



THE SIEGE OF MAFEKING
A.D. 1899-1900

BY
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PREFATORY NOTE

I have to acknowledge gratefully permission to publish in this book certain articles contributed before and during the siege of Mafeking to *The Times* and *Black and White*. To the editor of the latter paper I am indebted also for leave to reproduce photographs taken by myself and published, from time to time, in that journal.

I would acknowledge, too, in anticipation, any kindly toleration my readers may extend to me for the many shortcomings, of which I am dismally conscious, arising from the hasty preparation of this volume. When I explain that between the date of my return to England and this date—when I start for China—barely a fortnight has elapsed, I shall make good, perhaps, some small claim upon the indulgence of the critics and the public.

J. A. H.

July 21, 1900

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Special Introduction

THE SIEGE OF MAFEKING

Seen through the eyes of the

DIARY KEPT BY

TROOPER

WILLIAM ROBERTSON FULLER

PROTECTORATE REGIMENT, FRONTIER FORCE, MAFEKING

October 13th

Boers crossed the border and blew up two trucks of dynamite about five miles out, which were taken out of Mafeking Station for safety.

October 14th

Boers attacked off the North East Side of town about 7 am and after about 3½ hours hard fighting we retired. Boer force estimated about 800 strong while ours was only about 60. Our loss 4 killed and 16 wounded. Boer loss not known.

October 15th

Everything quiet. Boers don't intend to break the Sabbath. Everybody busy digging trenches.

October 16th

Cronje sent in a message saying we must surrender by 9 am otherwise he would shell town. BP sent back saying he wouldn't surrender and to shell as soon as he likes. About 10.30 am shelling commences. No damage done, only seven pounders in action.

October 17th

Boers sent in again, asking us to surrender to save further bloodshed. Reply, "Ikona".

Bloodshed only one dog and two fowls killed.

October 23rd

A devil of an explosion heard outside trenches of which we found out to be Boer 95 pounder, which they have placed off South West of town about three miles out. Everybody in dugouts. Short was hit with a piece of first shot and broke his leg.

October 27th

D Squadron, 65 strong under Captain Fitz made an attack on Boer trench East of town. Managed to get at them with bayonets. Our loss 6 killed 9 wounded. Enemy's not known, but we heard afterwards it was 80.

October 28th

Boers sent in trolley of dynamite towards town, but fortunately for us it exploded about 1 mile out of town. I presume the trolley went too slow for the fuse.

October 29th

Sargent W H Bolton of A Squadron deserted, supposed to have gone over to the Boers. A reward is out to the amount of £50 to the man that discovers him dead or alive. Have since heard that he wandered to the Dutch while drunk.

October 31st

Boers attacked Cannon Kopje and were repulsed with a loss of about 100. Our loss, 8 killed: two officers, two SMO, 4 men and 7 wounded.

November 7th

Boers attacked PU defences and were repulsed. Our casualties, 4 wounded. Enemy's not known.

December 21st

About 200 men paraded at 10 pm at the Buds. All served out with India Rubber shoes. Rumour is to attack Big Ben on South East Heights. After going through a few manoeuvres, were marched back to trenches. Enemy supposed to have got wind of it.

December 26th

C and D Squadron under Major Godley attacked Boer Fort (Game Tree) North of town. Our strength 114 men. We were repulsed losing 3 officers, 23 men and 22 wounded. A few have died of wounds since. Captain Fitz was wounded.

1900

January 26th

A Big Ben fired into Women's Laager. No casualties. BP sent message saying if they started shelling women again he would place all suspected Dutch spies in an enclosure in the Laager. Therefore, they would be killing their own friends.

February 2nd

Boers shell Cannon Kopje again. Our loss 1 killed and 2 wounded.

Bread rations cut down to half and this is the saddest news up to date.

February 10th

Bread rations still the same.

February 11th

Man named Dall killed by 95 pounder. The shell hit him full on the stomach and took half his body away.

February 12th

Notices posted in town that Siege is likely to last until end of May.

February 15th

Big Ben moved quarters. Gone from East to West Side of town. Fired 12 shots; two at L Fort Store, two at Laager, two at Magazine, four in Native Staadt, two at Stables. No damage done, fortunately.

February 17th

Whilst about 20 of us drawing rations, a Big Ben landed about 25 yards from us. No damage. Range about 3½ miles.

February 22nd

Man named Miller of B Squadron was blown to pieces by 95 pound shell whilst opening it. His pal just escaped having taken one back which he had previously opened.

Big Ben shifted back to old position East of town.

February 25th

We are making our own powder and casting shells. Both a great success.

Census of cattle taken: 20 horses, 35 mules, 470 oxen, 61 calves, 500 goats and sheep.

Two men from Town Guard deserted to Boer lines. Names Rudolf Reck and John Evert. They were both suspected spies and were only let out of prison yesterday.

February 26th

Cast gun to fire 16 pounds shell. Fired one shot when it was seen alterations must be made.

We are now eating horse flesh. Have had doubts about meat for some days. Always thought it wasn't beef. Not bad, but tough. General complaint, not enough of it. We eat anything in these times.

February 27th

About 800 Natives left here for Kanye about 60 miles North. They are leaving town on account of scarcity of food. Boers fired on them killing a few, also a good number have returned.

Elkington of CPD2 struck with 5 pounds shell in face. Face is disfigured. Will live but will be blind for life.

Soup kitchens opened to feed Natives. Dogs not licensed are to be destroyed. Looks suspicious.

March 2nd

About 400 men women and children (Natives) went out with white flag on the Northern Road. Boers went out and met them and asked them where they were going. They said they were going to Kanye as they were starving. Boers refused to let them pass and ordered them back and when they got about three hundred yards from the fort they opened fire on them, killing many, among them several women and children.

BP sent out white flag saying if they didn't allow the Natives to pass through to Kanye to their homes and also withdraw Natives from their trenches, he would set Linchwe, Bathwane and Sabele, (numbering in all about 100 000 men) on them, these Natives having been kept in check by us.

Our gun, now altered, appears to be a success. Can travel at a pretty good range.

March 5th

Boers shell our Cape boys out of advance trench in brick fields and during night make another trench to one of our supporting trenches. D squad, CP&B Rifles retake trench. Enemy now within 40 yards distance of our advance trench. We are now throwing hand grenades into their trench. Boers doing also to us.

March 6th

Most of our men are now buying starch and eating it. A la Mazina! Not bad at all.

March 10th

Trooper Sydney Webb D2 Police shot through the head whilst on sentry in the brick fields. A chap that was very well liked by everybody.

March 13th

Had some Donkey meat for dinner today and found it to be beautiful and tender. Better than horse meat.

March 21st

Trooper Tottie Hay of A squadron deserted over to the Boer lines. He was doing 7 days field imprisonment at the time. There is a reward of £50 out for the man who finds him dead or alive.

March 24th

Boers evacuated the brick fields today. Cause unknown.

March 27th

Boers took a fit into their heads and shelled very heavily today, sending into town about 200 shells.

March 31st

A body of Plumer's Scouts engaged the Boers out at Oaklands. Our loss pretty heavy. Boers unknown.

Everybody thought the Relief was at hand. Our mounted men have parades every day, getting ready for no one knows.

April 4th

Had sopen for breakfast. It is fermented oats, sour like Kaffir beer. Not so bad. Find it fills up for an hour or so, but my belief is it turns to water.

April 11th

Shelling pretty heavy today. No damage to speak of. Only a few horses and donkeys killed.

Bread reduced to 6 ounces and a quart of soven dished out to us in place of the 2 ounces of bead cut off. Am damn sick of it!

April 14th

An attempt was made to bring in 100 hundred fat cattle last night. They were driven by 30 boys, but failed in the attempt. 23 Boys killed and all cattle captured by the Boers.

Just as usual, Live and Learn.

Troopers Maloy and Hassel were killed today by 12½ pound high velocity gun.

April 29th

Had horse meat polonies for rations today. Find it eatible, but damn tough. One man named Day fried his in Day and Martin's Dubbin. He said it wasn't bad. I fried mine in cocoa-nut oil. Not bad at all.

Eloff sent into BP today and asked him if he would play him a game of cricket. BP sent back saying we were 200 not out already and they have tried every bowler but don't seem to get us out.

May 6th

Dutch made a charge on our horses today. They managed to get away with 23 and 9 mules and also shot one of the horse guards, a chap named Francis, BSAP. This is the third brother been killed.

May 7th

6 Prime fat slaughter oxen arrived last night from Colonel Plumer.

May 12th

The Boers under Eloff, to the number of 700, rushed up the bed of the river past our outposts. Got into the Staadt, set fire to part of it. From there they rushed the BSA Fort, capturing 4 officers and 13 men. (Colonel Hore and Captain Singleton among the captured)

We were turned out to reinforce a small fort down at the river, but were too late to do any good, so we retired and while retiring were under a perfect hail of bullets, but got down to the town without any casualties.

From there we went down and raided the BSA Fort. The CP Town Guard relieved us and from thence we went down to the Staadt and captured it and wounded three.

I escorted prisoners into town.

The same evening the lot in the BSA Fort surrendered to us, but a lot rushed through our lines. We have 126 prisoners and have picked up 50 Boers dead and the Lord only knows how many the Kaffirs have killed and buried away. Our loss, 3 killed.

The Jailor was also killed today by a shell.

May 16th

5.30 pm. Artillery firing heard today North West of town. It is believed to be our Relief at hand, about 6 miles away.

8.00 pm. An officer and 8 men just arrived from outside. Relief Column arrived at last, after 7 months and 5 days weary waiting. They engaged Boers at 2 pm and inflicted defeat on them.

May 17th

The Relief Column arrived in town about 2 o'clock, numbering 1200 from the South and 900 from the North.

Great excitement prevails all our garrison and town.

9 am. RHA with Pom Poms moved towards East Side of town and started shelling the trenches. They stayed about half an hour and gracefully retired to the Laager, and then we started shelling the Laager, of which the Boers promptly evacuated and we captured.

We captured a lot of rifles and ammunition in trenches and the Laager had an awful lot of provisions, including meal flour, coffee, sugar, tea, pipes, tobacco, cigarettes, sporting guns, saddles, bridles, boots, biscuits, butter, potatoes, oatmeal, onions, horse shoes, biltong, eggs, whiskey, beer, dop, clothing, donkeys and wagons and also a lot of their sick they left behind in their hospital, including some of our wounded which were captured at the time of Colonel Plumer's defeat, including Captain Maclarene.

We also captured their 5 pounder in one trench

May 18th

We marched to Wessels Springs Laager about 10 miles off (a Laager) to see if we could get any loot, but we got there and found it had already been looted by other Squadrons.

We generally are last at anything of that sort, but first to take the field.

May 19th

Colonel Plumer's Column left today for Ramathlabama.

General Mahr's column is still here and will wait for further orders.

Sm A Hunter with a column of 4000 men is supposed to be on his way up here.

May 23rd

Still on short rations. Don't know why as there are a lot of wagons with provisions about to come into town. I suppose we will get them in time.

May 24th

First train arrived from North with a few provisions and also a few of our men, which had been up the line all the time, being cut off in October last.

I get a bit of rootie off one chap. Don't I relish it!

May 28th

Spent my birthday in gaol, guarding Eloff and a few other Dutch officers.

June 6th

Left Mafeking for Malmané. Arrived Malmané on 7th.

Here endeth my diary and may I never be in a besieged town again.

I remain,

Yours truly,

W R FULLER

I

AT SEA

R.M.S. *DUNVEGAN CASTLE*, September 16th, 1899.

A breeze was freshening, tufting the heaving billows with white crests and driving showers of spray and clots of foam upon the decks of the *Dunvegan*. Passengers stood in strained attitudes about the ship, fidgeting with the desire to be ill and the wish to appear comfortable—even dignified. In the end, however, circumstances were too strong for the passengers, transforming them, from a state of calm despair, into a condition of sickness and temporary dejection. Everyone was perturbed, and those delicate attentions which the sea-sick demand were being offered by a much-worried deck steward. Here and there groups of more hardy voyagers were spending their feeble wit in unseasonable jokes; here and there bedraggled people, wet with spray and racked by the anguish of an aching void, were clutching at the possibility of gaining the privacy of their cabins before their feelings quite overpowered them. In this mad rush, not unlike the scramble of a shuttlecock to escape the buffetings of the battledore, I also joined, fetching my berth with much unfortunate sensation. Alas! I am a wretched sailor, and travelling far and near these many years, crossing strange seas to distant lands at oft-recurring periods, has not even tutored me to stand the stress of the ocean wave. I cannot endure the sea.

The *Dunvegan Castle* was steaming to the Cape, carrying the mails, together with a number of tedious and most tiresome people, whose hours aboard were passed in periods of distracting energy—in deck quoits, in impossible cricket matches, in angry squabbles upon the value of the monies which, day by day, were collected by the crafty from the foolish and pooled in prizes upon the daily run of the steamer. It was said that these were pleasant gambles, but the Gentiles paid and the Hebrews, returning to their diamonds, their stocks and shares, scooped the stakes. It is a way that the people of Israel and Threadneedle Street have made peculiarly their own; and, indeed, the multitude and variety of Jews upon this evil-smelling steamer suggested that she might have held within her walls the nucleus of an over-sea Israelitish colony, such another as the Rothschilds founded.

Time was idle, dreary, and so empty! There was nothing to do, since nothing could be done. The monotony was appalling, and if this were the condition in the saloon, how distressful must have been the lot of the third class, who constituted in themselves, as good a class of people as that contained in the saloon. Surely in these days of systematic philanthropy something more might be done to brighten the lot and welfare of third-class passengers. Is it, for example, quite impossible to supply them with that not uninteresting development of the musical-box—the megaphone? Of course it should be quite possible; but antiquated, even antediluvian, in its arrangements, the Castle Company cannot initiate anything which has not yet been adopted by the other lines of ocean shipping. And yet I have been told by numerous merchant captains that it is the steerage which provides the profits, making lucrative the business of carrying cargoes of goods and human freight from our shores to more

distant lands. But that also is the way of the world; yet when a rude prosperity enables the emigrant Jew and Gentile to throng the saloons, making them altogether impossible for the gentler classes, we shall find the economy of the third class appealing to an ever-increasing and ever-superior body of people until these “superior” people will not endure the dirt, unwholesome surroundings, and fetid atmosphere of the steerage accommodation of ocean-going steamers, but will cry to Heaven upon the niggard’s policy which controls the vessels.

As the days wore away, and Madeira came and went, even the flying fishes ceased to attract, and the noises of the ship grew more distant, the people less obtrusive. Moreover, I became at rest within myself, and the gaping, aching void which has filled my vitals these many days, became assuaged. It was then we began to inspect the passengers; to consider almost kindly the African Jew millionaire who ate peas with his fingers and mixed honey with his salad, thought not disdainfully of the poor lady his wife, who, suffering the tortures of the damned when at sea, shone at each meal valiantly and heroically until the menu was pierced by her in its entirety, and she made still further happy by the administration of an original preventative against *mal de mer* of sweet wine biscuits bathed in plentiful and sticky treacle. It was her way of pouring oil on troubled waters. Oh, those were dreadful people, never ill, always eating, ever complaining of a curious dizziness which, nevertheless, occasioned them no loss of appetite. Surely they, of all others, were indeed of the specially select! Then there was Mr. Clarke, a friend of the two Presidents, who, undaunted by the most violent motions of the steamer, kept to the deck in a constant promenade, discoursing amicably the while, and punctuating his utterances, of a somewhat patriarchal order, with brief pauses, in which he stroked, with much dignity, a long white beard. He was a dear old man, and, unlike other Boers, he did not quote from the Scriptures, a concession which, to be properly appreciated, demands the lassitude and extreme prostration of violent nausea. There is something inordinately irritating about the man who proposes to soothe the irruptions attendant upon sea voyages by the assurance that such discomfiture is to be endured, since in Chapter L., verse 1, of a pious writer, the Lord hath there written that the ungodly shall be everlastingly punished. Personally I objected only to the form of punishment.

The friend of the President, a fine specimen of sturdy masculinity, touching eighty-two years of age, was quite the most impressive figure aboard this particular Castle packet. He had been a sojourner in the Orange Free State for forty years, coming to it from Australia shortly after the riots at Ballarat goldfields. The old fellow had fought against the Boers, championed their arms against the Basutos, raided the blacks in Queensland, and tumbled through a variety of enterprises ranging from mining in Australia to successful sheep farming near the Fickersburg. I liked him, taking an intense anxiety in his future movements, and wondering whether this fine old specimen of life would also become our enemy. Who could tell! So much depended upon the situation, so much upon the action of the President and the will of Providence. He stood, as he himself was apt to remark, upon the border of the next world—looking back upon a span of four score years, possessing a knowledge of the affairs of these African Republics which had obtained for him the friendship of President Steyn and President Kruger; indeed, they had been comrades-in-arms, Oom Paul and himself, while he had seen Steyn spring into manhood from a stripling, and

when his thoughts dwelt upon those days the voice of the old man became flooded with emotion. These tears of memory were a sidelight to his real character, and I was convinced that if he shouldered arms at all these earlier friendships were held by such ties as were too sacred to be violated. In his heart he hated fighting, yearning merely for the attentions of his children, the cool delights of his mountain home. In his domestic environment he was a happy man, since prosperity had brought him certain cares of office, much as the dignity of his age had brought him the respect of his fellow-burghers. And yet he figured as an illustration of countless hundreds, each one of whom was in close relationship with the crisis in the politics of the country.

Morning, noon and night he strolled, the one figure of interest in the ill-assorted company of passengers which the good ship—to my nostrils an evil-smelling tub—was carrying to the Cape. There were few others of importance upon this journey. There was a colonel of the Royal Engineers, who had a snug billet in the War Office, and who was leaving Pall Mall to inspect the barracks at Cape Town, St. Helena, Ascension, and all those other places to which certain preposterous War Office officials devoted that attention which should so much more properly have been paid to the defenceless condition of the frontiers in South Africa. But then, after all, what is the destiny of the War Office unless to meddle and make muddle? If Colonel Watson might be said to have represented the Imperial Government among the passengers, Mynheer Van der Merure, Commissioner of Mines in Johannesburg, might be considered as representing the Pretorian Government. It seemed to me that these two worthies were quite harmless, representing, each in his own way, the acme of good nature, the gallant—all colonels imagine that they be gallant—colonel by reason of his advanced age; the worthy—all commissioners imagine that they be worthy—commissioner because he lived off the spoil of the mines. But even the spectacle of these three—the grand old man, the War Office *attaché*, the wealthy Randsman—did not suffice to break the hideous monotony of a most depressing voyage.

With the peace of nature enveloping us in a feeling of security, it was difficult to realise that each day we drew a little nearer to a possible seat of war. There was much rumour aboard; the stewards hinted that the hold was filled with a cargo of munitions of war. The captain flatly denied it, even the War Office pensioner thought it improbable. “You must understand, sir”, said he one morning, across the breakfast table, “that it is contrary to the custom of her Majesty's Government, and, if I may say so, sir, especially contrary to the custom of her Majesty's War Office, to squander the finances of our great Empire upon unnecessary munitions of war because the *Times* and other papers choose to send half a dozen irresponsible individuals to South Africa. Now, sir—pooh!” When Colonel Watson broke out like this the friend of the President would intervene, suggesting in his kindly, paternal fashion that “the War Office—given half a dozen colonels, gallant or otherwise—might well afford to follow the lead of the *Times* newspaper”. “It has been my experience”, the Colonel retaliated on one occasion, “that when people begin to interfere they cease to understand”. It was always quite delightful to watch these two cross swords; the elder invariably took refuge in his age when the sallies of the War Office could not be directly countered. “Experience! You are only old enough to be my son”. The Colonel spluttered—colonels do. By these means the elder man usually carried off the honours, replying, as it were, by a flank movement to the frontal attack of his superior adversary.

The farmer from the Orange Free State talked much to me, giving me, towards the end of the voyage, an invitation to his home. It was a visit in which I should have found much pleasure, since the splendour of his years, his gentleness and nobility of character were attractive. It seemed to me that among all sorts and conditions of men this one was indeed, a man, and I do most sincerely hope that the end of the war may find him still living and enjoying his farm in his usual prosperity. He was so set against the war, and dreaded the consequences of hostile invasion into the Orange Free State, insomuch that he realised, if some immunity were not guaranteed, the ruin and desolation which would spread over the land. In August as we left England there was nothing known about the future action of the Orange Free State. The question was one of debate, altogether confused, almost intangible, and this man, knowing Steyn as he knew Kruger, was convinced that the Orange Free State would alienate itself from the Transvaal difficulty. But who can tell? We look to the sea for our answer, and it throws back to us only the echoes of the sighing waves, the pulsing throbs of the screws pounding the green masses of water in an effort to reach the Cape. Nevertheless, I am inclined to believe that there will be war. I hope that there may be, since it is to be my field of labour.

The journey nears its end, and the weather breaks, for a few hours into grey cold; while the sea, where it laps the bay at Cape Town, darkening into thin ridges of foam, tumbling and tossing amid the eddies of the bleak water, looks menacing. A fog lies off the land, dense and weighty, impeding the navigation and impressing no little conception of the perils of the deep upon the minds of timorous passengers, and folding the surface of the ocean in its expanse. The weather threatens to be wild. All day the sea fog broke and mingled, merging, as the day wore on, into one conglomerate mass of cloud, impenetrable to the mariner and screening the signs of the sea from those who were upon land. Here and there, low down upon the horizon, the storm fiend from the shore had broken into the garland of mist which hung so drearily upon sea as upon moor, detaching parcels of cloud from the main and toying with them with the coy and heartless grace of Zephyr! But as yet the wind only came in minor lapses, and was followed by intervals in which there was no movement in the fog. From the waste of sea came a ceaseless, muffled roar which seemed loudest and most full of mystery when carried upon the wings of the wind. Then these echoes of mighty waters, tumbling upon the rocks off the land, seemed ominous and charged with deadly peril, and, as the fog belts lifted or dispersed before the gusts of the wind, the sea would look as though swept with growing anger, heaving in tremulous passion, until the great reach of quivering waves was flecked with white. Closer and closer lapped the tiny waves, until, under the pressure of the freshening wind they mingled their crests, rising and falling in foam-capped billows of growing volume and increasing majesty. Thus developed the storm; the wind beating on the face of the waters and breaking against the clouds until rain fell, in the end assuaging, by its raging downpour, the tempest of the ocean. Down came the storm in one panting burst of tempestuous deluge. The heaving waves threw sheets of foam from their rain-pierced summits, and the wind whistled and screamed as it swept through the rigging. Flashes of lightning and thunder claps parried one another in quick succession. The rain fell in torrents, the decks, shining in the lightning flashes, roared with rushing water. So that night we rode at anchor, rocking idly at our cables within the shadow of the mountain, and upon the morrow, beneath the light of coming dawn, we drew

nearer through the cool greyness of the bounding ocean. At first the figures, the walls of the fort, the cranes, the shipping, and the scarred and crinkled facing of the mountain were silhouetted in black against the grey of early morning, but as the day broke more firmly across its slopes, the finer and more subtle light gave to everything its actual proportion. All kept growing clearer and yet clearer, and more and more thoroughly outlined, until the sun, shooting over the horizon, bestowed upon the coming day its first wink of glory.

And so we landed, passing from a sluggish state of peace into a world where everything was lighted with martial glamour.

II.

A GLANCE AHEAD

CAPE TOWN, *September 20th, 1899.*

To be in Cape Town in September would seem to be visiting the capital of Cape Colony in its least enjoyable month; since, more especially than at any other time in the year, the place be thronged with bustling people, who plough their way through streets which, by the stress of recent bad weather, are choked with mud and broken by pools of slush and rain-scourings. The rain is falling with a determination and force of penetration which soaks the pedestrian in a few minutes and makes life altogether miserable. Moreover, there are signs of further foul weather. There is a white mist upon the mountain and a sea fog enshrouds the shipping in the harbour: everywhere it is cold, colourless and damp. Everywhere the people are depressed. It is as though the wet has drenched the population of the town to the bone and drowned their spirits in the cheerless prospect which the rainy season in Cape Town provides. If the sun were to shine the aspect might be brighter, a little warmth might be infused in the character and disposition of the constantly shifting streams of mud-splashed, bedraggled pedestrians who, despite the rain and mud and an air of general despondency, impart some little animation to the dirty thoroughfares.

Other than this air of depression there is but little external evidence of the momentous crisis which impends. It may be that the Cape Town colonist has forgotten the responsibilities of his colony in the cares of his own office, and is become that mechanical development of commerce, a money-making man. Who can tell? Is it even fair to hazard an estimation of the man in his present environment? But it would assuredly seem that the troubles of the Government, the menace which is imposed upon the colony by the Bond Ministry, do not touch him, do not even stir his loyalty to the ebullition of a little doubtful enthusiasm. Just now, although there may be war upon his borders, although the spirit of disturbed patriotism be in the air, and although his neighbours may be thinking of joining some one of the Irregular Corps who are advertising for recruits, the ordinary inhabitant of Cape Town is unmoved. He is too lethargic, or is it that his loyalty is not of that degree which regards with concern

the arming of the border republics, the near outbreak of bloody war? It would seem that each, after his own caste, be happy if he be left alone; the money grubber to gain more shekels, the idler and the casual to bore each other with their stupendous, even studied indifference to the propinquity of the latest national crisis. Within a few days, it may even be within a few hours, our questions with the Pretorian Government will have reached their final adjustment or their perpetual confusion, and it may be that we shall be at war. It may be also, although it be difficult to believe, that a peaceful solution will be derived. At this moment the services of such pacific measures as can be adopted should be utilised, since if war should come within a brief measure the position of the people of this country will indeed be grave—the utter absence of adequate defensive measures, the entire lack of efficient military preparations being factors which are calculated to incite to rebellion those who incline to the Dutch cause, and indeed, most positively, their name is Legion. There is, I think, the essence of revolt beneath this heavy and depressed condition of the people: it were not possible otherwise, to exist within such intimate proximity to a state of war and be unmoved; it is not possible either to find other explanation. It may be that in their hearts, as in their heads, they are weighing the consequences of revolt, succouring one another in their distress of mind and body with seditious sympathies, maintaining a spirit of antagonism to the Imperial fusion under pretence of the mere expression of a lip loyalty. And in their immediate prospect there is everything which may be calculated to disturb their equanimity, and to force upon them the consciousness of their impotency. It is perhaps this knowledge of their actual weakness which subdues them since they cannot afford to openly avow feelings which are inimical to us and which would betoken their own hostility. Nevertheless, Great Britain can do nothing which could encourage these people in their loyalty; nor can they themselves, in reality, assist to remove their unfortunate predicament, since they must needs sacrifice their possessions to substantiate their views, and to do this implies complete disintegration of their fortunes. This they will not do; since they cannot suffer it. They will remain discontented partisans, however; slaves of commerce, restrained by the possibilities of further aggrandisement from declaring their mutual connection, and manacled by the bonds of free trade and crooked dealings. They will be neutral, as indeed the greater proportion of the inhabitants of the towns along the coast and within the littoral zone will be, since with every feeling of unctuous rectitude in relation to the values of their trade, they will leave to the provincial areas, which lie between the borders of the Orange Free State and the metropolitan circuits, the onus of the situation, the work of supplying active and more potential supporters of the Republican arms.

This is the middle of September, and I am assured that the crisis should not be expected before the middle of October, inclining to the first two weeks of the coming month. If this be possible, and the information is difficult to discount, our sin of indifference is the greater, our apathy the more criminal. Indeed, everywhere there is nothing doing—God forbid that the steady warlike preparations of the Transvaal Government should intimidate us, but let us at least be heedful and not over sleepy. If we can gauge the situation by the public press of the Empire it is most critical, and the time is rather overripe in which we also should indulge in a few military exercises. There is a situation to be faced which will tax all the resources of the Castle, and strain even the vaunted excellence of the home administration—that army for which Lord Wolseley has claimed such splendid mobilisation, such insensate volition. If these fifty

thousand men were here now the turns of the political wheel would not be regarded with such intense apprehension, while in their absence there lies perhaps the answer to the rain-drenched dulness of the population. The land is naked; from Basutoland to Buluwayo and back to Beira, mile upon mile of smiling frontier rests without protection of any sort. We are inviting invasion, and it is impossible that such a movement will not be attempted. To invade our territory—it will sound so well round the camp fires of the Boer laagers—a mere scamper across the frontier, a pell-mell, hell-for-leather retreat to their own lines, and the manœuvres would be executed felicitously and with every sign of success. But such a contingency is submerged under an accumulation of theories and official explanations each of which deny the possibility of the Boer taking upon himself the responsibility of rushing the situation. Moreover, it does not seem that the Boers require much instigation to attempt such an act. We have laid open our borders to such an enterprise, even taking the trouble to leave unguarded many towns whose adjacency to the border is singularly perilous. In many cases a Boer force need only make a short march to arrive in the very heart of some one of these border towns, when, should they appear, the turn of affairs could be said to be complex; and some emotions might be felt by those worthy and effete military noodles who so persistently shout down the “pessimists” who, knowing the country, the ambition and resourcefulness of the Boers, persist in declaiming upon the hideous neglect which characterises our frontier defences, and strenuously assert the probability of Boer invasion into those districts which superimpose themselves upon the borders of the Transvaal and Orange Free State Republics, and which, possessing values of their own, can be held as hostages against the slings and arrows of an outrageous fortune elsewhere.

It is the duty of the Crown at the present juncture to bear this contingency in mind, to confront it with the determined resolution to repair the negligence of the past at once and at all costs, and to allow neither the opinion of the Bond Ministry, nor the ignorance of the existing military advisers to the Governor, to persuade the Executive from adopting the only course which remains to us, which is to push men and materials of war to the border with the least possible delay. If we do not take these steps now it will be too late in a little time, and the course of the war must necessarily be the more protracted. There are many who would have us delay lest our premature acts should expedite the despatch of the ultimatum, and we should lose the opportunity, which the next few days will give to us, of receiving delivery of the troops who are already upon the water. But the presence of these men means little and forebodes, in reality, a slight accentuation of the gravity of the actual situation. It is with the forces that we can control at this moment that we must count, and it is with them that we must deal. It does not suffice to have parade-ground drills in Cape Town as a preliminary flourish; we should at least show ourselves as ready as the Boers be willing. This of course we cannot do, since, with a handful of exceptions, we have not a modern piece of artillery in the country. Moreover we do not quite know what armaments the Transvaal Government possess; it is with a pretty display of pretence that we conceal the nakedness of our borders and bolster up the situation. There is Kimberley, Ramathlabama, and Buluwayo—what is to happen upon the western frontier?—and although it be doubtful if the Boers would pierce the Rhodesian border and seize Buluwayo, it is not too much to expect that if they should inaugurate any movement into the Colony from the Orange Free State, even if their activity only

should assume the shape of a demonstration against Kimberley, that this southern advance would receive sympathetic co-operation from a parallel movement in a northerly direction by which they might temporarily secure possession of our line of communication and menace Buluwayo by encroaching upon Rhodesia.

Then there is the position of Natal, which must be more or less hampered by the war in the Transvaal if it does not become actually and potentially concerned. That Natal will play an important rôle is elaborately evident from the Boer patrols who, even now, are reported to be in possession of all strategical points in the mountains, and who are also said to be busily engaged in fortifying the rocky fastnesses of the Drakensburg Mountains, and to dominate Laing's Nek tunnel as well as the line of railway which curvets through the chain, by having emplaced some heavy ordnance upon prominent and immediate commanding slopes. It would seem as though Natal may play a part, so distinctive and so vitally important in its own history as a colonial dependency, that the prospect of the war there may become a campaign in itself, and one which will be almost detached and isolated from the movements in the Orange Free State and Transvaal, where I have reason to believe there is some intention of formulating, what may be regarded as a dual campaign, which will avoid all invasion of the Transvaal territory until the Orange Free State has been completely pacified and the lines of communication effectively and securely held. In support of this scheme it is generally conceded that it will be impossible to carry war into the Transvaal until every provision has been made against the risk of local rising in the areas of the Orange Free State, and thus endangering our lines of communication, as well as our flanks.

These, then, are the signs of the day, and in such signs do we read something of the terrible struggle upon which we are so soon to be engaged, and in appreciation of which, local opinion is in such marked contrast—I almost wrote conflict—with the opinion and views of the special service officers from India and England. To whom, then, belongs the honours of accurate estimation; to the man from home as it were, or to the man who has passed his life in South Africa and understands the Dutchman as the mere military interloper can never hope to understand him? There is, I think, no doubt as to what point of view be erroneous, and it is because we so persistently ignore the worth and reliability of the men who are upon the spot, that we shall have the falsity of our intelligence someday brought home to us by the tidings of a terrible disaster. South Africa is already the grave of too many fine reputations; but let us, at least, hope that we shall not add to the disgrace of the private individual any loss of national prestige. The wind sighs ominously just now, however, while there is a note in it which I do not like, and which I cannot understand. At the Castle they talk airily of being home by Christmas! If they be sailing within twelve months they will be lucky, and at Government House Sir Alfred Milner is beset with the difficulties of his very onerous position. For the moment he takes—I am glad to be able to say it, since I would have him upon the side of sound common sense—a somewhat depressed view of the general outlook. Kimberley and Ramathlabama were his especial concerns when I called there today, insomuch that they extend an especial invitation to the mobility of a Boer commando, while it is quite beyond his powers to save them from their fate. It seemed to me that he despaired of these towns in particular, but I will withhold his remarks upon them until I myself have been there. Yet it may be taken as granted that, should Sir Alfred Milner be concerned for their immediate and eventual safety, the

gravity of their situation is extreme, pointing even to the closeness of the danger which would arise from a Boer invasion into those areas.

But in this hurried letter I am dealing with the colony, and singularly enough we have to consider how our colonists will behave, what may be their attitude, and how near are we to rebellion? It is of course an all-important question, and one which, in relation to a British colony, is untoward. If I were asked to localise the possible area of revolt I should decline, since the question be so serious and infringes so much upon the life and existence—the central forces—of the colony that it would be difficult, definitely and evenly, to demarcate any zone of loyalty, as opposed to any area of disaffection, without unduly trespassing upon the sentiments of less favoured districts. But I do think that the possibilities of this question are enormous, emanating as it does from the life teachings and doctrines of the people of the country, and however much we try to draw a line between what constitutes due loyalty and what infringes the spirit as well as the letter of the individual's allegiance, we must unconsciously perpetrate much injustice either upon the one or upon the other side of the question, which, owing to the dualistic temperament and inclinations of no small majority of the people, it is impossible to avoid, and which will have to be endured by individuals, loyal or disloyal, as their penalty. The spirit of the Dutch pioneers still impregnates much of Cape Colony; its presence south of the Orange Free State and in the actual territory of the colony receiving direct support and sympathy by the increasing numbers of the Dutch population in these African Republics; an increase which, being unrestricted in its development, has spread far and wide until it has created a partial exodus from the recognised centres of Dutch influence and Dutch population into those areas from which the traces of the earliest Dutch occupation were rapidly vanishing—if they have not altogether disappeared—and which has been the medium of resuscitating a feeling of sympathy and clanship which, augmented by still closer ties of commerce, has promoted the functions of matrimony and friendship and gradually released a current of feeling throughout the district which was avowedly Dutch, and, equally avowedly, in silent and semi-subdued opposition to the instincts and ideals of the Anglo-Saxon colonist. And it is against the rapid spread of this feeling which we have to contend, much as we must guard against the conversion of these prejudices into tacit support and effective co-operation with the armed burghers of the sister Republics should their arms secure any initial successes. With this danger in our midst, in itself an almost insurmountable obstacle, no precaution which could render the safety of these districts the less precarious should be omitted; and to effect this—and it is quite essential to our temporal salvation—men and materials of war should be in readiness to forestall, or, at least, to circumvent, the consummation of the Boer operations. If we can accomplish even so little, it may be possible to prevent the no small proportion of the colonists discharging their obligations to the Crown by combining with the Boer forces. To this end our efforts will have to be seriously directed, and the sooner this simple fact is realised by the authorities in South Africa as in London, the more convincing will the scope and measures of our policy become. At present it is chimerical, and we hesitate.

III.

ON THE ORANGE FREE STATE BORDER

THE CAMP, DE AAR,
September 23rd, 1899.

Africa was streaming past the dusty windows of the railway carriage, presenting an endless spectacle of flat, depressed-looking country, with here and there a hut, here and there a native. I am in the earliest stages of a journey which should lead to Ramathlabama, and the command of Colonel Baden-Powell. Slowly and with much effort the train drags itself along; the road is steep, the carriages hot and uncomfortable, and there is nothing to attract attention, nothing to fill the emptiness of the mind. I slept at intervals, to awaken at some roadside station where fussy people were struggling to eat too much in too short a space of time. There, for a moment, was the scamper of bustling, hurrying passengers, who pushed and menaced one another in a thirsty rush to the refreshment room; with a cloud of officers, orderlies, and troopers I stood apart, listless, bored, and travel-stained, feebly interested, more feebly talking in disconnected phrases, until, with shrill blasts of his whistle, the guard signalled the departure of the train. Then off again, the jerking, swaying flight of eighteen miles an hour—the rumbling monotony of express speed which was conducive to drowsiness and nothing more. The landscape faded in the distance, a raucous voice sang of 'Ome, while, in a monotonous buzz of nothingness, I slept again.

The train was slowly thrusting itself forward as, with much panting and purring and some screaming, it cut the borders of the Great Karoo. Slowly the wheels clenched the metals as the waggons rocked in a lullaby of motion, and the passengers were fanned with draughts of scented air. The Great Karoo, lying in the shades of evening, hearkening to the secret calling of mysterious voices, heeding not the ravages of time, wearing majestically the massive dignity of its grandeur, threw back its barriers of resistance to our intrusion and delighting our senses with ever-changing and oft-recurring glimpses of its beauty. But the picture faded with the passing of the train, the golden and crimson delights of the overgrowing flowers gave place to a soulless expanse destitute of beauty.

I stopped at De Aar, which is the junction where the Orange Free State and Transvaal lines connect with the Cape Colony system. At De Aar I was anxious to observe the press of traffic. From Cape Town for Kimberley, Borderside, Fourteen Streams, and Mafeking, truckloads of horses and mules, waggon loads of general military stores were passing northwards to the front. In the interval, there were Imperial troops and men of the Cape Mounted Police. Indeed, the scene upon the platform was animated by martial spirit. If the train from the south was loaded with war material, the trains from the two Republics were packed with fugitives, among whom were many men who, in the hour of necessity, will, it is to be hoped, consider flight as the least satisfactory means of procedure. However, no goods are going through to the two Republics from Cape Colony, unless Mr. Schreiner has passed more ammunition over the Cape lines to the Transvaal. But things are working more satisfactorily down in Cape Town since it became known that the Cabinet would be discharged by the Governor, unless—and to a discerning politician of the Bond,

whose income depends upon his salary from the House, a blank conveys many wholesome home truths.

