—which will be found discussed in some detail in Chapter xx.—Lord Roberts would probably have been thankful for more men. He could no doubt have had them for the asking, but they would have been "half-baked" as regards training—some of the Imperial Yeomanry sent out were very "doughy" indeed—and quite

unfitted to meet a clever and resourceful enemy. As it was, the war had strained our existing military resources very considerably, and we had not a Kitchener at home collecting and training New Armies by the hundred thousand, nor was the manhood of the nation at all deeply stirred by the necessities of the case, or fully awake to the danger of continued failure.

I think, therefore, that Lord Roberts may well have been moved by other than personal considerations when he declined—as he did, for example, at Paardeberg—to allow lives to be expended freely in attacks which might very possibly have brought things to a speedier conclusion, but which would have shocked the home public by their costliness in casualties and, perhaps, made it really difficult for the military authorities to send out a sufficiency of fresh troops without unduly diminishing the home garrisons. As it was, the difference between the results which he achieved at a comparatively insignificant cost and those attained by the Generals whom he had superseded, and who, more especially at Magersfontein and Colenso, had tried by reckless frontal attack to bring matters to a quick issue, was sufficiently remarkable to make one almost sure that in the long run his was altogether the best system to pursue.



Turning to the question of humanity to a conquered enemy, Lord Roberts simply could not be cruel, but he could be very stern when occasion demanded and he suspected anything in the nature of treacherous conduct. When he entered Kabul after the Battle of Charasia he gave the Afghans clearly to understand that if attacks were made on individual members or small bodies of his force he would give orders for the "looting" of the capital, a process the nature of which is, perhaps, more thoroughly appreciated by Asiatics than by Europeans. There is no doubt, too, that he would have carried out the threat if any breach of his injunctions had occurred. Similarly, if the Boers had not fought on the whole very fairly and squarely against us—though their treatment of prisoners was not always, to say the least, civilised—he would have dealt with them far more harshly than he did. But in the circumstances he always behaved to them like the great gentleman he was, and the probability is that, humanity apart, his policy was the very best he could have adopted. To it must largely be ascribed the comparative absence of bitterness when the war was over and the Boers settled down in peace under the British Flag. What finer tribute could there be to Lord Roberts's method of conducting a campaign against a right-

mindful, though prejudiced and stiff-necked, enemy than the fact that fifteen years later one of the Generals with whom he fought—Louis Botha—should first have sternly repressed a Boer revolt, and then have led the forces of the Union—in which hundreds of Britons and Boers worked side by side in the most friendly co-operation—against the enemies of the Empire in the adjacent colony of German South-West Africa?

At the end of November, 1900, Lord Roberts returned home, after spending ten months in command of the British forces in the field and leading them to a series of victories, the collective effect of which seemed at the time decisive. He himself thought the war was over and said so, and in saying so made one of the few mistakes of his life. As a matter of fact, the Boer resistance was considerably prolonged, and it was not until it had been broken down by a series of "drives" organized with consummate skill and extraordinary patience by Lord Kitchener—to whom Lord Roberts had handed over the command on his departure—that the war was finally terminated by the Treaty of Vereeniging on May 31st, 1902. But still, if the war was not really finished, the beginning of the end was visible, and in any case what Roberts had done was fully decisive as far as it went, and it

went a very long way. How far can only be gauged by going back to the "black week" of December, 1899, when, in spite of a really great effort, Great Britain was humiliated by a series of grave reverses inflicted upon her by quite a small nation, owing partly to unpreparedness, and partly to the shortcomings of individual Generals. To have altered all in the short space of ten months, to have straightened out the kinks, to have scored a series of successes where predecessors with big reputations and ample resources had only made dismal failures, to have driven the enemy out of their two capitals, and to have added two great provinces to the British Dominions—these alone constituted a great achievement, trebly great when accomplished by a veteran of nearly seventy years, upon whom the sorrow of a great bereavement pressed heavily, sadly reminding him, we may be sure, at every turn of the campaign, of the hopes he had proudly and with every reason formed for the future career of his gallant only son.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### WORK AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

RETURN HOME—RECEPTION BY QUEEN VICTORIA—FRESH HONOURS—KNIGHTHOOD OF THE GARTER—EARLDOM—DEATH OF THE QUEEN—THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEFSHIP—CIVILIAN HEADS OF THE ARMY—ROBERTS AT THE WAR OFFICE—MAKING READY FOR WAR—INFANTRY TRAINING—SERVICE DRESS—GOOD SHOOTING ENCOURAGED—CAVALRY CHANGES—THE ESHER COMMITTEE—ABOUT THE END OF THE CHIEFSHIP—LORD ROBERTS SCURVILY TREATED—KING EDWARD'S TRIBUTE.

**L**ANDING in England on January 2nd, 1901, Lord Roberts was at once received at Osborne, in the Isle of Wight, by Queen Victoria, who bestowed on him two very high honours, the Knighthood of the Garter and an Earldom. The Order of the Garter is of great antiquity—it was originally established by Edward III. in 1349—and membership is a privilege conferred by the Sovereign only upon fellow-Sovereigns and nobles of the very highest rank and distinction. His title was henceforth, Earl Roberts of Kandahar and Pretoria, and

Parliament a little later voted him a sum of £100,000 for his great services in South Africa. In October, 1900, he had been made Colonel of the newly-formed regiment of Irish Guards. Yet another honour awaited him in the shape of the Order of the Black Eagle, which the German Emperor conferred on him, and which later the veteran Field-Marshal felt it his painful duty to return to the Kaiser on the outbreak of the Great War.

Peculiar sadness was attached to Lord Roberts's last interview with his aged Sovereign, whom he had served so long and so well. For within three weeks the Great Queen passed away, and it fell to the Field-Marshal to make the arrangements for her funeral.

During the later stages of his stay in South Africa it had been arranged that Lord Roberts should succeed Lord Wolseley as Commander-in-Chief of the British Army. Lord Wolseley had already vacated the post when Lord Roberts returned to England, and it was from Sir Evelyn Wood, who had been acting as a stop-gap, that Lord Roberts actually took over the historic appointment, of which, as it turned out, he was to be the last holder. The "last holder," that is to say, of the official title, for it cannot be too clearly understood that the real Commander-in-

Chief of all the armies of the British Empire is His Majesty the King. There was a royal Commander-in-Chief in the year 54 B.C., when Cassivelaunus took the lead of a confederated British Army in order to oppose the second invasion of Julius Cæsar, and there have been royal British Commanders-in-Chief ever since that remote period. But from time to time, especially from 1660, when at the Restoration a standing British Army came into existence, our Kings and Queens have delegated the duties of Commander-in-Chief, sometimes to Royal kinsmen as in the case of H.R.H. the Duke of York (1795-1826) and H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge (1856-1895), sometimes to great soldiers such as Marlborough, Wellington, Lord Hardinge, Lord Wolseley, and, finally, Lord Roberts.

It is well, perhaps, to make clear one or two other important facts concerning the headship of the British Army. Most boys, and a good many men, are under the impression that a Commander-in-Chief, whether in war or in peace, can do as he pleases with the army or armies under him. This is to a limited extent the case in war, but in peace the soldier occupying the most important position in the Army—the Commander-in-Chief of former times, or the more modern Chief of the Imperial General

Staff—has for many years been more or less under the control of the Secretary of State for War, who is a member of the Cabinet and usually a civilian. Under our system the Secretary of State for War is responsible for the Army to Parliament, and through Parliament to the Nation, and it is he who officially “advises” the Sovereign in regard to military matters. It follows that the Secretary of State for War is the really powerful man in regard to everything connected with the Army, and the military heads can do little or nothing without his approval. This state of affairs is, of course, strictly in accordance with what is known as “constitutional usage,” in other words is more or less necessary in a country where the King himself is a constitutional monarch, and the King’s Army is subject, like all other public services, to the control of Parliament. But it often leads to a good deal of friction and unpleasantness, especially when the Secretary of State for War happens to be a civilian who thinks he knows more about soldiering than men who have been actively engaged in it all their lives.

Happily, Lord Roberts did not suffer much in this way during his tenure of the chiefship. The Secretary of State for War during most of the time, was the Hon. St. John Brodrick, now Lord Midleton,

who did much useful work. He was much concerned with a scheme for organising the Army in Army Corps, which promised very well so long as the public remembered how unprepared the country had been at the beginning of the South African War, but fell to pieces when people began to forget and to make a fuss about finding the money. Lord Roberts assisted him in preparing the scheme, but it does not appear that he himself was greatly interested in it.

Possibly Lord Roberts saw more clearly than did Mr. Brodrick that the Army Corps scheme would not retain any permanent grip on the Nation, and counted it more to the point to devote himself as Commander-in-Chief to other branches of progress and reform. He was certainly anything but idle, and, after a short round of visits, settled down to his duties at the War Office with his accustomed energy. As at Simla and Calcutta, so in London he interested himself specially in the work of the Intelligence Department, in regard to which his own experience had been so varied and extensive. He was also unwearied in his attention to every detail connected with preparedness for war, and was probably never happier than in tightening loose joints in our armour which the conduct of the



South African War, now dragging tediously to an end, had disclosed.