Travelling, even with the variety of emotion which the Karoo excites, is no great comfort in South Africa. One lives in an atmosphere of dust and Keating's. If the trains go no faster to Cairo when the rails be through, than they do to Buluwayo, the steamers will still retain the monopoly of passenger traffic. It takes a "week of Sundays" to reach railhead at Buluwayo, but there is some small consideration in the fact that such a journey has been made. It will become a feature in our Sabbatarian domesticity some day, and among railway journeys at the present time it is unique. Where else do express trains arrive several hours in advance of their scheduled time? Where else do goods trains arrive several days late? These are but the manifold and maddening perplexities of railway travelling in Africa. Yet if one kicks against the uncertainties of the desert service, there is sure to be an Eliphaz somewhere upon the train, whose philosophy being greater than his hurry, recognises that the element of expedition, when his train does arrive, is greater than the prospect of moving at all where no train comes. Time passes somehow on these journeys, and the chance prospect of obtaining a good meal, when one is dead certain to get a bad one, is enlivening. If it were not for such trifles, the journey would have no interest. To look forward to luncheon and an afternoon nap, to anticipate dinner and then digest it, makes the day run with pleasant monotony into the night. And night is worth the inspection. The beds in the train are comfortable enough, but the night is vested with misty beauty, and its fascination woos the traveller from his rest. There is the roar of the engine, the rumble of the carriages, the buzz of insects, and the faint rustle of the night wind over the plains. Then, looking into the night, one falls asleep, tired and stunned by the spectacle of the never-ending desert. But, in the morning there comes a change. The stretches of the Karoo are past, and breakfast at De Aar is in sight.

At De Aar—a sea of tents with here and there a man—there begins the outward and visible signs of preparation against the necessities of the coming struggle. There are men and arms at De Aar and munitions of war, comprising the Yorkshire regiment, a wing of the King's Own Light Infantry under Major Hunt, and a section of the Seventh Field Company of Engineers under Lieutenant Wilson; but their numbers are impossible, much as their supplies be limited and seriously insufficient; and, as a consequence, I must not talk much about the interior linings of the British camp which has sprung up at De Aar, and which, within a few days of what must be the turning point of the present crisis, is so little able to cope with the exigencies of the situation. It is a protective measure, this little camp at the junction of the divergence in the railway system of the colony, placed in its present situation to guarantee the safety of the permanent way, and to ensure a modicum of safety to the traffic which is crowding north over the points at the meeting of the rails. It is a gorgeous piece of impudence; this minute establishment of British soldiers, and if it be impressed with the might and majesty of our Imperial Empire, it is also beset with the innumerable difficulties and trials which attend an isolated State.

We are guarding the lines of communication between De Aar Junction and Norvals Pont, the bridge across the Orange River which unites the territory of the Orange Free State with the land of the Colony, between De Aar and the Camp at Orange River, between De Aar and many miles to the south in the direction of Cape

Town. I believe that the practical influence of this particular unit extends so far south as Beaufort West, where the custody and patrol of the line is handed over to the care of the railway authorities, whose men are detailed to the all-important duty of guarding the culverts and bridges of the system. The greatest menace to our weakness in the present situation springs from the vast lines of communication over which we must watch and which, although lying well within our own borders, are endangered through the contributory sympathy of the Dutch who, resident and settled within our own Colony, and boasting some sort of idle observance of the obligations entailed upon them by such residence, have seldom by word, and not at all in spirit, forsworn their entire and cheerful assistance to the cause of the Transvaal. In any other campaign these fatigues would be unnecessary, and the services of the innumerable small detachments delegated to the duty would be released for more active work, but with this war the safe maintenance of our lines of communication will become a problem of most vital concern, and will be necessarily imbued with absorbing interest. Moreover, whatever the nature of the scheme for efficiently guarding these lines may be, due attention must be paid and every consideration given to the superior mobility of the Boer forces to that of our own troops, an advantage which will increase their facilities and chances of success should they exert themselves to harass any particular section of our inordinately long lines of communication.

With the formation of a camp at De Aar, the trend which our campaign may assume becomes more definite. De Aar is but a little removed from Norvals Pont, an important bridge into the Orange Free State, which it is proposed to protect from the immediate base of the troops at De Aar, or to hold altogether from an ultimate base in the same direction at Colesberg. I propose to visit there before the next mail departs, since it be rumoured here that the town of Colesberg has been left entirely undefended by the military authorities, and that the end of the bridge, remote from this border and within the limits of the Orange Free State, is in the hands of an armed patrol from that Republic. When these things happen, and De Aar becomes the centre of a big base camp, the position will constitute another link in the chain of towns which are to be occupied by the Imperial forces along the western and southern borders of the Orange Free State, and whose occupation, should the troops arrive in time thus to execute the initiative, indicates our probable line of advance to be from a number of points, so that General Joubert will be unable to concentrate his troops before any one force. Upon our side, also, those frontier detachments that may be in occupation of the towns, will harass Transvaal and Free State borderside, suppress any rising within our own border areas, and be entirely subsidiary to the main columns, which will be simultaneously thrown forward from these three or four special points on the same extreme line of progression.

Moreover, this plan of operations accentuates the detached and especial character of the Natal Field Force, restraining them to service in that colony, and restricting their activities to that sphere. These troops will occupy Laing's Nek, the ten thousand men already assembled in that Colony being reinforced before hostilities are declared, until the Field Service footing of the Natal Field Force will equal that of an army corps. The critical points in the present situation are the western and eastern borders of the Transvaal, where the young bloods from the backwoods are mostly gathered, and in their present state eminently calculated to force the hand of Oom

Paul into an impromptu declaration of belligerency. The movements of the Natal forces will be confined for the moment to holding Laing's Nek, maintaining communication with the permanent base at Ladysmith and Pietermaritzburg, and in occupying Dundee, Colenso, and all such towns as fall within the limits of its exterior lines.

From De Aar a division will support the left flank of the advance of the First Army Corps, divided, for purposes of more speedy concentration upon its ultimate base, into two divisions, which will reunite at Burghersdorp, *viâ* the railways, to Middelburg and Stormberg Junction from their immediate bases of disembarkation at Port Elizabeth and East London. The total force will then advance in exterior lines upon the Orange Free State, maintaining the railway system upon their individual western flanks, so far as possible, as their individual lines of communication.

While the Second Army Corps supports the situation in Natal, it is hoped that our forces in the Orange Free State border will either crush or drive the Boers back upon their ulterior lines towards Bloemfontein, which, with the assistance of the De Aar flanking column traversing the watershed of the Modder River in the direction of Kimberley, and in possible cooperation with a force from that base, they should be in a position to occupy. The capital will be held by the De Aar and Kimberley divisions, upon whom will then fall the work of protecting the lines of communication of the Southern Army Corps as it advances.

After supporting De Aar, Kimberley, and the lines of communication with defensive units, and maintaining a western column by employing the service of the Mafeking force, the First Army Corps will begin the move upon Pretoria, in collaboration with the Second (Natal) Army Corps, the former once again advancing in twin columns from a mutual base. The western border will probably be held from Kimberley to Fort Tuli by the forces composing the western column, while a flying column is to be in readiness lest a wider area be given to the theatre of war, and it become necessary to cross the Limpopo River. It would appear, too, that there is also some possibility of a column moving from Delagoa Bay. By this advance Pretoria becomes the objective of the campaign after the occupation of the Orange Free State, but this depends to a great extent upon the policy pursued by General Joubert and the nature of the Natal operations. If the Boers give way and, acting upon interior lines, fall back upon Pretoria, as General Jackson fell back upon Richmond in 1864-1865, the Transvaal capital will at once become the objective of the British forces advancing upon exterior lines, the object of the campaign, once the Transvaal has been invaded, being to force a battle upon the combined forces of the Boers or to beset Pretoria. It will thus be seen that the theory of the British advance favours the concentration of troops upon the Transvaal and Orange Free State frontiers so that the Boer forces may be dislocated, retaining the railways and their lines of communication and, leaving the actual protection and pacification of the frontier to the local mounted police and to the special service corps assisted by a few detachments of Imperial troops, while no progressive movement will be made from any one point until the exterior line, upon which the entire advance will be conducted, has been thoroughly established. For the nonce extraordinary precautions are being taken to conceal the movements of troops, and I have withheld from publication at this moment much which could be given in support of the lines by which I have suggested our advance will be governed. This plan

of campaign reads very prettily, but it seems to me, that we are making no allowances for possible disasters, for possible defeats, for unavoidable delays, which, should they occur, will hamper the mobility of our advance and restrict the celerity of our movements to a great and most serious extent. Despite the fact that the massing of troops at the selected points between De Aar and Mafeking, between Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, and the ultimate and interested bases will proceed almost immediately, the successful evolution of our plans, the wisdom or foolishness of which are so soon to be put to the test, demands much greater forces than are calculated to be available during the next few weeks. At present, and until the latter days of October, the combined strengths of the Regular and Irregular forces in South Africa will not equal twenty thousand men, and yet we are dabbling with and making preparations against a plan of campaign which requisitions two Army Corps at least, and will probably require the services of not less than one hundred thousand men. I dread to think of what may happen if war should come within a few days, but we can do nothing but face what is a most intolerable position, and one which most easily might have been avoided. The outlook in the absence of efficient men and stores is indeed disheartening.

Since I arrived upon the Orange Free State border I have omitted no opportunity to discuss with the Boers the question of the war. A friendly Boer, hailing from Utrecht, suggested the probable direction which the Boer plans, so far as they concerned Natal, might assume, and while they appear to be feasible, they reveal how curiously predominant among them is the idea that their arms will again defeat the British troops. The Transvaal Boers from Vryheid and Utrecht propose to attempt raids upon Natal and Zululand as the preliminaries to a rush upon Maritzburg and the southern district of Natal, by Weenen and Umvoti; Orange Free State Boers from the border areas will harass our soldiers as they move towards Laing's Nek, and, thus drawing the attention of the British troops, the road will be clear for those marching south on their attack upon the capital of Natal. All approaches to Laing's Nek upon the Dutch side of the border, already alien, have been fortified, fourteen guns being actually in position at the more important points. The British troops soon after leaving Ladysmith will have the Transvaal Boers on one side, the Free State Boers upon the other, and long before the Imperial troops can occupy the extreme border a commando of Boers from Wakkerstroom will have concentrated upon it. In the opinion of the Boers the effective occupation of Laing's Nek by either force will decide the war. The Boers all seem convinced that they can sweep the British forces from South Africa. The procedure of a campaign which finds much favour in their eyes includes the rising of the Swazis, the Zulus and the Basutos, who will be permitted to devastate Natal and as much of the south as they can penetrate, and whom they claim will be easily stirred against the Rooineks. The Boers will then feint with a small force upon the centre of our military occupation, while their entire army marches down upon Port Elizabeth, East London, or Cape Town, or proceeds by railway if they can secure the lines. They will hold open no lines of communication, because by that time Imperial arms will have been defeated, and it will only remain for President Kruger to dictate peace from Cape Town.

This is actually the opinion of a Boer who administers for the Transvaal Government an important district, and who is under orders to proceed to the Natal

border without loss of time. Surely he must be consumed with delusion and impotent fanaticism; nevertheless, educated Boers from the border side and living in the Cape Colony, who have come to the camp to invite the officers to a cricket match or some buck shooting, have all expressed this view. At present I have not met the Boer who can conceive the defeat of his own countrymen, while both Imperial and Republican Governments count upon the assistance of the natives. Upon the other hand, however, I am informed that there are many Boers who do not wish to fight, since they recognise the futility of any effort which they can direct against British troops; but, at the same time, should they be called out upon commando, there is no fear of their declining to obey, while, so far as my inquiries go, they have failed to elicit anything which would show the Boers to be moved by any view so eminently sound as this would be.

IV.

BRICKS OF STRAW

THE CAMP, ORANGE RIVER,
September 26th, 1899.

Soldiers and sand—clouds of sand whirring and eddying through the air, drifting through closed windows, piling in swift-mounting heaps against barred doors. That is the camp here, stretching upon both sides of the railway line in orderly rows, flanked upon either extremity by a ragged outspan of waggons, empty today but soon creating work for numerous fatigue parties when the orders come to push forward the supplies. At present it is only a small cluster of tents, many more tents than men—this to confuse the friendly Boers who, visiting the railway station refreshment bar for the purposes of espionage, stop to drink in an effort to gauge the strength of the camp by counting the ranks of dirty white tents which flap and quiver in the breezes. Such an impossible little camp, but so impressed with the true spirit.

Colonel Kincaid, R.E., commands at Orange River, and his force comprises a few companies of the Loyal Lancashire Regiment, a troop or two of the Cape Police District II., sections of the Field Company of Engineers, a composite field battery and a few stores—but a general numerical insufficiency of men and munitions. Major Jackson, with Major Coleridge, commands the companies of the Loyal Lancashires that were detailed with him from Kimberley, where his regiment lies, for duty at this camp. Surgeon-Major O'Shanahan takes care of the field hospital which has been attached to the camp, and Captain Mills, R.A., controls the artillery. It is a happy family, this British camp in which the necessity for hard work is understood and the members of whose circle willingly endure the difficulties and privations of their situation. From the ends of the earth they have come together to be dumped down upon the Orange River flats, where for many days they will remain an important unit in the scheme of preparation, but one which stands alone and aside from the general hurry and scurry of our belated movements. There is a bridge across the Orange River at this point, and it is the duty of protecting it and guaranteeing it from the attentions of the Boers,

guarding its approaches by cunningly contrived gun emplacements and enveloping its definite security in a network of defensive measures, which is, for the time, the sole objective of the various officers and detachments that compose Colonel Kincaid's command.

The conformation of the country abutting upon Orange River presents those composite peculiarities of construction which contribute more generally to the setting of the high veldt. Orange River is broken by hills and river-beds, dry courses with rock-strewn banks, patches of sand, sparsely grassed and destitute of bushes. The land to the west rolls smoothly to the watershed of the river, breaking into bush and short rises about the banks of the stream. The water clatters among stones and rocks to the north-west, leaving to the south-west and due west the same barren open sand flats. Upon the east there is a slight contrast to the evenness of the pastureless country which meets the sunset; but the fall of the land due south, south-east, south-west, is unchanging, the compass shifting due east and north-east before the abrupt and rugged lines of the country are exposed. Then, and then only, does the face of the country reveal its uncouth and uncomfortable character. East, whence the waters stream beneath the railway bridge, the watershed is herring-backed, concealing, beneath rough folds of rising ground, stretches of bush veldt and stony patches. High ridges debouch at right angles to the stream, with uncertain contours and abrupt declivities; detached kopjes rise from upon the face of the country, claiming classification with the ages around them, but standing aloof with forbidding mien—a formidable menace to the chance of successful storming. Parallel hills and ridges distinguish the hinterland of this watershed so far inland as the areas of the Orange Free State, while the broken and dangerous character of the country east-north-east, continuing until the watershed of the Modder River, still further prolongates these disturbing features. The valley of the river, within a mile from the stretch of flats which rolls away from the bases of the hills, converges until the sides lie within a few hundred yards of each other. There the stream rushes and roars with some force, until the wider reaches of the plain give to the pent-up waters a greater space of revolt. From the mouth of the valley the river wanders with easy indifference across a broader course to the west; gathering its volume from the seasons, and leaving in the hot weather a margin of shining stones upon both sides of the river bed. The hills are in pleasant contrast to the even tenour of the veldt, and the cool waters of the river invite repose. Small game lurk within the cover of the scrub, mountain duck haunt the mountain cataract; cattle roam across the land, snatching mouthfuls of dry herbage, while just now the sides of the hills throw back the echo of the military occupation, the noises of the camp, the calls of the horses upon the picket lines, the heavy thudding of the picks, the shrill rasping of the shovels in the places where the men are throwing up the necessary field works.

Everywhere is the spectacle of orderly bustle. The summits of the hills are crowned with earthworks, brown lines of trenches traverse the valley, block houses command the entrances of the bridge. These are the signs of the times, encompassed in an unremitting rapidity of execution. Colonel Kincaid rides from point to point, throwing advice here, praise there, and expressing general satisfaction over the labours of his men, as the scheme of defences runs to its conclusion. Out across the plain, upon Reservoir Hill, the sappers are constructing an entrenched position under the

direction of Captain Mills, R.A., and especially designed to protect the water supply. Roads have been cut across the rear face of the hill, a breastwork of stones and earth encircles the Reservoir, and gun emplacements flank either extremity. It is a pretty work, carefully conceived, skilfully constructed, commanding the portion of the camp, and sweeping the approaches to the bridge. From the top of Reservoir Hill, no great eminence, the surrounding country is easily inspected, and the more one scans and studies the peculiarities of its formation, the more one becomes impressed with the fact that it presents the gravest obstacles to the British principles of military operations. A well-equipped and mobile force will hold the hills for eternity—but God help the troops who are launched against these awful kopjes which create the strength of such positions. The officers commanding these detached units along this border have received instructions to prepare extensive lines of fortifications round their bases, and at De Aar, as at Orange River and elsewhere, these commands have been complied with, until now the positions need only the service of some good artillery to be made impregnable. When cables be at the disposal of a possible enemy, it is as well to be reticent upon the cardinal weaknesses within our lines, but already there are signs of the extreme haste with which the troops have been despatched to the front. No unit would appear to be complete, despite the months of warning in which there has been ample opportunity to prepare. Everything is rushed through at the last, and although urgent orders be issued to make ready against attack, no artillery is available for the purpose. Everything is obscured in idle talk or deferred by empty promise, and the authorities appear to be continuing a policy which gives to the Boers some justification of their hopes of success. The Imperial authorities, in relying so much upon the moral effect of their artillery, appear to forget that the better it is, the more important the results it achieves; the more important the position to be defended, the better it should be. The Boers lose nothing by possessing modern weapons of defence. But with a wing only of the King's Own Light Infantry to occupy De Aar, and four companies of the Loyal Lancashires to hold Orange River, the need of strong artillery support is manifest. It has been laid down that the proportion of guns to men is as near as possible three guns to one thousand men, but this proportion must depend upon the nature of the service upon which the force is to be employed, the topography of the theatre of war and the quality of the troops. A force intended more for the occupation of strong positions, must have a larger proportion of guns than an army intended for offensive operations in the field. De Aar, as one base of operations toward the lines of least resistance to the western, southern, and south-eastern approaches to the Orange Free State, is even more important than our position at Orange River, which is intended, in the event of any campaign, to protect the railway bridge and the lines of communication with the north. But at De Aar the lines of railway, which converge upon it, link Pretoria and Bloemfontein to Cape Town, connect the north with the south, join Cape Town with the south and south-east by a stretch of line almost parallel with the southern border of the Orange Free State. Yet, so dilatory have been the efforts of headquarters to obtain the necessary artillery, that, having reduced South Africa to a condition of war, they split up between De Aar, Orange River, and other defenceless, but important, strategic positions along the western border, improvised field batteries drawn from any garrison lumber room which came handy.

The artillery at present upon this border is, as a consequence, the seven-pound muzzle-loader which was obsolete when the passing generation of officers were at the

"shop." The inadequacy of the artillery is a matter of the gravest concern, since, even if the troops at these places be sufficient to police the disaffected areas, and to hold in check the local disposition to rebel, in face of the weapons of precision with which the Boer forces be armed, it would be impossible, should they move forward, for the British artillery to maintain any position which was incumbent upon the possession of good artillery. So well is this realised by our Intelligence Department, that elaborate precautions are taken by that Bureau, as well as all commanding officers, to prevent the enemy from discovering that, in its main part, the strength of the batteries in opposition has been drawn from derelicts in the garrison stores. These improvised field batteries might be of service in maintaining the line of communication if any advance of British troops be made, but as an actual factor in any defensive or offensive movements which the forces may undertake, their restricted utility escapes all serious consideration, and puts our present artillery almost at once out of action. The physical configuration of the country urgently calls for the immediate despatch of modern weapons, similar to those which the Sirdar used in his Soudan campaign. In addition to this an exchange, piece by piece, between these seven-pounder muzzle-loading monstrosities and the converted twelve-pounders, breech-loaders and high-velocity quick firers, might be seasonably effected. Five-inch howitzers, too, should also be sent forward. But the lack of reliable artillery is scandalous, and the sooner that guns, of a calibre which is in a true proportion to the importance of the positions which they will command, arrive upon the scene, the less uncertain will be the results of any actual contact between our forces in their present deplorable condition and those of the African Republics with whom we are so soon to be at war.

V.

DIAMONDS AND WHITE FEATHERS

THE CAMP, KIMBERLEY,
September 28th, 1899.

This usually dull and dirty mining station has now been occupied by a small detachment of British troops. The force arrived here from the camp at Orange River within the week, and include the 1st Loyal North Lancashire, with its usual complement of machine guns, No. 1 Section of the 7th Field Company of Royal Engineers, 23rd Company of Garrison Artillery with 2·5 seven-pound muzzle-loaders on mountain carriages (which are almost useless and certainly obsolete weapons), an organised Army Medical Staff, and a transport most indifferently equipped if it be intended for immediate and prolonged field service. Yet it is claimed that nothing has been omitted which could make this force an imposing factor in the chance of attack to which, from its exposed situation, the hapless Kimberley is threatened. The Loyal Lancashire Regiment is in full strength, but the battalions have been divided between the positions here and the camp just south of the Orange River. It is, of course, doubtful whether much be gained by splitting up our forces along the border into

small units, but at the present juncture, when so few troops be in the colony, this policy is receiving its own justification. We are all urgently hoping for the arrival of troops, since if there were a general advance of the Dutch troops, a contingency not by any means altogether remote, upon any one of these well-defined but indifferently manned places, the task of maintaining the advanced lines would be a severe strain upon the efforts of the very limited number of men that are available at each point. It is surely only within the limits of the British Empire that a frontier line over 1,500 miles in extent would be kept absolutely without any defensive measures; while it is Boer activity during the past few weeks that has induced the Colonial authorities to adopt their present precautions. Our troops are now more or less efficiently prepared at certain points along this Western boundary, and, if no order has yet come for their mobilisation, the steps necessary to effect it have all been completed. At Kimberley, in the few days which have elapsed, wonders in the preparation of the town's defences have been worked, and the alarm which caused so much panic there before the arrival of the soldiers has now, in part, subsided.

For many hours before the arrival of the troops at Kimberley crowds of interested spectators besieged the railway station and thronged the dusty thoroughfares of the town. The Imperial men detrained very smartly to the sound of the bugle, off-loading the guns and ammunition to the plaudits and delights of an admiring crowd. The actual detraining took place at the Beaconsfield siding, two miles from Kimberley, the men not making their camp in the town until the next morning. For the time the transport was stored in the goods sheds, and the troops arranged to bivouac beside the railway. The traffic manager had prepared fires and boiling water before the men came, so that soon after their arrival they were all served with dinner. The detailing of guards, posting of sentries, and other evolutions incidental to open camp, permitted Kimberley to indulge its taste for military pomp and vanities. Imperial troops have not been here since two squadrons of the 11th Hussars passed through from Mashonaland in November, 1890, and the presence of the troops has inspired the townfolk with a magnificent appreciation of the gallant men who have come up for their protection. It is hoped that special means will be taken to interest the troops in the few hours which they have free from work. At present all attention is being devoted to the construction of the defences of the town, to the formation of adequate volunteer assistance, to the arrangement of a complete system of alarm and rallying spots. Lieut.-Colonel Kekewich, in command of the Imperial camp here, is anxious to assist the people in rifle practice and field-firing; while the Diamond Fields Artillery and the De Beers Artillery are to be called out for temporary service in conjunction with the Imperial Artillery.

The rumour that a Boer force is within the vicinity of Kimberley has done much to assist in the speedy formation of local forces, and now that the train mules and private bullock teams have been requisitioned for the Imperial service, there is much solemn speculation upon the date of hostilities. The fact is that no one here can, with any certainty, predict an hour. A shot anywhere will set the borderside aflame. Moreover, the Boers are daily growing more impudent. At Borderside, where the frontiers are barely eighty yards apart, a field cornet and his men, who are patrolling their side of the line, greet the pickets of the Cape Police who are stationed there with exulting menaces and much display of rifles. But if the Dutch be thirsting in this

fashion for our blood, people at home can rest confident in the fact that there will be no holding back upon the part of our men once the fun begins. Seldom has such a determined and ferocious spirit animated any British force as that one which is now stimulating the troops in South Africa. Every man is sick of the Cabinet's delay, but they find consolation in the fact that the slow movement of the Ministerial machine is undertaken to avoid any precipitation of the crisis before the forces to be engaged have arrived upon the scene. Then it is every man's ambition to take his own share in "whopping" Kruger.

I did not hurry to leave Kimberley; but the place where the diamonds come from, the least admirable of any town on earth, is no longer essential to my existence. It has neither charm nor elegance, and it is sufficiently irregular in its construction to be the most barbarous example of architecture in South Africa. It greets the traveller enveloped in the haze of heat, and it bids him farewell through a cloud of sand. But if one has once imagined what the appearance of the mining town may be, let him give it a wide berth. It is a conglomerate jumble of tin houses with dusty streets dedicated to modern industry, and palpitating with the mere mechanical energy of native labour.

Kimberley, however, was a convenient immediate base between Orange River and Mafeking. Around these two places rumour was spreading a well-woven net of probabilities, intimate yet inherently impossible. War, bloody and fierce, was alternately looming large in the horizon just above their situations, so for the moment I tarried, watching the approach of impending battle from afar off. It was a fine feeling, the constant thrill caused by the mere vividness of martial rumours. They came from Buluwayo in the North, they came from Cape Town in the South, they were brought daily from Bloemfontein; and if they gave infinite zest to the passing hours, it was but the happenings of the hour that they were doomed to be misbelieved. To listen to the gossip and rumours of Headquarters at once became the most serious interest which our life contained just now. Spies are seen everywhere. Within the shade of every shadow there is said to lurk a Boer secret service agent, and, as a consequence, the attitude of the public is one in which each figuratively lays a grimy finger to his nose and breathes blasphemies in whispers to his confiding friend. The spy mania which swept through France but a few weeks ago has appeared here, endowed with magnificent vitality. At Mafeking it has dominated both the military and the public, and, as an illustration, I append the official notice, on page 46, in which many of these gentry are warned from the town by Lord Edward Cecil, Chief Staff Officer to Colonel Baden-Powell.

NOTICE.

SPIES

There are in town today nine
known spies. They are hereby
warned to leave before 12 noon to-morrow
or they will be apprehended.

By order,

E. H. CECIL, Major,
C.S.O.

Mafeking,

7th Oct., 1899.

THE NOTICE TO SPIES ISSUED BY COL. BADEN-POWELL.

Kimberley has not yet gone so far as this notice, but a similar step is in serious consideration, and the notice will soon be promulgated. What with spies, war scares, reports of Boer invasion, and of active hostilities having commenced, the Western border is living in a seethe of excitement, and appreciating the crisis with but doubtful enjoyment, and many signs of such indisputable terror. Kimberley has called forth its volunteers, who in name are glorious, but in utility uncertain. The Town Guard, after fortifying itself with much Dutch courage, has taken unto itself a weapon of precision of which it knows nothing. Infantry and musketry drill have not existed for the town of diamonds; they are for the Cape Police, for the Mounted Rifles, for Imperial troops; but for those who are regular in their mining, but irregular in their drill, there is none of it. These heroes shake with terror in private, but they gnash their teeth with impotent valour in public; at heart they are rank cowards, for the most part leaving to the few decently spirited the duties of volunteer defence, and to the soldiery and constabulary the rigours of the coming battle.

Nothing perhaps has been so discreditable as the hurried flight of men from these towns which are within the area of possible hostilities. It is perhaps different where they belong to the Transvaal, but one would expect Englishmen, who have seen their womenfolk to places of security, to proffer such service as could be turned to account in these hours of emergency. It is an unpleasant fact to reflect upon that the leaders of the general panic and consequent exodus from these towns are mostly Britishers. From sheer force of numbers the white-feathered brigade merits solicitous contempt.

Such is Kimberley in the passing hour, and as I waited there to see whether the rumours would crystallise into actualities, the word was passed round that three commandos of the Boers were concentrating upon Mafeking. Heavens! how the specials skittled! By horse and on foot, by cab and cart, they dashed to the station. Lord! and the train had gone some hours! But, with the instinct of true war-dogs, they fled in special expresses to the scene where attack was threatened. They might have crawled from Kimberley to Mafeking on hands and knees, for Boers may camp and Boers may trek, but war is still afar off. Had we not travelled in such haste, the journey might have proved of interest, but impatience made the time speed quickly, and the frontier posts upon the road went by unnoticed. Just now these frontier stations are of public interest. At Fourteen Streams, at Borderside, at Vryburg, Boer commandos have laagered within a few yards of the frontier fence, and since human nature is ever prone to politeness, it has become the daily fashion for Boer and Britisher to swear at one another across the intervening wires. John Bosman, a Borderside notoriety, implicated in a late rising of the natives against Imperial authority, is in command of one hundred and fifty "cherubs," as the Boer captain dubs his gallant band. Matutinal and nocturnal greetings have enabled the two forces to become acquainted with one another, and it is

held to be a sporting thing for men, from either force, to invade each other's territory, inviting blasphemies and creating some excitement, since at Borderside the friendly relations between the two countries be altogether gainsaid.

VI.

TWO DAYS BEFORE WAR

THE CAMP, MAFEKING,

October 9th, 1899.

Mafeking lies a day's journey by the train from Vryburg, and was once the terminus of the Cape railway system pending its extension northwards. Just now it is the embodiment of a fine Imperialism. There is the dignity of empire in the shape of her Majesty's Imperial Commissioner, Major Gould Adams, C.B., C.M.G.; the majesty of might, as suggested by Colonel Baden-Powell, of the Frontier Force; by Colonel Hore, of the Protectorate Regiment; by Colonel Walford, of the British South Africa Police; by Colonel Vyvyan, base commandant; and there are, too, the various strengths attached to the respective commands. For weeks this little place has been terrorised by Boer threats, until the presence of the military has reassured them. Now, however, the veldt beyond the town has been effectively occupied by the different commands, while within the town, or beyond its outer walls, noise and bustle everywhere embody the grim reality of war. It has not been possible to visit the different camps, in time for this mail, since the exigencies of war have interfered with the dispatch of the English letters from the more remote districts, and until the country is more settled the night train service is altogether discontinued. This week's mail is two days in advance of its usual fixture; but perhaps we are fortunate, since the mail coach to Johannesburg has discontinued running, its last journey from Mafeking being confined to taking back to the Transvaal the few things which belonged to it in Mafeking. The supplementary coach was behind, its harness was stored in sacks upon the top, and thus it made its departure. It had better have remained at Mafeking, for no sooner had the coach passed the border-line than its mules were commandeered for transport by order of the Transvaal Government.

Mafeking has entered into warlike preparations with commendable zeal, but in reality men are uncertain whether to face the music or to skip with their women and children. Ostensibly they wish to bear the brunt of an attack upon their town, but as time wears on and the numbers of the Boer force concentrated upon the border increase, the number of men available for actual volunteer service grows beautifully less. Mines have been laid down, fortifications thrown up, the volunteers and local ambulance services have been called out, and an armoured train patrols the line. The staff officers are everywhere, a crowd of journalists drifts about smothered beneath a variety of secret reports. Everyone wears a worried look, and still the expected does not happen. To break the monotony of false alarms, of the sound of armed feet marching anywhere, of bells by day and rockets by night, of irresponsible gossips chattering

upon subjects they do not understand, of the plague of locusts thick as fleas on Margate Sands (a plague as great as the military bore)—there is lacking but one thing—WAR. The troops want it to prove their efficiency, the journalists demand it to justify their existence, the countryside approves since it has sent the price of foodstuffs and of native labour to a premium, the Boers want it as the first step in that great scheme by which they hope to reduce London to ashes and sweep the red-vests of Great Britain into complete oblivion.

But if the path of glory lies in that direction for the Boer sharpshooter, Mafeking will present him with a splendid spectacle just so soon as the curtain rises upon the drama of mortal combat between Boer and Britisher. It is a straggling town this Mafeking, and covers an area wider than its dignity demands. But should Commandant Cronje, who is hovering upon the border at Louw's Farm with 6,000 Boers, come down, in that spirit of unctuous rectitude which epitomises the Scripture and so distinguishes the Boers, a bill will be settled by this little town against the man who, already the hero of many historical iniquities, baulked Jameson of his raid.

Upon this point Colonel Baden-Powell's notice to the inhabitants is instructive:—

NOTICE.

DEFENCE MINES.

“The inhabitants are warned that mines are being laid at various points outside the town in connection with the defences. Their position will be marked, in order to avoid accidents, by small red flags.

“Cattle herds and others should be warned accordingly.

“Mafeking: Dated this 7th day of October, 1899”.

If this throws a sidelight upon the situation here, the second notice paints in the background with gloomy shadows:—

“NOTICE.—It is considered desirable to state to the inhabitants of Mafeking what is the situation up to date.

“Forces of armed Boers are now massed upon the Natal and Bechuanaland Borders. Their orders are not to cross the border until the British fire a shot, and as this is not likely to occur, at least for some time, no immediate danger is to be apprehended. At the same time a rumour of war in Natal or other false alarm might cause the Boers upon our border to take action, and it is well to be prepared for eventualities.

“It is possible they might attempt to shell the town, and although every endeavour will be made to provide shelter for the women and children, yet arrangements could be made with the railway to move any of them to a place of safety if they desire to go away from Mafeking, and it is suggested that some place on the Transvaal border, such as Palapye Siding, or Francistown, might be more suitable and less expensive places than the already crowded towns of the colony. The men would, of course, remain to defend Mafeking, which, with its present garrison and defences, will

be easy to hold. Those desirous of leaving should inform the Stationmaster, Mafeking, their number of adults and children, class of accommodation required, and destination.

COLONEL BADEN-POWELL,
Colonel Commanding Frontier Forces.

October 7th, Mafeking”.

One turns from this to learn that streets in the town are barricaded, that the houses are sandbagged, that the railway is patrolled by an armour-plated train, which is imposing if incapable of much resistance. It is fitted with Nordenfeldt and Maxim quick-firing machine guns, and provided with a phonophone and an acetylene searchlight which stands like a fiery dragon at one end of the car. The train is in three parts, the engine being placed between two trucks. Each of the vehicles is about thirty feet long, mounted on four pairs of wheels, and is capable of holding sixty men. The entire train is covered over with $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch steel armour-plate over double iron rails, but at some recent trial the bullets from Lee-Metfords and Martinis penetrated at 200 yards' range through all thicknesses of armour.

Mafeking is situated upon a rise about three hundred yards north of the Molopo River, and from time to time its history has been associated with military enterprises. It is not an unimportant town, and in that day when it has been connected by railway with the Transvaal and its present system has been improved, its commercial importance will receive material increase. The present railway, which cuts through Mafeking in its journey to Buluwayo, is to the west of the town, running north and south and crossing the Molopo River by an iron bridge, at which point the trend of the railroad inclines to the west. To the west of the railway again is the native stadt, extending to both sides of the river, and commencing about half a mile from the railway. The stadt extends to the west from the base of a rise beyond the bed of the river which, at present, covers the exterior line of the western outposts. Near the railway the ground slopes gradually for a considerable distance, while the country around Mafeking is flat in general, but across the Molopo, to the south and south-east, it commands the town, while the ground to the west of the stadt commands the stadt. The native village rests upon this western face, and, owing to the rough character of the country upon which the stadt lies, this native town has received the name of “The Place among the Rocks”. About a mile from the town, and slightly east, there is an old fort called Cannon Kopje, a hideous collection of stones, which is held by a detachment of the British South Africa Police. It has an interior diameter of some thirty yards. The native location lies between Cannon Kopje and the town, on the southern bank of the river. The native stadt consists of Kaffir huts. Further east, and between the native location and Cannon Kopje, on the northern bank of the river, extend the brickfields, while a little further in the same direction is MacMullan's Farm. Between the farm and the ground to the north-east is the racecourse and the waterworks, which are connected by a pipe with The Springs, a natural water-hole to the east of the town. Cannon Kopje is due south of the town, the cemetery north, the native stadt west, the racecourse east. Between these points there are a few buildings which serve as local landmarks. There is the Convent to the north-east corner, Ellis's

Corner south-east, the Pound south-west, and the British South Africa Police Barracks west.

The town of Mafeking has been built upon a rock, the centre of the town being the market square. Buildings extend at all points from the square, running into the veldt, showing an irregularity of design and no architectural perfection. The town is principally composed of bungalows, built of mud-bricks, with roofs of corrugated iron. The population in time of peace includes some 2,000 whites and some 6,000 natives. Just now there are perhaps 1,500 whites, 8,000 natives, the ordinary population of the native village being swelled by the influx of some native refugees from the Transvaal. The perimeter of the defences is between five and six miles. The armoured train protects the north-west front. Between the railway on the north-west and the Convent, there are some trenches, built with an eye to their future use. Upon the western and eastern bases of the town there are further trenches, manned by the Protectorate Regiment, the Town Guard, and other local volunteer corps. The town was garrisoned by the Cape Police under Inspector Marsh and Inspector Brown. Colonel Walford held Cannon Kopje with the British South Africa Police. Colonel Hore commanded the Protectorate Regiment, which was scattered about the defences of the town under its squadron officers. The western outposts were entrusted to Major Godley, while in this direction there were also the Women's Laager and the Refugee Laager in Hidden Hollow. To the south-west was Major Godley's headquarters. Below this, and further to the west, was Captain Marsh's post, upon the other side of which, along the eastern front of the town, there are many forts in process of construction. There are De Koch's, Musson's, Ellitson's Kraal, Early's Corner. These forts will be garrisoned by the Town Guard, and it is hoped that they will be provided with adequate protection from the enemy's artillery. The Railway Volunteers garrisoned the cemetery and controlled an advanced trench about eight hundred yards to the front. In the meantime, every effort is being made to press forward the work of constructing the defences, and every one appears to be willing to assist. The aspect of the town is gradually changing, and in the little time that is left to us we hope to ensconce ourselves behind something of an impregnable defence.

VII.

THE SKIRMISH AT FIVE MILE BANK

THE CAMP, MAFEKING,
October 14th, 1899.

Early this morning a mounted patrol under Captain Lord Charles Bentinck reported the Boers in strong position to the north of the town, and engaging them at once a general fight ensued.

Colonel Baden-Powell, upon receiving this information, instructed Captain Fitzclarence, D Squadron Protectorate Regiment, which is commanded by Colonel Hore, to cover the right flank of the armoured train, which had already moved out to

support the patrol of A squadron, and which, under the direction of Captain Williams, British South Africa Police, drove the Boer artillery from two positions.

It may be said that this movement began the more serious and certainly the more determined portion of the engagement. Captain Fitzclarence was accompanied by seventy men. Upon the termination of the fight he had twelve wounded, two dead, and two others wounded so seriously that they since died. The firing-line at no time contained more than two troops, who, in extended order, and having seized the little cover which was available, hotly contested the position against four hundred Boers. Upon the arrival of the squadron under Captain Fitzclarence the Boers again began to fall back, and withdrawing their right flank from its propinquity to the armoured train, they projected their entire force well beyond the right flank of Captain Fitzclarence. The two forces both in extended order, the one falling back upon the lines of a position which had been carefully selected and which was admirably adapted to their methods of fighting, the other pursuing, then prepared to settle matters between themselves. Had Captain Fitzclarence but realised it, and had this young officer not been so intrepid, he would have recognised in this Boer movement the ruse by which they hoped to entice the "Red necks" within range of a position from which they could be more effectually surrounded. The motive in their movement to the rear was to secure the ample protection which was offered to them by the low ridge covered with timber, scrub, large masses of rock, and cut up by many little sluits, which extended along the line of their retreat. When once the Boers had gained this ridge they faced about, though it must not be imagined their retirement was in any way a mad gallop. They fell back in as good order as our squadron advanced, but so soon as they had lined up upon the ridge it could be seen how very greatly the Boer detachment out-numbered the men opposed to them. Moreover, in a little their artillery again spoke for itself, impressing the situation with still greater gravity. When the Boer guns opened fire Captain Fitzclarence very wisely availed himself of the shelter of three native huts, for the better protection of the horses and any wounded that might come on. Leaving his horses here, he advanced with his men in extended order, until he had secured a line of front immediately adjacent to the Boers. Indeed, our firing-line was at first only four hundred yards from the ridge; but, after a short experience of such close quarters, it was found to be wiser to take up a position some four hundred yards further off. The action of Captain Fitzclarence in endeavouring to meet the Boer commando was one of those inopportune acts of gallantry where loss, should the fight be successful, is overlooked. Technically speaking, of course, the strategy was all at fault, and it soon was seen how very serious the situation of Squadron D had become. By good luck I had joined this squadron in its move to the front, and it was very interesting to observe how a force, whose composite qualities were quite unknown, showed itself to be worthy of the utmost respect, and a corps upon which every reliance could be placed. Our men did not seem to mind the formidable odds against which they contended. The only disconcerting thing at the outset of the action being the position of the artillery on the Boer side, but for some reason the Boers ceased their shell fire very shortly after the action had begun. This again is another of those extraordinary blunders which creep into most fighting. The Boers might have wiped Squadron D out of existence by playing their nine-pounders upon our position. As it was, the Boer commandant withdrew his artillery from the fight and relied solely upon his rifles. From the little ridge, which, when our own firing-line had fallen back, was barely five

hundred yards distant, there came a shower of Mauser and Martini bullets. The direction from which the fire came at first suggested that the Boers were undecided as to the area of the position which they would occupy, since shortly after the action began the enemy's line of fire expanded until it extended beyond our front. For the moment the firing-line developed, continuing to expand until it became evident that the fire of their either flank was here most effectually enveloping the rear of our position, and endangering our line of retreat as well as those who had been sent to the improvised hospital in the native huts. But it was impossible to avoid such a contingency with the numbers against which we had to contend. Indeed, there was no point from which this enveloping movement could be escaped, since the men with Captain Fitzclarence were already unduly extended. The rifle fire was very heavy.

From the ridge of the Boer position our complete formation and the situation of each unit could be seen. It merely required a little sharpshooting, keen sight, and sufficient energy to cause a disaster. Our men lay upon the ground seeking cover where they could find it, but they had neither the trees, nor the low-lying shrubs, nor the rocks, nor the sluits which had lent themselves to the Boers' shelter. They simply lay, a determined body of men, individually keen for distinction, and individually keen to put the Boers out of existence. The firing became hot and so rapid that in a very short time the heavy drain upon our ammunition was beginning to have effect. This again establishes the position of D Squadron. There were no supplies, nor was there any artillery support until too late. There was no ambulance, and no effective preparation for retirement. The horses behind the huts, the men in the front, were each in a position from which it certainly seemed that escape was impossible. The Boers, upon the contrary, had a train of supplies and an excellent line of cover for retreat.

The first Boer shell killed two horses and reduced to ruins a hut from the group which had given some protection to the wounded. The second shell fell wide, exploding, with no effect, into a sand heap. Between the intervals of shelling, the fire from the Boer Maxims whistled across the open spaces between the two firing-lines with a discord which was altogether out of harmony with the calmness and coolness of our men who, so soon as they had settled down to the serious business of the engagement, did not seem at all to mind the firing.

Two cousins, Corporal Walshe and Corporal Parland, Irishmen, were shot dead very soon after the engagement opened, but the absence of ambulance arrangements prevented those who were wounded in the advanced position from falling back to the rear. With a quiet and unsuspected courage they just stopped where they were shot until they could muster sufficient strength to drag themselves to the rear. Each wounded form became, as it crawled along, the objective of the Boer rifle fire, and no few of those who had been hit in action were hit again as they made their way to the field hospital. Here Major Anderson, with whom I remained from the moment of my arrival until we retired—who told me afterwards that it was a mere chance which caused him to accompany the squadron to the field, since in the confusion and din no one had thought to give him his orders—was busily dressing the men as they came in. The total area of the improvised dressing station was perhaps half a dozen yards; into that crowded six or seven horses, seven or eight wounded men, the Surgeon-Major, his orderly, and all those others who made their way through the firing-line from time to

time. There seemed to be indescribable confusion in this little spot. The wounded men lay between horses' legs, rested upon one another, crouched against the walls of the huts, each recognising that the situation was one of gravity, and endeavouring to assist so far as he was able; those who were not too severely wounded helped to undress those who had been less fortunately hit, and to each as he fell back from the firing-line to have his wounds dressed, there was thrown a merry jest from his comrades. The nature of the wounds created no little interest among the men, since it was the first time that anyone had seen the effect, upon human beings, of the Mauser bullets. One man as he came back was advised not to sit down; another man, with extraordinary coolness in seeing the nature of his wounds, which were seven, exclaimed with a quaint blasphemy, that it still might be possible for him to enjoy the functions of a married man. But if this were the scene at the hospital base, the scene at our firing-line and at that upon the Boer side was very different. We possibly occupied a line of front some eighty yards in extent, and as the Boers saw that the hospital hut was becoming the centre of our position, so they extended their lines until a direct cross fire from the extremities of the two flanks were added to the direct fire from the centre; each man, therefore, was under a converging fire from three distinct points, and had it not been that the Boers' aim was not so good as their range our losses would have been much more serious than has happily proved to be the case. We could see the Boers sitting in the branches of the trees; we could see them crouching beneath bushes; we could detect them, from the fire of their rifles, in the shelter of the rocks and in the depths of the sluits. It soon became the first serious consideration with our men to try to hit them as they sat in the branches of the trees, and it was because Private Wormald caught sight of a piece of a paper as it dropped from a tree that he was able to shoot the Dutchman who was known to have shot the two cousins. It was almost a unique method of warfare. Anon and again our fellows enjoyed a little Boer potting among the foliage of the trees. Here and there a body was seen to fall heavily from a branch, or to spring up and fall heavily into a bush; that was as much as we could gauge of the effect of our own handiwork. Those who were behind the stones were possibly as safe as those who were in the sluits, but through the lack of any effective support our shooting, good as it may have been, was not sufficiently strong for us to maintain our position. If D Squadron were to save itself from an unfortunate disaster it seemed that it would have to fall back. The wounded men had come in so rapidly from the front, and ammunition had been so heavily expended, that many of those situated upon the extreme flanks of our position were completely without ammunition. In one case five men had no ammunition left, and one volunteered to go to the rear to obtain some from those who had been wounded, and were consequently out of action. He successfully accomplished this errand, sustaining, however, such wounds as must prove fatal.

Captain Fitzclarence maintained his splendid isolation as long as possible, and just as every one was wondering why, in the name of Heaven, no artillery had been sent to support the squadron in a position it was never intended to occupy, a gun detachment was seen to gallop into action on the extreme right flank. Between our men and the gun perhaps a mile stretched, and when we could see that they were preparing to fire, each for a brief moment stopped to congratulate his fellow upon the succour at hand. In this they didn't think of themselves, but they hoped that with the

aid of the gun they might still be able to maintain their position and give the enemy a hiding.

Suddenly a cloud of smoke hung over the gun and a shell shrieked through the air. We rapidly speculated upon the amount of damage it would make, when, with noisy force, it burst among us. We thought at first that the shell had fallen short, and we hoped the next would reach the enemy, but when Lieutenant Murchison, who was in charge of the gun, dismissed his second shell, and it was so well directed as to fall upon one of the three huts behind which we were sheltering, the luckless position of D Squadron received unmerited but instantaneous aggravation and aggrievement, since it was turning the tables with a vengeance upon the enemy when the guns coming to our support set, forthwith, to shell us. The menace which our own artillery had thus unconsciously become to one portion of our wounded men about these huts had to be immediately removed, and I was one of two who were permitted to carry intelligence of his mistake to the officer in charge of the seven-pounder. In galloping across to the position of the gun, the third shell thrown in this direction burst just past my horse's head, the force of its wind almost lifting me from the saddle. The moment was of interest, and I only realised my escape when, upon returning, I found the base of the shell and my helmet lying quite close to each other. When a new direction had been given to the guns, and their fire brought to bear upon the position which the Boers occupied, the rifle fire from the front of the ridge gradually slackened, while, under cover of the very excellent work which this gun was executing, our men fell back upon the hospital. Here an order had just arrived instructing Fitzclarence to send back his wounded to the armoured train, those uninjured covering the movement. While the squadron was engaged in completing this order, no shots were fired from the position of the Boers, and we concluded that they also were engaged in withdrawing at discretion. Captain Fitzclarence, Lieutenant Swinburne, and myself were the last to leave the line of action, tailing off ourselves in the same open order that the remainder of the squadron had been ordered to preserve. As we retired Captain Fitzclarence put three wounded horses out of their misery, leaving their bodies for the vultures that were already wheeling in circles in the realms of space above us. These were the last shots fired in this action, although through mistake, the Boers had fired upon the ambulance train, mistaking it for a new instrument of destruction. Subsequently we heard that the Boers buried their dead at Ramathlabama, and we also have heard that all the houses in that place have been seized as accommodation for the 107 Boers who were wounded in the fight. These numbers may probably be exaggerated, but there is no cause to doubt that their loss was much greater than ours, since the proportion of their men to ours was greater than twelve to one. Saturday thus initiated the Boer war along this frontier, and after the morning's excitement the rest of the day passed without incident. Colonel Baden-Powell, Colonel Hore, and Colonel Walford, the one as the colonel in command, the others as the commanding officers of the Protectorate Regiment and the British South Africa Police, congratulated their men upon the stand which they had made in the morning, and the courage which they had displayed. Brevet-Major Lord Edward Cecil, C.S.O., described Captain Fitzclarence's movement as brilliant. It is a question whether this movement was not, at least, characterised by an equal amount of foolhardiness. However, the officer himself showed such coolness in this his baptism of fire as to deserve much congratulation upon his individual gallantry.

VIII.
THE FIRST DAY OF BOMBARDMENT

THE CAMP, MAFEKING,
October 22nd, 1899.

There was some sign that the engagement of Saturday between the Protectorate troops and the Boer forces investing Mafeking would have been the precursor of a series of minor fights, which, if not of much importance in themselves, yet would have been of interest and encouraging to the command generally.

As it happens, however, the engagement of Saturday is the first, and, up to the present, the only action of any importance, of any interest whatsoever, that has been brought about between the two forces. General Cronje is evidently a man of some humanity, though it is perhaps possible that the motives which direct his present policy of exceeding gentleness towards the "Rooineken" that he be besieging in Mafeking, aims at procuring for himself, when the inevitable does come, terms perhaps not quite so extreme as would have been the case had the Boer commandant not conducted his operations in accordance with the articles of war.

During the progress of the Sunday following the engagement at Five Mile Bank, Commandant Cronje made a curiously sincere, but not altogether unhumorous demand for our unconditional surrender. Colonel Baden-Powell very properly felt he was unable to comply with any such demand, and with the exchange of notes of a courteous character this incident closed.

During Sunday the town put the finishing touches to the earthworks, lunettes, and to the gun emplacements, which will form a more or less complete chain of fortifications around the town. So much as possible, and so far as it lay within the knowledge and experience of the Base Commandant, Colonel Vyvyan, and Major Panzera, each distinct earthwork was made shell-proof.

From the outside the town looks as if a series of gigantic mounds had been suddenly created. At different points tiers of sandbags, several feet high, protect the more exposed places, and to these again has been added, as an exterior facing, banks of earth. Within such a position as I am now describing there is a deep trench, which is of that depth which enables a man standing upright to fire through loopholes between sacks of sand. Behind the trench is a low shelter of deals with an upper covering of sandbags, intending to serve the garrison of the fort as protection against shell fire.

To those points which are exposed to the more direct attack of the enemy, a Maxim has been detached or a seven-pounder emplaced. The Town Guard man these positions: the work of patrolling, of forming Cossack posts, of maintaining the outer lines of sentries, being undertaken by the Protectorate troops and the Bechuanaland Rifles.

An elaborate system of signals has been arranged. A red flag will fly from Headquarters should the Boers be coming on, and an alarm will be rung in the centre of the town. The streets have been barricaded with carts, and all open places protected by traverses of a useful character. Mines have been placed within and without the town, and an improvised field telegraph or the telephone has been connected with every point which lies beyond the immediate precincts of the defences. Every possible precaution that human ingenuity can devise and the resources of the town supply for the protection of the place, is in order.

Thus did Mafeking prepare for the Boer bombardment, and upon the Monday following this took place; but it is perhaps no exaggeration to say that nothing so ludicrous in the history of modern warfare has been propagated as the gigantic joke which Commandant Snyman, who directed the fire of the artillery, played off against us that day. For many weeks we, along this frontier, had heard what the Boers proposed to do once war should be declared. These forecasts had indeed been sanguinary; the heads of the English people, had we believed in these rumours, were to lie upon the veldt like the sand upon the sea shore.

The bombardment as such was totally ineffective, and so curiously amateur, so wholly experimental, as to move one to astonishment rather than derision. It began at 9.15 a.m., and the first shell fell blind. The second and the third also pitched short, but once the bombardment had been initiated, the feelings of those who had dreaded such an event, more on account of their women and children than on account of themselves, were unperturbed. When the shells began to fall into the town it was found that they were of such poor quality as to be incapable of any explosive force whatever. Judging from their effect the area of damage was not three square feet.

Shortly after the first few shells had been dropped the Boers found the range, and from Signal Hill, their position to the east of the town, threw several shells at the hospital and monastery. Strange as it may seem our most grievous cause of complaint against the Boer plan of war is that they do not respect sufficiently our Red Cross flag. Commandant Snyman had given us no time in which to remove our women and children, and, as a consequence, we established somewhat hurriedly a laager, in which they were confined and which it was hoped would be beyond the fire of the Boer, since we afforded it the protection of the Red Cross flag. This, so far as the laager was concerned, luckily proved to be the case, since on the occasion that Commandant Cronje sent in to apologise for the firing upon the Red Cross by his younger roughs during the Five Mile Bank fight, Colonel Baden-Powell took the opportunity of pointing out to him the precise significance of this flag, and the exact whereabouts of the buildings which enjoined its protection. In the absence of direct evidence of the enemy's intention upon this day, in the repugnance with which one would charge them with wilful abuse of the Red Cross, it is good to believe that Colonel Baden-Powell's letter was not communicated to Commandant Snyman previous to this action, for from the moment that this officer opened the bombardment until his artillery ceased fire for the day, each individual missile was thrown directly across the hospital and monastery. It was unfortunate that these buildings should have been in the line of fire, and it was a fact greatly to be deplored that the hospital should be filled, at such a moment, with women and wounded, the former magnanimously devoting themselves to the work of looking after those who had been disabled in Saturday's engagement. It

was perhaps unavoidable, with such a line of fire, that the shells should not drop upon the hospital and monastery. Fearing this as we did, the garrison was filled with consternation when, so abruptly that we had scarcely realised what had been the actual object of the nameless dread by which the camp was suddenly depressed, the inevitable happened and we knew that a shell had burst within the hospital itself. Had this shell been of the quality and explosive character that we had been led to expect, one entire side of the hospital would have been reduced to ruins; as it was, however, the area of destruction most remote from the point of penetration was not three feet in circumference. A little of the masonry was destroyed, a few boards of the floor ripped up, and that was all. Dust and dirt, however, covered everything.

Two more shells penetrated the same building in the course of the attack—the one burst in the principal waiting-room, the other played havoc with the children's dormitory. Fortunately no one was injured, and it was a happy omen for future shelling that throughout the whole of the first bombardment no human life was lost in Mafeking. There were no casualties, and three buildings, the hospital, the monastery, and Riesle's Hotel, alone were struck. The dead comprised one chicken. There were many narrow escapes. My horse was fastened to the hitching-post outside Riesle's Hotel at the very moment that a shell burst against the steps of the verandah, but this animal would seem to enjoy a happy immunity from shell fire, since at the Five Mile Bank engagement there was a shell which burst within three or four feet of him.

Our guns made no return whatever to the fire of the Boers, beyond a chance shot which exploded by accident. After this very ineffective and amusing bombardment had continued for some hours the enemy ceased firing, and from their position only 2,000 yards from the town, and to which they had moved from Signal Hill, where the attack had begun, the usual messenger, half herald, half spy, was despatched to our lines. It has become quite a feature of the Boer operations against Mafeking for them to enjoy at every few hours a cessation of hostilities under a flag of truce, and, I regret to say, that these constant messages in the middle of an action, from the Boer Commandant to Colonel Baden-Powell, are sent with an ulterior motive. The Boer Commandants would appear to lack that experience of the conditions of warfare which should enable them to perceive the folly and futility—if not the guilt—of such procedure as they have been following since operations against this town began. It was, perhaps, as much through our own ignorance of the character of the enemy whom we were fighting as anything, that they secured any profitable information by these tactics, since we had expected that they would observe the unwritten regulation which restricts the progress of a flag of truce to a point half-way between the lines of the two forces. Upon no occasion at this period in the investment did the Boers recognise this custom, but securing cover where they could they crept down to our lines under protection of the white flag. By these means they secured valuable intelligence.

The Boer emissary was allowed safe conduct into our lines, and was escorted by Captain Williams, of the British South Africa Police, who was in command of the armoured train, and Lieutenant the Honourable Hanbury-Tracy of Headquarters Staff, who had been sent out to meet him. The messenger was conducted to Colonel Baden-Powell, who received through this medium a second demand for unconditional surrender. Commandant Snyman presented his compliments to Colonel Baden-Powell, and desired to know if, to save further bloodshed, we would now surrender. Colonel

Baden-Powell received this message with polite astonishment, and while not telling the deputy of Commandant Snyman that his shell fire had only spilt the blood of a fowl, and knocked small pieces out of three buildings, replied, that so far as we were concerned, we had not yet begun. While the Headquarters Staff were deliberating upon the reply to such a momentous message, the messenger was regaled with beer and bread and cheese. He was escorted back at 4.45 p.m., and for the time being shell fire ceased.

On Monday the armoured train took up a position in advance of the town, and in such a manner that it was completely sheltered from the Boer position. It so happened that the Boer messenger came directly upon this train, which was patiently waiting for the enemy's line of fire to be advanced a few hundred yards further, before opening its artillery. The little ruse which we had so carefully planned was thus forestalled, and to prevent further disclosures being made the herald was therewith blindfolded. It was a strange spectacle to see this Boer being brought through our lines with a somewhat soiled handkerchief across his eyes. His flag of truce comprised three handkerchiefs tied to a bamboo, and as he came forward it waved with a motion in which fright played as great a part as dignity.

The Boer Commandant had evidently determined to shell Mafeking from three positions, but force of circumstances, and the undesirability of throwing up earthworks under the telling fire which would have been poured into him from our own trenches, prevented him bringing his heavy artillery into position. He had stormed Mafeking from Signal Hill with a twelve-pound Krupp, but when he advanced into a range of 2,000 yards he fell back upon a seven-pounder, and a nine-pound high-velocity Krupp. These guns were quite unprotected by earthworks and could be easily seen from the town. Indeed it was the possibility of their being put out of action by our guns which instigated the Commandant to secure a cessation of hostilities by despatching his messenger upon some fatuous errand to Colonel Baden-Powell while he and his entire force busied themselves in erecting breastworks about his field pieces.

The Boer emissary arrived at 2.30 p.m., and no sooner had he been received by us than the Boers began to work with pick and shovel, continuing their labours throughout the conference. By the time that their herald had returned two emplacements had been prepared and their locality partially concealed by a quantity of small bushes and scrub with which they had been covered.

It may be that Commandant Snyman was unaware of the breach of faith he was committing in working upon his trenches under a flag of truce. It is our hope that this should prove to be the case, since we would not willingly believe that the Boers be so lost to the sense of fairness which should underlie the provisions which prevail during any cessation of hostilities as to promote a condition of truce for interests of their own. But should this be, indeed, the extent of the ignorance of the Boer Commandant upon the conditions governing war, let us trust that he may soon furbish up his knowledge upon these especial points.

When the messenger returned to his lines, the Boers proceeded to advance in force upon the waterworks, and, driving in our outposts, they have since maintained a control over our water supply. The town, therefore, is wholly without water from this source, although we be not in any way frightened at the loss of the springs, since many

wells have been opened out and many promising springs have been located within the radius of the town, some of which watered the troops of the Warren expedition. When we consider that to the majority this is their first experience of war, and that the length of the siege is unknown and more than likely to be protracted, it must be admitted that Mafeking is bearing itself wonderfully well. The few women and children who remained here show a dauntless front, while the men are only too anxious, and indeed too willing, to indulge in some sniping on their own account.

Nevertheless, the position of Mafeking at the present moment is one which, if giving no cause for alarm, is at least unsatisfactory. Our wires are still cut to north and south. Our line is up, and all around us the Boers are supposed to be encamped, yet as the days go on it is becoming harder and harder to realise that we are seriously engaged in war, and we are more inclined to believe in the cheery optimism of Colonel Baden-Powell. It is very like some gigantic picnic, although it may doubtless be food for disquieting reflection. Occasionally we sleep out at night, and are in the trenches all day, but upon the whole it is quite impossible to believe that we are engaged in repelling an enemy who already are investing us.

To get away from the hotels, to get more into contact with the spirit of the siege, I have been camping out for some days at the most outlying position upon the west facing of the town, but even by such means it is infinitely difficult to find much that is instinctive with active and actual campaigning. We perform the duties of a vedette, watching by day and night, sleeping at oddly-snatched moments, ever ready, and straining our vision in wild efforts to find trace of the foe. But it amounts to but little in the end.

Since Monday we have seen small detachments of the Boers daily, we have even exchanged outpost fire with them, while we have on three different occasions turned our guns upon their position at the waterworks; but these occurrences are purely incidental and not wholly relative to the main features of the situation. It has become quite necessary for us to justify our own existence, and since there be but such vague signs of war around us, this desire has become infinitely more difficult of fulfilment. As the time passes we receive messages daily from different units in the Boer commando to friends in Mafeking, which are sometimes amicable, sometimes impudent in character; but to increase the irony of our situation, if we be engaged in the press of battle at dawn, it is certain that at dusk we shall be dining with no small degree of luxury at the hotel.

At present there has been no misery, for there has been no war, and apart from the five lives that have been lost already, Mafeking to-day is as it was a month ago. It would seem as though this gigantic war, which so many people have been urging upon the Government, in relation to the operations of the enemy along this frontier may develop into a series of cattle raids by armed Boers. But if there be little in the immediate situation to alarm us, there is behind the rose and silver of the clouds a dark spot, a spot which growing bigger, ever bigger as the days go by, implies that signs of the times are not wanting to prove that our official optimism, forecasting the siege as but of three weeks' duration, is based upon anything less secure than the imaginings of a man who, knowing the hollowness of his words in his own heart, seeks but to cheer the hearts of the garrison. There was little sign of readiness in the Imperial troops, little to show that they can relieve Mafeking before the year dies out in the

birth of the closing twelve months of the nineteenth century. But it were heresy to say so now. The idle singer of an empty day dares not pronounce the denunciation of his country in her hour of danger. Nevertheless, if Mafeking be not relieved before the Christmas season, the hour of our existence will be an hour of travail, impressed with the echoes of much suffering and saddened by the memories of many who will be dead. But for the time we will ignore the gravity in our situation, mock at our splendid isolation, our scanty resources, since to dwell too long upon the guilty splendour of the naked truth is to beget an earnestness which will depress our spirits, allowing us to read out the future of the siege in words of deadly omen.

IX.

THE ADVENT OF "BIG BEN"

MAFEKING, *October 25th, 1899.*

To-day is the third day of the bombardment by which Commandant Cronje is attempting to realise his threat of reducing Mafeking to ashes. Up to the present it has been impossible to consider very seriously the attempt of the Boers to besiege Mafeking. The earlier bombardment and the series of events which have occurred during the interval have not augmented the gravity of the situation. The Boer Commandant endeavoured to carry out his word by opening the second bombardment of Mafeking upon the day which he had notified Colonel Baden-Powell. We had been incredulous at the threat of the Boers to send to Pretoria for some siege guns. Monday, therefore, was a day of some anxiety for us, and each was curious to know what result the enemy's fire would produce. Upon this occasion, however, the townsfolk had reckoned without taking into account the intentions of Colonel Baden-Powell, and it was a very pleasant surprise to find that the bombardment of Mafeking by the Boers had been converted into the bombardment of the Boers by Mafeking. At a very early hour, two guns, which had been placed near the reservoir, opened fire upon the enemy's artillery in position at the water springs. The artillery duel which was thus started continued for some hours, and if it did not do much damage to either side it made manifest to the Boers that the defences of Mafeking were not altogether at their mercy. About noon, however, the Boers, who had been observed to place some guns in position upon the south-west side of the town, threw shells at Cannon Kopje. Here again, fortunately, no material damage was done.

Somewhat early in the afternoon, the look-outs reported tremendous activity in the Boer camp. Across the veldt, those who cared, might have seen the enemy engaged upon some enormous earthwork, which the general consensus of opinion very quickly determined to be the emplacements for the siege guns. They were about three miles away from the town, and in a position different from that from which the guns had shelled the kopje in the morning. The frequency with which shells had exploded within the limits of Mafeking, had rendered the people somewhat callous of the consequences, and despite an official warning which was issued to the town, a large number of people stood discussing, in excited groups, the value of this news, while no

small proportion of the population had gathered upon the west front to watch with their glasses the completion of the enemy's earthworks. It was three miles across the veldt, a mere black shadow upon the skyline, distinguished by its proximity to a local landmark, the "Jackal Tree," where the Boers had intrenched their Creusot gun. It was not so much that there were no other guns around us which had drawn the crowd, as the morbid curiosity to see for themselves what perhaps in a few hours they might never see again. At different points upon the eastern and western heights the Boer guns had been stationed. To the south-east there was a twelve-pounder at a very convenient range, and so placed as to act as a flanking fire to the direct onslaught of "Big Ben." Upon the extreme east there were two seven-pounders, one in position at the water springs, the other covering the entire front of the town. Upon the west and to the north the enemy had similarly placed their guns. There was a seven-pounder emplacement, with a Nordenfeldt support due west, 1,400 yards from the native stadt. Below that, and between it and the north, the Boers had a Maxim. It is, perhaps, somewhat extraordinary that an enemy who has procured the best available artillery advice, should proceed to attack the town in such a fashion, and much of the failure which has distinguished the Boer bombardment is due to the fact that, instead of concentrating their fire upon a series of given spots, they have maintained simultaneous shelling from isolated points. As their shells fell, the damage which they caused was scattered over a wide area, and confined to a building here and there. Indeed, the greater portion of the shells had merely ploughed up the streets. However, it was not to be confirmed that afternoon. An hour after noon on the following day the alarm rang out from the market place, the red flag was seen to fly from headquarters, and the inhabitants were warned to take immediate cover. Within a few minutes of the alarm, the proceedings for that day began, and the first shell thrown from the Boer battery burst over our camp. Presently on the distant skyline a tremendous cloud of smoke hurled itself into the air. The very foundations upon which Mafeking rests seemed to quiver, all curiosity was set at rest, and there was no longer any doubt as to the nature of the new ordnance which the Boers had with them. With a terrific impact the shell struck some structures near the railway, and the flying fragments of steel spread over the town, burying themselves in buildings, striking the veldt two miles distant, creating a dust, a horrible confusion, and, an instant, terror throughout the town. For the moment no one seemed to know what had happened, when the sudden silence which had come upon the town was broken by the loud explosion of the shell as it came in contact with some building. It was a scene of unique interest, the rush of air, the roar of its flight, the final impact, and the massive fragments of steel and iron which scattered in all directions, gave no time for those who had been exposed, to realise the cause of the disturbance. Much as people throng to the spot where some appalling catastrophe has occurred, so, a minute after the shell exploded, people appeared from all directions to run to the scene, and although the shell had caused no very great damage, the noise which it had made, its unusual size and explosive force, did not tend to pacify people. Many were convinced that Mafeking was doomed, and although no loss of life occurred, there were few who did not think that their days were numbered. In the course of the afternoon, after a rain of seven-and nine-pound shells, the Boers opened with this gun again, and although happily no loss of life occurred, the missile wrecked the rear of the Mafeking Hotel, falling within a few feet of Mr. E. G. Parslow, the war correspondent of the *Chronicle*. The force of the explosion hurled

this gentleman upon a pile of wood, blew the walls out of three rooms, set fire to a gas engine, and effectually littered the yard of the hotel. With the curious inconsequence which has marked the Boer proceedings in their investment of Mafeking, the enemy threw no more of these heavier shells during the afternoon, contenting themselves with discharging at odd moments those of lesser calibre.

The two shells which had been fired during the afternoon gave the inhabitants of Mafeking some little ground by which to judge the nature of the bombardment on the morrow. After the cessation of hostilities word was passed round that the two shells which had been launched at Mafeking were a 64lb. howitzer and a 94lb. breech-loading siege gun, and that it might be reckoned that these were but the preliminary shots by which to measure the range. Officially it was notified that every precaution must be taken to remain within the bomb-proof shelters which the inhabitants of Mafeking had been advised to construct. It is the presence of these pits which explains the slight loss of life that has occurred during the Boer bombardment of Mafeking. Up to to-day the effect of the terrible hail of shells which has poured into the town has been but a few slight wounds. But there could be no doubt that the more serious fighting was at last to take place, and it seemed to us only natural to expect a general advance upon Mafeking in the morning. The night passed with every man sleeping by his arms and at his post. The women and children had been removed to their laager, the horses were picketed in the river-bed, and once again all preparations for defence, and all those measures which had been taken to secure immunity from shell fire were, for the last time, inspected. Firing began very early on Wednesday morning, a gun detachment under Lieutenant Murchison opening with a few shells from our position to the east of the town. When the light had become clear the Boers brought their new siege guns once more into play. We estimated at nightfall that the enemy must have thrown rather more than two hundred shells into Mafeking, and if Mafeking be saved for future bombardment its salvation lies in the fact that it is, relatively speaking, little more than a collection of somewhat scattered houses with tin roofs and mud walls. Any other form of building would have been shaken to its foundations by the mere concussion of these bursting shells. Where bricks would have fallen, mud walls simply threw down a cloud of dust. But if Mafeking be still more or less intact, it can congratulate itself upon having withstood a most determined and concentrated shell fire.

It is difficult to defend the action of the Boers in laying upon Mafeking the burden of these siege guns. We have heard no little from Commandant Cronje upon the rules of warfare, as set out by the Geneva Convention, by time-honoured practices, and by that sense of custom and courtesy which at the present day still brings back some slight echo of the chivalry which distinguished the wars in dead centuries. Nevertheless, there is a grim and ill-savoured travesty in the Boer bombardment of this town. We do not complain, and we must be forgiven if we find some ironical and melancholy interest attaching itself to our situation. Three times has Colonel Baden-Powell pointed out to Commandant Cronje the buildings which enjoy the immunity of the Red Cross flag, yet these buildings are still deliberately made the objective of the Boer artillery; twice have we received flags of truce from the Boers, ignoring altogether the fact that they were but the clumsy subterfuge by which an unprincipled enemy secured to itself some new and advantageous position for its guns; then, as a crowning

act of mercy, we have this Boer Commander, so blatant a gentleman that he is by sheer force of his aggressive impudence worthy of our attentions, training upon a defenceless town a 64lb. howitzer and a 94lb. breech-loading siege gun, pieces whose action is relegated by these self-same observances of civilised warfare to towns who possess, in the first place, strong fortifications; in the second, masonry and concrete in their construction.

After the early morning hours had been whiled away Commandant Cronje made preparations for a general advance upon the town under the protection of his cannon fire. This was the moment which each of us had longed for. As the Boer advance seemed to be concentrated upon the eastern side, I proceeded to the redan at De Koch's Corner under Major Goold-Adams, and, later on, to another a little lower down in the same quarter of the town under Captain Musson. At this time, any one who can, is supposed to bear arms to defend our position, and, so as to more completely identify themselves with the movement for protection of this place, the correspondents that are here are each carrying their rifle and bandolier, and taking up their stand in some one of the trenches. The correspondent of the *Chronicle*, Mr. E. G. Parslow, the correspondent for Reuter's, Mr. Vere Stent, and myself, requested Captain Musson, a local dairy farmer, who has been placed in charge of one of the redans upon the east front, to allow us to assist him in the protection of his earthwork, and it was from there, as a consequence, that I watched the bombardment of Mafeking, taking an active part in any rifle practice which Captain Musson permitted to his men. At Major Goold-Adams's there had been stationed a Maxim detachment, and it was not long before its sharp rat-a-tat-tat was heard speaking to the enemy. The warm reception which was accorded to the Boers from this redan soon began to draw their fire. With "Big Ben" discharging its 94lb. shells in every quarter of the town, and a 12-pounder from the north-west dropping shrapnel with much discrimination over that quarter, the enemy upon the east side soon followed the example so shown them and discharged shells at the redans along their front. The range was singularly good, and in a very few minutes shells were dropping over and in very close proximity to our two redans. Between the two, and but a little removed from the line of fire, was the building of the Dutch Reformed Church, and several of the shells intended for the Maxim in Major Goold-Adams's fort found lodgment in its interior. The front of this church had been penetrated in several places by the shells, when the gun was slewed suddenly round upon the hospital and a shell fell in an outhouse attached to the monastery with disastrous effect. When the smoke had cleared away little was left of the building beyond a pile of smoking ruins. Above Captain Musson's redan our untimely visitors constantly burst and scattered, and we began to realise fully the value of the bomb-proof shelters. In a little while, however, the Boers relaxed their shell fire, and beyond maintaining sufficient fire to cover their advance, the heavier guns were for the time silent. With this, the Boers began to open out in extended order upon the east side of the town, advancing on our west to within 900 yards of our defences. At each point the Boer advance was protected by the guns, the heavy artillery to the south-west seeming to be the centre of a circle of armed men, who were advancing slowly upon this gallant little town. At no time did the enemy, however, beyond the few upon the west side, come within effective range of our rifles or our Maxims, contenting themselves with taking up positions at 2,000 yards, and dealing out to us prolonged rifle fire with some intermittent shelling. The firing was very rapid, very

general, and more or less impotent. Indeed their expenditure of rifle ammunition and their extreme prodigality in shells was as much playing into our hands as reaping them any advantage.

By night we reckoned that over two hundred shells had been fired alone, though it was very doubtful whether there be two hundred pounds worth of damage to credit to them. We have had two men wounded, while here and there it is believed that certain of the enemy received their quietus. Whether we beat them off or whether they lacked the spirit to attack us it be impossible to determine, and it is enough to say that, whatever may have been their intention, Mafeking remains as it was before the first shot was fired. At night, after the attack, Colonel Baden-Powell issued a general order congratulating his forces and the people in Mafeking upon their calmness during the heavy fire to which they had been subjected.

As we are situated at present, it is impossible for us to leave our trenches in order to give battle to the enemy, but we are still buoyed up by the hope of being able before long to take in our turn the offensive. In the meantime, most of us live with our rifles in our hands, our bandoliers round our shoulders, existing upon food of the roughest kind, peering over sandbags at the distant position of the Boers, or crouching in the shell-proof trenches as their shells burst overhead. There is much gravity in our isolated position; there is the danger that, by good luck more than by skill, Mafeking may be reduced, but there is no reason to fear that the determination and courage of the town will give way. Above all else that may be calculated to endure.

X.

A MIDNIGHT SORTIE

MAFEKING, *October 28th, 1899.*

Last night there occurred one of those isolated instances of gallantry by which the British sustain their high reputation. For some days, in fact ever since the Boers secured their siege guns from Pretoria, the enemy has been building a circlet of trenches around Mafeking. At the least distance they are perhaps 2,500 yards, unhappily beyond the reach of our rifle and Maxim fire. We have seen them lounging in their breastworks, we have seen them gathered around their camp fires, and the inability of Mafeking to shake off these unwelcome intruders has been daily a source of irritation. We have not, of course, allowed them to enjoy, undisturbed, the seclusion of their own earthworks, and, as a continual goad in their side, little expeditions have been despatched to make night fearsome to our besetting foe.

Another of these midnight sorties was undertaken last night, proving in itself to be the most important move on our side since Captain Fitzclarence and his men engaged the Boers two weeks ago. The same officer, 55 men of D Squadron Protectorate Regiment, with Lieutenant Murray and 25 men of the Cape Police, were the prime movers in an attempt to rush the first line of earthworks of the Boer

position. Shortly after 11 o'clock Captain Fitzclarence, Lieutenant Swinburne and their men started on the perilous undertaking. In the faint light of the night we could see their figures from our own redans, silently hurrying across the veldt. In the blue haze of the distance a black blur betokened the position of the enemy, and it seemed that at any moment the hoarse challenge of the Boer outpost would give the alarm. The men crept on in slightly extended order, holding themselves in readiness for the supreme moment. Nearer, and yet nearer, they drew to the Boer entrenchments. The silence was intense. The heavy gloom, the mysterious noises of the veldt at night, the shadowy patches in the bush, all seemed to heighten the tension of one's nerves. In a little while our men were within a few yards of the enemy; then furtively each fixed his bayonet to his rifle, and as the blades rang home upon their sockets the gallant band raised a ringing cheer. Instantly the Boer position was galvanised into activity, figures showed everywhere, shots rang out, men shouted, horses stampeded, and the confusion which reigned supreme gave to our men one vital moment in which to hurl themselves across the intervening space. Then there was a loud crash, for, as it happened, many of our men were nearer the entrenchments than had been anticipated, and their eager charge had precipitated them upon some sheets of corrugated iron which the Boers had torn from the grand stand of the racecourse for protection from the rain. With our men upon the parapet of the trench, a few rapid volleys were fired into the enemy, who, taken completely by surprise, were altogether demoralised. Those in the first trenches seemed to have been petrified by fright. Where they were, there they remained, stabbed with bayonet, knocked senseless with the rifle's butt, or shot dead by the fire of their own men. Captain Fitzclarence himself, with magnificent gallantry and swordsmanship, killed four of the enemy with his sword, his men plying their bayonets strenuously the while. This was the first trench, and as the fight grew hotter, some little memory of their earlier boasts, inspired the Boers to make a stand. They fought; they fought well. Their vast superiority in numbers did not enter into their minds, since Commandant Botha told Lieutenant Moncrieff, who had charge of the flag party that arranged for an armistice upon the following morning, that he thought that at least a thousand men had been moved against his position. The long line of front held by the enemy flashed fire from many hundred rifles. Houses in the town caught the bullets, the low rises to the east of the position threw back the echo of the rifle shots. Our men became the centre of a hail of bullets. The Boers fired anywhere and everywhere, seeming content if they could just load their rifles and release the trigger. Many thousands of rounds of ammunition were expended in the confusion of the moment, the enemy not even waiting to see at whom, or at what, they were aiming.