He was especially zealous in preparing the Army for active service, and in getting rid of the shams and affectations to which so many of our mishaps in South Africa had been due. Under his direction a new drill book under a new name, not "Infantry Drill" but "Infantry Training," was produced, the keynote of which was to be found in the injunction, "It is forbidden to limit or restrict the freedom granted in these Regulations to Battalions and Company Commanders, both as regards methods of instruction and the leading of their men in action. Nor are the men to be allowed to degenerate into mere machines." Intelligence and initiative were the two primary qualities which had fashioned a Commander-in-Chief and the most famous soldier of his day out of a Gunner subaltern with no special advantages in the way of birth or influence to help him on; and he who had thus risen by making the most of these attributes was determined that they should have free scope in the younger generation of officers and men it was now his business to control and direct.

The modern khaki service dress owes its general adoption to Lord Roberts, who also tried hard, and

with some success, to cut down officers' expenses, especially in the cavalry. As regards the technical side of the military profession, Lord Roberts was, as always, keen on maintaining a high standard of efficiency in musketry, and insisted that General Officers should keep their Commands in a thoroughly satisfactory condition in this respect. The fruit of his admonitions has been seen in the Great War, in which the wonderful shooting of the British soldier has been the admiration of Allies and enemy alike.

In respect to the mounted branch, Lord Roberts made a change which was much criticised at the time, and has since been modified, by practically discarding the lance. But the effect of his policy largely remains in the increased attention which our cavalry now pays to the use of the rifle, with which they are now armed instead of with the old cavalry carbine, a very inferior weapon. In the trench warfare in France and Flanders British cavalry regiments took their turn of duty with the infantry, and acquitted themselves as no cavalry of the old days could have done without a long course of special training. Lord Roberts, too, was very insistent upon the need for better "horsemanship" in our Army. This, of course, is quite a different matter from horsemanship, and consists in knowing how

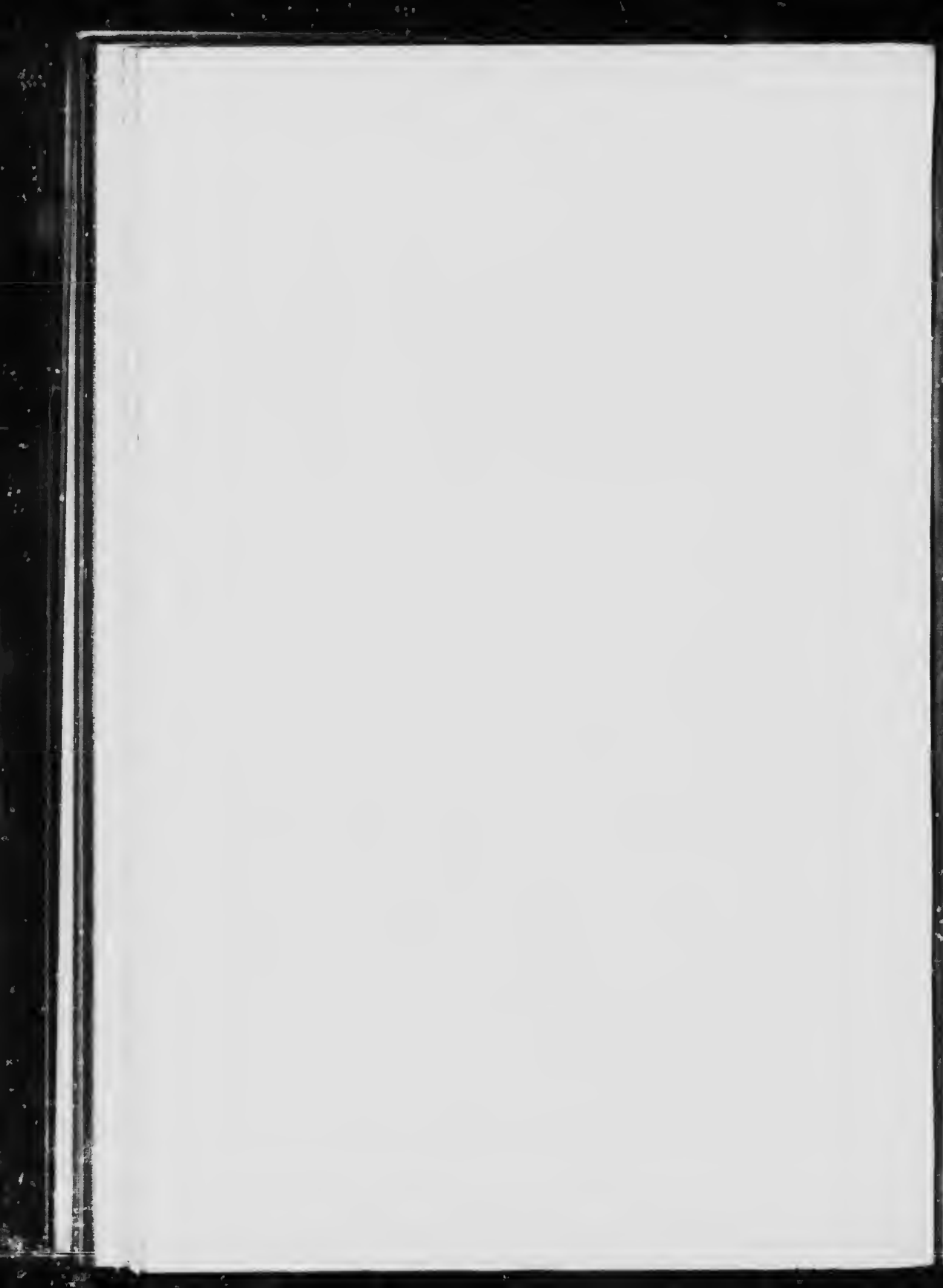


GREETING INDIAN ORDERLIES DURING THE RETURN FROM THE  
SOUTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN.

From the drawing by R. CATON WOODVILLE.

*Lord Roberts.*

*[To face page 240*



to care for a horse so that at a pinch the very utmost of which he is capable can be got out of him. Thousands of excellent horsemen are very bad horsemasters, and in South Africa our losses and failures from this cause were incalculable.

Things went on pretty comfortably at the War Office until the autumn of 1903, when Mr. Brodrick was succeeded as Secretary of State for War by Mr. Arnold-Forster. A short time afterwards the famous Esher Committee was assembled, which turned the War Office inside out, and incidentally sent Lord Roberts into retirement. There had long been a feeling that the War Office was not conducted on sound lines, and many recommendations had been made for making it a more business-like organization. Among these recommendations had been the abolition of the Commander-in-Chiefship and the substitution for it of a Chiefship of the Staff, but nothing could be done as long as the Duke of Cambridge was alive, and there was a general feeling that it would be ungracious to deprive soldiers with such claims as Lord Wolseley and Lord Roberts of the chance of succeeding to the coveted and honoured title. But early in 1903 there had been a great public inquiry into the military preparations for, and the conduct of the war in, South Africa, and in the course

of it the War Office had come in for much criticism. Accordingly, when the Esher Committee on War Office Reconstruction got to work, the public was prepared for some sweeping recommendations. Nor was it disappointed. The Committee, which was composed of only three members, Lord Esher, Admiral Sir John, now Lord Fisher, and Colonel Sir George Sydenham Clarke, now Lord Sydenham, worked with great rapidity, and by the beginning of March had practically reorganized the War Office on the lines of the Admiralty, which inquiry proved to have done its work in the past with smoothness and efficiency, and without any great upset in time of war.

Quite early in its career the Esher Committee affirmed its belief that the Commander-in-Chiefship of the Army was a mistake, and on February 6th, 1904, the appointment was abolished and Letters Patent were issued constituting an Army Council. This meant, of course, the immediate retirement of Lord Roberts, and it is a painful reflection that what was undoubtedly a heavy personal blow to the veteran Chief was not made to fall a little more gently. The story goes that he was not even officially aware that he was no longer Commander-in-Chief until one day he went to the War Office and

found his room occupied. This is, perhaps, an exaggeration, but it is certain that very little pains were taken—so easily do the British Government and the British public forget—to consult Lord Roberts's susceptibilities in the matter. King Edward, however, did not let his old and faithful servant go into retirement without an expression of thanks for his services in India, in Africa, and at home. "During that long period," His Majesty wrote, "he has performed every duty entrusted to him with unswerving zeal and unfailing success."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"BOBS WAS RIGHT."

IN PRIVATE LIFE—CHAMPIONSHIP OF UNIVERSAL TRAINING—  
RESIGNS MEMBERSHIP OF DEFENCE COMMITTEE—PRESIDENT OF  
NATIONAL SERVICE LEAGUE—PROPOSAL AS REGARDS TERRITORIAL  
FORCE—SPEECH IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS—AN AUGUST ASSEMBLY  
—OUR MILITARY WEAKNESS—SPEAKS TO DEAF EARS—INDICT-  
MENT OF GERMAN POLICY—QUESTION IN HOUSE OF COMMONS—  
LORD ROBERTS BLAMED—CONTEMPTIBLE SUGGESTION—GREAT  
NATIONAL SERVICE LEAGUE MEETINGS—AN IMPRESSION MADE—  
A BIRTHDAY GIFT—A GUNNER TRIBUTE—THE "PILGRIMS"  
MEMORIAL.