After the first fury had been expended, our men charged at the bayonet point right across the line of trenches. It was in this charge that the Boers lost most heavily. So soon as the squadron reached the extremity of the Boer position they retreated independently, their movement covered by the flanking fire of the Cape Police, which added still further to the perplexities of the enemy. The galling fire of the Cape Police disturbed them for some time longer than was required in the actual retirement of the force.

The Boers had been completely unnerved by the onslaught of the Protectorate men, and a feature of the hours which elapsed between the final withdrawal of our force from the scene of conflict, and the advent of dawn, was the heavy firing of the

enemy, who still continued discharging useless volleys into space. The loss to us in this encounter had been 6 killed, 11 wounded, and two of our men taken prisoners, but the gravity of the loss which the enemy sustained can be most surely measured by the fact that, until a late hour this afternoon, they could not find the spirit to resume the bombardment. It is said in camp here that one hundred Boers will have reason to remember the charge of the Protectorate Regiment.

The way in which these respond to the duties asked of them is shown by their conduct during this night attack. Nevertheless, when the enrolment of the Protectorate Regiment began in August, 1899, any practical opinion upon the future value of its individual units, as upon its possible mobility, was the merest hazard. When Colonel Hore accepted the command of the regiment, and endeavoured, by every means in his power, to promote its development, there were many who expressed, after witnessing the preliminary parade of the recruits at Ramathlabama Camp, the verdict that the short space of time which was allowed to the officers to knock the squadrons into shape would not permit the men attaining any proficiency whatsoever. In those early days of the war volunteers came from near and far, from Johannesburg upon the one side, from Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and East London upon the other, to enlist in the service of her Majesty. Time-expired men threw up their billets when the opportunity presented itself of rejoining the colours, and while enlistment was proceeding, the immediate vicinity of Ramathlabama and the roads from the Transvaal into Mafeking presented the appearance of a district which has been made the final destination of some mining rush. Pedestrians from the Transvaal humping their swags, passengers by train from the south, well-to-do youngsters from different parts of the Protectorate or from the back-lying areas of the colony, all made their roads converge upon Mafeking. At that time, however, when the work of enlisting was in its infancy, and the services of able-bodied men were much required, the Colonial Government, at the instigation of Mr. Schreiner, whose dubious policy was cheerfully endorsed by his colleagues, refused to allow her Majesty's soldiers, who were in process of enlistment for that special purpose, to afford Mafeking the moral value of their presence. No sooner had word reached the ears of the Colonial Cabinet that the work of recruiting was proceeding around Mafeking, than the recruiting officers were ordered to withdraw immediately from the precincts of the colony so long as they continued to act in a way which might give some possible offence to the dear friend, guardian, and patron saint of Cape Colony, Paul Kruger. After a very decorous and manly remonstrance, Colonel Hore withdrew his headquarters and his men sixteen miles across the border to Ramathlabama Camp, from which point the enlistment of the Protectorate Regiment was continued.

The Protectorate Regiment is strictly an irregular soldiery, composed of men drawn from every rank of African life, many of whom are gentle by birth and education and possessed of no little means. In the ranks of the regiment there are those who have been at the university and public schools; there are also mechanics, miners, farm hands, and men who have known office life. The nationalities of the men are as varied as their occupations in peace times are diffuse. There are a few Americans, some Germans, and Norwegians, although for the most part the regiment is British; as a whole, perhaps, it is an ill-assorted assembly of adventurers, animated with the same love of fighting and the glories of war, of lust and bloodshed which characterised the

lives of the buccaneers of old. In other days, and in other lands, they would be sailing the sea for treasure, or combining in the quest for gold in some hidden extremity of the world's surface. The prospect of free rations, of uniform, and allowance of pocket money, was of course sufficient to draw a few; but, as a body, the idler upon the farm, the bar-loafer from the town, and the thoroughly incompetent are as distinguished by their absence, as the general tone of the regiment is suffused with martial ardour. It is quite impossible to treat these men with the cast-iron regulations which enthral the Imperial soldier. He does not understand the petty exactions, the never-ending restraint which would be imposed upon him had he accepted the conditions which govern and regulate life in our army. He experiences and gives voice to a very genuine aversion to fatigues of every description, and it has required the exercise of much tact and no little personal persuasion to induce the men to become reconciled to the labours of their calling. They have accepted with some diffidence the fact that it is necessary for them to fulfil, at the present moment, many irritating, but essentially important fatigues which may not have entered into their original forecast of the duties which would be allotted to them. They frequently indulge in outbursts of choice expletives, at the expense of their non-commissioned officers, while they do not hesitate to correct, or at least to argue about what they imagine to be wrong in the execution of some order.

The conditions under which these men were enrolled were supposed to admit those only who could ride as well as shoot, and before the initial tests were applied the standard of the regiment upon paper was exceptionally high. After the first parade, however, it was seen that by far the great majority of the regiment was incapable of managing their horses. Upon parade, when horses and men were put through cavalry exercises, detached and riderless steeds would be seen galloping and bucking in all directions. However, those who were unproficient did not propose to allow their cattle to hold the mastery for any longer than was absolutely necessary, and many was the tough fight fought to a bitter end between the raw recruit and his unbroken, unmanageable mount. After many days and an inordinate amount of hard work, the troop officers managed to lick their men into a very presentable appearance until, with the beginning of the war, the squadrons of the Protectorate Regiment were as capable and efficient a body of irregular mounted infantry as any that had been enrolled by local movement in South Africa. During the siege there has been no chance to continue those early exercises, and it is not at all unlikely that when they become mounted once more the former difficulties will again assert themselves and, bearing this in mind, it is difficult to conclude that as a fighting force they will not be more at home upon their feet than in the saddle, since they will find their attentions occupied as much by the management of their steeds as with the handling of their weapons.

If they be not quite so mobile in the field as more experienced troops, there is no doubt that they present a determined front to the fire of the enemy. They have a keen relish for any preparation which appears to lead to some immediate collision, while they profess an equally profound disgust at their enforced inactivity. How these men might act if, through the smoke-filled air, they saw an array of sparkling bayonets, or heard the serried ranks of hostile lines advancing to the charge, it is impossible to say; but in the few fights which we have had the personal element has been strong, and the individual courage high. We have lacked the spectacle of the many-coloured, steel-

edged columns impelled forward by the impulse of some dominant power, with the dusty faces of the men, the stumbling, sore-stricken feet, the gasping breath of the stragglers who tired, dead beat, and thirsty, limp to the rear; but the play of human passion in our little fighting force has not been absent. We have had the wager of life against life, the angry, turbulent crash of fierce-blooded men, fighting under the shadow of death, with their emotions strained as they struggled in the very atmosphere of passion. And it has done us good to see how reliable the force has been about which so much doubt existed. Unlike the Imperial service, these irregular corps act as much for the unit as they do for the mass, as animated by terror or by valour, by a fatal despair, or by a blooded triumph, they fight for an individual supremacy. That is the moment of their triumph, and it is these splendid qualities of savage and physical animalism which makes it more easy to treat them with a wider latitude than is usual. Their magnificent hardihood, their splendid fighting gifts, their lurid blasphemy, their admiration for officers who are men, their appalling debauchery, gives to them the ideal setting of the rough but very gallant soldier of fortune, who, scorning his enemy and hating a retreat, has played so omnipotent a part in the history of the universe.

XI.

CANNON KOPJE

MAFEKING, *October 31st, 1899.*

Cannon Kopje is in itself a hideous cluster of stones, perched upon a rocky ridge, which commands the town, a mile across the veldt. It is impossible to conceive any more positive death-trap than that which was contained in this kopje, and whatever may have been the determining element in its original construction, it is infinitely to be regretted that the possibilities of its being under shell fire were never very seriously contemplated. It was thrown up during the Warren expedition, and much as these things go, was neither removed nor replaced until Monday's bombardment established its complete uselessness under shell fire, and the folly of which Colonel Baden-Powell was guilty in leaving it unprotected. It is too late to say much now, but we have paid a heavy price for our neglect and carelessness. We found it here when we came; we put men into it, we are maintaining men there, and it is essential to the safety of our town that we should still hold it. Since the action an effort has been made to improve it; a splinter-proof shelter has been thrown across the trench, and traverses have been thrown out, but the work of the past few days has perhaps prepared the kopje for further shelling at the enemy's convenience. As a *pièce de résistance* in the defence of Mafeking, Cannon Kopje is the most strategically important position near Mafeking, and we may reckon that, at the moment when these wretched shepherds who are besieging us, secure this fort, to Mafeking itself there remains but a few hours.

Colonel Walford had under his command at the fort forty-four men with a Maxim detachment from the Protectorate Regiment. The fairest estimate of the men against him would place the Boer forces at no less than eight hundred with four guns. Sunday night, the look-out from Cannon Kopje saw a body of Boers making their way

to a point somewhat nearer the town than had hitherto been their custom, and our expectations having been aroused by this movement we were inclined to believe that the enemy might attack upon the following morning. Our anticipations were further grounded upon the fact that the Boers to the south-west of the town, had by no means despised the claims of Cannon Kopje upon their attentions, and to every three shells which their guns had thrown into the town during the days which the siege had lasted, one, in a proportion of one in three, had been fired at Cannon Kopje. It has gradually come to be considered, therefore, that Cannon Kopje was a point against which the Boers would, sooner or later, direct an attack, since its capture was necessary to the successful execution of any general movement against the town.

The detachment of Police, who formed the garrison at Cannon Kopje, upon this day performed a most brilliant service for the town by their determined and gallant stand. Perhaps in war more than in anything else, chance is a greater arbiter than we like to consider, and if it had not been for the chance attack against Cannon Kopje, which resulted in the defeat of the Boer forces, it is not improbable that Mafeking itself would have been invaded by the enemy. The subjugation of this point, in reality the turning point in the siege, was, however, of vital concern to Commandant Cronje, since it had been his intention to bombard the south-east portion of the town, and to carry it with a large force which he had assembled during the night in the adjacent valley of the Molopo River. When day had dawned, the look-out from Cannon Kopje had already reported to Colonel Walford that there was unusual activity in the Boer camp; at the moment this was stirring news, and indeed the fatigues for the night had been barely dismissed when an experimental shell from the Boer artillery to test the range, opened the action. During the night, and about the close of Sunday, the enemy's artillery had taken up their position, and as the grey of dawn ushered in the fatal day, a large force of Boers moved out from their laager and occupied any point by which they might command the area of the fort. It seemed to me, as I witnessed their disposition, that at least a third of the forces before Mafeking had been concentrated upon Cannon Kopje, and if so great a tragedy had not attended the action, we could have afforded to laugh at the efforts of an enemy so hopelessly incompetent as the Boer force has proved itself to be. Against a mere gun emplacement and forty-four men, shell fire from four guns was directed, and the services of eight hundred men utilised. In the extreme west there was "Big Ben" and a seven-pounder; in the extreme east there was a twelve-pounder. Within a circle from these two points, and within effective range, a seven-pounder and quick-firing Maxim-Nordenfeldt had been stationed. The big gun took no part at all in this attack upon the kopje, but at every moment that the enemy's shell fire lapsed, the Boer marksmen opened with their Mauser rifles. Their rifle fire stretched from the extremities of either flank and enfiladed the interior trenches of the kopje. Nothing perhaps in the history of their operations along this frontier, was so calculated to prove successful as the Boer attack upon Cannon Kopje. They had the guns, the men, and they held all commanding points, while they themselves were snugly ensconced behind cover almost impervious to shell fire. With these advantages it would seem morally impossible that forty-four men could withstand the unceasing stream of shells, the mist of bullets, which comprised the zone of fire of which the kopje was the centre. Had these men wavered, such a thing is easy to explain; had they fallen back upon the town, their movement would have been in order. But by preference they stopped at their posts, the mark for every Boer rifle, the objective of

the enemy's shell fire, until so great had been our execution upon the enemy that the Boers themselves proclaimed an armistice under the protection of the Red Cross flag. When this was decreed one-fourth of the detachment in the kopje were out of action, and eight of these were killed. But the lamentable list of fatalities had been piled up only at great cost to the enemy, since around the circle of the fort, and not four hundred yards away, we could see the Boer ambulances picking up their dead and wounded. It has been stated that they lost one hundred men, and that a further fifty were seriously wounded, but this is preposterous; while if we err at all towards our foe it is in the computation of the losses which we claim to have inflicted upon them. It is almost impossible to kill a Dutchman on the field, since they are as pertinacious and industrious as beetles in seeking cover. We saw two waggon loads pass from their firing-line to their laager, but I am inclined to doubt if we killed and wounded forty of the enemy. To have scored that number in the face of the most remarkable fusilade of bullet and shell which was directed against the fort is a wonderful feat, since it should not be forgotten that to every shot which we fired, there were at least four hundred barrels emptied at our marksmen in return. Such was the unfortunate construction of Cannon Kopje, however, and the gross neglect with which it has been treated to prepare for the present war, that it was not possible for our men to use their loopholes, and as it was most necessary to hold the fort each man who fired stood to his feet, and exposed himself above the breastwork to the full force of the Boer rifles. The enemy had carried out their movement so well, that under cover of their guns, and the great annoyance of their enfilading fire, they had made it almost impossible for the defenders of the fort to pay much attention to their advance. They compelled men to take cover, since if anything were seen to move behind the parapet of the fort, the Boers swept the area of the position with most cruel and deadly volleys. But cover was sought only at intervals, and when the hail of shells became too tempestuous, since the brave little garrison were impressed with a courage which scorned the fire which was turned upon them. When they manned the defences and maintained a sturdy front the Boers were nonplussed. They had expected to carry the position whereas they were losing men more rapidly than they were killing them. We fired by six, we fired independently, and whenever it was possible, the Maxim swept the front of the enemy, but, relatively speaking, nothing could prevail against the Boer numbers. It was easy enough to hold them in check, since the first well-directed volley made them fall back some few yards, but the heavy shell fire would sooner or later have told its tale. It had already claimed the majority of those who were hit, since if the shells did not burst and strike some one of those who were lying near, they splintered upon the stones which composed the defences of the fort and these splintered in their turn, coming into contact with anyone who was crouching behind them for shelter. Cannon Kopje in itself was a terrible lesson; but it was also a magnificent example of gallant conduct in the field. Captain the Hon. D. Marsham who was killed, and Captain Charles Alexander Kerr Pechell, who died in the course of the morning from wounds received, were individually setting as fine an object lesson to their men as could be conceived, yet it must not be imagined that the standard of their bravery was much finer or much greater than that of their comrades. Colonel Walford and Colonel Baden-Powell have each expressed their high appreciation of the conduct of the men who survived the attack, and although, as befits their rank, the example of the officers was admirable, it was no better in reality than the action of the men over whom they were commanding.

Captain Marsham was struck by a rifle bullet in turning to render some assistance to a wounded comrade. As he attempted to do this a second bullet passed through his chest, and a moment later he was dead, just as a third bullet passed through his shoulder. It was as fine a death as any soldier could perhaps have chosen, and it had the crowning mercy of being instantaneous.

Captain Pechell was busying himself in directing the rifle fire from the fort, and thereby directly drew the attention of the enemy. He, with a detachment of six men, ranged up from time to time, and picked off the enemy with well-aimed volleys. They had taken up their position behind the eastern wing of the kopje, engaging a body of the enemy whose flank fire enfiladed our position. The first shell which came at these six men fell short, and the second and the third bursting in the same place, scattered the outer covering of the breastwork. Pechell ordered his men to retire from the direct line of shell fire, when just as they were shifting their position a shell struck the stone parapet, and burst among them. Private Burrows was killed at once, just as he had been admiring the shooting of a comrade. Sergeant-Major Upton and Captain Pechell received some terrible injuries; poor Pechell died of injury extending from the thigh to the shoulder. No one regrets, so much as his comrades, Captain Pechell's gallant act, since had he not been endowed with most magnificent courage he would have preserved discretion in the method by which he exposed himself to the enemy, and by the death of these two officers, Captain Marsham and Captain Pechell, her Majesty loses two officers of exceptional promise and soldierly qualifications.

The casualties of this action alone were eight killed and three wounded, four being killed upon the spot, four dying of their wounds within twelve hours of the action. Captain Marsham, Sergeant-Major Curnihan, Private Burrows, and Private Martin were killed in the fort; Captain Pechell, Sergeant-Major Upton, Private Nicholas and Private Lloyd died of wounds; Sergeant-Major Butler, Corporal Cooke and Private Newton were wounded.

That night the garrison paid its farewell duties to those gallant men who were killed at Cannon Kopje. Their interment took place at six o'clock, and as we followed in the wake of the *cortège* we felt the shock which brought home to each of us the bitter fact that we should henceforth know them no more. The attack of the Boers upon Cannon Kopje had been so sudden, so utterly unexpected, and the manner in which these men of the British South Africa Police had met their death, had been so valorous that the sympathies of the entire town had been most keenly aroused and overcome by the appalling swiftness of the tragedy; there was no one who did not feel that in some way he was himself a mourner even though the men who had been killed were quite indifferent to him. Doubtless before the siege terminates we shall become accustomed to our situation, and realise that after all it is but the natural issue to a condition of belligerency that no one can quite tell what sorrow the day will bring forth. But at present these tragedies come upon us with a vivid freshness which is almost unnerving and which stimulate disquietening fancies in the minds even of the most callous.

The cemetery here is in close proximity to the Boer lines, and lies to the north of the town. It is a small enclosure banked by white rough stones, and set amid green trees, where gentle fragrance imparts a balminess to the breeze. It is as quiet and peaceful, by force of contrast to the dried-up veldt around, as some oasis in the desert. There is a winding path from the hospital to the cemetery; a road which at the present

moment is flanked in two places by the forts of the Railway Division, and kept well defined by the footsteps of those who bear their burdens to the tomb. Since the siege began we have lost twenty-five, and with one engagement following rapidly upon another, nightfall usually ushers in a scene in which a small body of men may be seen gathered round an open grave, waiting irresolutely to take some share in the rites of the burial service. We paced slowly and solemnly along this veldt track, depressed not so much by the fate which had befallen them, as by the hideous realism with which the appalling uncertainty of war had been brought home to us. In the darkness of the evening we could see across the veldt the fires of the enemy's position, and as the *cortège* wound its way from the hospital we marched to the boom of the Boer artillery, while passing bullets sang the notes of our evening hymn above our heads, and dropped about us in the sand. Along the eastern front of the town as it lay behind us, an occasional blaze of light in the sky told us where the shells of the enemy were bursting, and to many came the thought that perhaps even of those who had remained to do their duty in the trenches, there were some who, less fortunate than others, might have already kept their last vigils. In time we reached the grave side, then as we gathered round the open spaces which had been so quickly prepared, those who felt their loss the keenest, those who had been comrades and close friends of the killed, paid their last homage to their memory by placing some little trinket, some slight token of personal friendship and affection, upon the winding sheet. At this juncture, when war is all around us, when every able-bodied man is standing to his arms, it is not possible to provide the dead with anything better than a simple sheet. The men who fall in these days are interred in their blood-stained uniforms, since there be no time in which to dress their bodies. Those upon whom the funeral service was about to be read lay in two waggons, silent shrouded witnesses to the fleeting vanity which attends all heroes. Around the entrance to the cemetery the officers of the staff, the commanding officers of the outposts, representatives of every corps and every troop had foregathered, following closely upon the heels of those who, bearing the grim burdens upon their shoulders epitomised in their action the horrors of war. It seemed as we stood there waiting, listening to the solemn words of the service, punctuated now and then as they were, by the screams of shells, by the angry snap of the Mauser, and the droning of the Martini bullets, that these men who were now dead had achieved the full honour of their calling. Indeed, many were there who would have given gladly their own lives in exchange for that of their friend, while there was not one who did not feel that the manner in which their end had come to them was impressed with all that was most noble.

For a moment after the service had concluded, we stood listening to the strains of the Last Call. As its solemn notes died away, and we retraced our steps to the various trenches and earthworks which, for the moment, gave us shelter, we little imagined that within a few hours, those of us who were correspondents would follow the body of one from amongst ourselves once more upon this road. The following night Lieutenant Murchison, who was in charge of the guns, wilfully shot with his revolver Mr. E. G. Parslow, war correspondent of the London *Daily Chronicle*. The horror of such a crime still hangs over us, and is not in any way diminished by the fact that an officer who had already distinguished himself by his career, should now be awaiting the verdict of a Field Court Martial upon the gravest charge in the criminal calendar. Poor Parslow had endeared himself to everybody by the genial sympathy which he extended to those

who were themselves in trouble. He had won the admiration of many by the calmness with which he conducted himself under the heaviest fire.

XII

A RECONNAISSANCE

MAFEKING, *November 7th, 1899.*

A short canter from Mafeking across the sloping expanse of the veldt and the interior lines of its western defences lie before one. It can be said that Cannon Kopje to the south-west and Fort Miller to the north-west are the two most outlying extremities of the outposts on this front. Between them there is an almost unbroken chain of earthworks, manned by detachments from squadrons of the Protectorate Regiment, from the British South Africa Police, from the Cape Police, and even from the Native stadt. These men live the lives of soldiers whose every moment is engaged in watching a foe that might at any opportunity which is given them charge down upon our lines. Unlike the Boers, we do not despise the native interests, and much of the weakness of our position emanates from the fact that we have incorporated within the mystic circle of our armed defence the most outlying areas of the native reserve. These, indeed, can very properly be considered the exterior lines of the western outposts. It would have been a very simple thing for Colonel Baden-Powell to have ordered the destruction of the Native stadt, compelling its inhabitants to seek what protection they could from the inclemency of the elements, from a benign Providence, and the rapacious Boer. Mafeking, without the Native stadt, could have been much more easily defended, since the base of the slopes, across which our advanced trenches now extend, would have been defended from the ridges of the acclivities which rise from them. This would have given to the advanced outposts some commanding heights from which the western plains could have been more easily swept. As it is, however, the policy which Colonel Baden-Powell is adopting towards the native tribe, whose huts were here many generations before white men ever set their feet in this part of the country, is one which extends to them the same Imperial protection as he has extended to the colonists in Mafeking. Where the Native stadt had been included in any portion of the defences, the Baralongs have been assisted to defend, and have been instructed in the means by which they might secure immunity for themselves and for their stadt.

The entrenchments of the Boers rise like mole-hills from the surface of the plain, although there is a curious regard for what has been humorously termed "three mile limit." The valley of the Molopo River sets a background to the Boer position, the placid waters of the stream wind through their lines, while their chief laagers have been constructed upon the ridges of its watershed. From Cannon Kopje a commanding view of the whole country on all sides of Mafeking may be obtained, the Boer laagers giving to the expanses of the valley the aspect of a mining camp. From different points of observation the daily life of the enemy can be noted. In the early morning the smoke of many fires swings in thin spirals to the sky, and the silence of the plain is broken by the echoes which echo back the noises of the camp. It would seem that they are as

regular in the ordering of their camp life as we are. When the sun has warmed the air, and evaporated the morning dew from the grass, we can see them out-pinning their horses, driving their cattle to fresh pastures, and endeavouring by the establishment of sentries and Cossack posts to take the siege of Mafeking as a very serious element in their lives. Everywhere there is the green of early summer covering the plain with the sheen of Nature's youth. Between the lines of the two camps graze herds of cattle, in themselves affording tempting bait to the predatory instincts of the Boers, who, if they did not lack the courage of their desires, would have already attempted to raid the browsing oxen. So far as our own outposts are concerned, along this line there are many days in which nothing whatever happens, just as there are others in which the dawn of day is made hideous by the scream of shells, the singing of the Mauser, the angry rustle of the Nordenfeldt and Maxim. The Boers have many guns along this side, and from time to time they treat us to bombardments, lacking both purpose and any definite result, beyond the expenditure of much ammunition. When the shells are falling every one who can seeks cover, watching with some impatience their passing, and could we in these moments but give existence to our wishes, it would be that opportunity might come at once to turn the tables upon our enemy. It is neither very honourable nor very pleasing to have to preserve discretion as the better part of valour, but, while remain the objective of their fire, our pent-up energies are developing a fine hatred against the foe. Colonel Baden-Powell has some hope of giving indulgence to the spirit which animates his men, and, even if the moment be somewhat uncertain, no small contentment is derived from such belief. Morning and night we gird our loins for the attack, but night and morning we awaken to a sense of infinite disappointment, yet when it comes they may expect an avalanche, and, in result, an overthrow.

Day is dreary, sun-swept, dusty, teased with insects, and infinitely wearisome, but with the coming of night, the fragrant coolness of the air, the soft lisp of the evening breeze bringeth contentment. Each evening, when the peace of the camp be settled and the men resting, there is always an outpost standing within a few hundred yards of the Boer camp. If the night be fine, he lies behind the stones of a neighbouring kopje; but whether it be fine or wet, the guard is posted; the safety of the camp depending upon his vigilance. Sometimes he is relieved hourly, sometimes his watch is of four hours' duration. It depends upon the proximity of his post to the enemy's lines, but, lying there within earshot of the Boers, it is just possible to realise the full gravity of our situation. The element of danger is greater in these nocturnal hours, and men go to rest, their spirits buoyed up with the infinite zest which comes from anticipating a night attack. They sleep beside their arms, their posts are doubled, and the officers of the watch make hourly rounds. In the distance, across the plain and enveloped with the darkness of the veldt, the difficulty of seeing intensified by shadows, the outline of the Boer laagers can be demarcated. Their camp fires die down one by one, and presently, beyond the restless moving of their cattle, no sign of life animates their position. It is in such moments that those who lead us deplore the paucity of the numbers under their command, since, were it possible to spare the men, there have been several occasions, when a midnight dash, after the fashion of Captain Fitzclarence, or the repetition of the reconnaissance at daybreak such as Major Godley so gallantly led, could have been organised with equally satisfactory results.

However, within the last few days, Colonel Baden-Powell has taken advantage of the enemy's position upon this front to order the western outposts to spend some few hours in worrying the enemy. It was a very pleasant little outing for us, and eminently beneficial, since the excitement attendant upon such a manoeuvre was as wholesome as a bumper of champagne. Word had already reached me of this contemplated move upon the enemy, and Lieutenant Paton, of C Squadron, was good enough to offer the hospitality of his hut for the night in question. We dined, not with the guilty splendour of the Trocadero or amid the sombre magnificence of Prince's, but in the rough-and-ready fashion which falls to those who, carrying their lives in their hands, have at most but a moment to spare for such unimportant incidents as breakfast and dinner. As a humble offering to the board I had drawn from the Army Service Stores a tin of canned mutton, and procured somewhere—which may or may not have been a private garden—a luscious marrow, and with these I hied myself to Lieutenant Paton's quarters. Along this western front there are many delightful and very genial officers. There is Major Godley, who is in command of the whole line; Colonel Walford, who commands Cannon Kopje; there are Captain Vernon and Captain Marsh, who, with Major Godley, are Imperial special service men; Lieutenant Holden and my host. The distances between their quarters are but slight, and perhaps the most entertaining moment in the siege is that which enables us to foregather at Major Godley's, chatting with eagerness and charming frankness upon the possibilities of the war as they are suggested by our immediate environment. By the time that I had arrived Lieutenant Paton's boy had prepared a savoury stew, and such was the scarcity of fresh meat that we had no hesitation in dedicating the canned mutton to some other meal. We ate, and pleasantly indulged in lime juice and water, smoking with contented elegance some choice cigarettes. After we had dined a short conference was held at Major Godley's, and then to rest, perchance to spend the night in sleeping, or perchance, to scratch; for fleas and flies, the parasitic mosquito and the insidious ant, make both day and night a source of irritation.

The men of C Squadron under Captain Vernon, the Bechuanaland Rifles under Captain Cowan, and three guns under Major Panzera and Lieutenant Daniels, of the British South Africa Police, were engaged in the movement, and distinguished themselves in what they did as well as can be expected. At a quarter to two we turned out. Greatcoats had been left behind, men slinging their waterbottles and bandoliers upon their shoulders. We were to meet at the base of a hill rising a few hundred yards across the veldt from Major Godley's. Night hung heavily upon us, the sky was dark, and everything seemed to point to the wisdom of choosing such a night. We stepped out briskly, although to our strained nerves the soft tread of the men sounded as the rumble of a juggernaut. However, we proceeded very quietly, and the sheen of sand, the white lustre of the road, the rustle of the thorn bushes were presently left behind as we took our stand in the rear of Major Godley's troop. In the valley at the base of the hill we halted. Before us, a scarcely perceptible rise silhouetted against the sky, the bushes lining the summit throwing themselves into prominence against the grey, black, background, while here and there trees tossed their arms silently and warningly in the breeze. All around us there was the hum of insect life, that monotonous dead level buzz of countless insects and the baying of the bull frogs. And we waited, when out of the darkness came Major Godley, a tall, thin figure impressed with energy and determination, inspecting the lines.

The squadron was dismounted, and had fallen in by troops, the dull khaki of the Protectorate Regiment scarcely showing up against the grey-blackness of the night; and at either end of the line there was a squad of Bechuanaland Rifles and a contingent of natives. As they stood there, there were nearly one hundred men, and, though the order had been given to be in this position at 2.30, and the hour had come, we were waiting for the guns. Presently, as we waited, barely a mile from the Boer laager, there was the rumble of artillery in the distance. As we heard it officers and men believed that at any moment the Boer camp would sound the alarm. We could hear the guns rising over hillocks, falling heavily upon stones, or crushing back upon some boulder. Indeed there was noise enough to wake the dead themselves. The rattle of the limber was only a little more acute than the tension on our nerves. Men swore silently at the guns and showed their restlessness as the noise grew louder. In a little the Major bustled up all eagerness and fluff and worry, and then as the guns trailed behind us and the little column moved on, it seemed that every step we advanced further would have brought the Boers tumbling about our ears. Much as one creeps about a house at night treading on every board which creaks in preference to those which do not creak, so was the march of the column. As the guns came on they seemed to find stones everywhere. Wheels fell into snug hollows, jammed in ragged holes, and bumped with such heaviness that the night was made hideous by the echo of their rumble. Occasionally we stopped, as though to allow the peace of night to settle. Then we moved forward once again and in a little we halted for the final stage. The guns took up their position to the left of the column, the hundred men lying in extended order across the veldt. Before us there was the ridge of rising veldt and scrub, and so we rested, fretting with curious impatience at the signs of life which began to animate the enemy's camp. When we stood up we could see the dull white of their waggons bent in position for their laager; we could see the fires within, we could hear in the still silence of early dawn the chopping of wood as the axe fell upon the logs. The sides of the valley threw back the noise until, echoes echoing back, the sound caught our ears, and so we watched and waited until gradually dawn came.

The dull-black beauty of the night passed, slipping into grey and leaving the uncertain mystery of an early morning sky. A red streak across the east threw glimpses of light into the canopy of heaven, when, as a signal of its birth, there came the words to fire; then the line of creeping figures which had gained the ridge pressed their rifles through the scrub and bush which hedged the top, and, crouching to the ground, opened the reconnaissance. The objective of the night attack which Major Godley was commanding had been to effect a reconnaissance in force against the western laagers of the Boers. In respect to the constant increase of the force that surrounds Mafeking, almost the one means of temporarily checking their advance which remains to us is through the medium of these attacks. Information had been brought into headquarters that the Boers were massing upon the east side of the town, the small laager on the west being temporarily evacuated. The night dash would both surprise and annoy the enemy, and anything which combined such benign ends was very welcome. The guns were to throw a few shells, the men were to fire a few volleys; when the squadron would fall back by troops their reconnaissance completed. We opened by volleys poured incontinently into their camp, but so soon as the guns had discharged the first shells into the laager, the little signs of order which had animated the natives disappeared, and although they maintained their line they began an independent

practice. It was the first time that native arms had been incorporated with our men, and it is to be hoped, before the next experiment is repeated, they will have been got more under control. Excellent as they may be on their own account, they are almost altogether useless when removed from the immediate spheres of utility. Our fire at first was high, and many rounds of bullet and shell fire were absolutely wasted. Presently Daniels secured the range for the guns, and shells, prettily planted, ruined many waggons. The sortie, so far as we were concerned, proceeded merrily, doing no material damage, but making a hell of a lot of noise. The glories of the early morning were soon enveloped in the heavy smoke from the rifles of the natives, who still continued blazing independently and indifferently at the enemy's position and who also generally struck the earth a few yards short of their own front of fire. The opportunity which was thus afforded of both surprising and annoying the enemy was very welcome, and the night dash was entered into with infinite zest. So soon as the guns had discharged their first shell our men began to fire by volleys, but the sortie had not progressed very far when the activity in the Boer lines showed that they were preparing to repel a force much larger than the mere reconnoitering party which was actually before them. In the uncertain light of rising morn a body of 600 Boers could be seen riding from the main laager upon the western front to the support of the minor camp. We have hitherto thought the Boers timid at close quarters, but in this case there was every sign of haste and eagerness on the part of the reinforcements to arrive upon the scene of action. We could see them dismounting as they came up and run to the laager, some of them firing as they ran, others of them forming into detached parties and firing from isolated positions. After volleying for some minutes our men fulfilled the object of their morning excursion and were preparing to retire by troops, when, owing to the presence of the reinforcements, firing became general. Our rifles replied to their rifles, our two seven-pounders replied to their guns, but beyond this nothing was permitted to interfere with the successful completion of our work. It mattered very little to us how fiercely the enemy's Nordenfeldts spat out defiance or what their rifles said, for we fell back steadily, the different troops doubling fifty, one hundred, and one hundred and fifty yards each time. The fire as the various troops took up the retirement became very hot, the enemy cheerfully Mausering into space. For some hours after our men had gained the security of their own trenches the enemy maintained a heavy fire upon the several outposts along the western front. During the retirement of C Squadron Major Godley had ordered Captain Cowan to occupy Fort Eyre, a rifle trench, with a detachment of Bechuanaland Mounted Rifles, so that he might check any signs of advance which the enemy might display. In consequence of this, Major Godley, Captain Cowan, Lieutenant Feltham, and their men experienced as severe a fire as any which has, at present, been received from the Boers. The enemy made a determined rifle attack upon the work, but lacking the courage to charge, after some few hours' rifle firing, they withdrew.

These little encounters are all that the outposts have with which to pass their time, and the success with which they have been conducted has been sufficient to check the enemy, and to cause him to reflect upon the relative value of the means at our command. The defence of the western front lies wholly in the hands of men from the Protectorate Regiment and a few native contingents. The Town Guard is not *en evidence* upon the west side, the area of their exertions being confined to the more immediate precincts of the town. And by this it does not seem that the Town Guard

will have much opportunity to distinguish itself, since, unless its members volunteer to take part in any sniping expedition, those manning the interior line of our trenches, which are those occupied by the Town Guard, have received positive orders to withhold their fire until the enemy is upon the point of rushing the town. Several times it has been thought that this was going to happen, and the local defensive force had hopes of justifying its existence, but hitherto the valour which underlies the good intentions of the Boers is not sufficient to inspire them to convert an excellent suggestion into a practical experiment. Thus despite the Boer telegrams to Europe there has been no battle round Mafeking; a few slight skirmishes upon our part, much proud boasting upon the part of the Boers is the limit of mutual operations which have centred around Mafeking. We are waiting, and in the interval, preparing. That is all which can be said.

XIII THE TOWN GUARD

MAFEKING, *November 15th, 1899.*

The straits of a beleaguered city are only just beginning to come to Mafeking. A retrospect of the history of the Franco-Prussian war reveals how very great were the sufferings of those unfortunate people who were unlucky enough to be besieged by the Prussian armies. Their difficulties, the dangers to which they were constantly subjected, their constant struggle against the extortionate demands of the few who had been able to "corner" the provisions can perhaps be taken as conveying a general impression of the hardships of a siege. Yet, however, when we come to consider the siege of Mafeking in its more elemental details, the picture is not unlike those presented by the farcical melodrama. It is now nearly six weeks since Mafeking was proclaimed as being in a state of siege, and, although there has been no single opportunity of any commercial reciprocity between ourselves and the outside world, the ruling prices are at present but very little above normal, distress is wholly absent, danger is purely incidental, and, indeed, it would seem, as Colonel Baden-Powell said in a recent order, that "everything in the garden was lovely." This somewhat happy state of things is, of course, to be attributed to the extraordinary foresight and sagacity which characterises the arrangements that the well-known firm of contractors in South Africa, Julius Weil, concluded for provisioning the town. Immense stocks of foodstuffs had been stored in the town before the war, and it is the knowledge of the valuable stores which are lying here which has inspired the Boers to court us so assiduously. The tale might have been different had the Colonial Government been permitted to arrange for any such emergency as a siege. In this respect, so completely opposed to any preparation were Mr. Schreiner and his Cabinet, that it was not even possible to procure through such an agency any adequate means of defence, much less to obtain the essential food supplies. When Kimberley appealed to Mr. Schreiner for permission to send up from Port Elizabeth some Maxims which had been ordered by the De Beers

Company, the licence was refused on the ground that there was no cause to strengthen the defences of that town, nor any reason to believe that the situation demanded such precautions. The Colonial Government repeated their policy in relation to Mafeking, and when urgent appeals were sent to Mr. Schreiner, to the Castle authorities, and to Sir Alfred Milner, the influence of the Cabinet was such that no notice was taken of their request.

Nothing perhaps can excuse such an obstructive policy as that which was followed by the Colonial Government upon the very eve of hostilities. It is only when we come to deal with the situation which their neglect has created that we can adequately measure the full extent of their culpability. The claim of so important a centre as Mafeking upon their attention was wilfully ignored with a persistence which is positively criminal, and when taken into consideration with the repeated warnings which were sent to them by leading members of the community of Mafeking it is difficult to believe that the Colonial Cabinet, by so flatly contravening the spirit of their loyalty to the Imperial Crown, were not directly conniving with a hostile oligarchy for the downfall of this colonial town. Had Mafeking been anything but Anglo-Saxon at heart, had it possessed that proportion of debased Dutch and renegade British colonists which is to be found in Vryburg and those other hostile areas in our own colony, the story of Mafeking would have been a story of treachery and deceit, of broken allegiance, and of palsied faith. As it was, when the petition for extra armaments was ignored, the town, disdaining the danger which confronted them, proceeded to stand their ground, and to show, at any rate, a firm front to any enemy that might assail them. While Colonel Baden-Powell organised the defences of the Western Border, the men of Mafeking, under the supervision of Colonel Vyvyan, base commandant, strongly entrenched the position of their town, which hitherto had been open to every corner of the earth. In times of peace Mafeking is a collection of buildings placed upon the veldt, lacking both natural and artificial protection, the centre into which all roads come and from which all classes of people go. It is a thriving mid-African township which, more by good management than by good luck, has become at the present time an important outpost of our Empire. In these days, when the boom of cannon destroys the silences of our splendid isolation, and the scream of shell disturbs the harmony of night, Mafeking rests with patient steadfastness behind its hastily improvised earthworks, seeking shelter when the shells of the enemy press too hotly upon one another, yet always ready for work at the outposts, prepared for the fitful turbulence of our invading foe. Possibly from the Boer trenches Mafeking may look an armoured citadel. Possibly it is the sturdy appearance of our ramparts which have caused the Boers to bring their heavy artillery to bear upon our mud brick walls. Yet there is humour in this situation, since the gravity of our position accentuates the grim travesty of our defences. We have not so much as appears, and it would be unfair to give such a moment as the present the correct estimate of dummy camps which have been built, dummy earthworks which have been thrown up, of dummy guns which are in position. The situation between the Boers and ourselves may be likened to a game of poker, Mafeking possessing no hand, yet retains the privilege of bluffing. In the end it will be seen that the dignity of our impudence has swept the board, although we may be excused from wishing to renew the game. But there is perhaps a finer spirit in the tribute which this place has paid to Queen and country than mere courage. We have the faith of our affections, the steadfastness of a

duty which, if inspired, is equally impressed with reverence. Such strain as the siege has put upon the loyalty of the colonists of Mafeking has been welcomed by reason of the opportunity which it has given for the many who have never seen the Queen to show, their honourable allegiance to her Majesty.