RETIRING for a second time into, comparatively speaking, private life, Lord Roberts was not long before he found fresh scope for that wonderful activity both of mind and body which characterised his whole career. On relinquishing the Commander-in-Chiefship he had been asked by Mr. Balfour to remain on the Committee of Imperial Defence, which is composed of the leading naval and military officials and a few specially selected



members, with the Prime Minister for the time being as chairman. But this work did not prove sufficient for his energy, and, moreover, he found the Committee unwilling to adopt the larger schemes he was now beginning to put forward for the defence of the country. For from the end of 1904 to the day of his death the central idea in Lord Roberts's mind was the awakening of the British nation to the urgent need of some form of obligatory military training.

In 1905 this view found expression in several ways, notably in an appeal for the establishment of rifle clubs throughout the kingdom, a movement which quickly developed, and has produced some very useful results. But it was not until a little later that Lord Roberts fully and formally associated himself with the cause of Universal Service. In the meantime he performed various public duties, notably as the head of a special Mission charged with the duty of conveying to the Courts of Berlin, St. Petersburg, Constantinople, and the Balkan capitals the news of the accession of King George V. He also paid in the course of the next few years visits to South Africa (where he was photographed on the steps of Kimberley Town Hall, surrounded by fifty children born during the siege), to Canada and to Egypt, but during all this period he refused to



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absent himself for any length of time, lest he should fail in the new duty he had voluntarily taken upon his shoulders of trying to convince the country of its military weakness.

At the end of 1905 Mr. Balfour's Ministry was succeeded by that of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, from which Lord Roberts saw there was no hope of getting any encouragement for his proposals. So he resigned his seat on the Imperial Defence Committee, and became President of the National Service League. The latter had been formed in 1902 for the purpose of educating public opinion in favour of universal training for home defence. At the time Lord Roberts became President it had a membership of 4,000 ; five years later the number had risen to 90,000, among whom were many leading men of the day. That alone is some indication of the driving power which this splendid veteran, now well on in his seventies, put into the crowning achievement of his noble life. But neither figures nor words can give an adequate idea of the marvellous energy, the restless force, and the business-like capacity with which Lord Roberts conducted this wonderful campaign.

In 1906 Mr., now Lord, Haldane introduced his famous Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill,

which abolished the old Volunteers, instituted the Territorials, and converted the Militia into the Special Reserve. Lord Roberts, in the House of Lords, admitted that Lord Haldane's scheme was a notable advance, but declared that the National Service League could only accept it as provisional, as it did not go anything like far enough towards meeting the military needs of the nation.

In 1909 Lord Roberts proposed a compromise which most unfortunately was rejected. He introduced in the House of Lords a Bill, the gist of which was that all civilians of military age should undergo some form of military training, and that, failing service in the Navy or Army, every young man should be compelled to join for a stated period the Territorial Force. The Bill was rejected in the Upper House by only twenty votes, but of course, even if it had been accepted by the Lords, it would have been thrown out by the House of Commons. For the feeling against any form of compulsory training in this country always has been, and probably always will be—even if its necessity comes at last to be generally recognised—extremely strong. "Let sleeping dogs lie" had long been the motto of politicians and Governments in regard to compulsory service, and it was against this stone wall of

prejudice, mixed largely with apprehension of personal or Party consequences, that Lord Roberts struggled unsuccessfully in 1909, and, as regards positive results, more or less unsuccessfully till he died.

In the early part of 1911 Lord Roberts made a notable speech in the House of Lords, in which he solemnly warned his audience that our military strength was not by any means what it should be in view of our tremendous responsibilities and the possibilities which lay ahead. The debate was a memorable one, and, in view of what has since happened, may well be described as historic. A good many of those who read this book may have seen the inside as well as the outside of the House of Lords, and admired the stately magnificence of what, by reason of its elaborate and sumptuous decorations, is often alluded to as the Gilded Chamber. They would be additionally impressed if they could see the Peers of the Realm assembled on some special occasion, dressed in their robes, and listening in dignified splendour to a series of weighty speeches by the more notable orators among them. But at first they might be disappointed in the spectacle of an ordinary debate in which—with the exception of the Lord Chancellor, seated on the

“Woolsack,” the Peers wear their ordinary dress, and speak, too, very often, in quite an ordinary, sometimes in almost a conversational, manner.

Still, even when the business is of a routine character, the mere atmosphere of the House of Lords is frequently a refreshing change from that of the House of Commons. In the latter, of course, there is always a chance that something exciting may happen, a “scene” may take place, or an unexpectedly good speech may be delivered, and one sees more of His Majesty’s Ministers and of people specially prominent in the public eye, as usually only a small proportion of the leaders of both Parties are to be found in the Upper House. But in the “Lords” there is an air of stateliness about the whole proceedings, and an absence of wrangling, which are very attractive, and often rather convincing as well. The debates on military subjects in the Upper House almost always reach a high level, because, as a rule, noble lords take part in them who have themselves served with distinction, and not infrequently as leaders of armies. Also there are generally present one or two Peers who have in their time served as Secretaries of State for War, and so have a quite profound knowledge of what goes on behind the scenes, so to speak, at the War Office.

Lord Roberts addressed this august assembly on several occasions with reference to the shortcomings of our military system, and there is no question that he did so with considerable effect. He was not a great speaker, not at all really eloquent, and probably never moved his brother Peers as a body to anything like genuine enthusiasm. But he spoke clearly, and all his facts and figures were, as might have been expected, admirably marshalled. To many of his hearers his 1911 speech in the Lords carried complete conviction, and, if a Unionist Government had been in power, it would have been difficult for it to avoid accepting in some measure the veteran Field-Marshal's statement of our military weakness, and acting upon his representations. But the Liberal Party were in charge of the Ship of State, and one of their strongest men, Mr. (now Lord) Haldane, had, as Secretary of State for War, been so active in trying to persuade the country that the conversion of the old Volunteers into the new Territorials would meet our military requirements, that Lord Roberts's warnings fell on deaf ears. He was supported by several stalwarts who knew well enough that we were drifting on to the rocks, but the Government and their spokesmen in both the House of Lords and the House of Commons fought



against him tooth and nail, and in the end, as far as Parliament was concerned, he may be said to have been beaten. Probably history will have something rather severe to say when it comes to review that great debate in which a small grey man, who had pulled his country through a great Imperial crisis, tried so unsuccessfully to galvanise Parliament into doing something vitally necessary for the nation's safety.

I ought to stop here, perhaps, but cannot refrain from mentioning that in the year following that in which Lord Roberts, from his seat in the House of Lords, made his last great effort to move the country, he delivered elsewhere a speech warning his audience of the mistake we were making in trusting too much to the pacific intentions of Germany. Just what he said does not greatly matter now, but he stated, in brief, that German policy had always been to act in the interests of Germany at the right moment, and that, if the German Government could see its way to getting what it wanted by going to war with this country, and felt itself capable of fighting us successfully, it would not be deterred by any sentimental considerations. Will it now be believed that, as a result of this speech, it was suggested in the House of Commons that, since Lord Roberts was a

Field-Marshal and so nominally on the Active List of the Army, he should be called officially to account for his utterances against a friendly nation? The idea, apparently, was that the veteran's pay as a Field-Marshal should be stopped because he had ventured to tell what hundreds of those behind the scenes, among them members of the Government itself, knew to be the solemn truth. The ears of those who put forward this noble proposition must have tingled, and their faces have reddened, when, in the early stages of the Great War, they reflected on the manner in which they sought to behave towards "Bobs" in the winter of 1912.

But he made progress nevertheless, just as he did in everything to which he set his hand, notwithstanding difficulties. Year in and year out he hammered away at the cause of national service, and speaking continually on the subject until the public became interested almost against their will, and the politicians began to be somewhat alarmed. The National Service League grew stronger and stronger, and in 1913 Lord Roberts thought the time ripe for a special demonstration of its ends and aims and a supreme appeal to the country to further them. The opportunity was favourable, for the war in the Balkans had shown Europe what compulsory service

could do for quite small nations. Accordingly, the National Service League organized four enormous meetings in Bristol, Wolverhampton, Leeds and Glasgow respectively, Lord Roberts being the principal speaker at each.

A profound impression was created by these meetings. Perhaps at no period of Lord Roberts's career did his personality carry greater weight than at these huge gatherings, largely composed, as it was intended they should be composed, of men of the working classes, to whom in the bulk the idea of any form of compulsory military service was distasteful. But, whatever views may at the beginning of the meetings have swayed Lord Roberts's audiences, and however little he may have been able to play upon their emotions, as some practised speakers can play upon the emotions of crowds, there was no getting away from the fact that here was a man who knew more of what he was talking about than any man living, who had served his country nobly for sixty years, and who was transparently sincere and utterly unselfish in his aspirations. As he unfolded one after another the strong reasons which led him, with all his knowledge and experience, to believe that the country was not safe under its existing military system, even those of

his hearers who shrank from making the sacrifice necessary to enable Great Britain to put her house in order against the evil day of a really great war, could not but be moved by the spectacle before them. They *were* moved, too, and to some purpose, for from the date of those meetings public opinion on the subject of national service underwent a distinct change. The leaven began to work, slowly, perhaps, but unmistakably, and, though some time might have elapsed in any case before Lord Roberts's warnings and injunctions had any comprehensive result, his words had penetrated to corners which the pamphlets of the National Service League could never reach, and in time the conviction that "Bobs was right" would have gripped the best part even of the working public with irresistible force. As it was, the Great War was itself to dot Lord Roberts's i's and cross his t's with cruel distinctness, although there are still those who try to distort the success of the New Armies into the likeness of a great triumph for voluntary service. Their formation, thanks to the wonderful driving power of their great organizer, Lord Kitchener, was a striking example of what even voluntary service can do in a time of great emergency. But we have only to think of what the position at the end of July, 1914, would

have been if we had had a couple of million trained men in actual readiness, to realize what the country lost through not following the advice which Lord Roberts tried to hammer into it through the last ten years of his life.