From time to time Colonel Baden-Powell has issued orders congratulating the townspeople upon their spirit, and commiserating with them upon their unfortunate predicament. They are indeed deserving of great sympathy, since the manly way in which they have come forward in support of the situation has very materially aided the successful resistance given by Mafeking. The forts upon the eastern facing of the town are manned altogether by the Town Guard; these are particularly warlike when beneath the protection of their bomb-proof shelters, and it would be almost a pity should the siege close without any opportunity arising of testing their efficiency. Throughout day and night they are compelled to remain idle in their trenches, and from 9 till 6, and again from 6 till 9, they are not permitted upon any pretence whatever to leave their posts. The life they are leading is of the roughest description, and it certainly appears that by far the greatest proportion of the hardships of the siege has fallen to the share of the Town Guard. At the beginning of the siege, when, according to official reports, there was no ground to believe that it would be of long duration, few people were animated by anything but the plain determination to enjoy any actual hostilities which might eventuate. Now, however, as the fifth week of the siege draws to an end the rigours of the confinement to which the townspeople have been subjected are beginning to tell. The work, the most laborious, the least interesting, and totally without compensation, is that performed by the Town Guard, and as a body this defence force presents strangely contrasting features as the siege progresses. Their hours are early and late, they stand to arms at 4.30 in the early morning, and at intervals during the day the full strength of the fort is mustered. There is nothing with which these men can occupy their minds, and if their inactivity is beginning to irritate them, if the poorness of their food is affecting them, it is to be hoped that the work which they are doing now will receive full and satisfactory acknowledgment, both at the hands of the staff, and of the Government. As a body, the Town Guard is a medley of local salamanders, and if it be possible, by the force of their surroundings, they should become inspired with soldierly instincts, and although after their fashion they may be expected to fight, their greatest wish at the present moment is to obtain from the Government, imperial, colonial, and military, some adequate explanation of the causes determining their present situation. They feel that they have been neglected by Mr. Schreiner and I am quite certain that if that political chameleon were here now, he would suffer as much by reason of his own sins, as for the trouble and worry he has caused the industrious, if benighted, citizens of Mafeking. For the most part the Town Guard is a collection of civilians, who are accustomed to the full enjoyment of comparative affluence, and who, through the exigencies of the siege, are at present living under conditions which would test the endurance of the most experienced soldier. They are penned up within the limits of Mafeking, unable to move with any degree of safety, and condemned to an inactivity which is very irksome to those who have been pressed as volunteers into the defences of the town. They did not expect, in the early days of the crisis, to be actively engaged in defending their town, since, with some hope of having their views adopted, they repeatedly urged upon the general staff the fallacies which distinguished the official forecast of the situation, but

the staff was incredulous and Colonel Baden-Powell was impressed with an optimism which now seems strangely at fault. If one is to believe important respected members of the community here, it would seem that they made special and very urgent overtures to the colonel commanding upon the defenceless condition of Mafeking, and now, as they stand to their posts, throughout the heat of an African summer, beneath the deluges of the rainy season, they cull but little satisfaction from the Ministerial refusal adequately to protect their town by sending troops and armaments to it. They say that they were derided, that no notice was taken of their request, that their petition was overruled, leaving to them the work of warding off from the town such a day of bitterness, of exceeding danger, of very genuine disaster, as might have been expected to result from the unprotected condition of the place. The irregular soldiers of the Protectorate Regiment do not, perhaps, deserve so much commiseration, since in all probability their present circumstances are little worse than those which they anticipated when they were enlisting. But there is some force in the case which the inhabitants of Mafeking can bring against the Colonial Government, and it is to be hoped that the work which they are now doing will receive full and satisfactory compensation at the final adjustment. But there exists little possibility that they will be given any compensation which will be in any way commensurate, since to those who have followed the history of such Ministerial compensation as comes within the region of political economy it will be known that the accidents of war put a somewhat close limit upon the accident of compensation. Their businesses have in many cases been absolutely ruined, those who were farmers upon the outskirts of the town have had the melancholy satisfaction of seeing their homesteads set fire to by the enemy and their cattle raided. These facts are the simple home truths that do not tend to make them appreciative of the honour and glory which falls to them by playing so prominent a *rôle* in the defence of their town. They expect, however, to receive medals. Those who were local merchants, men of peace for the most part, with no very keen enthusiasm for martial glory, have seen the industry of a lifetime completely wrecked by the diffidence of the general staff and the unwillingness of the Government to take such precautions as would have placed the town beyond the probability of attack; but, although everyone recognises the worthlessness of the material which was placed at the disposal of Colonel Baden-Powell, there exists no reason which can defend the absence of efficient military stores in the town. Upon the termination of the war let us hope that Colonel Baden-Powell will be asked to explain, but for the present the townspeople of Mafeking are singularly unanimous in their desire to co-operate with the military authorities.

Under their direction the Boers have been repulsed for seven weeks, just as without the walls of Mafeking an almost impregnable defence has been constructed. It is perhaps a detail if our defenders be armed with Sniders, Enfields, a few Martinis, and a still less number of Lee-Metfords. Moreover, we have none too much ammunition, our seven-pounders are incapable of sustaining the brunt of an action without being sent to the repairing shop upon its termination, and if our Maxims be beyond reproach, our Hotchkiss and Nordenfeldt are both obsolete and unreliable. These are the more material elements of our defences, and to them may be added the strength of the Protectorate Regiment, Cape Police, British South Africa Police, Railway Division, the Bechuanaland Rifles, and the numerous native contingents numbering, with the Town Guard, some fifteen hundred men. Against this we must place an enemy whose

tactics are surprising everybody, whose artillery fire is admirable, whose guns are numerous and first class. They stand off five miles and shell the town with perfect safety, while under cover of their fire they project their advanced trenches daily a few feet nearer the town. We have endeavoured with our artillery and by night sorties to check their progress, but the sapping of Mafeking continues, and is, at once, a very serious, if not our sole, danger. Should their trenches advance much further it will be impossible to move about during daytime at all, and, although we have thrown up bales of compressed hay and sacks of oats to act as shields against the enemy's bullets, and the flying splinters of passing shells, there is no hour in the day in which the streets of the town are not sprayed by Mauser bullets. It is not possible for us to advance very far from our own lines, since, as eagles swoop down upon their carrion, so would the Boers from other quarters attempt to rush the town. Yet there is no doubt that such movement would be very welcome, affording as much keen pleasure to the volunteers of the town as to the newly-raised units of the garrison. We nurture a wild desire to attempt to spike "Big Ben," and it may be that before long Providence will turn from the side of the enemy by presenting us with some such golden opportunity. The big gun is hedged around by barbed wire, guarded in front by mines, flanked upon the one side by a Nordenfeldt-Maxim and upon the other by a high-velocity Krupp. Truly, they could deal out a very warm reception to those who chanced their luck, but a little novelty these days atones for many hours of tiring inactivity, and if the Colonel chose to put a price upon the task there would be no trouble in enlisting for the venture some five hundred volunteers. The siege, as it progresses, seems to give fewer opportunities for coming into positive contact with the enemy; such occasions as there have been are few and far between, and, although Colonel Baden-Powell holds out the promise of such a venture, it has been so constantly deferred that we are for the most part becoming incredulous.

XIV

WASTED ENERGIES

MAFEKING, *November 22nd, 1899.*

Within a few weeks of Major Godley's daybreak attack upon the western laager, it was decided to repeat the experiment against the main position of the Boers upon the east side. Had this but come off, from the estimate of the men and guns engaged, the movement would have been as important as any which have taken place. It had been arranged to open a general fire upon the emplacement of the hundred-pound gun and the advanced trenches of the Boer position a short time before sunset, since the closing of day would make it impossible for the enemy, in the absence of aiming-posts and clinometers, to train their artillery upon the town. Now that the enemy have begun to sap Mafeking by a system of advanced galleries, the military authorities here have been waiting for them to come within a certain radius of the town so that we might counter-gallery their position and enfilade their trenches. From their entrenchment at the

brickfields, rather more than fifteen hundred yards from the town, Boer sharpshooters have been sniping the town with comparative impunity. When this plan was first projected, natives, under Corporal Currie, Cape Police, were sent up the river-bed, which runs at this particular point within three hundred yards of the Boer flank, to build a trench as near as possible to the position of the snipers in the brickfields. With the successful execution of this piece of work the first steps towards the contemplated reconnaissance had been taken, since this new post, which was constructed under cover of night, completely outflanked the advance trenches of the Boers. When they began to fire upon the town in the morning they were somewhat surprised at receiving a volley from what appeared to be little more than a mud heap. Corporal Currie and his natives drove back the Boers from their advanced post in the brickfields to the first line of trenches in their position, and so long as we retained the river-bed post the brickfields ceased to give shelter to the Boer sharpshooters; moreover, when the Boers had been effectually quieted in the brickfields a little more of the original conception was carried out. Captain Lord Charles Bentinck and A squadron and Captain Fitzclarence with the Hotchkiss detachment were sent to support the native outposts, while a seven-pound gun under Lieutenant Daniels moved into an emplacement in the river-bed. Major Panzera took command of the gun which was to support the Maxim under Major Goold Adams in the north-east corner of the town. In conjunction with this, the extreme eastern flank of the town was defended by a detachment of the Cape Police with a Maxim, and a supplementary force of the same police, under Inspector Marsh, were entrenched across the eastern front of the native location. Thus upon Monday night were the plans arranged. Shortly before midnight Major Panzera, who has charge of the artillery, gave me a courteous permission to accompany Lieutenant Daniels to his emplacement in the river-bed, from which point it was possible to move to our advanced trenches further up the stream. Mafeking had gone to rest when the gun started, and although the wheels were padded and every precaution taken to muffle the noise, it seemed that at any moment, the town would have been aroused. In a little the immediate precincts of Mafeking had been left behind, and the challenge of the last sentry answered. As we moved down to the river-bed the gun detachment hung upon the rear of the gun straining to prevent the shake and rumble of its descent. Silently we crept on; no murmur of human voices, no steel rang a "care-creating" clatter, no rumble of tumbril or gun broke through the darkness to the sentries of the enemy; in about an hour the gentle lapping of the river told us that the journey was at an end, and as we crossed the stream and reached the party working upon the emplacement there was much feeling of relief that the enemy had not sounded the alarm. While Lieutenant Daniels arranged the emplacement of the gun, he permitted me to try my hand at superintending native labour. There were thirty of them, who, commencing about midnight, were to have completed by daybreak, the task upon which they were engaged. It reminded me of the days at college when the house whips stood over the team urging them and coaching them in their game. There was every necessity for speed, and as the night was cold one made the most of the opportunity. The working party was divided into those with picks and those with shovels—the one breaking up the ground, the others heaping up the earthwork. In addition to the natives who were digging there was a small party filling sacks with sand which, when they had been filled, were piled up around the rapidly-rising parapet of the gun. As they worked they sang, droning a war-song which seemed to give zest to their labours.

As an experience it was rather fine to feel that even in this perfunctory fashion one was attempting work of some importance. About the scene there was the usual feature of the veldt by night: there was the subdued murmur of the waters tumbling gently over stones or causing stray groups of bullrushes to shiver; then from the bank there spread the veldt, rising in soft-clad hillocks, or falling in snug hollows, the green expanse tinted with the silvery light of the moon. Beyond ourselves and our cordon of sentries there should have been no one, although occasionally we thought that, just above the skyline, lights played about the shadowy outline of the Boer gun. But if they heard us they took no notice, and as dawn broke across the east the finishing touches to the gun were quickly given. Brown earth was strewn upon the whitened patches of the bags which had not been properly covered, the humidity of the fresh-turned soil mingling with the fumes of working natives. For the night's work, as we gathered our tools together, the best evidence of our labours was the grim muzzle of the gun which leered through its embrasure. It spoke defiance, and as the day which then was breaking, drew to its close we should know whether its sense of might had been effectually established. And so we returned to town talking upon the strength of the emplacement and upon its strategic value. As we left the gun we were alone, when suddenly, without a sound, the figure of the Colonel was seen coming across the veldt. He passed us quickly, and as we followed him we wondered what he knew, but before noon those who had been informed of the contemplated attack had learned the news. As he had crept up the lines he had passed detached parties of Boers withdrawing from the extreme rear of their position. The explanation was obvious, but he stayed until daybreak to make certain of his ground, and by the light of early dawn the trenches which we were so shortly to fire upon were found deserted. Thus do the spies work within our camp, taking to the enemy news of everything which happened, and thus does the Colonel circumvent them. However, if we did not attack them with our guns, for the remainder of the day the advanced squadrons in the river-bed justified their position by keeping down the crew from the big gun. They poured in volleys at 1,400 yards, and, for the first time in the siege, no shells were thrown. As they retired from their trenches, so they withdrew their gun, and we had a day of peace.

But how wearily the time passes; moreover we are still enduring the straits of a siege and the torments of a bombardment. For almost seven weeks we have defied an enemy who encircle us upon every side, and who has summoned to its aid, for the purposes of breaching our trivial earthworks, the finest guns from their arsenal in Pretoria. The Boers outnumber us in men and in artillery, and not a day has passed since the siege began that they have not thrown shrapnel and common shell, omitting minor projectiles, into the town. And still we live, with just sufficient spirit to jeer across our ramparts at the enemy. They Mauser us, and shell us; they cut our water off, and raid our cattle; they make life hell, and they can do so, so long as it may please them; but no one was ever so deluded if they think that by such means Mafeking surrenders. From time to time we have given them a taste of our quality, and if on occasion we have lost some few, it is a source of melancholy satisfaction to know that their loss has been the greater. It is not long since the Boers attempted to blow the town to atoms through the agency of dynamite, though, *similia similibus curantur*, they went to heaven prematurely by an undesirable explosion. It was night, and the town was just about to rest, when it was shaken to its foundations by a most deafening roar; sand and stones, fragments of trees came down as hail from the skies, the whole

place being lighted with the lurid glow of blood-red flame. To the north of Mafeking, and so close to the cemetery that it might have been a pillar of fire coming to earth to claim its own, an immense arc of fire and smoke was ejected out of the ground. After it there came silence, broken here and there by the rattle of the *débris* upon the roofs of the houses, and by the shouts and shrieks of a town in the confusion of a panic. That night those who slept had dreams of the day of judgment, while those who lay awake were restless, quaking with an insidious terror. In the morning the cause explained itself, since barely half a mile up the line was an enormous rent in the ground, the line itself being strewn and scattered with the rubbish of an earthquake. The Boers, with much ingenuous enterprise, had despatched upon a purely friendly mission a trolley load of dynamite; unfortunately, where they had started their infernal machine the declivity of the line had precipitated the truck backwards toward their own camp, and having very foolishly lighted their time-fuse before they had surmounted the crest of the rise, they had not the courage to stop the progress of the somewhat novel engine of destruction. Apparently it had rolled slowly downwards, tracking the instigators of such a deed with very fatal persistence, until the time-fuse met the charge, and powder and dynamite went off together. Upon the morrow there was much sadness in the Boer camp, and much silence.

Dynamite has played a not unimportant *rôle* in the history of our siege. Cronje has heard from native spies, and from his friends in our camp, that Mafeking is set within a circle of dynamite mines, and he has protested against its use in civilised warfare. Since then, however, he has not only discharged dynamite by trolley loads into the town, but he has threatened, in his vague and shadowy fashion, to send to his capital for some dynamite guns. It would seem, then, that a warm time is coming to Mafeking; the pity of it being that we are kept so long and in such unnecessary suspense. If Cronje were the gallant warrior whose dignity he assumes in addressing the garrison, he would have either taken or abandoned Mafeking some weeks ago. As it is, however, with occasional letters of regret for such untimely procedure, he still elects to bombard an inoffensive and unoffending township. The other morning, after the usual series of dull days, the activity in the Boer camp suggested to us that the town was about to be attacked. From the south-west the big Creusot opened fire at intervals of twenty minutes, the intervening periods being pleasantly filled in with Mauser and Martini fire and shells from two nine-pound high-velocity Krupps. In a very short space of time the list of fatalities included a native dog, a commissariat mule, and many buildings. After such a bloodless bombardment the Boer legions gallantly rode round to the east with the apparent intention of attacking the town. Then we thought that, in that moment, our defence would be justified, but he is wisest who determines what is to be the nature of the Boer movement when that movement has taken place. Down the serried lines of armed Dutchmen old Piet Cronje, as his friends call him, or General Cronje, as a sycophantian Boer press describe him, rode. He was a gallant sight—albeit we could only just see him some two thousand yards distant. After a temporary and casual inspection of his force, General Cronje turned his head towards Mafeking, and waving violently one arm in the air, cantered with much solemn apprehension towards our trenches. He had covered in this desperate effort some thirty yards, when perhaps a natural superstition caused him to turn his head. Was there a man dismayed in the Boer lines? Not one; but nevertheless, they were not taking any such manœuvre just then. Cronje stopped and cantered back again,

seeming to hold an indaba with his petty officers. They gathered round him, they talked to him, pointing towards their lines, and shouting at one another; but there it ended. In a little while we saw a silent figure, moody and taciturn, guarded by two orderlies, ride slowly around from the east front to the headquarters of the executive on the south-west. Thus Cronje failed, not through any fault of his, but because the idle braggarts who form his army have not the spirit of whipped curs. Since then Cronje has made no effort to storm Mafeking, and it is very much to be doubted whether until the siege be raised the attempt will be renewed.

One must sympathise a little with Cronje since he has not been able to sustain in his attack upon Mafeking the high reputation which he enjoys among his countrymen. Now that he has been recalled to Natal, we here hope that he may be able to find some opportunity to distinguish himself. His force without Mafeking is a raw, lawless body of Western Boers, the majority of whom have followed him on his march. We say Natal, but there is no very positive ground for believing that it is in that direction that the new field of his activity lies. It may be that he has gone South, and if such should happen to be the case, it will not be long before he will come in contact with men who will test his mettle to the utmost. There have been many rumours of reinforcements: some people, addicted with a greater faculty of imagination than power of veracity, have even seen the advanced outposts of the relief, which, of course, is ridiculous. They mistake some scattered party of Boers for advanced scouts. We do not think that there is much real chance of the siege of Mafeking being raised before the New Year, since such would be opposed to the stately and insular procedure of the Imperial and Colonial War Offices. Hitherto it has apparently ignored the claims of Mafeking. All conditions of people here united in their efforts to secure some more or less reliable armament from the Government, but the reason, above all others, which made this impossible was that the Imperial authorities at home, in their fatuity, could not bring themselves to believe that the war, which South Africa knew to be imminent, would come to pass. Nevertheless, in face of their neglect, we are snug in Mafeking, although our artillery be hopeless; and since the war began we have gradually added to our defences. After many days' bombardment a breach was effected in one only of the town's earthworks. That was very quickly repaired, so quickly indeed that before nightfall it had already been restored.

XV

SHELLS AND SLAUGHTER

November 30th, 1899.

The Boers continue to shell Mafeking daily, and to concentrate upon the streets of the town their customary rifle fire. At first we experienced a terror of the dangers of shell fire, but the daily and constant presence of exploding shells has brought about an unusual degree of familiarity with its attendant feeling of contempt; people now are too careless, seeming to rest under the delusion that, one and all, enjoy an absolute immunity. The folly of it is that occasionally the error of their way is illustrated by a

longer list of fatalities through one shell claiming half a dozen victims. Europeans perhaps, are less careless of the consequences of shell fire than is the native population, and it is a pity that it has not been found possible to impress into the mind of the Kaffir a better appreciation of the possible result of their intrepidity. We have had many more natives killed than whites, and the element of tragedy in this becomes the greater and more acute since, as a rule, the native, employed in building bomb-proof shelters for the whites, lacks the energy to turn to his own profit his knowledge of the manner in which shell cover should be constructed. They lie about under tarpaulins, behind zinc palings, wooden boxes, and flimsy sheds of that description, and perhaps for days their shelter may escape the line of fire; but there comes a moment made hideous by the scream of shell as it bursts in some little gathering of dozing, half listless natives. At such a moment their bravery is extraordinary—is indeed the most fearful thing in the world. The native with his arm blown off, with his thigh shot away, or with his body disembowelled, is endowed with extreme fortitude and most stoical resolution. Unless he is seen, he lies where he is struck, not caring to take the trouble to make his wounds known to someone who could sympathise and assist him. When the gaze of the curious is turned upon his mangled and wounded form he attempts to laugh, makes every effort to assist himself, and even if he knows that his injuries be fatal, he makes no sign. There is thus much to admire in these natives, but for the most part, people are quite indifferent to their sufferings.

A few moments ago, indeed as I was writing the concluding words of the last sentence, a terrific explosion, a shower of gravel and leaden bullets upon my roof, foretold the fact that somewhere near at hand one of these untimely instruments of destruction had burst. As I went to the door a crowd of people could be seen running towards the Market Square, the air was filled with the strong perfume of the bursting charge. I ran with the throng to where the shell had first struck in Market Square before delivering its full effect upon the windows of the local chemist. Amid the splintered glass and the consequent disorder of the chemist's shop lay the writhing figure of an unhappy native. As an illustration of the appalling wounds which these shells inflict, I am purposely dilating upon this very pitiful scene. As the shell rebounded from the ground leaving a hole many feet long, narrow, and arrow-headed, it had come in contact with a native before it wrecked the apothecary's store. Mingled with the fragments of glass and the contents of the shop were shreds of cloth and infinitesimal strips of flesh, while the entire environment of the scene was splashed with blood. The poor native had lost an arm, a foot lay a few yards from him, and his other leg was hanging by a few shreds of skin. In an angle of the wall formed by the junction of the shop-front of the chemist and the tin protrusion of his neighbour's building, something was sticking. For the moment it had escaped the gaze of the sordid few, who, drawn by idle curiosity, were standing about without the inclination to help, or even a smattering of the first aid to the injured. When the bleeding body was put upon a stretcher, and the mangled extremities gathered together, the Hospital Orderly caught sight of the bunch which was clinging to the recess in the wall. As he went forward to seize it, the trickling streams of fluid which escaped from it revealed only too plainly its true character. So great was the force of the shell, and so near had its unfortunate victim been to the galvanised iron wall, that as body and shell met, the terrible violence of the impact had wrenched away the lump to hurl it, in the same moment, through the exterior wall of the adjacent premises. Despite his fearful

injuries, which were beyond the scope of human power to aid, he was not dead, feebly exclaiming as they put him in the stretcher, "Boss, Boss, me hurt". The ruin of the building had scarcely been realised, and the vapour of chemicals from the shell, mingling with the scattered perfumes of the shop, with the scent of the ploughed-up earth, and with that curious, insidious scent of a wounded body dissipated—when a second shell screaming its passage through the air hurled itself with a terrible velocity against the other window of the same building. In effect it added a little more to the ruin of the premises, escaping by a miracle five men who had been standing in the interior of the premises, but killing an unfortunate corporal, who had gone from the scene of the death of the native to get a "pick-me-up" from the adjoining bar in Riesle's Hotel. In such a manner does the death roll pile itself up—with the impending slowness of a juggernaut and the haunting persistency of fate. If these were the actual numbers of the killed upon this date, there were also two who were wounded, one of whom has since died, thus giving to one day a terrible trio. With such a sad lesson before one it would seem that, beyond those who were compelled to be out and about, no one would venture in the streets under shell fire, much less employ their leisure in endeavouring to unload those of the enemy's shells that might have fallen into the town, yet, but two days ago a local wheelwright blew himself and two other men to an untimely end by the explosion of a shell from which, with a *steel* drill, he was endeavouring to extract the charge. One of these men was killed almost instantaneously, another had his leg blown off, while the third sustained terrible wounds upon his body. There is not a day now without fresh victims being claimed in different parts of the town. Almost the first question asked as the shell bursts is for the name of the unfortunate owner of the wrecked house, and the number of the killed and wounded. In the early part of the siege when people were thoroughly scared by the introduction of this new element of destruction, bomb-proof shelters became quite popular, but lately with the good luck which the people in town have enjoyed, the shelters have been rather abandoned, but there is no doubt now, that the number who have been killed in this past week has somewhat unnerved the town. If it induces people to stay beneath their shelters, from out of the fearful misfortunes which have fallen upon the few, may be derived almost universal salvation.

The hospital in these times, is the centre of melancholy interest to the town. It is perhaps a quarter of a mile beyond the outskirts of the town, but so situated that apart from the flag under whose protection it should lie, it would be impossible for the enemy not to be unaware that it was a natural shelter for the sick and wounded. Much as the town in general, the Convent which adjoins the hospital, and the hospital itself show the stress of the bombardment. The walls of the hospital have been riddled with Martini and Mauser bullets, while shells have perforated the galvanised iron roofing, torn holes in the walls of the ward, wrecked outstanding buildings, and in brief, played such direful havoc as would be considered impossible in a war with any nation that has subscribed to the articles of the Geneva Convention. Only the most strenuous opposition from Colonel Baden-Powell, who threatened the severest pains, penalties, and reprisals upon Commandant Cronje and Commandant Snyman, for their neglect of the Red Cross flag, has saved the building in its entirety. Nevertheless that degree of consideration, which we secured from the Boers for our hospital was denied by these infamous barbarians to the Convent and its gentle inmates. Their home has tumbled about its foundations, the wall which faces the enemy's fire has been hit in numerous

places. Shells have ruined the children's dormitory, burst with a magnificent effect in the interior of what would have been the operating room, shattered a corner stone to pieces, and rendered rotten and wholly impossible for any further habitation our subsidiary hospital. The sisters, however, still stick to their posts and minister the comforts of religion, though seeking their share in the task of nursing, and setting, by their subdued heroism, an example to the entire community. Never has any hospital been saddled with such a work as the local one in Mafeking. War had taken every one so suddenly that like everything else in Mafeking at the crucial moment, it was wanting in much which was cardinal to its existence. The corps of nurses was made up of those ladies from the town who were willing to volunteer, and if there was an absence of the professional nursing service, there were equally a dearth of dressers, of surgical appliances, of medical comforts. The Victoria Hospital in times like these possesses no Rontgen Rays, and many times indeed have the medical staff regretted that so important an instrument should not have been sent in good time. Indeed all that the Director-General of Hospitals has done for Mafeking was to send Surgeon-Major Anderson out from England, and had it not been that this gallant officer supplied, at his own expense, a large quantity of medical stores which he believed to be necessary, with the best intentions in the world, it would have been impossible to cope with the requirements of the wounded.

It has been interesting, however, to observe from the point of view of the medical profession the nature of the wounds caused by the Mauser and Martini rifles and shell-fire. The Mauser perforates, the Martini splinters, the shell pulverises. The point of entry of the Mauser bullet is somewhat smaller than the circumference of a threepenny piece, and if it passes through the bone it does not appear to set up any undue amount of splintering. The hole through which it emerges is usually, except where the path of the bullet has been deflected, as small as the point of penetration. The Mauser does not, as a rule, set up in the body, and in the greater number of cases passes clean through. It is a humane wound, and infinitely less injurious than the Martini and Dum-dum. A Martini destroys a large internal surface making beneath the point of contact a wound between two and three inches in diameter, with an even greater area of exit. It sweeps everything before it, shredding arteries, shattering the bones, while its process of recovery is, in consequence, the more protracted. I have already described the wounds from shell-fire, adding to that account, however, the fact that the merest fragment of a shell is as capable as the shell itself, of making most terrible injuries.

XVI

A SOFT-WATER BATH

MAFEKING, *December 6th, 1899.*

As compensation to the inhabitants of beleaguered Mafeking for the many dull days we have had lately, yesterday was replete with incidents and crowded with a constant succession of events of more than ordinary interest. We have had our days of activity, when the boom of artillery and the rattle of musketry have impressed into a

few brief hours the full measure of martial excitement, we have endured our days of lonesome and tiring idleness when the hot winds of the Kalahari Desert have swept eddies of whirring, biting sand across the trenches, when the pitiless sun has spent its energies upon the heat-stricken garrison. But yesterday we experienced the effect of a combination between that Providence which the Boers claim as their special and benign guardian and the elements themselves. It was a reconnaissance in force by nature. A union of extreme subtlety and one against which it was impossible to contend. It came, it swept everything before it, and it left us drenched with rain, surrounded by small lakes of mud, streams of water, and without dry garments to our names. When the mischief was complete the deluge ceased. The general physiognomy of the scene can be described at once. When dawn broke in the morning across the sky there glowered the haze of heat, which in Africa, as elsewhere, denotes a more than usually tropical day. To those, however, who knew the signs of the sky, the fleeting masses of black cloud, low down upon the horizon, foretold a day of evil tempest. Slowly the rising wind drove them together until, shortly before noon, clouds were bunched high up across the sky and over the Boer laager. From where we were in the town it was quite apparent that the temporary centre of the storm was almost above the emplacements of the enemy's artillery. Before the breeze had increased the Boers had thrown a few shells into the town, but presently, as the force of the gale struck us, it was evident that the rain-filled clouds were discharging their contents upon the extreme limits of the veldt. For an hour or two the Boers received the full effect of the storm, and but few drops of rain fell into the town, as the wind swept before its path the *débris* of the veldt, portions of broken trees, of scrub, and bushes. The deluge quickly left the south-east, concentrating a little beyond and over the town, and so soon as it began to trouble us it seemed to have deserted the Boers. Possibly the wind carried with it a rainspout, since the effect of the streaming water was as though from somewhere in the sky buckets were being emptied on to the place beneath. The veldt was quickly flooded, the dried-up spruits were soon charged with foaming cataracts, Mafeking itself lay under water, the earthworks around the town were swept away, trenches and bomb-proof shelters were choked with eddying streams, everywhere was ruin—destruction and complete chaos reigned until the storm had spent itself. Down the acclivity upon which Cannon Kopje is placed there rolled the surging tide, carrying in its might the stores of the fort, the blankets of the men, the bodies of struggling animals, who, if they succeeded in coping with the force of the stream, were dashed to pieces upon the rocky facing of the hill. The women's laager, which has hitherto rested in snug seclusion at the base of the hills forming the western outposts, was, in a few minutes, flooded with the off-pourings from the sluits of the veldt, while the trenches were quickly submerged or silted with the refuse of the torrent. A cart which went to the assistance of the inmates of the laager found itself water-bound through the tremendous force of the tortuous cataracts. In the town, bomb-proof cellars were vacated, and the people, discarding their shoes and stockings, made their way from point to point by paddling and fording the footpaths across the streets. To the north of the town, below the exterior outposts, the men stripped to the skin, allowing the full strength of the streaming downpour to beat upon them. The Market Square was a sheet of running water, rising with such rapidity that it seemed that the houses bordering the square would be inundated.

From Market Square, upon two sides, the roads make something of a descent, and down these slight inclines volumes of water, yards in width and some feet in depth precipitated themselves to the river-bed. As the storm increased it was seen that it would be impossible to retain any longer our advanced positions in the river-bed. The first to go was the trench occupied by Corporal Currie and his native sharpshooters. As the water swept from bank to bank through this post, which we, but a few days before, had won so gallantly from the enemy, the men clambered up the banks to the veldt and made their way as best they could to the base. With the flooding of this position, so rapidly did the river rise, that those occupied by Captain Fitzclarence and his squadron were equally untenable. As they were abandoned the stream rushed by them with the roar of a river in flood, while the crash of boulder upon boulder turned masses of rock into shattered fragments. Within an hour the river had risen eight feet, and so unexpected was the flood that for the time being it was not possible to rescue from the rising stream the 7-pounder gun, which was in position some way down the river. As the rain continued the wind died down, until in the height of this storm it scarcely possessed the strength to dissipate the white mists which were rising from the veldt. They hung low upon the ground, prevented from rising by the strength of the downpour, and making it difficult to see the progress of events in the enemy's lines. From time to time above the hissing of the rain and the roar of the rivers we heard the angry cough of the Nordenfeldt, the shrieks of their quick-firing guns, and the heavy and more stately boom of "Big Ben." Ofttimes there was the echo of the Mauser, the grating rustle of the Martini, and it soon became evident that the enemy did not propose to let us endure the misery of the storm altogether undisturbed. From these omens, as some slight diminution in the downpour allowed the mists to rise from the ground, we expected to hear the sound of exploding volleys coming through the fog, and to find that the fight had become suddenly desperate; but the Boers lacked the individual courage, and the charge which they might have made under cover of the tangle of the brushwood and the bewilderment of the fog never took place. They were satisfied with cannonading our position; and across the ground, heavy with rain, upon which the mist laid dense, the red flashes of the gun and the sparkle of the rifles had a weird effect as they flared and vanished through the eddying masses of vapour and fantastic columns of smoke. The tumbling volumes of mist and the grey-black masses of smoke mingled and curled in distorted pillars, forming at a moment when the sun shone briefly, as the tears of heaven dried off into space, an evanescent and iridescent canopy of colour. The respite was momentary, and as the sun withdrew, the groups of men that had been seen about the Boer lines were quickly obscured in clouds of grosser vapour. Their fire, however, continued, while about them tossed the thick white fog, as above us occasionally rolled the thunder of their guns. The area of the storm included the most advanced trenches of the Boers, and as the wind shifted the gloomy masses of vapour we saw through the whirling mist and smoke-charged air, the Boers, rain-soaked as ourselves, standing disconsolately upon their muddy parapets. They did not seem to understand what they should do. They could hear their own guns firing on our positions, happily beyond the later centre of the storm, but these men themselves stood still, shaking the water from their limbs, attempting to dry their weapons. At night, with the darkness to cover our misfortunes, the town was busily constructing fresh earthworks, draining those shelters from which any further use

could be obtained, and making such amends as were possible for an occurrence, almost unprecedented in the annals of war.

XVII THE ECONOMY OF THE SITUATION

December 12th, 1899.

The importance of the resistance which Mafeking has made to the attacks of the Boers should be viewed in the light of its relationship to the two Protectorates, Bechuanaland and Matabeleland, since had this place fallen, its position as a *depôt* for the Northern trade would have made it a comparatively easy task for the victorious Boers to have secured the control of the intermediate areas. They would have at once seized the rolling stock of the railway whose headquarters are temporarily invested in Mafeking, and could, by that means, have mobilised their forces in a fashion and with a degree of acceleration which would have brought them in a completely equipped and efficient condition to the borders of Rhodesia. Indeed, from what one can learn now, it is not at all improbable that the plan of the northern operations of the Boer forces from their base at Mafeking provided for the seizure of Mafeking with its stores and rolling stock, with their subsequent enlistment of this material in the work of occupying Bechuanaland and assisting our enemy in the concentration of their forces upon Rhodesia. With the railway in their hands small forces would have been stationed at the important points such as are afforded by the natural drifts, and while they maintained by this system of custodianship an open line of communication, they would, at the same time, have been free to utilise, in a combined and united mass, all of these scattered parties of Boers who were engaged upon marauding expeditions between here and Middle Drift. The history of Mafeking then would have been but the story of Vryburg, where, once its sympathy to the Boer cause was proclaimed and the place effectually occupied, the Boer commandant withdrew the greater portion of his men to fresh spheres of activity. With Mafeking in the hands of the enemy, our chief stand would have been around Buluwayo, where Colonel Baden-Powell and Colonel Plumer would have united their commands, thereby presenting to the enemy greater resistance than would have been possible had the forces been engaged upon their own initiative. In a way, therefore, Mafeking has forged an important link in the chain of outposts, by which the safety of the Protectorates has been guaranteed and the independence of the country still preserved to Imperial rule. It must not be forgotten, however, that the success which Plumer's column has enjoyed at Rhodes' Drift and at Middle Drift gave to Southern Rhodesia a certain immunity from hostile invasion, while in any estimate of the economy of the victories which Colonel Plumer's men and our own here have scored against the Boers, it should be borne in mind that had they vanquished our forces at Middle Drift or Rhodes' Drift, further Imperial territory would have been invaded, and the road upon which they might have marched to besiege Buluwayo would have been open to them. Colonel Baden-Powell has, of course, been chiefly instrumental in preventing the investment of Buluwayo, since the determined stand which he made caused General Cronje to hold an aggregate number of Boers,

amounting to 8,000 men, and by far the larger portion of the Western Division of the S.A.R. forces, under his control for Mafeking; but without in any way disparaging this work, so important in its achievements, so vital in its issues, nothing perhaps has proved so integral a factor in the work of maintaining our occupation and dominion over these important adjuncts of our Empire in Africa, as the defence which Colonel Plumer so successfully and gallantly accomplished. However we here may have assisted in the preservation of those Protectorates as Imperial dominions, there can be no doubt we should have lost, for the time being, all claim to their moral and practical possession had Colonel Plumer's force retired. With 8,000 men investing Mafeking, and various minor bodies scattered up and down the border between here and Fort Tuli, the enemy could have spared 6,000 men for co-operation with these subsidiary bodies, and still have maintained the siege and bombardment of this town. It did not need, then, its downfall to give the Boers important belligerent rights throughout the Protectorate and Southern Rhodesia, and although our surrender might have materially facilitated their progress, our successful opposition did not necessarily, nor altogether, impede it. The strategical value of the drifts made their safe custody a matter of momentous importance, since through them, as much as from Mafeking, might entry have been made and territorial supremacy for the moment acquired. Indeed, it is very much to be doubted whether the chief value of the stand by which Mafeking has distinguished itself is not found in the lesson which it has read to the Colony itself. Had we gone the way of Vryburg, or had we surrendered after some slight stand, it is almost certain that our fall would have been the signal for the general uprising of the Dutch in the northern areas of the Colony as well as in British Bechuanaland. How near we are to a mare's nest in Mafeking is uncertain, but after much inquiry amongst the chief people (business) in the town, there is no doubt that had the inhabitants of Mafeking been able to conceive the difficulties and trials which were about to beset them, the losses in business at the moment, and the temporary stagnation which will follow the war, they would have preferred to have worshipped the Golden Calf, and to see Colonel Baden-Powell and Colonel Hore remove their headquarters to some spot in the Protectorate, while the sleek and prosperous merchants of Mafeking were thus enabled to follow their occupation and to turn over their money while they lived amid the baneful protection of a temporary and purely commercial allegiance to the Transvaal Republic. It is not, it would seem, that individually Mafeking is disloyal, but that it is essentially a commercial centre, governed, impressed, and inherited by commercial instinct, and reflecting, in its inhabitants, a gathering of the peoples of the world in more or less confused proportion. There is a small German community, there is an American colony, there are French, and Jews of every nation. They have made money in Mafeking; they own much property; they are even friendly to the Transvaal since they have large trade interests among Dutch towns which are near the border. They came here in the days when this part of Africa was unknown to white man; they trekked from Kimberley, from the Transvaal, even across the African desert from the coast, and if they have lived beneath the protection of our standard, they have amassed their wealth by trading with the flags of all nations. They care very little indeed for the Uitlander in the Transvaal, for his wrongs or for his rights, but they would respect him much if he came with his cattle and his sheep, with his waggons and his chattels, and some superfluity of money, for then they could add still further to their hoard of shekels and trade with

him for his cattle. It is a weird and motley crowd that constitutes Mafeking: disgusted with Imperial government, wishing to have vengeance upon the Colonial Government, and boasting to Heaven at one moment about their gallant resistance, crying out against the ill-wind that has brought them the siege. They move with the current of the Colony, and can be as easily disturbed to patriotism as they can rouse themselves to a passionate criticism of the follies of the Imperial protection under which they exist. When they are moved to sympathy with the Dutch, it is difficult to believe that they are the self-same loyal inhabitants of Mafeking who are now beleaguered, since by daily contact, by union of marriage, by personal friendship, they have consciously or unconsciously assimilated the cause of the Boer, and reveal the profundity of their sympathies in these times of distress.