The four great public meetings alluded to undoubtedly gathered additional force from the circumstance that they were so vigorously addressed by a man now in his eighty-first year. The eightieth anniversary of Lord Roberts's birthday on September 30th had been made, by the way, the occasion of a semi-public effort on the part of those who loved and respected him, with the result that a fund of £5,000 was collected for presentation as a birthday offering. Some token of personal esteem the Field-Marshal could not refuse, but at his urgent request the bulk of the money available was devoted to the work of the National Service League.

In passing, another way in which the arrival of the Field-Marshal at the age of four-score years was honoured may be recalled. Throughout his career "Bobs," in spite of his constant service on the staff, never forgot that he was originally a Gunner, and his association with the "Royal Regiment of Artillery"—for that is its time-honoured official title—was always of the closest and most cordial description.

Since 1896 he had been a Colonel-Commandant of the corps, and the corps was, of course, intensely proud of him. On September 30th, 1912, this pride was evinced in a manner which may well have brought tears of gratification into the eyes of the grand old soldier who could look back over sixty years' connection with the artillery branch, though, as has been recorded in an earlier chapter, it was not until 1860 that he became an officer of the Royal Regiment. For the morning of his birthday saw the assembly on his lawn at Englemere, near Ascot—not by invitation but at the personal instance of those who loved to consider themselves his brother officers—of the splendid band (perhaps the finest military band in the world) of the Royal Artillery. No finer compliment could courtiers pay to an emperor than the music which the Gunner bandsmen discoursed this autumn morning as a surprise tribute to their venerated Colonel-Commandant, and never assuredly was anyone better pleased or more profoundly touched by a birthday offering than was Lord Roberts by this.

This chapter may, perhaps, be not unfitly closed by a brief reference to the impression which Lord Roberts's campaign in favour of universal military training had upon clear-sighted men of other

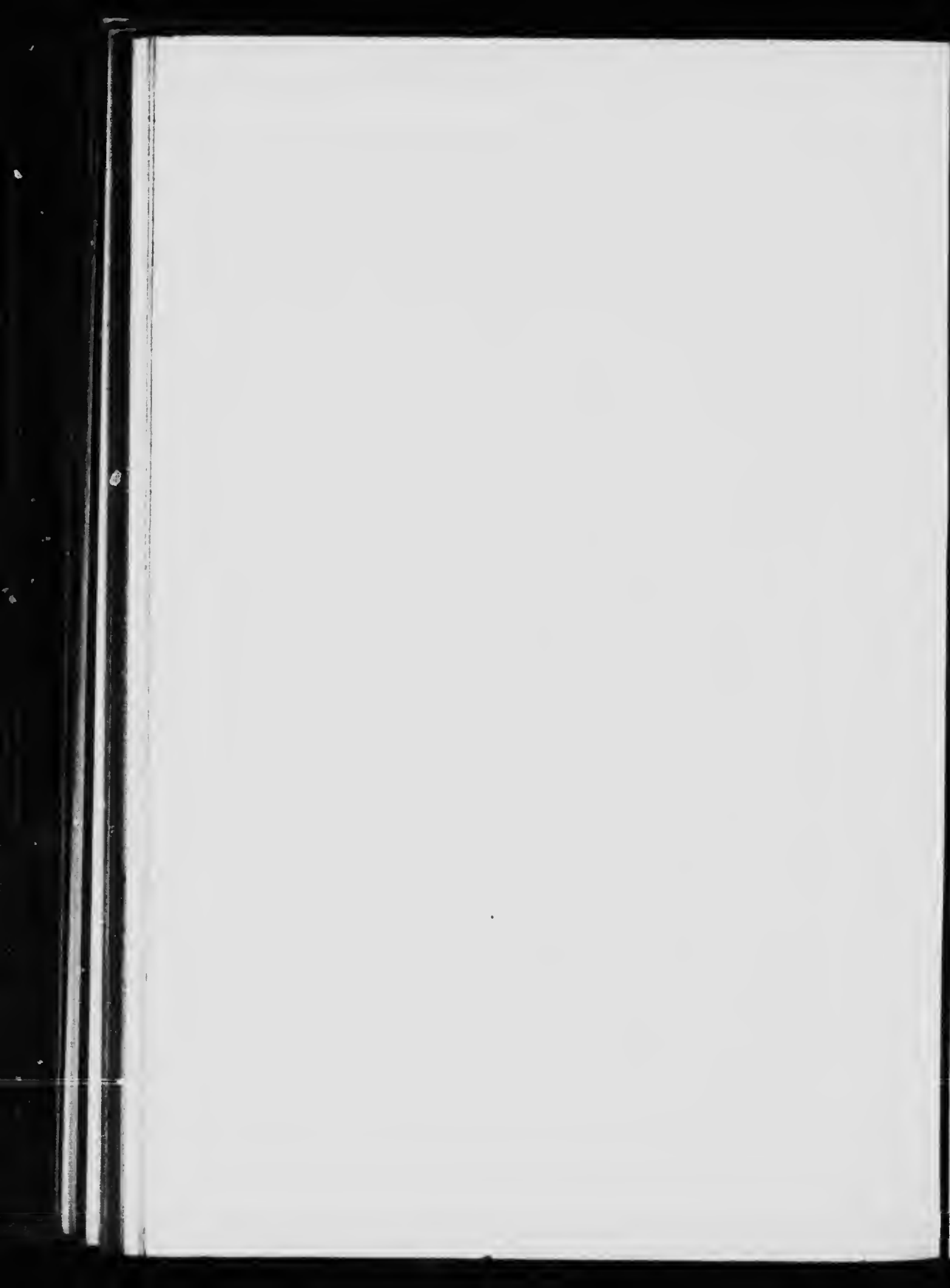


LORD ROBERTS WARNING THE HOUSE OF LORDS OF THE DANGER  
FROM GERMANY

From the drawing by RALPH CLEAVER.

*Lord Roberts]*

*[To face page 256*





countries. Lord Roberts was always very popular in America, and was for years President of the notable order of the "Pilgrims of Great Britain and the United States," which concerns itself largely with the maintenance of good fellowship between the two countries. After his death it was resolved by the "Pilgrims" to set up a memorial to Lord Roberts both in England and America, and the announcement that this would be done was made at the annual meeting of the Order in New York in February, 1915. The speeches at that meeting contained several allusions to the warnings Lord Roberts had given his countrymen—the more pointed because the speakers evidently felt that the United States needed some similar shaking-up to make them realise their unreadiness. "Lord Roberts," said the President, who had served as United States Ambassador in London, "always exhorted his countrymen to be ready for war. They did not always see the reason, but they do now. We are indebted to him for his warning words. His ideas are being taken up by the people of our own country, who believe we should be ready for the sacred duty of self-defence." Still more direct was the reference of General Wood, of the United States Army, to the advice Lord Roberts had given the British

nation on the subject of national service. "If they had listened to his words of yesterday they would have been ready to-day." There is a long story of patient effort, of unregarded counsel, of tragic misuse of opportunity packed in that short sentence.

## CHAPTER XIX.

“WITHIN SOUND OF THE GUNS.”

THE GREAT WORLD WAR—LORD ROBERTS'S WARNING RECALLED  
—GENEROUS RESTRAINT—A GREAT GENTLEMAN—USEFUL EFFORTS  
—TIMELY APPEALS—LORD ROBERTS GOES TO FRANCE—THE  
HOSPITAL SHIP—AFFECTING SCENES—AT SIR JOHN FRENCH'S  
HEADQUARTERS—VISITS THE INDIAN TROOPS—A FATAL CHILL—  
A FITTING END—ROYAL TRIBUTES—A FIELD-MARSHAL'S FUNERAL  
—IMPRESSIVE CEREMONIAL—THE CATHEDRAL SERVICE—THE  
LAST POST—LYING IN STATE.

TOWARDS the end of July, 1914, it became evident that the peace of Europe was in danger of being broken. On June 28th the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the Austrian Heir-Apparent, had been murdered at Serajevo, and Serbian complicity with the crime was alleged. Serbia was called upon by Austria to take certain steps by way of expressing her official condemnation of the murder, and although the smaller nation, advised by Russia, consented to meet nearly all the demands made

upon her, the Dual Monarchy, egged on by the Kaiser, declined to be appeased, and insisted upon an unqualified acceptance of her humiliating terms. Beyond a certain point Serbia would not go, and on July 28th Austria-Hungary declared war. Russia having shown herself ready to take up the cudgels on behalf of Serbia, Germany took offence at her preparations, and on August 1st declared war upon her. On the following day Germany delivered an ultimatum to Belgium, and on August 3rd she declared war on France. On August 4th Great Britain declared war on Germany. By August 12th both France and Great Britain had declared war on Austria. Thus in a fortnight Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Serbia, and Belgium, were all involved in the most tremendous war which has ever been recorded in the history of the world.