An interesting side issue to the siege of Mafeking has been the chain of events relating to the departure of Lady Sarah Wilson from Mafeking upon the night of the day during which war was declared, her temporary sojourn at Setlagoli, from where she supplied the garrison with news, and acted as the chief medium by which Baden-Powell managed to get his dispatches through to the Government in Cape Town; her retirement from Setlagoli, when her work was discovered, to General Snyman's laager before Mafeking to request from that gentleman a safe permit into Mafeking; her eventual arrival in the town in exchange for the prisoner Viljoen. Lady Sarah Wilson experienced no very extraordinary adventures and was treated with that consideration which is due to her sex by the Boers, despite the fact that they might have made her position somewhat unpleasant, since she had quite voluntarily taken up active participation in the siege by endeavouring to keep the garrison supplied with news.

XVIII A VISIT TO THE HOSPITAL

December 12th, 1899.

The week has been a dull one, which in relation to the siege implies that the passing days have not borne what we have now come to regard as their full quota of shells and bullets. We here are somewhat sceptical of the lapses of the bombardment since tactics which the Boers have already adopted have led us to believe that intervals of some hours' duration be planned deliberately so that when shelling should be renewed, it may please Providence, ever on the side of the Boers, to have the streets thronged with people. Upon one or two occasions we have been lulled into a fancied security by the cessation of shell fire; but with the lamentable occurrences of last week, we are disinclined to be again caught napping. Accordingly, although there has been a week of extraordinary desistance upon the part of the enemy, those who were about were careful enough to take their airing within a short distance of their bomb-proof shelters. In a fashion, this gave to the environments of the town and the town itself, the appearance of a rabbit warren, where at sunset the little animals may be seen bunched about the entrance to their retreats. A few ladies enjoyed the novelty of tea *al*

fresco, with possibly, a keener appreciation for their propinquity to some bomb-proof, than for the light refreshment in which they were indulging.

Thus it came that I was visiting the hospital, chatting with the physicians upon the stoep of the building. Beneath the shelter of the verandah lay the forms of many who had been wounded, and who now were sufficiently recovered to sit outside; here and there a man limped painfully with the aid of crutches, to talk to a comrade who, with his arm in a sling, was not altogether inappreciative of the fact that he had been wounded in a recent sniping affray against the enemy's position in the brickfields. As we sat upon the stoep with our legs dangling to the ground, behind us in the building there was the complement of battle: the wounded, the nurses, and the doctors; but in front of us there was the expansion of the veldt, green and peaceful. The heat haze lay upon it, simmering in an endless stretch of floating vapour. There was every appearance of the provincial and rural simplicity which goes to make up the daily life of those who live upon the veldt. There were homesteads which, but a few months ago, had been the centre of some small and flourishing agrestic community, but were now charred and blackened, epitomising the destruction which the Boers deal out to unoffending people; in the place of the herds which formerly had grazed upon the scene, there were the white covers of the Boer laagers; there were the lines of the Boer horses, there were the mobs of cattle, of sheep, of goats, which, raided from the countryside, had been collected in the rear of the enemy's encampments. Upon the skyline, from the steps of the hospital, the emplacement of "Big Ben" could be seen outlined quite distinctly in the bright sunlight. The position of the gun was known by the glint of the sun as it played upon the burnished metal.

Presently, as we talked, there came the boom of cannon, and the enemy had turned upon the stadt their quick-firing Krupps. Instinctively, since the habits which rule the enemy are well known to us, a wounded man called out to us that was the five o'clock gun, and for the moment we were uncertain as to whether the peace of the afternoon would be further disturbed. But in a little a column of smoke, white and heavy, hung over the position of "Big Ben", and we at once settled down for further shelling during the remainder of the time that daylight lasted. In the distance, out on the furthest limits of the Stadt, there came echoes, echoing back the noise of the explosion when the hundred-pound shell burst amid a collection of native huts. It is so seldom that these greater projectiles miss their victims, that preparations were at once made for any casualties that might have been sent to the hospital. With these measures taken, we waited while the firing grew heavier. It was just one of those moments which we had been anticipating from the fashion which our friend the Boer had already set, and in a little it was proved that whatever had been our expectations they would be fully realised. When the firing began, the scene upon the stoep of the hospital gradually changed; the wounded were carried back to their wards, Surgeon-Major Anderson, the Imperial officer who has been sent out here; Dr. Hayes, who in the virtue of the rank of P.M.O. conferred by Colonel Baden-Powell, has charge of the hospital, and his brother, both local practitioners, waited the course of events upon the steps of the building. For the time firing seemed confined to the artillery and rifles from the Boer trenches in the brickfields, the south-eastern front of the town and the eastern facing of the native location receiving the brunt. By degrees the entire position of the enemy upon that side dropped into line, giving cause and effect to the wisps of

smoke which broke into the air about the advanced trenches of the foe. In about half an hour from the time the first shell exploded over the stadt, a stretcher-party appeared coming from the town and began to descend into the trench which led to the hospital. As they crossed the recreation ground, a large white flag which was carried in advance of the party, heralding to the Boers the passing of wounded, attracted the attention of the enemy and was promptly fired upon. It is these wilful acts which make it difficult to consider the Boer in any way removed from a savage combatant, and although the flag-bearer waved repeatedly to the enemy's trenches, the fire from that direction did not diminish. With no little heroism the stretcher-party, which was under Sergeant-Major Dowling, a resident physician in Cape Town, who volunteered his services for the campaign, and who has charge of the subsidiary hospital in the native location, made their way across the zone of fire to the doors of the hospital. Then in a moment all that had been peaceful and serene before, became impressed with the horrible effects and the fearful injuries which are derived from war.

The stretcher was taken to the operating-room, where nurses had already begun to arrange the table, to prepare the carbolic lotion, to lay out the lint and bandages, the dressing dishes, sponges, and a fine array of instruments; then when the stretcher had been placed beside the table, willing and gentle hands lifted the inanimate form by the corners of the brown and blood-stained mackintosh sheet in which the body had been enshrouded. Dr. Hayes snicked the strings which had caught the ends of the sheet about the injured, and as he threw back the flaps Surgeon-Major Anderson gently separated the clothing where, matted with blood, it had congealed into a sticky mass about the injuries. The doctors and the surgeon, bending with callous diffidence about the inert and prostrate form, then proceeded rapidly with their examination. Through the western windows of the room there came the ruddy rays of the sun as it sank to its rest. The light caught the bottles on the shelves, flickered for a moment upon the silvery brightness of the instruments, and played about the hair of the nurses, who, passing to and fro across the window, were as much interested in their work as in the nature of the patient's injuries. In a corner of the room Sergeant-Major Dr. Dowling explained to Surgeon-Major Anderson that the patient, who was a native woman of some repute, had been washing clothes upon the banks of the Molopo, when a flight of one-pound steel-pointed Maxim shells burst about her. The pelvis and the femur had been shattered completely, besides internal wounds of a most fatal character in the abdominal regions. The left foot was also pulverised, the extraordinary part being that any one, after suffering such severe injuries and sustaining so great a shock to the system, should yet be living. The examination completed, Dr. Hayes, turning to the head nurse, said that it was impossible to do anything which would save the woman's life, inquiring, as Surgeon-Major Anderson dissolved a grain of morphia in a wine-glass, if any one knew the name of the native. As the nurse was about to reply, the patient, moaning feebly, expressed in excellent English, that her name was Martha. Then it appeared that she was recognised as being the wife of a Fingo in the location, one who before marriage had been a member of the oldest profession which the world has ever known, but since lawful wedlock had consummated her union, she had passed, after the manner of her tribe, a life of great austerity. The air of the operating-room was becoming oppressive, the moaning of the patient merging with the heavy scent of the iodoform and the lighter evaporation of the carbolic liniment began gradually to dominate the nerves. To the casual observer such as myself, the scene was

striking. The insensitiveness of those assembled in the operating-room, in reality the outcome of great experience in a particular profession, enforced a calmness of feature and of feeling with which I was far from being actually animated. The mechanical industry of the surgeons, the automatic regularity with which the hospital orderly waved his fly whisk above the head of the dying woman, imparted a coldness to the scene which one could not help observing. In a fashion, all that human skill could do had been accomplished, since had the foot been amputated at the ankle, or the thigh removed at the hip, the labour would have been unnecessary, the extra shock to the system serving only to accelerate the end. Very gently they sponged the mouth and nose of the woman and cooled her brow, very gently they administered morphia and sips of brandy, but one by one the doctors, rinsing their hands and lowering their shirt-sleeves, put on their jackets. At the door of the operating-room Dr. Hayes and Surgeon-Major Anderson paused to impart a few brief instructions to the nurses. They were not to forget, said the P.M.O., to remove the tourniquet from the pelvis when the end had come; Surgeon-Major Anderson adding to this an order to continue waving the fly whisk so long as there existed the necessity.

And the incident had closed.

XIX A LITTLE GUN PRACTICE

December 23rd, 1899.

We take a keen interest in our artillery, although we never cease to deplore the fact that the War Office did not think it necessary to send to Mafeking anything better than old muzzle-loading seven-pounders of the Crimean period. Their range is restricted, and their mobility is greatly inferior to more modern types; but if they have not enabled us to do very much, we have at least been able to return their fire. In this way quite a little flutter of enthusiasm has been aroused through having unearthed an antiquated sixteen-pounder gun. It would seem to have been made about 1770, and is identical with those which up till very recently adorned the quay at Portsmouth. Its weight is 8 cwt. 2 qr. 10 lb., and it was made by B. P. and Co. It is a naval gun, and is stamped "No. 6 port." How it came here is uncertain, and its origin unknown; but one gathers that it must have been intended more for privateering than for use in any Government ship of war, since it is wanting in all official superscription. This weapon, which we have now christened "B.-P." out of compliment to the Colonel, has been lying upon the farm of an Englishman whose interests are very closely united with the native tribe whose headquarters are in Mafeking Stadt. Mr. Rowlands can recall the gun passing this way in charge of two Germans nearly forty years ago. He remembers to have seen it in the possession of Linchwe's tribe, and upon his return to the Baralongs, after one of his trading journeys, he urged the old chief to secure it for use in defence of the Stadt against the attacks of Dutch freebooters. The chief then visited Linchwe and bought the gun for twenty-two oxen, bringing it down to Mafeking upon his waggon. In those days it had three hundred rounds of ammunition, which were

utilised in tribal fights. With the exception of visits which the gun made to local tribes, it has remained here and is now in the possession of Mr. Rowlands. It has recently been mounted, and is in active operation against our enemies. We have made balls for it, and are intending to manufacture shells, in the hope that we shall at least be able to reach the emplacement of "Big Ben". The first trial of "B.-P." in its new career gave very satisfactory results. With two pounds of powder it threw a ball of ten pounds more than two thousand yards. The power of the charge was increased by half pounds until a charge of three pounds threw a ball of the same weight as the first rather more than two miles. We, therefore, have pinned our hopes upon it, and commend to the responsible authorities the reflections which may be derived from the fact that our chief and most efficient means of defence, lie in such a weapon.

After many weeks of inactivity upon our part, we have lately taken the initiative against the foe, whose present mode of war, so far as this place is concerned, would seem to give preference to the chastened security of laagers already beyond the three-mile limit from the town. Upon two occasions during the last week we have celebrated dawn with many salvoes of artillery, securing sufficient noise and effect from our shell fire display, to excite the town to no little enthusiasm. Moreover, up to the present, reaction has not set in, and we are even more cheerful to-day than we were at the beginning of the siege. Dingdaan's Day, the earlier of the two events, was distinguished by the Boers, as by ourselves, with a bombardment, which opened with a hundred-pound shell from "Big Ben", landing in the Headquarters Office at half-past two in the morning. Fortunately no one sustained any injury from this untimely marauder of our rest, the corner of the building alone being shattered, and the town itself sprinkled with fragments of masonry and shell. A few hours later the enemy again started firing, while our guns upon the east front proceeded to give a good account of themselves. About seven o'clock firing for the day ceased from the Boer lines, since they devoted themselves to psalm singing and prayer gathering in their laagers in commemoration of their day of independence; but we, upon our part, threw four rounds at noon into their camp, and then we, too, enjoyed the comparative peace of the siege. For the next few days our guns remained quiet, and "Big Ben" kept its nose pointed upon the furthest limits of the Stadt or Cannon Kopje, until the impression gained ground that the Boers had shifted the gun round to a position upon which they were very busily engaged on the western side of the Stadt. There were those even who were willing to lay odds that, when the gun fired again, it would be found to have taken up a new site. And so universal was this idea that it was not altogether discarded by members of the Staff. With a view to disproving this illusion Colonel Baden-Powell arranged that all our available artillery, under Major Panzera, should effect a reconnaissance of the Boer lines upon the east of the town, from which it could easily be learnt whether the fire of the big gun still dominated that front.

There had been some little talk of a movement against the five-pound gun, which the enemy had located at Game Tree, and upon Sunday night I camped with Captain Vernon, from whose fort upon the western outposts, the sortie would have taken place. However, nothing happened, and although a few shells fell about us at daybreak, there was nought to interest one beyond the usual routine of daily life upon the western outposts. Upon returning to town I learnt that the following morning might reveal something more important than a mere artillery exchange. Towards nightfall, to those

who knew about the contemplated move, Mafeking appeared to present much unusual animation. Artillery officers, whose duty detained them at points distant from the town, gathered at Headquarters to receive Major Panzera's final instructions before setting out for their emplacements, as at the same time small detachments of men moved to reinforce the entrenchments along the eastern front. For the most part the town went to its rest in ignorance of the surprise which was being laid for the enemy at daybreak upon the following morning, and by nine o'clock the nocturnal aspect of the town was eminently peaceful. The transformation from the harsh and biting sunlight of the day to the soothing and eerie light of night impressed the hour with grandeur and solemnity, which was in striking contrast to the labour upon which we were engaged. From the town, those guns which were not already in position moved to their stations—one, the Hotchkiss, being despatched to an emplacement which had only been completed the preceding night. It was a pleasant scramble to this position across the veldt, and so near to the enemy's lines that we could hear the murmur of their voices as they called to one another in the trenches and discerned their gloomy figures silhouetted against the skyline. The Hotchkiss, which was our extreme piece upon the north-east of the town, was to direct its fire upon the enemy at the waterworks and the opposing corner of their advanced trenches. Its precise utility was uncertain, since it was not possible to see the object at which its fire would be directed, but, as the gun party moved to the emplacement, the officer in charge arranged with the nearest entrenchment in the rear to signal the accuracy of his range. Then we set out to visit the outposts and the different emplacements. Time and distance passed rapidly in the starlight expanse of the night, and few things could have been more impressive than the calm which had come upon the town. From the veldt, as we cut directly across from the Hotchkiss to the nearest post, it seemed as though we were passing some walled-in city of the ancient days. At short distances the outlines of the forts showed out against the buildings, and it became almost difficult to suppress the cry to the sentry, "Watchman, what of the night?" As we made our rounds it was interesting to note how some points had received heavier fire than at others. The ground round the Dutch Church was ploughed and furrowed by shell, and at Ellis's Corner and across the front of the location to Cannon Kopje there were numerous traces of the enemy's bombardment. Presently the rounds were concluded, and Major Panzera went to snatch a few hours' rest before he opened fire in the morning. As upon Dingdaan's morning, so this time did I attach myself to the emplacement under the direct control of Major Panzera, at the Dutch Church, and around this, as he arrived there, the hour of midnight chiming from the church towers, there were the sleeping figures of the gunners. For the time we slept together, and when Major Panzera aroused us in the morning the rawness of the morning air foretold the earliness of the hour.

The mists of night were still rising from the veldt about the Boer lines, and as we looked through our field-glasses, figures here and there, were busily engaged in gathering brushwood for the matutinal fire. Then, as it was yet early, and they were about to prepare their coffee, we boiled up ours, and, passing round the billy, filled our pannikins to the health of the enemy. It was but a grim jest, and one perhaps which shows the indifference of the men to the accidents of fate, but as we drank, he who was number one said, raising his tin to the air, "We will drink with you in hell." But the hour of jesting was soon over and the gun party prepared for their morning's work by running up the gun into the embrasure. Number one laid the gun, and number two

stood with his lanyard in his hand ready to connect the friction tube. Number three hung upon the trail piece, and he, with the sponge and ramrod, was prepared for immediate service. Within a few feet of them were two who were actively adjusting the time fuses. At their side there was a pile of common shell and shrapnel, and with this, the local colour of the picture is completed. Of a sudden Panzera gave the order to the man who fed the gun—"Common shell, percussion fuse, prepare to load", and as it passed from the hands of the man to the muzzle of the gun, one found oneself muttering a prayer for the souls of the Boers who were so speedily to be sent into perdition. "Load", said Panzera rapidly, and the gun was loaded. Then, as I focussed my glasses upon the scene, the Major took one last squint down the sights of the gun. It was well and truly laid, and as he straightened himself to the precision of the parade ground the end came rapidly. "Prepare to fire", said he, and number two stepped forward, dropping the friction tube into the vent. "Fire", said Panzera, and one raised the glasses to fix them upon a party of Boers whom we could see drinking their coffee, as they sat upon the parapet of the trench. There was a roar, a cloud of smoke, and a red fierce tongue of flame leapt from the muzzle of the gun. Dust and smoke and sand enveloped the place where those Boers had been sitting, and I found myself wondering and endeavouring to believe that the breach in the parapet foreboded no great harm to anybody. The battle, if battle it were to be, had been started by a well-directed shell. Quickly the gun was trained and loaded again, and I felt the excitement entering into my soul. The feelings of humanity left me, and I began to hope that we should kill them every time. Again our gun fired, falling short, but giving the signal to the others along the front to join in the comparative splendour of the cannonade. Away down in the river-bed our guns boomed; beyond it and between that emplacement and Cannon Kopje there were the jets of smoke from the Nordenfeldt like the spurts of steam from a geyser. Above us there was the Hotchkiss and the merry rattle of the Maxim. So far as noise, and numbers of the pieces engaged, went the press of battle was about us. All down our front there broke the whistling rush of Lee-Metford rifles, as the eastern line of the defence dropped into action. For the moment the Boers were surprised at the manner and method of our onslaught, and beyond a few desultory rifle shots our guns fired some few rounds before any shells came back in answer. As Major Panzera had opened the fight so they threw their first shells upon his emplacement, and a well-directed flight of one-pound steel-topped base fuse Maxim broke in a cloud of dust about us, flinging their sharp-edged fragments in all directions. Then we fired again, raking the parapet of the Boers' trench, and wondering whether the big gun would reply to us, or whether those who had speculated upon its removal would win. The music of the fight grew louder and louder, the quick-firing guns of the enemy paying their tribute. From where we were we could see the gun in the river-bed emplacement doing remarkable execution. The smoke of our own hung heavy upon us, mingling with the dust from the Maxim shell, as the enemy continued to pepper our emplacement. We were beginning to find it difficult to see, while the roar of the guns made it almost impossible to catch the officer's orders. Suddenly, as our gun again broke forth, the bell clanged in the distance six times. It was the signal that the big gun had fired, the six strokes indicating that it was pointed upon us. We heard it and crouched in the dust, and as we crouched we wondered. There was a screaming tumult in the air, a deafening explosion at our feet shook the ground; earth and dust, stones and bits of grass fell all about us, and the roofs of buildings upon either side of us

rattled with the fragments of the shell as it burst within a circle of twenty-five yards from the gun. It was a moment rather fine than frightful, with just sufficient danger in it to make it interesting, but, if anything, somewhat quickly over. We wiped the dust from our faces, shook the grass from our shirts, and laid again: once more fired, and chuckled to see, through rifts in the battle smoke, that it had landed in the very centre of the trench. Again the bell clanged sonorously, and a building not fifteen yards from us was blown to pieces. They were getting nearer, and making magnificent shooting, when the Nordenfeldt turned its fire upon "Big Ben" itself. From where we were we could see the thin columns of smoke rising, as the bullets burst before and behind the emplacement. If anything were calculated to check its fire it was the irritating and penetrating possibility of the armour-piercing Nordenfeldt. With the introduction of "Big Ben" into the morning's festivities, the Boers opened from their trenches, with their Mauser and Martini rifles. In the intervals between the shells from "Big Ben", the Maxim, and quick-firing nine-pounders, the enemy swept our emplacements with their rifle fire. They came through the embrasure with quite fatal accuracy, dropping at our feet and raising dust all around us, but the tale of the one is the tale of the many, and the same scene was occurring throughout the entire eastern front. For a moment it became impossible to serve the gun, and we desisted with apologies to the enemy, but anon rifle fire was deflected, and we again trained the gun upon those very advanced trenches of the enemy; but, as we fired, the bell rang, and for the third time their shell, passing ours in its flight, tore up the ground in front of us. And then the Nordenfeldt spoke again, shooting into the very smoke of the gun as though they were anxious to drop projectiles into the breach itself. And to the north of us the Hotchkiss spat, as though resenting the intrusion of this big bully. But there unfortunately it ended, and no more big shells came our way, and we contented ourselves with a parting sally.

Then the gun was sponged and laid to rest in the trench, and the spare shell put back into the box as the engagement closed. Then Panzera called his men together and thanked them, expressing his admiration for their courage and their coolness. Then we cheered him, and returning thanks for thanks, we went to breakfast, but in the distance we could see the Red Cross upon the white background, floating in tragic isolation, above a waggon, which was stopping ever and anon at places where we knew our shells had broken. That was in the Boer lines, but in our own the bugle sounded us to breakfast.

XX

THE ATTACK UPON GAME TREE

MAFEKING, *December 27th, 1899.*

Barely had the celebration of Christmas Day passed in Mafeking when the order to prepare for immediate action was sent out from Headquarters, and in the early hours of Boxing Day two dismounted squadrons began to move to the front. We had spent a pleasant holiday that day, which of all days brings glad tidings and goodwill throughout the civilised and Christian world; but when, hereafter, we come to speak of the Christmas season of 1899, our stories will be impressed with the sinister memories of the tragic events which have for us marked the time as one of lamentation. Nothing

could have been in more complete contrast to the happiness of Christmas Day, imbued with much real meaning to beleaguered Mafeking, than those early morning preparations which were made as the day closed. For some little time we have been desirous to attack the enemy's position at Game Tree, and in my last letter I mentioned the fact that, in anticipation of such an event, I had camped one night recently with Captain Vernon at his western outpost. That attack, however, did not take place, and, although the town and garrison were disappointed, there was a very strong feeling that it would not be long before they were compensated for their disappointment.

Game Tree, against which our force moved, is a strongly fortified position of the enemy, about two miles from the town, and it has been from this spot that our front to the north-west has been subjected to a persistent rifle and artillery fire during many weeks. The attack was ordered for the purpose of breaking the cordon around Mafeking, with a view to ultimately reopening our communications to the north. D and C Squadrons of the Protectorate Regiment, under the Imperial Service officers, Captain Vernon, of the King's Royal Rifles, and Captain Fitzclarence, of the Royal Fusiliers, were detailed to carry out the attack from the east, under the protection of the armoured train, and Captain Williams and twenty men of the British South Africa Police, with a one-pounder Hotchkiss and Maxim. This right flank was further supported by Captain Cowan and seventy men of the Bechuanaland Rifles, the whole of the wing being under the command of Major Godley. The left wing comprised three seven-pounders, one cavalry Maxim, and a troop of the Protectorate Regiment under Major Panzera; Captain Lord Charles Bentinck with two troops of A Squadron holding the reserve. The entire operations from this side were conducted by Colonel Hore. Colonel Baden-Powell and his staff—Major Lord Edward Cecil, Chief Staff Officer, Captain Wilson, A.D.C., and Lieutenant the Hon. A. H. C. Hanbury-Tracy—watched the progress of the fight from Dummie Fort.

Our guns moved into position during the night, throwing up emplacements for the attack, and as soon as they could see, Major Panzera opened fire. It was yet dark, although there came a faint glimmer of light from the east, but not sufficient to prevent the flashes from the muzzles of the guns and the glow of the bursting shells from being plainly visible. Until that moment there had been no sign of any living thing about the veldt between us and the Boer lines, and there was no sound. We had seen C and D Squadrons creeping to their positions under the guidance of the scout Cooke. Captain Lord Charles Bentinck had deployed across the front of the Boer position, taking up his place upon the left of the line. Close to him and but little in advance, the gunners had ensconced themselves behind a few sods of earth and sacks of sand. These operations marked the preliminary of the fight, from which, as the armoured train steamed to its post, completing the units in our attack, nothing had been omitted which might increase our chances of success.

At 4.15 a.m. our first shells were thrown upon the enemy's position, the shells bursting short and beyond Game Tree with no very striking effect. Upon the left of Game Tree and extending to the receding wall of the fort, some sixty yards distant, there was a heavy overgrowth of bushes, upon which, as the enemy seemed to be firing from concealed pits in their midst, the cavalry Maxim concentrated its fire. Away to the right there was the automatic rattle of the Maxim in the armoured train, and the sharp crack of the Hotchkiss. For the first three-quarters of an hour the attack was left

to Major Panzera, who, it was hoped, would effect a breach in the parapet through the agency of his guns. But, unfortunately, the damage inflicted upon the fort did not materially aid the charge which our men were so soon and so very gallantly to make, and which, when completed, revealed the fact that Colonel Baden-Powell had also organised a frontal attack upon an entrenched and impregnable position, with most lamentable results. A few of the enemy were put out of action by our shrapnel shells bursting in such a manner as to search out the interior of the fort with their sharp-edged segments, but the strength of the fort was so great and had been so increased during the night, that the artillery which was available was not sufficiently heavy for our purpose, while the wisdom of using the guns at all is eminently questionable. The character of our attack needed a movement which was quietly delivered, and which was in the nature of a surprise. So far as the fact is of value, in appreciating the appalling disaster which upon that morning befell our arms, our gunfire simply warned the garrison in the fort to stand to their arms. There is no doubt that the employment of the guns was a blunder in keeping with the conception of the attack. Colonel Baden-Powell, one has to say regretfully, upon this occasion was instrumental in bringing about quite needless loss of life. Presently, as we watched, we could see the signal being given to the armoured train "to cease fire", and a moment afterwards the base notes of the steam whistle boomed forth, when, as though waiting for this signal, "Big Ben", whose emplacement was some 6,000 yards to the south-east in the rear, began to shell the armoured train. As the echoes of the big gun died away, a roll of musketry from our own line and from the fort swept across the veldt, and for a few brief moments the hail of bullets was like the opening shower of a tropical deluge. Upon the east Captain Vernon with C and D Squadrons had begun the charge. Their position at this moment was in echelon—Captain Sandford with a troop of C Squadron was upon the right extremity, with Captain Vernon in the centre, and Captain Fitzclarence upon his left. As Captain Vernon gave the word to charge they opened out into skirmishing order, maintaining the while successive volleys with perfect accuracy. The advance was well carried out; indeed, its order and style were worthy of the best traditions of our army, and received tributes of admiration from all the commanding officers present. As they advanced the fire of the enemy was principally delivered from the front of the fort and the rifle intrenchments in the scrub. For a moment it seemed as though the face opposed to the rush of Captain Vernon and Captain Sandford was a mere wall requiring only to be scaled for the fort to be captured. But, when the men approached within three hundred yards of the fort, rifles rang out from every possible point, and the ground was swept by Mauser and Martini bullets. The men who charged through this zone of fire suffered terribly, and the conclusion must have forced itself upon their minds that they were going to their death. As each face of the fort became engaged the fire of the enemy began to have a telling effect upon our charging line. Captain Sandford was the first to fall, mortally wounded with a bullet in the spine. He fell down, calling to his men to continue the charge; but where he had fallen, he died. Our men now began to drop rather rapidly, and Captain Fitzclarence was disabled with a bullet in the thigh. His place was taken by Lieutenant Swinburne, who at once continued the charge, that officer and Lieutenant Bridges, of the same squadron, being among the nine who, upon the termination of the fight, were unwounded. The ground around the fort was becoming dotted with the figures of our wounded men, who, although they were but an irregular soldiery, followed their officers with the pluck and

dogged determination of veterans. The brunt of the fight now fell upon the companies under the immediate command of Captain Vernon, who, undaunted by the impossibility of his task, steadily fought his way forward. As they approached still nearer, his men, undisturbed by the shower of bullets which fell about them, cheered repeatedly, the echo of those cheers, giving rise to the impression that the capture of the position was imminent. The steady rush of our men, undeflected by the worst that the enemy could do, was rapidly demoralising those who were firing from behind the loopholes in the fort, and it may have been that, had we not had our responsible officers shot or killed before we reached the walls of the fort, a different story might have to be told. As it happened, when Captain Vernon, with whom was Lieutenant Paton, steadied his men for the wild impetuosity of the last charge, a bullet struck him in the body. For a brief interval he stopped, but, refusing the entreaty of Lieutenant Paton that he should fall out, he joined that officer once more in taking the lead. From the point which they had gained the character of the fort was seen, and the heavy fire under which it was defended showed it to be impregnable. It rose some seven feet from the ground, from the edges of a ditch with sides that it was almost impossible to climb. It was certain death which stared them in the face within twenty-five yards, but not a man was dismayed. They continued. The ditch was before them, the fort above them, and through double tiers of loopholes came the enemy's fire. Our men from one side of the ditch fired point-blank at an enemy who, from behind his loophole, fired point-blank at him. Here those who had survived until now were either killed or wounded, and it was here that Captain Vernon was hit again, as he, with Lieutenant Paton and the scout Cooke, whose tunic at the end of the engagement was found to be riddled with bullets, endeavoured to clamber into the fort. Captain Vernon and Lieutenant Paton managed by superhuman efforts to reach the loopholes, into which they emptied their revolvers. Their example was eagerly followed by the few who remained, and who were shot down as they plied their bayonets through the apertures. Here Captain Vernon, Lieutenant Paton, Corporal Pickard, Sergeant Ross, and many others were killed. Captain Vernon was shot in the head, the third wound which he had received within two hundred yards. Lieutenant Paton was shot in the region of the heart. Bugler Morgan, who was the first to ply his bayonet, was shot in three places, but it is believed that he will live. Then a mighty roar rose up, and we who had not taken part in the charge, again thought that the position had been carried. But it was the triumphant shout of the Boers, who, from the quick manner in which they followed us in hoisting up the Red Cross flag, would seem to have been partially demoralised by the keenness of our attack. With the dead and dying about them, and the area of the wounded encircling the fort, those of our men who were left fell back savagely and sullenly, with a contempt of the enemy's fire and the desire to renew the attack. Further assault was impossible, and, though we continued to fire upon the position until stretcher-parties were sent out, the fight was practically over upon our retirement. When they fell in again, out of the sixty men that had been engaged in the charge only nine were unwounded. Our killed were twenty-one; our wounded thirty, of whom four have since died. There were also three who were prisoners in the hands of the enemy.

Soon after the commencement of operations the chief staff officer gave me permission to move forward from Dummie Fort, and I therefore rode over to the position occupied by Captain Lord Charles Bentinck, and afterwards to Game Tree,

joining Surgeon-Major Anderson, when the Red Cross flag was hoisted on the scene of the engagement. The heavy vapour from the shells still impregnated the air, and hanging loosely over the veldt were masses of grey-black and brown-yellow smoke clouds. Boers on horseback and on foot were moving quickly in all directions, and mounted detachments were seen advancing at a gallop from the big laager upon the eastern front, with their rifles swung loosely across their knees. They had been proceeding to reinforce Game Tree Fort, upon an order from Field Cornet Steinekamp, when the cessation of hostilities had taken place under the provisions of the Red Cross. Game Tree Fort presented an animated picture. The enemy thronged its walls, held noisy conversation in scattered groups, that, breaking up in one spot, congregated the next moment in some other. The bushes about the fort were alive with men who, with their rifles in their hands and a few loose cartridges at their side, were prepared at any moment to resume hostilities. The fort itself showed no traces of the shelling, although it were impossible, from the seventy-five yards limit, up to which we were permitted to approach, to examine it very thoroughly. It has been claimed that the fort was strengthened during the night, but signs were absent by which one could detect traces of the new work, and, in view of this fact, one is disinclined to impugn the statement of Commandant Botha, who told me that he had been expecting the attack for the past two weeks. From where we were the strength of the fort was very apparent, seeming altogether unnecessary for the requirements of such a post, unless definite information had been carried to the enemy about our plans. It may be that the night attack which Captain Fitzclarence had led against the Boer trenches upon the east of the town earlier in the siege had prompted the enemy to strengthen all their positions. The fort itself had been given a head covering of wooden beams, earth, and corrugated iron; the entrance in the rear was blocked, and in every other way it appeared impregnable. When the order came for our men to retire, Dr. Hamilton proceeded from the armoured train with the Red Cross flag, making his way to the wounded in the face of a heavy fire. But as soon as it was recognised by the enemy that he was desirous of helping the sufferers the firing was at once stopped, and Commandant Botha himself apologised. The field around the Boer position at once became dotted with similar emblems, for the character of the charge and the severity of the fire had confined our losses within a very small radius of the position. The scene here was intensely pathetic, and everywhere there were dead or dying men. The Boers moved out from their trenches and swarmed around with idle curiosity to inspect the injuries which they had inflicted upon their foe, while a constant procession came from the immediate precincts of the fort, bearing those of our men who had fallen within its actual circumference. In their way they assisted us, although for some time they would not permit the waggons of the ambulance to approach nearer than half a mile, nor at first would they entertain our proposal that the services of the armoured train should be employed to facilitate the conveyance of casualties to the base.

As Surgeon-Major Anderson proceeded with his work, assisted by Dr. T. Hayes, Dr. Hamilton and a staff of dressers, the character of the wounds which our men had suffered gave rise to the impression that the enemy had used explosive bullets, although it is perhaps possible that Martini rifles fired at close range would account for the wide area of injury on those who had been wounded. In one case a bullet in the head had blown off rather more than half the skull; in another a small puncture in the thigh had completely pulverised the limb; while in a third, in which the bullet had

struck just above the knee-cap, it had raised a mass of shattered flesh and bone into a pulpy mound. With these fearful injuries before one it was scarcely possible to believe that the wounds inflicted had originated through the impact of Mauser or Martini bullets. The Field Cornet, with whom I conversed at some length, upon being shown the dreadful condition of the wounds, admitted that at one time explosive bullets had been served out, but that it was not possible that they could have been used that morning, since he was convinced that that particular ammunition had already been expended. He then produced a bandolier filled with Dum-dum bullets, and suggested that since so much of the Mark IV. ammunition had been taken by them from us, our men had been hit by bullets which we ourselves had manufactured. I pointed out that this particular ammunition had been recalled, so far as Mafeking was concerned, since it had been found to strip in the barrel of the rifle. The Field Cornet then said that he and his men were already aware of the uselessness of this particular pattern of bullet, since upon many occasions they had been hit by some curious missile from which it was evident that the casing had stripped, and from which no injury had been sustained. It was a strange conversation to have with a man against whom the moment before we had been fighting, but from time to time, as we were waiting for the wounded to be brought up, the conversation was reopened between us.

The attitude of the Boers around us was one of stolid composure, not altogether unmingled with sympathy. At one time almost one hundred had assembled around those who were dressing the wounded. With their rifles upon their backs and two bandoliers crossing each other upon their chests, they appeared a stalwart body of men; for the most part they were big and burly, broad in their shoulders, ponderous in their gait, and uncouth in their appearance, combining a somewhat soiled and tattered appearance with an air of triumph. Their clothing was an ill-assorted array of patterns and materials, altogether incongruous and out of keeping with the campaign upon which they were then engaged. Some of them, with quite unnecessary brutality, had doffed their own rifles and bandoliers, in order that they might show and swing somewhat aggressively before our notice, the spoils of the battlefield. In this manner they sported Lee-Metford rifles and bandoliers containing Mark II. and Mark IV. ammunition. But for the most part they behaved with a certain decorum, and it may be that the weapon which they bore was the silent confirmation of the Field Cornet's words. Here and there they made some attempt to rob the wounded and despoil the dead, but when I remonstrated with the Field Cornet he expressed, with every appearance of sincerity, his very keen regret, ordering the transgressors from the field, and explaining that he was unable to accept the responsibility for such acts, since, although they had instructions to respect the dead, the younger men were so unruly as to be beyond his control. The Field Cornet proceeded to assert that the acts of his men were neither so barbarous nor so inhuman as those which our own soldiers had committed after the battle of Elandslaagte, where, he said, Imperial troops had stripped the body of General de Koch, leaving him to lie upon the field wounded and naked, and adding that we were morally responsible, and held as such by every right-minded person in the Transvaal and Orange Free State, for the subsequent death of the Boer general. This opinion was loudly endorsed by a number of the enemy, who had collected around us, one of whom stated that he had received orders from Commandant Botha to take possession of any effects which were found upon the bodies of the wounded or dead. I referred this man's statement to the Field Cornet,

when quite a lively altercation in Dutch ensued. The Field Cornet denied that any such order had been given by Commandant Botha, and that, had any orders at all been given, they referred merely to papers and to the removal of side arms and ammunition. I pointed out to him the bodies of five of our men whose pockets had been turned inside out, and who were at that moment being brought up under an escort of the enemy. He was also confronted with three wounded who declared that they had had their personal effects stolen as they lay about the Boer trenches, their rings taken from their fingers, and their money taken from their pockets. The Field Cornet then promised that if any man who had done such a thing could be identified he would be immediately punished, while the more reputable of those who gathered round us guaranteed, if not the restitution of the property, summary conviction for the offenders. And in this connection it must be said that during the course of the afternoon a Boer orderly came in, under a flag of truce, to our lines to restore to Bugler Morgan his silver watch and £3, which had been taken from him as he lay, shot through each thigh, in the trenches of the enemy.

Very striking was the tone of harmony which characterised this temporary intercourse upon the field of battle between Boer and Briton. People who had been pitted against each other in mortal combat the moment before were now fraternising with every outward sign of decency and amity. This is doubtless due in some measure to the strange composition of the two contending forces, since so many upon the one side have friends and even relatives fighting against them that it seems the most natural thing in the world for any mutual acquaintance of one particular individual to make inquiries about his welfare. These greetings impressed the scene with a note of pleasantness and good feeling which was in most happy contrast to the surroundings.