It is not our purpose to deal with the Great War except in regard to its limited association with the life of Lord Roberts. We must pass lightly, then, over the stirring story of the manner in which Great Britain rose to its new and tremendous responsibilities; how the Expeditionary Force—not complete, it is true, in spite of all the promises of Army reformers, but still a force of unsurpassable quality

and superbly equipped—was landed in France, and fought gloriously at Mons, the Marne, and later in almost countless stern struggles for ascendancy; how the Territorials took their part both in home defence and at the front; how New Armies came into being; how Indian princes and nobles with splendid unanimity offered their swords and fortunes to the King-Emperor; and how grandly the Overseas Dominions once more responded to the "call of the blood."

Lord Roberts only lived to see the Great War partially developed, and much of what he did see must have aroused in him some sad and bitter reflections. For here was the very crisis against which time after time he had warned his countrymen, imploring them to make due provision for it. They had preferred to listen to fluent talkers who had assured them that there was no cause for alarm, and one of whom had even ventured to decry the views of the greatest soldier of the day because they took no account of the influence upon strategy of policy. Policy! As if policy could give us a quarter of a million trained men when we wanted them, which Lord Roberts's project would have done, and done twice and three times over if his words of warning had been listened to when they

were first uttered. Thanks to Lord Kitchener, we "worried through," and the spring of 1915 saw Great Britain, by stress of circumstances, if not a Nation in Arms, at any rate a nation with an army commensurate with her needs. Whatever happens in the future, nothing can alter the central fact that at the outset of war we were in a military sense shamefully unprepared, and that the blame for this unreadiness lies largely upon the shoulders of those who strove to thwart Lord Roberts in the work he had undertaken—at an age when most men are content to dream peacefully of the past—of opening his country's eyes and ears to present and future military needs and dangers.

A man in Lord Roberts's position might now have been forgiven for saying "I told you so." He had worked so very hard, he had been so scurvily treated, men not fit to black his boots had been permitted, sometimes even encouraged, to point their talk at him as one who doubtless meant well but was behind the times, did not understand the temper of the nation, made far too much of a bogey of Germany, had no knowledge of policy. If the grand old soldier, now completing his eighty-second year, had burst out in a fit of righteous anger, and held up to everlasting shame those whose opposition

to his campaign was so largely responsible for the deficiencies of our military system, who could have blamed him? It would not, perhaps, have been the act of a truly great man, but it would have been very human, and his country certainly would have forgiven him, and very possibly have made his former opponents feel the weight of its displeasure.

But “Bobs” was always not only a great man but a great gentleman, and his greatness in both these capacities was far too real to allow him to stoop from his high level to “get even” with smaller men. Not a word did he utter in public, at any rate, which could be construed as a complaint of past neglect of his advice or reproach of those to whom the neglect was chiefly due. He did not even ask for himself any special consideration in regard to a military crisis which he had foretold, and in the handling of which his ripe experience and profound sagacity might well have been utilised. Instead, he quietly looked about to see if there were any direction in which he could make himself practically useful, and in regard to which he could be sure that the influence of his personality would strongly back up any appeal he might make to his countrymen over his signature.

He soon found what he sought in the scarcity of field-glasses, saddles, and other additional equipment, in respect to which no proper provision had been made for the large number of troops we were putting in the field. Lord Roberts accordingly issued a request that those in possession more especially of field-glasses and saddles which they could spare, if only temporarily, would place them at his disposal. The public responded promptly, and in a very short time the Field-Marshal had obtained all he asked for. This singularly practical effort, of the greatest possible value at such a crisis, was very characteristic of "Bobs," who in such matters never thought any detail beneath him as long as it bore directly upon the question of fighting efficiency. Hundreds of officers had reason to be thankful for his prompt and energetic intervention at such a juncture, when in the ordinary way such things as field-glasses and saddlery were almost unobtainable by individuals at short notice, owing to the sudden and enormous demand. Many private persons, too, were pleased and proud to give their assistance in the matter through such a medium.

In November Lord Roberts, shocked and grieved at the harm that was being done, more especially in the New Armies, by temptations held out to



recruits to drink, sent to the papers an earnest appeal to the public to refrain from "treating" soldiers, a practice which could not but impair their efficiency and sap their morality generally. The evil referred to was not wholly removed by the Field-Marshal's moving letter, but some improvement was undoubtedly effected, more especially as regards the youngsters then flocking in thousands to the colours.

A few days after the publication of this appeal it was announced that Lord Roberts had gone to France with the special object of inspecting the Indian troops who had recently been brought up to the front. One who saw him arrive at Boulogne by the Folkestone boat said that he gave the impression of being in remarkably good health. "His alert carriage and light step as he crossed the gangway were remarked by all. It was difficult to realize that he was over eighty years old. He was received on the quay by a number of officers of the General Staff and stood for a while in conversation with them, the centre of a picturesque group."

Lord Roberts landed in France on November 11th, and his first act was to visit the hospital ship in Boulogne Harbour. His visit is touchingly described

in a letter from one of the medical officers which was published later in *The Times* :—

“ Lord Roberts came yesterday to inspect the ship and see the wounded. It was wonderful to see them directly he was recognized—they were all trying to get up and salute him. He was very kind to them all and heard all about their wounds, patting their heads and saying, ‘ Poor chap, poor chap ! ’

“ When he left the ward there was a general murmur from them all, blessing him. I have never seen such an affecting sight. The tears ran down the old man’s face, but he turned round on me very sharp and said, ‘ Your hospital is as near perfection as any I have seen. I congratulate you, sir.’ He then saw two native officers, both of whom knew him, wrote his name in my book, shook hands, and went.

“ He is simply worshipped by these men. Other generals have been round often, but there is never a sound. Yesterday was like a whole church full of men praying. Such is my first official experience of ‘ Bobs,’ and it brings the water to my eyes. . . . His face is old, but his back is as straight as a line, and his signature the large, firm writing of a young man.”

From Boulogne Lord Roberts went on at once to Sir John French's headquarters, and on Thursday, November 12th, he visited the Indian regiments, being received by the Maharajah of Bikanir, his old friend Sir Pertab Singh, and other Indian officers. His appearance among the Indian troops created intense gratification, and his welcome evidently pleased the grand old soldier immensely. Not less warmly was he received by the British corps which he subsequently visited.

On his return after a round of such visits on Friday afternoon he complained of feeling chilled, and after seeing a doctor, went early to bed. As he suffered from such chills, neither his daughter, Lady Aileen Roberts, nor his son-in-law, Major Lewin, who had married Lady Edwina, his younger daughter, the previous year, were at all alarmed. But by 11 o'clock he was much worse, and it was seen that he was suffering from a sharp attack of pneumonia. He never really rallied, and at eight o'clock the next morning he passed away quite peacefully and painlessly. *Felix opportunitate mortis!* The old Latin phrase never surely had a fuller, closer application than it had to the death of Lord Roberts in extreme old age, with his splendid faculties unimpaired, surrounded by loving friends and old

comrades-in-arms, and within touch of the very field of battle.

Very fittingly was this thought emphasised in the message sent to Lady Roberts by Field-Marshal Sir John French :—

“ In the name of his Majesty’s Army serving in France, I wish to be allowed to convey to you and your family our heartfelt sympathy. Your grief is shared by us, who mourn the loss of a much-loved chief. As he was called, it seems a fitter ending to the life of so great a soldier that he should have passed away in the midst of the troops he loved so well and within the sound of the guns.”

The same feeling inspired the Indian officer of Cureton’s Multanis, whose tribute is quoted in *The Times History of the War* :—

“ He was truly not only the Colonel-in-Chief of our Army ; he was our father. He was a pattern of the British officer under whom we gladly serve—brave, wise, and above all, full of sympathy. It is sad—what parting with one like him is not?—but, thank God, *we* saw him here at the last, and I, if I live, will be able to tell my children in the Punjab that he shook hands with me and spoke to me in my own language. And what death could have been more

to the choosing of a man like our Colonel-in-Chief than to die amid us—the Army that he loved so well?"

There were, of course, almost countless other tributes, including expressions of deep sympathy and regret from the King and Queen and all the members of the Royal Family, his Majesty taking the unusual course of writing Lady Roberts an autograph letter of condolence.

The body of the dead Field-Marshal was brought from France to Englemere, near Ascot, where it remained until the 19th, when it was laid to rest in the great Empire Church where both Wellington and Nelson are buried—St. Paul's Cathedral.

It was a grey, cold, misty morning, but the gloom served to enhance the solemnity and grandeur of the funeral ceremony. The burial of a Field-Marshal is always extremely impressive, but in the case of Lord Roberts, of course, there were added touches of significance and pathos. The coffin was brought up by a special train from Ascot, to the station at which it was borne from Englemere on the gun-carriage which Lord Roberts's son had lost his life in endeavouring to save at Colenso. The local procession included Boy Scouts, and boys from the Gordon Boys' Home and Church Lads' Brigade.