XXI THE ADVENT OF THE NEW YEAR

MAFEKING, *January 3rd, 1900.*

New Year's Eve drew to itself much of the sentiment which is usually associated with that event. We perhaps did not ring the old year out and the new year in, because the sonorous clang of bells presages in these times the advent of shells. When the enemy lay their gun upon the town the bell at the outlook rings once; when its precise direction has been located it peals according to the number which has been given to that direction. Then there comes the firing-bell, by which time all good people should have taken cover. It will be seen, therefore, that the ringing of bells has a particular significance, and one from which it is inappropriate and inadvisable to depart. But our celebration of New Year's Eve was a quiet gathering of men drawn from the various points of the town, who assembled within the shadows of the English Church to sing a hymn and give voice to our National Anthem. It had been raining during the evening; the air was fresh and fragrant, and the ground was very damp. They came in their cloaks; they carried their rifles and wore their bandoliers, since it was not a time to chance the possibilities of an attack. There were perhaps one hundred of them, and

had it been convenient to allow a general muster, the whole garrison would have very willingly attended. When everything was ready the great stillness of the night was broken gently by a prelude from the harmonium, which, dropping to a low tone, became a mere accompaniment to the human voices. Then the volume of music grew somewhat fuller until it carried in its depths the voices of the singers merged into one torrent of stirring melody; then there was a fresh pause, and as the echoes of the hymn died away, lingering in the rafters of the building until countless spirits seemed to be taking up the refrain, the voice of the preacher broke out in words which manfully endeavoured to cheer the congregation. We stood and listened, rapt with an attention which gave more to the scene than to the exhortations of the man, and waiting for the time to sing the National Anthem. In these moments, when one is so far from the Queen and the capital of her great Empire, the singing of the National Anthem has a weight and meaning much finer and much greater than that imparted to the hymn when the words are sung at home. Presently the voices took up the hymn, throwing into the darkness of the church some whiteness of the dawn which will usher in the days of peace upon the termination of the war. The National Anthem, sang amid these surroundings, was incomparably beautiful, seeming to strengthen the irresolute, even cheering those who were already strong, and imparting to everyone a happier frame of mind and a greater spirit of contentment. Scenes on a smaller scale, but identical in purpose, were enacted at almost every one of our posts, and the hour of midnight must have borne to the watchful sentries of the enemy some slight knowledge of the pleasing duty upon which the garrison was engaged. It was only for a moment—just so long, indeed, as it took to sing the verses of the anthem. Then, when this was over, the harmony of night fell once more upon the garrison.

The New Year has brought to Mafeking and the garrison that is beleaguered within its walls, no signs of the fulfilment of the prophecy that relief would come by the end of December. Indeed, the closing year of the nineteenth century was ushered in with the boom of cannon and the fire of small arms, and in a style generally which does not differ from any one of the many days during which the siege and bombardment have lasted. There was no cessation of hostilities similar to that which characterised Christmas Day; firing began at an early hour in the morning from the enemy's artillery, and did not terminate until the evening gun gave a few hours' peace to the town. For quite a fortnight there has been no such heavy fire, and it would seem that, for our especial edification, the authorities in Pretoria had sent to the commandant of the Boer forces that are investing us, a New Year's gift of three waggon-loads of ammunition. A new gun was also despatched to them, and, its position being constantly shifted, its fire has since played upon every quarter of the town. For the moment we had attached no great importance to this new weapon, but after the first few rounds it was discovered to be employing what are called combustible bombs. These new shells do not usually explode, seeming to discharge a chemical liquid which ignites upon contact with the air. They are also filled with lumps of sulphur, and so severe might be the damage from this new agency of destruction which the Boers have turned against Mafeking that the most stringent orders have been issued for any one finding these shells to see that they are immediately buried. At present, beyond a few unimportant blazes in the gardens of the town, no damage has been caused, while, in the meantime, our situation here has in no way altered.

It would appear that our resistance is beginning to exasperate the enemy, driving him to a pitch in which he is determined to respect neither the Convention of Geneva nor the promptings of humanity. Again, despite the innumerable warnings which he has received, for two days in succession has he made the hospital and the women's laager the sole object of his attentions. Yesterday the shells fell sufficiently wide of these two places to justify the broad-minded in giving to his artillery officers the benefit of the doubt; but today it is impossible to find any extenuating circumstances whatever in his favour, and I very much regret to have to state that through the shelling of the women's laager many children's lives have been imperilled, many women wounded. From time to time every effort has been made to give to the gentler sex the most perfect immunity, but it would seem as though we can no longer consider as safe these poor innocent and helpless non-combatants. The children of some of the most respected and most loyal townspeople have been killed in this manner, just as they were romping within the trenches which encircle their retreat. For two hours this morning the Creusot and quick-firing guns of the enemy fired into the laager, creating scenes of panic and consternation which it is not fitting to describe. Nine one-hundred-pound shells burst within the precincts of that place in the space of an hour, and in palliation of this there is nothing whatever which can be said, since the enemy had posted a heliograph station upon a kopje a few thousand yards distant from the point of attack. As the big shells sped across the town to drop within the laager beyond, the enemy's signallers heliographed their direction to the emplacement of Big Ben. Our own signalling corps intercepted the messages from the enemy, reading out, from time to time, the purport of the flashes. The first shell was short, and the enemy's signallers worked vigorously. The second was too wide. The third fell within the laager itself, the pieces piercing, when it burst, a number of tents. To this shot the heliograph flashed a cordial expression of approval. These actions upon the part of the Boers, as repeatedly pointed out to them, make it almost impossible for us to regard our foe as other than one which is inspired with the emotions of a degraded people and the crude cruelty and vindictive animosity of savages. Just now, when the press of our feelings is beyond confinement, there is nothing but a universal wish that we may speedily be relieved and so enabled to enjoy the initiative against the Boers. When that moment comes it must not be forgotten that we have suffered bitterly, and in a way which must be taken as excusing any excesses which may occur.

As I returned from a visit to the women's laager Colonel Baden-Powell was lying in his easy-chair beneath the roof of the verandah of the Headquarters Office. Colonel Baden-Powell is young, as men go in the army, with a keen appreciation of the possibilities of his career, swayed by ambition, indifferent to sentimental emotion. In stature he is short, while his features are sharp and smooth. He is eminently a man of determination, of great physical endurance and capacity, and of extraordinary reticence. His reserve is unbending, and one would say, quoting a phrase of Mr. Pinero's, that fever would be the only heat which would permeate his body. He does not go about freely, since he is tied to his office through the multitudinous cares of his command, and he is chiefly happy when he can snatch the time to escape upon one of those nocturnal, silent expeditions, which alone calm and assuage the perpetual excitement of his present existence. Outwardly, he maintains an impenetrable screen of self-control, observing with a cynical smile the foibles and caprices of those around him. He seems ever bracing himself to be on guard against a moment in which he

should be swept by some unnatural and spontaneous enthusiasm, in which by a word, by an expression of face, by a movement, or in the turn of a phrase, he should betray the rigours of the self-control under which he lives. Every passing townsman regards him with curiosity not unmixed with awe. Every servant in the hotel watches him, and he, as a consequence, seldom speaks without a preternatural deliberation and an air of decisive finality. He seems to close every argument with a snap, as though the steel manacles of his ambition had checkmated the emotions of the man in the instincts of the officer. He weighs each remark before he utters it, and suggests by his manner, as by his words, that he has considered the different effects it might conceivably have on any mind as the expression of his own mind. As an officer, he has given to Mafeking a complete and assured security, to the construction of which he has brought a very practical knowledge of the conditions of Boer warfare, of the Boers themselves, and of the strategic worth of the adjacent areas. His espionage excursions to the Boer lines have gained him an intimate and accurate idea of the value of the opposing forces and a mass of *data* by which he can immediately counteract the enemy's attack. He loves the night, and after his return from the hollows in the veldt, where he has kept so many anxious vigils, he lies awake hour after hour upon his camp mattress in the verandah, tracing out, in his mind, the various means and agencies by which he can forestall their move, which, unknown to them, he had personally watched. He is a silent man, and it would seem that silence has become in his heart a curious religion. In the noisy day he yearns for the noiseless night, in which he can slip into the vistas of the veldt, an unobtrusive spectator of the mystic communion of tree with tree, of twilight with darkness, of land with water, of early morn with fading night, with the music of the journeying winds to speak to him and to lull his thoughts. As he makes his way across our lines the watchful sentry strains his eyes a little more to keep the figure of the colonel before him, until the undulations of the veldt conceal his progress. He goes in the privacy of the night, when it be no longer a season of moonlight, when, although the stars were full, the night be dim. The breezes of the veldt are warm and gentle, impregnated with the fresh fragrances of the Molopo, although, as he walks with rapid, almost running, footsteps, leaving the black blur of the town for the arid and stony areas to the west, a new wind meets him—a wind that is clear and keen and dry, the wind of the wastes that wanders for ever over the monotonous sands of the desert. It accompanies him as he walks as though to show and to whisper with gentle gusts that it knew of his intention. It sighs amid the sentinel trees that stand straight and isolated about the Boer lines. He goes on, never faltering, bending for a moment behind a clump of rocks, screening himself next behind some bushes, crawling upon his hands and knees, until his movements, stirring a few loose stones, create a thin, grating noise in the vast silence about him. His head is low, his eyes gaze straight upon the camp of the enemy; in a little he moves again, his inspection is over, and he either changes to a fresh point or startles some dozing sentry as he slips back into town.

MAFEKING, *January 10th, 1900.*

During the time which has elapsed since Christmas an interesting event has been the deposition of Wessels, the chief of the Baralongs. At a *kotla* of the tribe, to which the councillors and petty chiefs were bidden by the Civil Commissioner, Mr. Bell notified the tribe of his decision. The deposed chief, a man of no parts whatever, but one who unfortunately reveals all the vices of civilisation, has been put upon sick-leave, the reins of government being placed in the hands of his two chief councillors. Wessels had been instigating his tribe to refuse to work for the military authorities here, and through his instrumentality it has become difficult to obtain native labour and native runners. He told them in his amiable fashion that the English wished to make slaves of them, and that they would not be paid for any services which they rendered; nor would they, added he, taking advantage of an unfortunate turn in the situation, be given any food, but left to starve when the critical moment came. With the change which had been adopted and which has been given the sanction of the *kotla*, it is hoped that matters may progress more smoothly and the tribe itself increase in prosperity. It was an interesting meeting, and one which recalled the early days of Africa, when the authority of the great White Queen was not a power paramount in the council chambers of the tribes. Wessels, unwilling and assuming an air of injured dignity, filled his place in the *kotla* for the last time; around him there were the chiefs of the tribe, his blood relatives, and his councillors. Their attire was a weird mixture of effete savagery and of the civilisation of the sort which is picked up from living in touch with white Africa and missionary societies. Many black legs were clothed in trousers, many black shoulders wore coats. Here and there, as relics of the past, there was the ostrich feather in the hat, the fly whisk, composed of the hairs from the tail of an animal, the iron or bone skin-scraper with which to remove the perspiration of the body. A few wore shoes upon naked feet, a few others sported watch-chains and spoke English. At the back of the enclosure there was a native guard who shouldered Martini-Henri rifles, elephant guns, Sniders, or sporting rifles. A few of these were garmented with skins of animals upon the naked body. After a stately and not altogether friendly greeting to the man who had ordered the assembly to meet, the reasons which had brought about the contemplated change in the head of the tribe were stated in English and then translated by the interpreter. The old chief snorted with disgust and endeavoured to coerce his people to reject the demands made upon them. But they had been made before a body of men who were capable of realising the worthlessness of their chief, and who, under the protection of the Imperial delegate, did not mind endorsing the suggestions and expressing their opinions. The younger and more turbulent, who recognised, in the failings of the chief, follies dear to their own hearts, were inclined to express sympathy for the man who was so soon to be compelled to relinquish the sweets of office. They spoke at once in an angry chatter and confused chortle of sounds, which, if eloquent, were wholly insufficient. The chief then threw himself back upon his chair, spat somewhat contemptuously, and finally acquiesced in the decision, obtaining some small consolation from the fact that his official allowance would not be discontinued. Then the *kotla* ended, and the indunas rose up and left, standing together in animated groups around the palisades, for the discussion of the scene in which they had just taken part. Then, as the decision spread throughout the

tribe, children and women, young and old, banded together to watch these final indabas.

The scene had been solemn enough beneath the *kotla* tree, but outside the natural instinct of these children of the veldt soon asserted itself, and they began to dance. They formed into small groups of about forty, to the sound of hand-clapping, a not unmusical intoning, and much jumping and stamping of feet. It would seem that they were dancing an old war-dance which had degenerated into one symbolical of love and happiness. Around the joyous groups the old crones circulated, clapping their withered hands, shrieking delight in cracked voices, and generally encouraging the festivity. The dance was curious, and appeared to catch echoes of many lands. There was the diffident maiden, anxious to be loved, but bashful, modest in her manner and in her gestures, until she saw the man that could thrill her; then she glowed, and her steps were animated, buoyant, and caressing. A smile irradiated her face, while a slight, almost imperceptible, movement pulsed through her body. Behind her were her companions, the same age as herself, who imitated her with feverish sympathy, instinctively reproducing her moods of body and of mind. The vibration that stole through the bodies of the dancers increased gradually until, from statues with wicked eyes, full of sensuous expression and amorous allurements, they wavered like thin flames of love in a gust of passion. As the potency of their feelings grew steadily stronger, they swayed in languorous movements, throwing out sinuous arms, their feeble faces smiling, their graceful bodies bending in eager attitudes of expectation. The air became heavy with noise, thick with a veritable tumult, as the dancers jumped more wildly; now they threw themselves into postures in the circle, shifting rapidly with tiny screams of delight and a gliding, clinging motion of their arms and legs as though, coy and eager, they would escape the cherished caresses of their lovers. As they glided, their actions seemed always to be marked with the same regularity, with the same regard to rhythm, and with an innate conception of grace. When they shook their bodies it was with an abandonment that was, at least, graceful; if they stood, rocking in a sea of easy emotion, as though victorious, they would hug their capture with an air of conquest which was delightful to behold. As they rose to the pinnacle of their happiness, when their countenances were suffused with love and tenderness, they infused into their emotions an appearance of sadness. It was as though a cloud had suddenly fallen upon them, revealing to them that their endearments had been abortive, that their ambitions were not to be realised and that they themselves had been flouted. Then there stole upon them the incarnation of sorrow, in which, finding themselves alone, uncared for, unconsidered, they resolved, in a burst of artificial tears, to have done with giddiness, and to take up with the delights of placid domesticity. Then the dance terminated, she, who had by her graceful contortions and sympathetic bearing moved her audience to laughter and tears first, being considered the victorious. Thus did these simple natives celebrate the new era.

If dancing be one form of amusement here, the siege has also brought the means and opportunity of indulging in a pastime of quite a different character. If sniping be the rule by day, cattle raiding by night gives to the natives some profitable employment. During last night the Baralongs secured, by a successful raid, some twenty-four head of cattle, and in the course of last week another raiding detachment looted some eighteen oxen. The native enjoys himself when he is able to participate in

some cattle-raiding excursion to the enemy's lines, and, although the local tribe may not have proved of much value as a unit of defence, their success at lifting the Boer cattle confers upon them a unique value in the garrison. We were deploring the pooriness of the cattle which remained at our disposal only a few days ago, but the rich capture which these natives have made has given us a welcome change from bone and skin to juicy beef. These night excursions are eagerly anticipated by the tribe, and almost daily is the consent of the Colonel sought in relation to such an object. During the day the natives who have been authorised by Colonel Baden-Powell to take part in the raid approach as near to the grazing cattle as discretion permits, marking down when twilight appears the position of those beasts that can be most readily detached from the mob. Then, when darkness is complete, they creep up, divested of their clothes, crawling upon hands and knees, until they have completely surrounded their prey. Then quietly, and as rapidly as circumstances will allow them, each man "gets a move on" his particular beast, so that in a very short space of time some ten or twenty cattle are unconsciously leaving the main herd. When the raiders have drawn out of earshot of the Boer lines they urge on their captures, running behind them and on either side of them, but without making any noise whatsoever. As they reach their stadt, their approach having been watched by detached bodies of natives, who, lying concealed in the veldt, had taken up positions by which to secure the safe return of their friends, the tribes go forth to welcome them, and when the prizes have been inspected and report duly made to Headquarters they celebrate the event with no little feasting and dancing. Upon the following day merriment reigns supreme, and for the time the siege is forgotten.

XXIII BOMBAST AND BOMB-PROOFS

MAFEKING, *January 20th, 1900.*

Yesterday we completed the first hundred days of our siege, and when we look back beyond the weeks of our investment into those earlier days it is difficult to realise the trials and difficulties which we have undergone, and to believe that the period which has elapsed has witnessed the inauguration of a new era for South Africa. In those early days when we first came here Mafeking was a flourishing commercial centre, contented with its position, proud of its supremacy over other towns, and now, perhaps, if outwardly it be much the same, its future is impressed with only the faint echo of its former greatness. The town itself has not suffered very much; here and there its area has been more confined for purposes of defence, while the streets and buildings bear witness to the effects of the bombardment. Houses are shattered, gaping holes in the walls of buildings, furrows in the roads, broken trees, wrecked telegraph poles, and that general appearance of destruction which marks the path of a cyclone are the outward and visible signs of the enemy's fire. We shall leave in Mafeking a population somewhat subdued and harassed with anxiety for their future,

since the public and private losses will require the work of many anxious years before any restoration of the fallen fortunes can be effected. The pity of it is that all this distress might have been so easily avoided, and would have been, had the authorities in Cape Town and at home taken any heed of the very pressing messages which were despatched daily to them; but it was decreed that Mafeking should shift for itself for so long as it was able, and then—surrender. This, however, did not meet with the approval of Colonel Baden-Powell, with the result that we are still fighting and still holding our own. We have even achieved some little place in the sieges of the world, and our present record has already surpassed many of the more prominent sieges. But there is not much consolation to be gained from contemplating the position which we may eventually take up in the records of famous sieges, and, truth to tell, there is such glorious uncertainty about the date of our relief that it is perhaps possible that we may surpass the longest of historic sieges. At one time we confidently anticipated that the siege would be over in ten days. This, however, was in the days of our youth; since then we have learned wisdom, and eagerly seize opportunities of snapping up any unconsidered trifles in the way of bets which lay odds upon our being "out of the wood" in another month. Events are moving so slowly below that it does not seem as though we shall be relieved by the end of February. The relief column, which a month ago appeared almost daily in "Orders," is now no longer mentioned in polite society, although there be little reason to doubt that, at some very remote date, the troops may make their appearance here.

The early part of November witnessed the first attempt of the Commissariat to control the stocks of provisions in the town. All persons holding stocks of Kaffir corn, meal, crushed meal, yellow mealies, and flour, were ordered to declare the quantities and price at which they would be willing to dispose of them to the authorities. Captain Ryan, the Commissariat officer, was an energetic and painstaking individual, whose aim was to prove his department a financial success, and so rigidly did he adhere to this resolve that the questions involved by the Commissariat became amongst the most important of the siege. Traders claimed that the economy of the situation gave them a siege profit, since, as the Government had not been shrewd enough to lay down stores, those who had done this at their own risk, and upon their own initiative, should be permitted, at least, to make a margin of profit in proportion to the prices which they could obtain for their goods. This contention, however, was not upheld by the Commissariat officer, who at once became the best hated man in Mafeking. Oddly enough, although the Government would not allow the merchants to reap the profit, they themselves, in virtue of the expense in connection with the issue of rations, were not above charging these expenses to prime cost, and so exorbitantly increasing themselves the retail price of the articles which they had taken over. What was perhaps the most objectionable feature in the findings of the Commissariat Department was that the merchant himself who disposed of his goods to the Government at a ruling which allowed but the profit incidental to the transaction of business in times of peace, was compelled to buy back, when he required goods of that particular variety, at the price which the Government had placed upon them. This, of course, seemed to the people unfair, and they were quite unable to obtain any satisfactory explanation of such procedure; satisfactory because the reasons vouchsafed assumed the right of the Government to a certain profit, denying, however, that rate in the same ratio of proportion to the individual. Among the chief obstacles against which Captain Ryan

had to contend was the maintenance of the daily bread ration, since the supply of flour, of mealie meal, of oats, was not particularly great. There were many experiments made with the bread, but those which were most unsatisfactory failed because it had been found difficult to sift the husks from the oats once the oats had been crushed. While the issue of this particular bread lasted symptoms of acute dysentery prevailed, and in order to prevent an epidemic of dysentery from breaking out the Commissariat were compelled to adopt other methods of treatment. The bread eventually developed into a weighty circular brown biscuit, weighing anything under six ounces, about nine inches in circumference. These particular biscuits were less spiky, and less liable to create acute inflammation. They were issued to the entire garrison, excepting those who had been permitted to draw an invalid ration of white bread, and were preserved in many cases as mementoes of the siege. Although we have food enough to last several months this precaution is necessary, as when the siege is raised many weeks must elapse before supplies can come in. The garrison has been put upon a scale of reduced rations— $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of bread, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of meat per day. The reductions in bread took place in the early part of the year, while the orders in relation to the meat supply were issued during this week. Matches and milk are prohibited from public sale, and the latest order prevents the shops from opening. All supplies of biscuits, tea, and sugar—preserves also—have been commandeered. The shop-keepers and the hotel proprietors, and indeed anybody who can find any possible excuse for doing so, have trebled the price of their goods, pleading that the inflation is due to the siege. Accordingly, meal and flour have jumped from 27s. per bag to 50s.; potatoes, where they exist at all, are £2 per cwt.; fowls are 7s. 6d. each; and eggs 12s. per dozen. Milk and vegetables can no longer be obtained, and rice has taken the place of the latter among the menus. These figures mark the rise in the more important foodstuffs as sold across the counter, but the hotels have, in sympathy, followed the example, they, upon their part, attributing it to the increase which the wholesale merchants have decreed. A peg of whisky is 1s. 6d., dop brandy 1s., gin 1s., large stout is 4s., small beer 2s. In ordinary times whisky retails at 5s. per bottle. This rate has now advanced to 18s. per bottle and 80s. per case. Dop, which is usually 1s. 4d., is now 12s. per bottle; the difference upon beer is almost 200 per cent., and inferior cigarettes are now 18s. per hundred. Upon an inquiry among the publicans here, I was informed that the chief reason for the increase in their prices was to hinder the local soldiery from becoming intoxicated; this sudden regard for the moral welfare of the garrison on the part of the saloon keepers is however, oddly at variance with their earlier practices, and is in reality the flimsy pretext by which they seek to condone an almost unwarrantable act. Hitherto the constantly recurring evils arising from the sale of drink to soldiers and others performing military duties, have been openly encouraged by the hotel proprietors, who, although they now profess a fine appreciation for the moral obligations attached to their trade when prices are high and profits great, took no very serious steps at the outset to allay what was becoming a very serious menace to the community. Moreover, the hotels have demanded from such people as war correspondents and others brought here through business connected with the siege, rates which are far in advance of the ordinary tariffs, with equally preposterous demands for native servants and horse-feed. Indeed, whatever Mafeking may lose through the absence of business with the Transvaal, many will receive ample compensation from the high prices by which those who are able, are endeavouring to

recoup themselves, and in a way which it is not possible to consider other than extortionate. Stores of all kinds are, however, rapidly giving out, and it would not have been possible for Mafeking to have sustained the siege so long had not the Government contractor, upon his own initiative, laid in far greater stocks of provisions than were provided for by his contract, and in this respect every credit should be given to the commercial foresight and sagacity by which these arrangements were inspired. For everything which is in daily want, in fact for the bare necessities of life upon the existing scale of reduced rations, Mafeking now depends upon the stores and bonded warehouse which represent the local branch of the contracting firm, Messrs. Julius Weil & Co. In their hands lies the issuing of the daily allowances of bread and meat to the garrison, of the forage for the horses, of the feeding of the natives. Indeed, there seemed no end to the resources of this house. When the siege began, had there been no Weil, the Government stocks would not have lasted two months, and, moreover, they did not know that the Weils had laid in these stores—a fact which again establishes how very meagre were the preparations made for the siege. Therefore, when the time comes to give honour to whom honour is due, notice should be taken of the important *rôle* which this firm has fulfilled during the siege of Mafeking.

The siege drags on, however, the days seeming to be an endless monotony in which there is absolutely nothing to sustain one's interest. Week by week we make a united and laborious attempt to whip our flagging energies into some activity. It is a hideous spectacle, but this Sunday celebration reveals how very trying has become the situation. The military authorities have been at their wits' end to find amusement for the garrison, and this effort has developed into a Sabbatarian charade in which we all assume an active co-operation, and try to think that we are having a very giddy and even gushing time. Colonel Baden-Powell, in this respect, makes an admirable stage-manager. Authors, scenic artists, stage hands, scene shifters, there are, of course, none; but in the middle of the week the Chief Staff Officer becomes the town crier, crying lustily, by means of proclamation, that, by the grace of God, upon the coming Sunday there will be a golf match or baby show, a concert or polo match, even some attempt at amateur theatricals. The Sunday respite is, however, immensely appreciated, and, indeed, it is a very welcome panacea to our siege-strung nerves. Where in England you people are saying, "Oh, bother Sunday", "How like a Sunday", we say, "Thank God it is Sunday", implying, for that day in seven, a period of absolute rest and no little contentment. We are warriors on Sunday: bold, bad, and brave. We have our horses out on Sunday and take a toss as elegantly as we take our neighbour's money at cards in the evening, when fortune favours. We drink, we accept one another's invitations to meals of unsurpassing heaviness; we even invite ourselves to one another's houses. We drink, we eat, we flirt, we live in every second of the hours which constitute the Sunday, and upon the passing of the day it is as though we had entered into another world. As midnight arrives, we hasten back to our trenches filled with the good things of the day, even with the zest to penetrate the mysteries of another week of siege. In the morning we stand-to-arms at four o'clock, not because there is any special purpose for doing so, but rather that we may satisfy ourselves that we are soldiers; and then the labour of the day begins, and for six more days we stand-to-arms and wonder when the devil the enemy are coming on. We are very brave then, and at times we take ourselves so seriously that into each breast there comes the spirit of the Commander-in-Chief. Then we criticise the war, talk fatuously of what we would do, struggle somewhat

ingloriously with the archaic jargon of the army, until, if our speech betrays our ignorance, we, nevertheless, make a mighty lot of noise. Then we are satisfied, though doubtless each thinks the other somewhat of a fool.

To the man who looks on at all this, the gradual change which has come over the garrison is plainly discernible. In the beginning, when the Boers made war upon us, there was a contempt for bomb-proofs; there was a contempt for many other things besides, since each individual knew better than his Post Commander, and did not hesitate to tell him so, or rather to imply that he had told him so; but the scorn of bomb-proofs was mightier than the sword. In those days we feared nothing beyond mosquitoes and the creeping things of earth, but the change came silently, and although few people commented upon it, the transformation was completed within the first month of the siege. It grew, as it were, in a single night, from a village of mud-walled houses into one in which every other man owned something of a dug-out. For the first few days, while scorn of dug-outs was rife, he who built himself a haven kept it to his inner conscience, recalling it, when its existence was forced upon him, with something of an apologetic air. Thus we existed; then the staff built an underground room, and upon the Sunday that followed this momentous event many there were who visited it, and who, gathering wrinkles, went quietly to their gardens and did likewise. Thus insidiously came the transformation, and although there are still a few who talk disparagingly of these bomb-proof shelters, their faces wear an anxious look when the enemy are shelling, and strangely enough, as the fire waxes hotter, they easily find excuses to visit friends, lingering, the while, in the congenial gloom of their host's dug-out.

So greatly have ideas expanded upon this subject that at one of the hotels an underground dining-room is in course of construction. This is at Riesle's, whose proprietor, at last, has been induced to build his boarders—mostly war correspondents—a dug-out, since he had given places of shelter to the servants, to his native boys, and to his family, seemingly thinking that since the boarders kept the hotel going they could very easily shift for themselves. But then that is always the creed of the publican. These dug-outs are large excavations some ten by fourteen feet and seven feet deep, upon which there is placed a layer of iron rails which are procured from the railway yard; over these there is usually a layer of thick wooden sleepers, which again are covered over with sheets of corrugated iron. The earth from the hole is then piled up on this, and, after the dug-out has been inspected by the Town Commandant it is considered safe for habitation; a few cases and chairs equip it with certain accommodation, although there are a few into which trestle beds have been placed. It is not very healthy passing days and nights in these inverted earthworks, but it is eminently safe, and has been the sole means afforded us for escaping the enemy's fire. Fortunately the Boers have made no attempt to advance upon the town under cover of their guns, for if they did so we should have to stand-to-arms and face the music of the flying splinters. Every post has been supplied with one of these underground retreats, and quite the larger proportion of the townspeople have constructed private shelters for themselves.

XXIV
SOME SNIPING AND AN EXECUTION

MAFEKING, *January 31st, 1900.*

In itself the situation has not developed over much, but in relation to the siege there are two tragedies to chronicle. The Boers are still investing us, in more or less the same numbers, and with but little difference in the strength of their artillery. Sometimes we miss an individual piece, judging from its absence that it has been sent north to reinforce the Dutch who are endeavouring to circumvent the movements of Colonel Plumer's column. However, these periodical journeys of the five-pounder Krupp, the one-pounder Maxim, or the nine-pounder quick-firing Creusot do not last for any great time, and, as a matter of fact, Commandant Snyman has not permitted himself to be deprived of any one piece of artillery for much longer than a week. The garrison here, jumping at conclusions in the absence of any definite news, finds in these disappearances some slight consolation, since we at once affirm that Colonel Plumer must have arrived at some point in which the presence of the enemy's artillery is urgent and necessary.

The gun which we would very gladly spare is the one hundred-pounder Creusot, whose occasional removal from one emplacement to another is a source of much anxiety to everyone in the garrison. In the beginning of the siege—a date which is now very remote—"Big Ben" hurled its shells into this unfortunate town from an emplacement at Jackal Tree. In those days it was almost four miles distant, and we took but little notice of a gun which flung its projectiles from such a distant range. Those were the days in which we dug holes by night, and speculated rather feebly during the day upon the resisting power of the protection which we had thus thrown up. But the gun moved then to the south-eastern heights, a matter of barely 4,000 yards from the town, and of sufficient eminence to dominate every little corner. Those were the days in which we dug a little deeper and went round trying to borrow—from people who would not lend—any spare sacks, iron sleepers, or deals, so that our bomb-proofs might be still further strengthened. However, as time passed, we even got accustomed to the gun in its new position, and, much as ever, there were many who felt inclined to promenade during lapses in the enemy's shell fire. Now, however, this wretched gun has again been moved, and, according to those who know the country, is within two miles of the town—a little matter under 3,000 yards.

In accordance with the fresh position of the Creusot gun we have been compelled to extend our eastern defences in order that we may, at least, direct an artillery fire upon their advanced trenches. To the north-east and south-east we have put forward our guns and to the south-east have increased a detachment of sharpshooters, who, from a very early date in the siege, have occupied a position in the river-bed. These men are only two hundred yards from the sniping posts of the Boers, and through the cessation of hostilities upon Sundays, they have grown to recognise one another. Sunday has thus also brought to the snipers an opportunity of discovering what result their mutual fire has achieved during the week, and, when from time to time a figure is missing, either side recognise that to their marksmanship, at least, that much credit is due. Among the Boers who occupied the posts in the brickfields were many old men,

one of whom, from his venerable mien, his bent and tottering figure, his long white beard, and his grey hair, was called grandfather. He had become so identified with these posts in the brickfields that upon Sundays our men would shout out to him, some calling him Uncle Paul, others grandfather, and when the old fellow heard these remarks he would turn and gaze at our trench in the river-bed, wondering possibly, as he stroked his beard, brushed his clusters of hair from his forehead, or wiped his brow, what manner of men those snipers were. He has been known to wave his hat when in a mood more than usually benign; then we would wave our hats and cheer, while he, once again perplexed, would, taking his pipe from his pocket, slowly retrace his steps to his trench. The old man was a remarkably good shot, and from his post has sent many bullets through the loopholes in our sandbags. He would go in the early morning to his fort and he would return at dusk, but in the going and coming he, alone of the men who were opposing us, was given a safe passage. One day, however, as the Red Cross flag came out from the fort, we, looking through our glasses, saw them lift the body of grandfather into the ambulance. That night there was a funeral, and upon the following day we learnt that he had been their best marksman. For ourselves, we were genuinely sorry.

Yesterday there occurred another of those acts of war which illustrate in such a very striking fashion the silent tragedies which are enacted, and with which perforce many unwilling people are connected, during the progress of a campaign. There are, of course, many issues to the career of a soldier, and perhaps not the least important of these is the arduous and very dangerous task of collecting intelligence. In the ranks of society, men who are known to be spies are regarded with silent contempt, and ostracised from the circle of their acquaintances, so soon as their calling is ascertained; but the duties of a military spy differ in almost every respect from the individual who becomes a social reformer. In the field the military spy carries his life in his hand, since his capture implies an almost immediate execution without any possibility of reprieve. Last night such an occurrence took place at sundown, when, as the sun sank to its setting, a native, who had been caught within our lines, and who confessed to be an emissary of the Boers, was taken out and shot.

The spy was a young man, and a native of the stadt, which is a portion of Mafeking, and one who had accepted the work of carrying information to the enemy because he did not sufficiently realise the punishment which would fall upon him, were he to be captured. His instructions from the Boers had been remarkably explicit, and the sphere of his activities embraced our entire position. He was to visit the forts, counting the number of men, and taking special notice of those to which guns had been attached. He was to report upon the strength of the garrison, the condition of our horses, the supplies of foodstuffs, and he was to stay within Mafeking for about ten days. He was captured a fortnight ago, as he was creeping in, snatching cover from the bushes and rocks which spread over the south-eastern face of the town. When he was caught, as though momentarily realising the possibilities of his fate, he at first refused to say who he was, whence he came, or what had been his purpose. However, among the native patrol that had so successfully surprised him were some who knew him, whereupon he stated that he was simply returning to the stadt. In the earlier part of the siege almost every native who came across the lines gave this same excuse, until the suspicion was forced upon us that the Baralongs were acting in conjunction with

the enemy. However, this was not proved to be the case, the chief repudiating the suggestion and disclaiming any authority over those natives who happened to be beyond the lines at the outbreak of the war. Nevertheless, it had been impossible to prevent the Boers receiving information through native sources, and for the future, there remained no alternative but that which implied the immediate execution of captured spies. An increase in the Cossack posts at night somewhat checked the mass of information which was carried to the Boers across our lines, and in an earlier instance, when a native came in from the Boer camp and said that the big gun had been taken away that morning upon a waggon, he was given the benefit of forty-eight hours' grace, with the understanding that, should the gun fire during that period, he would be at once sentenced to death. For a day this man watched the emplacement of the big gun, and twenty-four hours passed without Mafeking receiving any shells from it. The day following was half over, and it was about noon, when the Boers disproved the story which they had instructed their spy to tell, and fired into the town. The man then confessed that his errand had been inimical, and that he himself was hostile to our interests. At dusk the sentence of the Summary Court of Jurisdiction was carried out, and that spy was shot. But this other at no time seemed to understand the gravity of his offence, and when we captured him he informed his captors and the Court that he himself had meant no harm. However, he confessed, endeavouring to minimise his offence by showing that at the moment of his capture he had gathered no information, yet his pleas were futile, and he at last seemed to understand that his doom was sealed. From then, as he returned to the prison to await the execution of his sentence, he said nothing more.

Last night the shooting party came for him, marching him to a secluded point upon the south-eastern face, and there they halted him, a silent figure in a wilderness of rock and scrub. Around him there was the scene of the veldt at eventide. There was the gorgeous, flaming sunset, its ruddy gold turning the azure of the sky to clouds of purple, pale orange, and a deeper blue. Here and there the heavens were flecked with fleecy clouds, which gambolled gently before the breeze. In the distance lay the green-clad veldt, simmering a russet brown beneath the glories of the sunset. At our feet it sloped, breaking into rocky sluits, banked up with bushes; over all there was the zephyr, tempering the heat. It was a moment meant for rejoicing in the beauty of earth's loveliness rather than for dimming it with the sadness of some crimson act. Presently we arrived, and as we bent across the slope the blood-stream of passing sunlight played around the shallow heap of earth, thrown out from this man's final resting-place. It was visible, much as were the deeper shadows of the excavation some seventy yards away, when, as though wishing to spare the prisoner, his eyes were bandaged by the officers of the party. With that a sudden silence fell upon us, and each seemed to feel that he were walking within the shadows of the valley of death. The prisoner, supported on either arm, stumbled in the partial blindness of the bandage, seeming, now that his last hour was at hand, to be more careless, more light-hearted than any of the party. Then we halted, and he was asked whether there were anything further which he wished to say, and he was warned for the last time. He shook his head somewhat defiantly, but his lips moved, and in his heart one could almost hear the muttered curses. Then for a space he stood still, and a few yards distant, in fact some ten paces, the firing party formed across his front. There were six of them, with a corporal and the officer in command of the post, and there was that other, who in a

little was to pay the penalty of his crime. There was a moment of intense silence as we waited for the sun to set, in which the nerves seemed to be but little strings of wire, played upon by the emotions. Unconsciously, each seemed to stiffen, as we waited for the word of the officer, feeling that at every pulsation one would like to shriek "Enough, enough!" As we stood the prisoner spoke, unconscious of the preparations, and the officer approached him. He wanted, he said, to take a final glance at the place that he had known since his childhood. His prayer was granted, and as he faced about, the bandage across his eyes was, for a few brief minutes, dropped upon his neck. In that final look he seemed to realise what he was suffering. The stadt lay before him, the place of his childhood, the central pivot round which his life had turned, bathed in a sunset which he had often seen before, and which he would never see again. There were the cattle of his people, there were the noises of the stadt, the children's voices, the laughter of the women, and there was the smoke of his camp fires. It was all his once—he lived there and he was to die there, but to die in a manner which was strange and horrible. Then he looked beyond the stadt and scanned the enemy's lines. Tears welled in his eyes, and the force of his emotion shook his shoulders. But again he was himself: the feeling had passed, and he drew himself erect. Then once more the bandage was secured, and he faced about. The sun was setting, and as the officer stepped back and gave his orders, a fleeting shudder crossed the native's face. Bayonets were fixed, the men were ready and the rifles were presented. One gripped one's palms. "Fire!" said the officer. Six bullets struck him—four were in the brain.