Charing Cross Station a guard of honour was formed by fifty men of the Irish Guards, all of whom had fought in France, and a group of distinguished naval and military officers awaited the arrival of the special train. From the latter the coffin was transferred to a Horse Artillery gun-carriage draped with the Union Jack. On top of the coffin, on a ground of red velvet, rested Lord Roberts's cap and medals and his bâton. Behind the gun-carriage the dead Field-Marshal's charger was led by a groom.

As the procession moved off a salute of nineteen minute guns was fired in St. James's Park. The route lay along the Embankment, and was lined by soldiers, behind whom spectators were gathered in increasing numbers until the crowd reached its fullest density in front of the Cathedral. At the head of the procession the pipers of the London Scottish marched silently, followed by a battalion of the regiment and various other units and details, including a detachment of the Royal Naval Brigade and some boys from the Eton contingent of the Officers' Training Corps. Just in front of the coffin rode a battery of Royal Horse Artillery, preceded by an Indian Mounted Battery. The pall-bearers were Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener, Admiral of the Fleet Sir E. H. Seymour, Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn

Wood, V.C., Field-Marshal Lord Grenfell, Field-Marshal Lord Methuen, Field-Marshal Lord Nicholson, General Sir J. Hills-Johnes, V.C., General Sir R. Biddulph, General Sir A. Hunter, General Sir A. Gaselee, General Sir C. Egerton, and Admiral Lord Charles Beresford.

In the rear of the coffin were other officers, some of them Indian, and mounted troops, the procession being so long that when the gun-carriage conveying the coffin reached the Cathedral the cavalry in the rear were still riding along the Embankment.

In the Cathedral the ceremony was brief but extraordinarily impressive. The coffin was borne to the catafalque (that used sixty years before at Wellington's funeral) beneath the Dome by eight sergeants from regiments of which Lord Roberts had been Colonel. Behind the pall-bearers came the Archbishop of Canterbury preceding his Majesty the King. Around and near the catafalque were grouped members of the Government and men of eminence in all walks of life. The two hymns sung were "Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin," and "For all the saints who from their labours rest," the latter after the coffin, still covered with the flag, was partly lowered into the grave. On its conclusion the blessing was pronounced by the

Archbishop of Canterbury: Garter King of Arms then advanced to the chancel steps and proclaimed in full Lord Roberts's titles, concluding with a reference to his Victoria Cross. A roll of drums followed, preluding Chopin's "Marche Funèbre," and, as the last notes of the latter died away, the trumpeters of the Royal Artillery sounded the "Last Post."

Throughout the afternoon the coffin "lay in state," and a long procession of private persons, who had formed a queue outside the Cathedral, passed in respectful silence by the open grave.



## CHAPTER XX.

### LORD ROBERTS AS A SOLDIER.

SOLDIERING AS AN ART—DANGER OF A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE—UNFAIR CRITICISM OF GENERALS—A USEFUL APPRENTICESHIP—ROBERTS'S PERSONAL INFLUENCE—MARLBOROUGH AND WELLINGTON—STRATEGY AND TACTICS—THE UNCHANGING PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGY—ROBERTS'S SMALL ARMIES—SUPERIORITY OF FORCE AT DECISIVE POINTS—ATTACK, DEFENCE, AND COUNTER-ATTACK—FLANK ATTACKS—DIFFICULT UNDER MODERN CONDITIONS—THE ELUSIVE BOER—ENVELOPMENT IN THEORY AND PRACTICE—APPLICATION IN SOUTH AFRICA—BREAKING AWAY FROM A RAILWAY—ROBERTS AS A TACTICIAN—SOMETIMES BADLY SERVED.

IT may perhaps be thought rather a mistake to include a sketch of Lord Roberts's characteristics as a soldier in a book intended primarily for young people. For soldiering, of course, and especially leadership, is just as much an art, just as much a profession, as, for instance, medicine or law, and if one were telling boys about a great doctor or lawyer, one would hesitate to go into technical detail about the manner in which their most notable

operations or cases were brought to a successful conclusion. But soldiering stands a little apart from the other arts and professions in that, although it requires just as much inborn talent, just as much hard work and varied experience to become really great, it is so nearly linked to our everyday life that it is not at all difficult for youngsters and the most thorough-going civilians to get a capital idea of even the technical side—provided that they are sensible and do not want to go too far in a hurry.

For there is certainly no branch of science in which the old adage that “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing” is more true than it is in regard to the Art of War. When they see a fine picture painted by a well-known artist which somehow does not please them, people who have never handled a paint-brush in their lives except in the nursery do not say, “Ah! *I* know the mistake that old Sepia makes. He doesn't use rose-madder for his sunsets,” and so on. But almost any man in a railway carriage or at a dinner-table, who has never heard a gun fired in anger, and has an idea that all marching can be done at a regulation pace of about four miles an hour, will tell you just how it was that such and such an operation in any current war in which he is interested did not “come off.” Often, too, he is quite right,

but the trouble is that he does not understand the reason why the unfortunate General who failed where he ought to have succeeded was unable to take certain necessary precautions, or what totally unforeseen difficulties cropped up just as the operation was beginning to develop in the way that it should. Napoleon said that all Generals make mistakes, but that the best General is he who makes the fewest mistakes. If the arm-chair, railway carriage, and dinner-table critic were not quite so firmly convinced that no General ought ever to make a mistake of any sort, the life of a leading soldier in the British Army at any rate would be rather more comfortable and less anxious than it sometimes is.

Lord Roberts, it is true, did not suffer very much in this way, because he was almost uniformly successful. But he was sometimes unfairly criticised by those who ought to have known better, and one of the sinners in this respect was the present writer ! It was during the South African War, and I was acting, temporarily, as the military critic of a great London daily paper. An incident, a very regrettable incident which had serious consequences, happened, showing that in making certain dispositions a gap had been left which I thought ought not to have been

left, and I said so, and should probably in the same circumstances say much the same thing again. As an arm-chair critic, I was more or less justified, but now that I know, or think I know, just how it happened, I am sorry I wrote as I did, for I can imagine Lord Roberts saying, as he read the passage in question—which I rather think he did, as it was a very great journal—"How little he knows the truth!" For it was apparently just one of those cases in which a great leader has to bear on his shoulders the failure of his subordinates to understand that in almost all orders in the field something has to be left to the imagination, and a good deal more to the intelligence of those to whom the orders are given.

Again, I have heard very good soldiers indeed question the wisdom of Lord Roberts's generalship largely on the ground that it was sometimes rather risky, and that, if it had not succeeded, the failure would have been very disastrous. That is a sound argument in some instances, no doubt, and there are notable recorded cases in which, after a long succession of victories won almost more by luck than by judgment, the pitcher has gone to the well once too often and been entirely smashed. But risks have to be taken by most Generals, and in war the old

maxim, that nothing succeeds like success, is one which can be applied at almost every turn. Lord Roberts was often very fortunate in bringing off "*coups*"—a very useful expression for which it is difficult to find an exact rendering in English—but then he always did all he possibly could in the first instance to deserve success, and the preparations he made, more especially in the matter of supply and transport, whenever he had the ordering of a campaign from the start, were always of the most thorough and far-seeing description.

I think myself that a great deal of what Lord Roberts actually accomplished as a leader in the field was due to this fact and to the long training he had in the Quartermaster-General's Department in India. In great business houses those are usually the most successful heads who have been closely associated at one time or another, and for a considerable period, with the inner working of the business, and in the Army there is, as I have tried to point out in an earlier chapter, no department or corps which has more to do with the inside, so to speak, of soldiering than that which is controlled by the Q.M.G. The conspicuous thing, too, about the work of that department is that it has to be kept going whatever the circumstances, and is even more vitally

important in the field than it is in quarters. Once you have soldiers properly trained and properly disciplined, you can trust them to do their work in war, under capable regimental officers, without much assistance from the Staff, except as regards the strategical and tactical dispositions—I will explain what these are a little further on—of the larger units. But you cannot expect the individual fighting man nowadays—especially when there are hundreds of thousands of him lumped together—to make his own arrangements for food or for getting from one place to another. That is chiefly where the Q.M.G.'s Department comes in, and naturally the General in the field scores who has had a long training in work the proper doing of which is so absolutely essential to the welfare, nay, to the very existence, of troops wherever they are congregated in large bodies.

Much has been written of the great personal influence which Lord Roberts exercised over those whom he led and which has caused him to be compared more particularly with Marlborough, who had the same remarkable power of making his men feel that they would follow him anywhere and that somehow or other under him they would win, whatever the odds and however great the difficulties. It is quite impossible to explain this wonderful

quality, which in some instances does not seem to have a great deal of reason at the back of it. Certainly there have been cases of very great Generals indeed whom everyone knew to be past masters in the Art of War, and in whom the armies they led really had every confidence, but who seldom if ever managed to galvanise their troops into anything like personal enthusiasm. Wellington, for instance, habitually led his men to victory, but was feared rather than loved, and men would not have followed him with the joyful readiness with which they followed "Corporal John." Lord Wolseley was another most talented and skilful commander, who probably made fewer mistakes than Lord Roberts, but Englishmen, Highlanders, Irishmen, Sikhs, Punjabis, Ghorkhas, and Pathans, who would have tumbled over one in their eagerness to follow "Bobs" in a "forlorn hope," would have needed some special stimulus to induce them to volunteer for any particularly disagreeable service under his great contemporary and, to some extent, his rival.

Curiously enough—and it shows how contradictory human nature is—both Wolseley and Roberts wrote a book about another General, and Wolseley wrote about Marlborough and Roberts about Wellington!

Lord Roberts, no doubt, owed much of his popularity with those under him to his happy, kindly disposition, as well as to his reputation for personal gallantry. But there is something more in it than that, something which has never been satisfactorily defined and never will. To a leader the possession of this quality makes up for so much that, even if unaccompanied by much real talent or by careful attention to important details, a man who can make men follow him anywhere in any circumstances must be accounted a useful commander. When, in addition, he knows his business very thoroughly indeed, and leaves little or nothing to chance, he takes much higher rank. When, finally, he has had experience in the handling of large armies, and has conducted a great campaign successfully, he becomes, as Lord Roberts became, and always will be reckoned, one of the very great Generals of history.

It will not be easy for me to say much about the characteristics of Lord Roberts's generalship without being either technical or long-winded, but there are one or two points which I should like to bring into some prominence. Before doing so, I will take leave to say a very few words about the art of generalship in the field, or, as it is usually called, Strategy, from a Greek combination which signifies "dealing with



an army." In military text-books it is usual to draw a distinction between Strategy and Tactics (the literal meaning of which is "arrangements"); the former being held to apply to the movements of an army before it comes in contact with the enemy, the latter to what is done actually in the presence of the enemy. As a matter of fact, it is often very difficult to say nowadays where Strategy ends and Tactics begin, and some professors accordingly use a sort of half-way phrase, "Grand Tactics," which is very applicable to many cases, and particularly so, I think, to Lord Roberts's campaigns, in which he frequently carried his Strategy, so to speak, on to the battlefield itself.

It is worth while to understand the difference between Strategy and Tactics, because it helps you also to realise what is the central fact in the whole Art of War, namely, the unchanging nature of the principles on which Strategy is based. Tactics are constantly changing. Forms of attack, methods of defence, the organisation of units for this or that special purpose, processes of reconnaissance, are quite different to-day from what they were when Lord Roberts was young, and in many ways the latter-day subordinate officer on the battlefield has to know a great deal more, and be prepared to face many more

sudden difficulties, than his predecessors of thirty or forty years ago. But the broad principles of Strategy never really alter. The application of them may be modified by new introductions, more especially by aerial reconnaissance, which often makes it possible for Generals to anticipate the enemy's movements to an extent which formerly only a first-class magician could have done, and sometimes, on the other hand, prevents them from carrying out useful concentrations which a few years ago would have been easily accomplished if properly screened. But the foundations of Strategy are the same to-day as they were in the days of Napoleon, even as they were in those of Hannibal, a very great strategist as well as a great leader.

It is particularly desirable to get this into your head when studying even casually the military career of Lord Roberts. For there is a great temptation, when reading the story of his earlier campaigns, to say, "Yes, no doubt he was wonderfully successful, but what small theatres of operations these were, and what tiny little forces he had to deal with compared with those in movement in connection with the great World War!" As a matter of fact, Lord Roberts's talents as a General are, as we have seen, not by any means to be measured by the standard

of, for instance, the Afghan War, since in South Africa he applied his strategy to a much vaster area and controlled armies which, if hardly to be compared with the gigantic formations to which we have been more recently accustomed, were still of very respectable dimensions. But that is aside from the point, which is that the main strategical principles which underlay Roberts's work in 1879-80 were exactly the same as those upon which Napoleon based his most successful campaigns, and upon which Sir John French, General Joffre, and the Grand Duke Nicholas directed their huge armies in the greatest struggle the world has ever known.

The first great principle of Strategy is to bring to bear upon the enemy a superiority of force at a decisive point. If you are trying your very hardest to do that, then you are attacking as you ought to attack. If you know yourself to be on the whole inferior to the enemy, the best way to act on the defensive is to prevent him by any means in your power from making his superiority tell. Between these two states of Attack and Defence there often comes an intermediate stage, when the defender thinks that the force of the attack has been broken, and that there will be a chance for him to gain the

upper hand if he in turn assumes the offensive. This is called the Counter-Attack.

Roberts, as you will hardly have failed to notice, almost always attacked. He took this line, not because he was always superior to the enemy in point of numbers—In Afghanistan he was always largely inferior in that respect—but he relied fully on the moral superiority of his troops, on their vastly better discipline and training, and on the fact, too, that their armament was more modern and effective. That was why he did not hesitate to attack at the Peiwar Kotal, although the enemy greatly outnumbered his force and occupied, moreover, an extremely strong position.

But Roberts also knew well how to act on the defensive when it was absolutely necessary to do so, as in the case of the defence of the Sherpur cantonments described in Chapter XI. With only 7,000 men he held up here a gathering of the tribes more than ten times that number, and, thanks to the excellent arrangements he made as regards food, ammunition, and the improvement of the position by artificial obstacles, the little garrison was thoroughly fit and ready to receive and beat back the enemy's grand attack when it came to be delivered. Again, if you look back at the account of that spirited

defence, you will see that just at the right moment, *i.e.*, when the enemy had delivered a series of unsuccessful attacks and was beginning to get "fed up" with his failures, Roberts launched a counter-attack on the enemy's flank and broke him up in complete confusion.

In the Afghan War Roberts sought as a rule to bring about the enemy's discomfiture by flank attacks, and in some cases, notably at the Peiwar Kota<sup>1</sup>, the attack was the result of a turning movement of rather an elaborate sort, of which Roberts himself took charge, the frontal attack being more in the nature of a feint. No doubt, in such operations he was largely influenced by his knowledge of the character of his Asiatic opponents, who were quite clever enough to select an extremely strong position, but who did not realise the necessity of protecting their flank from a very bold and resourceful enemy. The result was that at considerable risk he took them at a marked disadvantage, and fulfilled the first great requirement of successful strategy by concentrating such superiority as he possessed at a decisive point.

But there are, and in these later days of huge armies very frequently are, occasions when a simple flank attack is not in the least likely to prove effective.

If you have against you an army which is occupying a front, say fifty miles long, it is of no earthly use to try and win a decisive victory by sending a few thousand men to peck at one end of that front. You may produce a local effect, but it is almost equally possible that your enemy, swiftly reinforcing the threatened flank, may beat back your attack with complete success. Again, in order to execute a turning movement in such circumstances, the force carrying out the attack must generally go a long way round, and, while it is making its *détour*, it is, to use a military phrase, "in air," and itself liable to be suddenly engaged by superior forces, of the existence of which it was unaware.

Similarly, where the enemy is extremely mobile, that is to say, able to get about very quickly without troubling itself about lines of communication, a flank attack may be quite futile, because by the time it has developed, the force to be attacked may have packed up and vanished. That was often the case with the Boers, who have been described as "ideal mounted infantry," and who at their best were mobile in the highest degree. The Boer with the rifle which he knew so well how to use, and snugly ensconced in a very deep trench which he had made a Kaffir dig for him, was specially for-

midable against a frontal attack. But he also had the advantage of being able, when he found himself threatened by an approaching attack on his flank, to jump on his pony and gallop calmly off to some safer neighbourhood.

Lord Roberts was quick to see that the only remedy in such cases was to put in force the great principle of envelopment on a large scale, the doctrine of which had long appealed to the Germans, but which he himself was among the first, if not the very first, to put into warlike practice. There does not seem much necessity to explain in detail what envelopment means, more especially as so many cases of at any rate attempted envelopment have occurred in the World War. In a sense it is a sort of glorified turning movement, but it is something very much more than an ordinary flank attack. Perhaps the best way to describe it is to ask you to imagine two lines, each, say, two inches long, one thick and one thin, and placed, say, a quarter of an inch apart. The thick line represents a force numerically much superior to the thin. Now suppose the thick line to be drawn out until it is four inches long, and the ends bent in for a distance of half an inch, until they overlap the ends of the thin line, and you have envelopment in its simplest form. But of course, in

practice it is seldom that an enemy can be enveloped so completely as this. The more common thing is for the stronger force to try to envelop one of the enemy's flanks by extending his own front until it overlaps that of the smaller force opposed to it, the latter being unable, because of its inferior strength, to extend sufficiently to prevent the envelopment.

If envelopment has been properly carried out, it generally spells disaster for the weaker force. For the latter is all the time being threatened in front, not by a feint attack, but by a force equal to itself. It cannot afford to detach troops to meet the menace on its flank when that develops, and it cannot retreat without grave risk of being knocked to pieces in the process. If it stays where it is, the enveloping portion of the enemy's force crushes in upon its flank and, so to speak, "rolls it up," driving units in one upon another until utter confusion ensues.

If you look back upon the chapters dealing with the war in South Africa you will see how constantly Lord Roberts had this principle of envelopment in his mind as the best method of dealing with the numerically inferior, but extremely mobile, Boer forces. As a matter of fact, the Boers were so extraordinarily active and elusive that envelopment did not always work with them, and in the end Lord Kitchener had



to break down their resistance by means of wonderfully organised "drives" which eventually, by leaving them as few chances of escape as the fish in a pond which is being carefully netted, wore them out and made them thankful to have peace. But Lord Roberts undoubtedly did a great deal with his enveloping movements to make the Boers realise the hopelessness of their struggle with this country, and, in particular, he wrought a marvellous and complete change in the situation as it was when he arrived in South Africa after an almost unparalleled succession of reverses to the British arms.

Of Lord Roberts's fine stroke of strategy in breaking away from the Cape Town-Kimberley Railway and striking across country to Bloemfontein a detailed description is given in Chapter xv. That was something quite out of the ordinary run, and will always be quoted as a fine example of mingled boldness and soundness of conception. It had a wonderful effect, and was, indeed, the actual turning-point of the war. It may seem to the casual reader with a map before him not a very astonishing thing to do. But it is easier to appreciate it if you try to think what it means to switch an army off from an easy line of communication on to one which leaves the fighting force at once with greatly reduced rations

and makes it infinitely difficult to keep up even that lower scale of supplies for several weary weeks. The plan, bold and rather hazardous as it was, worked, as we have seen, to perfection, not only leading to the easy capture, first of Bloemfontein and afterwards of Pretoria, but greatly relieving the Boer pressure on Natal and thus expediting the relief of Ladysmith.

Of Lord Roberts as a tactician—you will remember what was said at the beginning of this chapter as to the difference between tactics and strategy—little if anything can usefully be said which comes within the scope of this book. As a matter of fact, Lord Roberts was always employed in the presence of the enemy either as a staff officer or as General in chief command, and so had never much to do with the minor movements of troops on the battlefield. But it may be said generally that his inclination lay in the direction of simplicity and directness, and that, if it had fallen to his lot to lead a regiment or a brigade in action, there would have been very little manœuvring about what he did, but merely swift and vigorous execution of a straightforward but carefully thought-of and thoroughly well-prepared plan of action. Often, I daresay, when he was elaborating his strategical schemes, he thought to

himself how much he would have enjoyed carrying out this or that detail himself, and wondered whether So-and-so, who would have to make the movement in question, would put all the needful "grit and go" into it. As a rule he was finely served in this respect, largely because he trusted those under him as fully as they trusted him. But he had some cruel disappointments, and would probably have given much to be able to show those who failed just how the same troops would have succeeded with "Bobs" at their head.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN.

A NOBLE NATURE—THE QUALITY OF COURAGE—THE SENSE OF DUTY—ABOUNDING OPTIMISM—BASED ON CAREFUL PREPARATION—CONFIDENCE IN SUBORDINATES—THOROUGHNESS AND DETERMINATION—SINGULAR SIMPLICITY—A CHARMING STORY—WONDERFUL SELF-RESTRAINT—A CHRISTIAN HERO.

THIS chapter will be short, not however because it would not be easy to fill pages with a description of the many attractive sides of Lord Roberts's character. But it has been the aim of the writer throughout this book to make his hero's actions speak for themselves, and in doing so to provide an index to the noble nature to which they owed their origin. In this brief concluding sketch, then, no attempt will be made to catalogue the virtues of the great soldier or to indicate at all closely the reasons why he came so rapidly to the front and stayed there all the days of his long life.

Those virtues and those reasons are to be found in the preceding nineteen chapters by anyone who cares to look for them between the lines of a simple yet not, it is hoped, unfaithful narrative. Here all that is proposed is to jot down a few desultory notes, embodying a few particular impressions and indicating some characteristics which may, perhaps, have failed to strike a reader engrossed for the moment by the stirring environment in which so much of Lord Roberts's life of strenuous activity was passed.

The quality which comes first in the estimation of most of those for whom more particularly this book is written is courage, and here, of course, to start with, Lord Roberts's character makes an overwhelming appeal, for as has been shown time and again, more especially in connection with the Mutiny story, he was one of the most plucky men who ever lived. His valour, moreover, was essentially that of one who always knew the difficulties and dangers of the situation in which the flame of his heroism burnt so brightly, and was generally displayed, too, when he was acting by himself—a rather different sort of bravery from that often exhibited by men acting in co-operation, and sometimes really ignorant of, or blind to, the perils to which they are

exposed. The gallant "Bobs" again was consistently as brave morally as he was physically, and repeatedly risked more than life to carry out what he deemed it was right to do, or at any rate to attempt, in the service of his country.

In the latter direction his two greatest helps were his sense of duty and his abounding optimism. As to duty, with Lord Roberts this was simply a rule of life. He held himself in trust, as it were, for his Sovereign and his country, and, if he thought they had need, or would have need, of his services, it was his one idea to be ready when called upon. When the summons came he was never unprepared. Always abstemious, he was always physically fit; always a hard worker, and, in his line, an earnest student, he was ever in mental readiness for any task he might be asked to perform. And when the task was laid upon him, how hard he worked to give others the benefit of his own preparedness; how he strove, often against heartrending obstacles, to get this and that done which his wisdom and experience told him would assist the success of the enterprise in hand, and how resolutely he set his face against make-believe preparations and mock efficiency.

When fully embarked upon any service, whether in the field or at home, Lord Roberts's optimism was

wonderful, and radiated from him in all directions until it was almost impossible for anyone serving under him to think of failure. But it will be observed that this optimism was of very different calibre from that of so many who hope confidently for success without having done anything to speak of to deserve it. It rested first on a pretty sure belief that he himself had done all that knowledge or forethought could suggest as necessary or desirable to be done, and secondly on confidence—coupled with shrewd discrimination—in his subordinates. Above all, he trusted the British and the Indian soldier. He knew them far better than most men know any book, and always looked closely to their comfort and well-being, whatever the circumstances. Partly as a consequence, they would follow him with enthusiasm anywhere, and “Bobs, God bless him!” became a sort of formula at the back of which lay the conviction that, if he demanded a special effort, that effort must be cheerfully made merely because “Bobs” said it had to be. That was the feeling that underlay the triumphant but toilsome march from Kabul to Candahar, and supported the army of the Modder amid many privations when it broke away from the railway and started the great advance on Bloemfontein, which was to put a new complexion

on what had hitherto been a deeply humiliating war.

To Lord Roberts's thoroughness and determination the preceding chapters bear constant testimony. They showed themselves when as a Gunner subaltern he was eager to master his duties, and to become a first-rate horseman ; when as a staff officer he set himself resolutely to learn all there was to learn in connection with his great and many-sided department ; when as a Chief he not only preached but practised the doctrine of efficiency, more especially in regard to good shooting ; when as a leader in the field he never swerved from his main object save to render assurance doubly sure ; and when, even as an old man, embarked on what was in many respects an unpopular campaign, he went steadily ahead, and by his very persistence brought many to his way of thinking who would otherwise have stood aloof.

Connected with, and yet in some ways distinct from, these attributes of valour, sagacity, optimism, and resolution were other characteristics which have done even more, perhaps, to endear the memory of Lord Roberts to those who came even distantly into some sort of intercourse with him. The first of these was his extraordinary simplicity. He was never the



"great man" to any one he met, and his attitude towards those immeasurably beneath him was one of real friendliness and interest in their work and welfare. To those whom he had known previously he was kinder still. An old comrade-in-arms tells a delightful story illustrating his utter absence of anything like a tendency to patronise those whom he had far outstripped in the race for honours and distinction. This officer, whom his friends used to call by the nickname of "Squire," failed for a moment to recognize Roberts on his return from his second successful campaign in Afghanistan. "What, Squire," was the friendly remonstrance he received from the great and popular hero of the moment, "don't you know little Bobs?" The officer mentioned remarks in his *Reminiscences*, "This little trait showed, I thought, a forgetfulness of his superiority, of the wide social gulf between us, which was as honourable to himself as it was flattering and delightful to me."

Again, he was extraordinarily patient. Mr. Prevost Battersby gives a striking instance of his singular restraint in circumstances in which many men would have blazed with anger and annoyance. "One recalls," he writes, "a hot red evening in the Orange Free State—a day which had begun at 2 a.m.

—when he learnt, wearied out, that his instruments had failed him to bring off the great capture he had planned. To them, no doubt, he spoke his mind, but to others there was not the faintest hint of irritation or impatience. No one could have guessed from the unruffled courtesy of his manner that a brilliant achievement which would have set completion to his fame had been missed by the hesitation of his subordinates. He listened quietly to the account of failure. ‘In war you can’t bring everything off,’ was all he said.”

Finally, Lord Roberts was in the fullest sense of the term a strongly religious man. His religion was to him a very real thing, and, little as he displayed it in public, we have the testimony of those who were in close and constant association with him of the extent to which it influenced his whole outlook on life. It has been said of him that he was the “almost perfect type of a Christian hero,” and, in his later day more especially, the wonderful restfulness which seemed to surround his personality, in spite of his continued activities of mind and body, could have only had their source in—to quote Mr. Prevost Battersby again—“that rare and unimpeachable devoutness which comes from an absolute consciousness of the Divine presence.” The writer thinks he

cannot conclude his task more fitly than with this fleeting glance at an aspect of Lord Roberts's noble life which later will doubtless receive full recognition. In this brief sketch of the great Field-Marshal's career, greater emphasis has been laid upon his other claims to imperishable renown. But any attempt, however humble, to portray the character of Lord Roberts would be futile indeed if it made no reference to the outstanding fact that he lived and died a Christian gentleman.

THE END.

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