XXV

LIFE IN THE BRICKFIELDS

MAFEKING, *February 3rd, 1900.*

The main occupation of the garrison just now is to speculate upon the progress of the work of trench-building, which is being rapidly pushed forward in the brickfields upon the south-eastern face of the town. It is eminently a safe occupation, since our activity in that quarter is absorbing the almost undivided attentions of the enemy in the adjacent trenches, and therefore giving to the town an enjoyable and protracted respite from rifle fire. This, however, exists throughout the day only, since night is made hideous and uncomfortable by the heavy fire which the enemy turn upon it, and which is returned, with very pleasing promptitude, by the town forts and the occupants of the trenches in the brickfields. The area of war, localised thus as it is in the brickfields, is an interesting testimony to the progress of our arms here in Mafeking. We began the siege by abandoning this position and with it the very excellent sniping opportunities it gave to the Boers. The 8,000 men that Commandant Cronje had with him in those early days, made it impossible for our small garrison to hold, with any prospect of success, positions so far outlying from the front of the town. It is, however, quite a different thing to occupy those trenches to-day, since the veldt intervening in the rear, has now been carefully protected, and we advance not at all until the post which is in occupation at the moment, has been securely fortified and connected with adjacent outposts by well-covered trenches. We are now, after almost

six months' siege, some 1,700 yards in advance of the town, and the south-eastern outposts, as these brickfield forts are called, constitute our most outlying positions around beleaguered Mafeking.

Very gradually, and with infinite pains and labour, we have sapped from town until the company of Cape Boys that is posted in the "Clayhole," under Sergeant Currie, is within two hundred yards of the Boers' main trench—a point from which one may hear at times our enemy holding animated discussions upon his failure to capture Mafeking. When war was first declared Commandant Cronje threw strong detachments of sharpshooters into the brick kilns which we ourselves now hold, and at this present moment, there is no position in those which we have seized, that was not originally in possession of the Boers. Innumerable traces exist of their temporary occupation, and where it has been possible we have preserved these; so that the town itself may at some future date be able to see the remains of the Boer investment. These little facts give to our work here a greater significance, insomuch that it may be assumed that an enemy who has been fortunate enough to secure for himself a strong position, is not so foolish as to abandon it voluntarily. This, of course, is quite the case, and many have been the occasions when the town has been able to watch affairs between outposts being briskly contested in these very trenches.

Nothing is quite so pleasant, so invigorating, nor quite so dangerous as life in these brickfield posts. Inspector Marsh, Cape Police, in whom the command of the south-eastern outposts has been invested, most kindly permitted me to join his quarters. We are aroused in the morning as the day breaks by a volley from the Boer trenches, and in all probability the derisive shout, "Good morning, Mr. damned Englishman!" to which the Cape Boys usually return the salutation of "Stinkpots!" which is the euphonious rendering of a Dutch word calculated to give, more especially when coming from a nigger, the utmost possible offence. The day may then be said to have begun, although, between this and any further ceremonies, there is usually a mutual cessation of hostilities, in order that each side may enjoy a cup of matutinal coffee. The coffee is made in town and brought out, since orders are exceedingly strict against the lighting of fires on outposts. Sometimes the day proves long, but usually it is one of an exciting character, and one in which it behoves the men to move with the utmost care. The enemy would seem to have filled their advanced trench with a number of picked sharpshooters; for it is quite an ordinary occurrence for them to fire, at five hundred yards range, through our loopholes; nor are these chance shots, for there is one man who seems to put the bullets precisely where he wishes, since, at least once during the day, he will test the accuracy of his aim by emptying his entire chamber through one porthole. Such sharpshooting compels one to move with a large amount of precaution, since if so much as a finger be shown above the top of the sandbags there is every likelihood of it being perforated by a Mauser bullet. But if this be the manner of our existence, the Boers do not take any risks either, and move between their portholes with the greatest precaution, until this system of watching one another may be said to have developed a class of work which consists principally of lying upon one's stomach in readiness to fire—if there should occur the slightest opportunity.

Sometimes, if the day be quiet, we creep from trench to trench, even venturing to the river; but upon the whole, however, there is not much of this visiting

accomplished, since the Boers have the habit of attempting to lull us into security and then spoiling the delusion with a well-directed volley. Recently the advanced trenches of the Boers were so heavily reinforced that we expected an attack upon the brickfields; in fact, one night we were almost positive that the enemy were about to make an attempt to wrest this position from us. They did not do so, nor have they made any night attack, since the Dutchman does not like to meet his enemy by night, unless he himself is ensconced safely behind some sacks and his foe in the open. Upon such an occasion he will fire until his ammunition is expended. However, we expected them, and although they made no advance, they poured in at daybreak, at somewhat under four hundred yards range, a most terrific fire. They turned upon us a 9-lb. Krupp, a 5-lb. Creusot, a 3-lb. Maxim, and about five hundred rifles. It was an amazing morning and a most interesting experience, while for some hours afterwards the air seemed to ring with the droning notes of the Martinis and the sharp crackle of the Mauser. Of course we fired back, since we never allowed the Dutchmen to turn their guns upon us without treating the gun emplacements and embrasures to several volleys. It is good sometimes to impress upon the Boers the uselessness of their efforts. Out here in these brickfields we appear to be upon the edge of a new world, with the limits of the old one just below. Mafeking itself is only 1,700 yards distant, but the undulating ground, the rocky ridges, the simmering heat, and the mirage give rise to the impression that the town, of which the brickfields is the outpost, is many miles away. We live a peaceful, almost serene existence, disturbed only by the hum of passing bullets. There is no pettiness of spirit, no mutual bickerings, no absurd jealousies; one does not hear anything of the clash between the civil and military elements. That is all below us in the little town which sits upon the rising slopes with that appearance of chaos and despair which now mark its daily existence. Black care is not here, and thank heaven for it; for indeed a luxury beyond comparison is the quiet and peaceful day.

Mafeking at last is siege-weary—and, oh, so hungry! It seems months since any one had a meal which satisfied the pangs that gnaw all day. We have been on starvation rations for so many weeks that time has been forgotten, and now there seems the prospect of no immediate help forthcoming! We are so sick of it, so tired of the malaria, diphtheria, and typhoid that claim a list as great almost as that caused by the enemy's shell and rifle fire! We ask, When will the end be? and then we shrug our shoulders and begin to swear; for we have such sorrows in our midst, such suffering women and such ailing children as would turn a saint to blasphemies!

XXVI

FROM BAD TO WORSE

MAFEKING, *February 7th, 1900.*

At a moment when the entire garrison, perhaps, excluding the military chiefs, was eagerly anticipating some announcement which would determine the date of an immediate relief, intelligence has come to hand, in a communication from Field-Marshal Lord Roberts himself, informing the inhabitants of Mafeking that he expects

them to hold out until the middle of May. Since the beginning of the year the town has lulled itself into a sense of security by endeavouring to believe that at some early date the garrison would be relieved. But now, if it were possible to find "a last straw" to break the spirits of the townsmen, it is contained in the unfortunate telegram which Colonel Baden-Powell received from Lord Roberts. To hold out until the middle of May, it can well be longer, is to ask us to endure further privations, and to maintain an existence in a condition which is already little removed from starvation, and at a moment when the great majority of the civilian combatants, if not of all classes, are "full up" of the siege. For the past month we have been living upon horseflesh, although at first these unfortunate animals were slaughtered only in the interests of the foodless natives, and whatever gastronomic satisfaction may be culled by us now in eating what in more ordinary circumstances has done duty as a horse, it is none the less a hardship and a damned and disagreeable dish.

The effect of the announcement has been to increase the gloom and depression which for some weeks has been noticeable among those civilians whose businesses have been ruined; who are separated from and unable to communicate with their families, and who themselves have been impressed into the defence of the town. During this state of war they are unable to earn anything, and it is quite beyond their power to pay even the most perfunctory attention to their businesses; but now with this statement buzzing in the brain like an angry bee, can they not be excused if they cry out, "Enough, enough," and feel depressed and sick of the whole siege? Within a few weeks we shall be entering the sixth month of the siege, and already the severity of our daily life is beginning to tell, and indeed has already told upon many. But now that we have come so far through the wood, when we have fought by day and by night, when we have been sick with fever and pressed by hunger, when we have been harassed by bad news, and the conviction, through the absence of any cheering information, that all was not well with us down below, it would be a monstrous misfortune if we cannot survive the pangs of hunger and the torments of starvation until the long-promised relief arrives in the middle of May. If we do succeed, those who come through alive will have a tale to tell, in which there will be much which will remain buried, since there are experiences which, when they have been lived through, it is impossible to talk about.

If we were only just ourselves, merely the defenders of a town against an enemy, we could endure our privations, our short rations, and our condemned water with even greater fortitude. The men live hard lives in Africa, and their constitutions are strong, their nerves firm. But they hate, as all men hate, in all parts of the world, that their womenfolk should suffer, and here is the misery of our situation, more especially that these gentle creatures should suffer before their own eyes, when they themselves can do nothing for them. Aye, indeed, there's the rub. A hard life is always hardest upon women, and, unlike the Australasian colonies, and Canada, or the Western States of America, and all places where women who lead colonial life have no black labour to rely upon, the women in Africa are curiously incapable, delegating a multitudinous variety of domestic duties to the natives they employ. Their sphere of daily activity, so far as it is in relation to their household, is reduced to a minimum, while consciously or through the absence of some active pursuit by which they could occupy their mind and exercise their bodies, their view of life is petty and impressed with prejudices and

absurd jealousies. Moreover, they are abnormally lazy; indeed, to one who has lived in Australasia, America, Africa, India, and elsewhere, and has experience of life in those colonies, the lassitude and indolence of the South African woman is one of the most striking aspects of the daily life in Africa. In Natal this weariness is called the "Natal sickness," and in Mafeking at the present juncture it is responsible for a great deal of the discontent, the unwillingness to make the best of an exceedingly trying situation.

Without the feminine element in Mafeking, the civil and military authorities would be in better accord, but with a pack of women and children in an insanitary laager, caring nothing for the exigencies of the situation, firmly believing that they are oppressed by design and deliberately maltreated, and, rising up in their wrath, smiting the Colonel, the Chief Staff Officer, indeed, the entire Headquarters' Staff, or any military and official unit that comes unfortunately into contact with them, the worry and annoyance caused to the garrison at large by their presence here at this juncture is eminently worse than the most fearsome thing it is possible to conceive. Of course, one sympathises in all sincerity with these unfortunate non-combatants, for they live amid conditions which produce and promote typhoid, malaria, and diphtheria—diseases that have been peculiarly virulent, and from which many women and children have died.

Apart from the fatalities from shell and rifle fire, there is the list of those who have died from the hardships which they have had to experience. Strong men have dropped off from typhoid, women and children contracting the same disease, or one which by its nature is similarly fatal, have been unable to bear up. The smiling and happy children that one knew in the early days are no longer such; they are thin, emaciated, bloodless, and live amid conditions which have already wrought sad havoc among their companions. The mortality among the women and children must form part of the general conditions of the siege, but it is peculiarly disheartening to the townsmen as they stand to their posts and their trenches to be compelled to ponder and to reflect sadly that the fell diseases which have killed the wives and children of so many might, at any moment, attack those members of their own family who are confined in the pestilential trenches of the laager. The unfortunate condition of these poor people here, as well as in Kimberley, has brought the suggestion to my mind that it should not be too late for either the Commander-in-Chief, or someone identified with his authority, to make overtures to the Boers, so that we, and even the garrison in Kimberley, might be permitted to send, in the one case our women and children to Bulawayo, and in the other case, to Capetown. It could surely be arranged, and if it were possible it would ensure a little greater happiness, a little greater comfort, falling to the lot of these poor people, who are unable to take, through lack of adequate remedies, the simplest precautions against the dangers which assail their own health and the lives of their children. But if our friends the Boers think that because of these straits we are disheartened they make a very grievous mistake. We propose to endure and we intend to carry the siege on until the end. Nothing so exemplifies the true tone of the garrison and the spirit of the men as this determination in which we one and all share and for which we mutually agree to co-operate.

Despite the heavy burden of domestic trouble which presses down upon the townspeople, there has been a remarkable absence of any open friction between the civilian element and military at present gathered in Mafeking. The military authorities

should be the first to recognise this and to appreciate the ready acquiescence and assistance which they have received from the inhabitants of the town. That at least they do acknowledge the importance of duties fulfilled, and the spirit with which they have been carried out, should be a conclusion against which it would be absurd to tilt. Nothing can underestimate the consideration which the townspeople, under conditions adverse to their interests, and for which the military authorities are entirely responsible, have shown for the vigours of martial law and the present military domination. Compensation would be so materially insufficient that it cannot be said that any one individual has stayed here for the purpose of receiving such emoluments as would be to him some kind of a profit. The economy of Governmental compensation is never known to be satisfactory—Government in its impersonal attributes being universally recognised as a most niggardly paymaster. They therefore, those who have stayed, apart from the delusions under which they suffered, can be said to have remained because they wished, as colonists, to prove their loyalty; and yet, when one looks back upon the siege and considers carefully the manner in which they have been imposed upon by their own Government, it is very questionable if ever so great a test was applied to the spirit of mind and body which constitutes allegiance to a sovereign. Fortunately the town cannot say that it has performed more than its share of the defence work. Indeed, for the most part the services of the townsmen have been restricted, so far as was possible, to a connection with forts which have been constructed upon the boundaries of the town, and have not been thrust forward in preference to the men of the Protectorate Regiment, who, following the profession of arms, can properly be expected to bear the brunt of the fighting. It was thought at one time that the strange assortment of human nature which had collected in or was drawn to Mafeking might be difficult of management; but mixed as is the population here at present, the doubtful element, which is one that sympathising with the enemy might create dissatisfaction among others, has been singularly subdued. There are many instances here in Mafeking of men who have taken up arms in defence of the town in which their business and their domestic ties are centred, and who, to do this, have had to fight against their own blood relatives. We have had therefore, in a sense, many men who, while apparently loyal and engaged in manning the trenches, were yet under constant supervision, lest they should give way to their feelings and too openly proclaim their sympathies with the Boer cause; but there have been few desertions, and affairs in general between Englishman and Dutchman, between the civilian and military, have passed off with greater harmony than was altogether anticipated. Mistrust between Englishmen of pronounced Imperial sympathies and colonials suspected of Dutch leanings has been the cause of a certain amount of jealousy, which tended to make the defence of Mafeking a work of, by no means, a pleasant nature. However much this feeling of difference, creating and causing in itself an acute tension between the pro-Imperial and the colonial, has given rise to, or has been the sole cause of, any ill-feeling which may have marked the relations between the civil and military, it has at no time assumed proportions grave enough to foster the opinion that its prevalence might endanger in time the commonweal of the inhabitants and threaten with strife the daily intercourse of the various units in the garrison.

XXVII

THE FIRST ATTACK UPON THE BRICKFIELDS

MAFEKING, *February 14th, 1900.*

In the history of the siege of Mafeking there should stand forth an event as remarkable to posterity, if, perhaps, not quite so historical, as the famous ball which was given by the Duchess of Richmond on the eve of Waterloo. It may be, indeed, a trite comparison, since its only relationship is contained in the fact that the officers were called away to the field of battle; but, with so much uncertainty in European circles upon the conditions of the garrison, this fact and its issues tend to show the spirit with which the town is sustaining its precarious existence. Although we have some 3,000 Boers around us, with twelve different varieties of artillery, and despite the steady increase in fatalities from shot and shell which marks each day, we can yet stimulate our flagging spirits to a pitch in which a ball is accepted and welcomed as an essential to the conditions of the siege. A mere detail, yet one of sufficiently striking importance and showing how very sombre and how serious is the daily situation, will perhaps be found in the postponement of this ball from Saturday night until the succeeding evening—a proceeding which was rendered necessary by the death of a popular townsman from a 100-pound shell in the course of the previous morning. Recent Sundays have revealed a tendency, upon the part of the enemy, to ignore that generous and courteous concession to a beleaguered garrison which General Cronje granted, by professing his willingness to observe the Sabbath, insomuch that the Boers have maintained rifle fire until 5 in the morning, commencing again at any moment after 9 o'clock at night. This Sunday was no exception, and we had the usual matutinal volleys.

Towards 8 o'clock in the evening the streets near the Masonic Hall presented an animated, even a gay, picture. Officers in uniform and ladies in charming toilettes were making their way to the scene of the festivity, each with a careless happiness which made it impossible to believe that within a thousand yards of the town were the enemy's lines. Immense cheering greeted the strains of "Rule Britannia," played by the band of the Bechuanaland Rifles, and then the dance commenced. The town danced upon the edge of a volcano, as it were; and while it danced the outposts watched with strained eye for any sign of movement in the enemy's lines. As dusk closed in the outposts had reported to the colonel commanding that the advanced trenches of the enemy had been reinforced with some three hundred Boers, and that their galloping Maxim had been drawn by four men to a point adjacent to our outlying posts in the brickfields, while what appeared to be the nine-pounder Krupp had been put into an emplacement upon the south-eastern front. This news Colonel Baden-Powell did not permit to become known, since he very properly wished to allow the garrison to enjoy its dance if occasion offered; and accordingly the dance began. It was early when the enemy sent their preliminary volley whistling over the town; in an instant the animation of the streets which had preceded the dance was apparent once more, as around the doors of the Masonic Hall a number of people collected from out of the ball-room. Officers raced to their posts as orderlies galloped through the streets sounding a general alarm. We were to be attacked, and a man can serve his guns, can

ply his rifle, can stand to his post in evening pumps and dress trousers as efficiently and as thoroughly as he can were he clothed in the coarser habiliments of the trenches. For a few minutes no one quite knew what would happen, and greater mystification prevailed as the noise of firing came from every quarter of our front. Urgent orders were issued, to be obeyed as rapidly; Maxims were brought up at a gallop, the reserve squadron was held in readiness, coming up to Headquarters at the double. The guns were loaded and trained, and within a few minutes of the general alarm, the ball-room was deserted and every man was at his post.

It was a fine night, and the moon was full. Here and there, silhouetted against the skyline, those who were watching could see the reinforcements marching to the advanced trenches. There had been little time to think of anything, to collect anything, the men who were sent forward simply snatching their rifles and ammunition reserves. For a brief moment there was exceeding confusion in the forts that had been ordered to furnish reinforcements for any particular trench; but this duty was performed so quickly, and the town was in such readiness to repel attack, that our mobilisation would have reflected credit upon the smartest Imperial force. Presently there came a lull in the firing, and the ambulance waggon made its way to a sheltered point, prepared to move forward should it become necessary. I watched for a few minutes the scene in the Market Square, paying particular attention to Colonel Baden-Powell and his staff officers, who had congregated beyond the stoep of the Headquarters office. Now and again Lord Edward Cecil, the Chief Staff Officer, would detach himself from the group to send an instruction by one of the many orderlies who, with their horses, were in waiting. It was a cheering spectacle, the prompt and methodical manner in which our final arrangements were perfected. Then the staff group broke up, and the C.S.O. explained the possibilities of the situation. The enemy contemplated an attack upon our south-eastern front, concentrating their advance upon our positions in the brickfields. If such, indeed, were the case, we could promise ourselves a smart little fight, and one, moreover, at point-blank range. We had so fortified our trenches in this particular quarter that, happily, there was no prospect of any disaster similar to that which befell our arms at Game Tree. Towards midnight heavy firing broke out upon the western outposts, caused, as was afterwards proved, by the success of our native cattle raiders, who, managing to elude the vigilance of the Boer scouts, had driven some few head of cattle through their lines into our own camp. The sound of this firing drew the Chief Staff Officer to the telephone in the Headquarters bomb-proof, whereupon I made my way to the point against which we had assumed that the attack would be directed.

It was to an old post in a somewhat new shape, then, that I made my way, a journey which amply compensated for any lack of excitement in the events of the last few days. Fitful volleys from the Boers made it impossible to walk across the section of the veldt intervening between the rear of these advanced posts and the town, while at present, these posts form a little colony, connected as they are now among themselves, but cut off altogether from communication with the town until the pall of night comes to shield the movements of those compelled to make their way between the town and the brickfields. Soon, those who are posted there hope to see a trench constructed, affording passage at any moment with the base; but until this happens it is a pleasant scramble, a little dangerous, and somewhat trying. The ground is rough and stony,

sloping slightly, in open spaces, to within a few yards of the Boer lines. It is commanded in many points, and upon this particular night it seemed to suit the purpose of the enemy to play upon it with their rifles at irregular intervals. To reach the river-bed was easy, to scramble up the river-bed with one's figure thrown out against the skyline is better appreciated in imagination; to put it into practice is to walk without looking where one is going, since one is continually sweeping the enemy's positions to catch the flash of the enemy's rifles. When the flash is caught, if the bullet has not hit one first, it is wiser to throw dignity to the wind and oneself upon the ground. In this position, prone and very muddy, even a little bruised, I found myself, until the fierce but whispered challenge of a sentry told me that my temporary destination had been reached. At this fort there was little to betray the excitement which consumed its gallant defenders, beyond the fact that the entire post was standing to arms. With a laugh and a jest we parted; and cut across what would have been the line of fire had a fight been raging at that moment. There was a low, elongated wedge a few yards distant upon the left, against which the moon threw black shadows. It was the Boer position, and as they had been firing frequently, warning to proceed cautiously was not altogether disobeyed. Inspector Marsh's post was then very shortly gained, and with this officer I passed the night.

It was 2 a.m. when Inspector Marsh turned out to make his last round before the men in his command stood to arms at daybreak. Whatever else was not evident, it was now certain that there would be no attack until the break of day, and so, upon returning to our post, we lay upon the stony ground and slept. It seemed that Time had scarcely scored an hour when we woke up, and, taking our rifles with us, buckling on our revolvers, stood to the loopholes. Day broke solemnly and with much beauty, night fading into grey-purple and soft, eerie shadows. Trees looked as sentinels, and there was no sound about us. Indeed, the spectacle of a large number of men expecting each minute the opening volley of an attack, was thrilling, and in that cold air their martial effect was a sufficient and satisfying tonic against the river mists. We had been standing some few minutes when from up the stream came the croaking of the bullfrog, so loud and emphatic that the older veldtsmen knew it at once to be a signal. This had scarcely been passed round when from that black line upon the sky there broke a withering sheet of flame; it was a magnificent volley, and swept across our intrenchments. We held our fire, crouching still lower and peering still more anxiously through the sandbags. Dawn was rapidly advancing, and as the light became clearer the enemy heralded its advance with a merry flight of three-pounder Maxims. They burst among us, hitting nobody, and falling principally upon the trench occupied by Sergeant Currie and his Cape Boys. Then we fired, or rather our most advanced trench opened, and in that moment the engagement began. However, beginning brilliantly as it did, under the snapping of the Mausers, the droning hiss of Martinis, and a roaring deluge of shells, it was short-lived. Sergeant Currie and his men bore the brunt of the rifle fire, replying shot to shot, undaunted and unchecked. The reverberating echoes of the firearms, of the exploding shells, to the accompaniment of the insulting taunts of the Cape Boys were somewhat deafening. When the advanced trenches of the enemy started, volleys came also from the ridge of the acclivity leading from the river-bed to the emplacement of the nine-pounder Krupp. Between them again, there were smaller trenches joining in the rifle practice, which, while it lasted, was so hot that it was not possible to creep through the connecting trenches, or, indeed, to move in any manner

whatever. Within three hours the enemy threw some thirty nine-pounder Krupp, some twenty-five five-pound incendiary shells, an overwhelming mass of three-pound Maxims, and a few rounds from the cavalry Maxim. Bullets innumerable had whizzed across us, to be answered by rifle fire as brisk again, and so rapidly returned that few of the defenders had even time to think.

But we wondered, as the day grew brighter and two hours' firing had passed, what would be the end, considering ourselves fortunate that the enemy made no attempt to rush any one of the brickfields in his command. Occasionally, as we fired, Inspector Brown, in charge of the river-bed work, exchanged signals with Inspector Marsh, the post commander, through a megaphone, much to the discomfiture of the Boers, who, as the stentorian commands rang out in any lull of firing, were sadly perplexed. These signals had, of course, been arranged beforehand, the men knowing that they were the merest pretext and one by which it was hoped to confuse the Boers. Upon the part of the enemy it must have been rather alarming to hear between some temporary stoppage in the firing a voice in thunderous tones crying out, "Men of the advanced trench, fix bayonets", an order which would be invariably followed by hearty cheering from the Cape Police and insults of an exceedingly personal character from the Cape Boys. However, everything draws to an end, and the Boers, abandoning their intention of turning us out of the brickfields, ceased fire, giving to ourselves an opportunity to prepare breakfast. We ate it where we had previously been firing, the men passing the tins of bully and the bread rations from one to another. Then just where we had been fighting, with the scent of the burst shells and the smoke of the rifles hanging in the air, thin spiral columns of smoke arose in the rear of the few brick-kilns, and coffee was presently brought to us. Until mid-morning we maintained our posts, but with the luncheon hour we took it easy, although preserving a watchful attitude towards the Boers. Thus passed the day with little further firing, and some sleeping, terminating in a merry dinner—under siege conditions—with Inspector Marsh and Inspector Brown, in the dug-out of their town post.

XXVIII

THE SECOND ATTACK UPON THE BRICKFIELDS

MAFEKING, *February 28th, 1900.*

In many ways this month has been the most eventful of any during the siege. Other months of the siege have secured for themselves a certain notoriety, because they have been identified with some particular engagement; but this month of February has seen our labour in the brickfields brought to a successful consummation, and, at a moment when the garrison was congratulating itself upon the triumphant issue of such an adventurous and adventitious undertaking, we have been brought face to face with the contingency that even yet it may not be possible to continue to occupy so advanced a post. If I return to the subject of the brickfields after such a short interval, it is because there, more than anywhere else in Mafeking, the clash of arms is predominant. These many days we have followed out our scheme, endeavouring to

circumvent the enemy by pushing forward a line of entrenched posts until they should embrace an area which would enable us to outflank their main lines and enfilade their advanced trenches. There was a moment when this was actually completed, a moment in which we who were in the advanced forts, knew that if we could but hold the position we held the invaders in such a fashion that they would be compelled to abandon their posts. But there was the shadow of uncertainty, since we were rather reckoning upon the hitherto recognised fact, that the Boers belonged to that class of fighting peoples who never purposely attack if they could secure their ends by entrenchments and delay. For one day we rather gloried in the work, until towards dusk we realised with a swift and fearful astonishment that the Boers were intending to sap us. We have supposed it to be by accident rather than by design that a man, in the uniform of some German regiment, appeared of a sudden to arise out of the ground at a point some thirty yards distant from what we had considered to be the end of the Boer trench. His presence explained much, since the night before we had been perplexed at hearing the sound of picking and shovelling a little in advance of our position. At that time we had concluded that the noises emanated from the natives, who were deepening and strengthening the advanced trench of the Boers; but with this figure suddenly appearing, we realised that there was quite a different story to be told, one which implied that our previous opinion of the enemy was in error, and that they intended to make us fight for our position or to turn us out. The situation was rapidly becoming as interesting as any which has developed from the siege. Sap and counter-sap were separated perhaps by eighty yards, and so gallantly and vigorously did the enemy work that we could see them approaching yard by yard. It was impossible for us in the time at our disposal to do very much to stop them; we could simply keep a look-out and drench their trenches with volleys upon the slightest provocation. It was useless to fire upon the natives working in the sap, since it was only possible to see the points of their picks as they were swung aloft, catching for a moment the radiance of the sun. Still they came on, and one night we knew that before dawn they would be into us. That night no one slept in the advanced trenches, and Inspector Marsh, who has very generously permitted me to stop with him for the past month in his quarters in the brickfields, visited the posts hourly. Between two and three we slept, and for a short space there was a perfect calm in our lines. At half-past four we stood to arms, to hear that the enemy had made contact with our trench. As we found this out, news was brought that the big Creusot gun had taken up its position upon the south-eastern heights, and so commanded our entire area. The inevitable had arrived and perhaps for a brief moment we were all a little subdued. As the sun rose Inspector Marsh, commanding the south-eastern outposts, under directions from Headquarters, warned every man to take such cover as was obtainable.

The situation would have given satisfaction had there been any prospect of an equal contest, since man to man we were not unmatched, but it would be impossible for the occupants of these advanced posts to attempt conclusions with an enemy who could bring to their assistance a high-velocity Krupp and a 100 lb. Creusot. There was immediate excitement, and Inspector Marsh telephoned the news to Headquarters. For the moment that was all which could be done—inform Headquarters. Then, with our rifles in our hands, with an extra supply of ammunition by our sides, we waited the inevitable, and we waited until night; but upon that night nothing happened. As dusk drew down, and as the calm of night was broken only by the rumbling echoes and

tremors of the work in the enemy's sap, we threw out a working party of some two hundred natives, starving and ill-conditioned, but the best that we could procure, intending to make the effort to check once and for all the advance of the Boers. We worked all night, and dawn was breaking as we drew off, but we had passed them. In a single night we had carried our sap some thirty yards beyond theirs, and at such an angle that we enfiladed their sap, while only eighty yards divided the pair. The Boer line of advance was deeper than ours by some five feet, but all that day white man and Cape Boy strove to deepen our new trench, and by night it was perhaps a foot deeper than it had been. It was dangerous work; it was exciting. The crackle of bullets was never absent; they struck all round one, and there were a few fatalities. That night we worked again, and so did they. Indeed, each side volleyed heavily all night to protect their working parties. We were not extending our trench; it was already a hundred yards sheer into the open, but in the morning when we looked, the Boer trench was barely thirty yards away from ours. That day we did nothing but await the inevitable again. We slept, since it was certain that on the morrow a fight would come. Once more there was nothing for it but to wait in such readiness as we could be in, for anything that the enemy might attempt. They began at dusk by throwing dynamite bombs into our sap—some burst, some fell blind; but this work was futile, since they had not yet reached sufficiently near to effect any damage. When they did obtain such access, we also had a little pile of bombs. Tooth for tooth—we were not going to give up without fighting. Then the end came suddenly, for Headquarters telephoned that the big gun had taken up its original position, which was barely two thousand yards distant on our left flank. With this message we began to comprehend what the next day would bring forth.

The affair between the outposts began about a quarter to five in the morning. The first 100 lb. shell fell between our trenches and those of the enemy: it seemed that they had wished to secure the range. They had secured it. The three holes which form our advanced position contain no cover whatsoever, since there is none to put up, and whatever earth had been thrown up was commanded by the enemy's fort upon the south-eastern heights. Each hole contained a shelter from the sun, a corrugated iron arrangement, supported by props, with a sprinkling of earth on top. The shooting was magnificent, and it will be difficult to find, when the various comparisons be drawn, marksmanship more precise or more accurate. Each was wrecked in turn: a shell to a shelter. When this work had been accomplished, the big gun directed its attention to the brick-kilns, in which we had posted our sharpshooters. In a little time the three were heaps of ruins. Between the intervals of shelling the Boers fired volleys from the three points: from the fort on the south-eastern heights, from the fort in the river-bed, and from their main trench. The company of Cape Boys in the advanced hole could not be expected to relish the triple fire, which was in turn endorsed by shells from the big gun. The holes are not very large, nor very wide, nor high: they are natural depressions in the soil, in which water had collected and caused a further subsidence. When the enemy volleyed from the advanced trench, they had to crouch under the lee of a bank that was facing the direction of the fort on the south-eastern heights; when they wished to avoid shell and rifle fire from this fort, they had to run the risk of finding shelter in the direct line of fire from the main trench. If they endeavoured to move to the second hole, they had to do so under fire from all three points. It was rather an unpleasant state of things for the Cape Boys, who, moreover, could find no point from

which to return the fire of the enemy. In an hour some twelve shells had been thrown into the first hole, and there were five fatalities. Whenever we endeavoured to occupy the sap the big gun shelled it, until it was no longer possible to maintain a post in a position so exposed. We fell back to the second hole, and the enemy began to shell other points in the brickfields. They sent two to Currie's post in the river-bed; they scattered them plentifully about the first, second, and third forts—entrenched posts by which it is hoped to keep back the Boers, should they successfully carry the Cape Boy holes. The situation was becoming serious, and we had been compelled to abandon the sap and evacuate the first hole. At the moment it was a question of whether the Boers were coming on, and as we waited in the expectation of seeing them advance down our own sap into our original position, the shelling ceased, for the Boers had gone to breakfast. That was our supreme opportunity, and although they must have seen us from the south-eastern heights, we employed ourselves in saving from the wreck what was possible. All the shelters had been pounded into *débris*: rifles and bayonets lay about broken and twisted, here and there were remains of camp utensils, and blood-stained clothing. It was a scene of ruin, and as we crept into it upon our hands and knees the confusion of the place struck one sadly. Sergeant-Major Taylor had been hurt by the second shell, and has since died, while another of the wounded has also succumbed. While the firing lasted the position was untenable, and we fell back from the sap into the most advanced of the holes. Here the situation rapidly became impossible, for the character of the outwork prevented any one from taking cover. But despite the galling fire, the Cape Boys behaved with admirable courage and endurance, and it was only when three men in the advanced hole had been seriously wounded, that they fell back behind the bank of the second pit. In a little, when the gun had effectually driven us from the advanced hole, the enemy began to shell the forts in the rear. At that moment there were two things to be done: one was to bank up the mouth of the sap, since the enemy had already reached it and were firing down it, the other was to throw up a rampart across the mouth of the second hole. Under a heavy fire Corporal Rosenfeld, of the Bechuanaland Volunteers, and myself undertook and accomplished the one, while at night the work upon the rampart was begun. By morning it was finished, but in the night the enemy had occupied our sap. The length of the first hole then alone divided us. Within the next few hours, however, the position of affairs changed as rapidly again. At a moment when the enemy were least prepared a strong party rushed the hole and sap, expelling the Boers by vigorous use of bayonets and dynamite bombs. Since then the Boers have left our advanced works severely alone.

XXIX.

THE NATIVE QUESTION

MAFEKING, *March 3rd, 1900.*

It has become altogether impossible to gauge with any degree of accuracy, the situation in relation to the fortunes of the Imperial arms, or as it might be found in the

camp of the enemy without Mafeking. We do not lack here men who, from a previous knowledge of the Boers, consider themselves capable of estimating the purpose and designs of Commandant Snyman; but what seems to be precise and even an admirable forecast one week, is proved, by events in the succeeding week, to be irrelevant and unreliable. It has been our habit, when for any length of time the enemy has rested, to attribute their comparative cessation from hostilities to news of ill-omen, and in our fatuous presciency we have approximately given the date upon which the siege will be raised. But in light of the never-varying contradiction in sense which befalls our optimistical assurance, we must perforce, recognise the falsity of our deductions and cease from worrying. Recently, indeed during the past week, we expected the Boers to celebrate Amajuba Day, and to this end, the garrison was held in a condition of complete readiness, so as to be able to at once repel the anticipated attack. The anniversary of this disastrous fight passed off, however, without incident, and as it happened that runners arrived from the North upon the same day, conveying to us the unconfirmed intelligence that a force under the ever-victorious General French had relieved Kimberley, the wise-acres here, both civil and military, were of opinion that the investing force, that has now surrounded us for six months, could not stomach such unfortunate information, and were as a consequence timorous of any renewed aggression. But now again our theories are erroneous, and the siege progresses today merrily and as pugnaciously as ever. With the tidings of Kimberley's good-luck, we looked to see the big Creusot gun removed across the border in its return to Pretoria, but alas! it still confronts us and still flings its daily complement of shells into the town. Indeed, without this piece of ordnance, life would become so strikingly original that the townspeople would break down under the strain. The uncertainty as to what direction it will take, as to the number of tolls which have been rung out from the alarm bell, as to whose house has been wrecked, or what family put into mourning, has buoyed up the townspeople to a pitch from which, when the cause is removed, there will be a pretty general collapse. With the advent of the news about the South, the Northern runners confirmed the fact of the presence of Colonel Plumer's force being near at hand. But this has been the irony of our situation since the siege began. There has ever been, it would seem, some worthy general or colonel within a little trifle of two hundred miles from us, bringing Mafeking relief, or if not for us, for the starving natives. This has always been so pleasant to reflect upon, just this little detail of two hundred miles. Colonel Plumer, we hear, is laying down "immense" stocks of food-supplies at Kanya, so that the natives here, who are already so reduced that they are dying from sheer inanition, having successfully accomplished the journey, which is one of ninety miles, may feed to their hearts' content—provided that they are able to pay for the rations which are so generously distributed to them. Whatever motives of philanthropy direct the policy of the executive in this question of distributing food allowances to natives, it cannot be said that the Government or its administrators, err in their administration upon the side of liberality. Even here in Mafeking we have set a price upon the bowl of soup—horseflesh and mealie-meal mixed—which is served out to the natives from the soup-kitchen, finding excuses for such parsimony in the contention that, by charging the starving natives threepence per bowl of soup, when it is exceedingly doubtful if they have that amount of money in their possession, we can successfully induce them to remove to Kanya, and there live in a state of happy flatulency off the stocks which Colonel Plumer has been ordered to prepare against

their reception. Of course, at a moment like this, it is injudicious to cavil at the procedure of the Imperial Government, but there can be no doubt that the drastic principles of economy which Colonel Baden-Powell has been practising in these later days are opposed to and altogether at variance with the dignity of the liberalism which we profess and are at such little pains to execute, and which enter so much into the pacific settlement of native questions in South Africa. The presence of a large alien native population gathered in Mafeking at the present juncture has been our own fault, since the authorities, in whom the management and control of the natives of this district is invested, advised the military authorities here to allow some two thousand native refugees from the Transvaal to take up their abode upon the eve of war in the Mafeking stadt, and it is through the tax which this surplus population put upon the commissariat that this particular question has required such delicate adjustment. With supplies which are rapidly diminishing, we are compelled to force nightly a moderate number to attempt the journey to Kanya, and if they have been signally unsuccessful in their essay to pass through the Boer lines, it is in part because the enemy, having promised them a free passage, maliciously fires upon them as they reach the advanced trenches. For the most part, therefore, we are no better off than we were, since those natives who escaped invariably return to Mafeking.

With the good news which we have received, a slightly better tone of feeling would seem to be about the community. We are simple people for the present, living as we do under the rigours of Martial Law, but we have such genuine faith in the supremacy of our flag, that now that we have heard of the general movement of troops, we are infinitely happier and inclined to forget for the moment the trials and difficulties of our position. There was a time when the townspeople were so disgusted with the conduct of the war, with the disgraceful and nefarious practices of the Colonial Government, with the abominable lethargy of the Imperial authorities, that five men out of every six had resolved to abandon a country where such misrule was possible, and to remove to some one other of our colonies, where life, upon a broader and happier basis, was the order. But with the inauguration of brighter things, such as the relief of Kimberley portends, this tone has disappeared, while there seems to be an almost unanimous desire to wait the arrival of the next intelligence. It is perhaps not altogether incorrect to say that the feeling of disgust, by which so many people were at one time swayed, existed chiefly among those who were connected to and related with families of Dutch origin, and who at some period discarded their Dutch allegiance, casting in their lot with the British. These people yet retained a certain sympathy with the Transvaal, and were as concerned as any Boer about the issues of the campaign. Upon the outbreak of war, many of these people took up their residence in border towns, and by these means Mafeking received a sprinkling of people who were, by protestation, Britishers, and by instinct, Dutch. These men were accepted, since as a rule they were known to be genuine in their avowal; but when they brought their families into Mafeking, their womenfolk, being wholly Dutch, were as a rule regarded in quite a different light. It must be remembered that inter-marriage is practised in the Transvaal to an extraordinary degree, and that the relationship of any one family with others can by this means permeate the entire country to such an extent that, while the woman might be the wife of an African Imperialist, she might be able to claim kinship with men who held high positions in the Republican service. These ladies, therefore, were quite open to the suspicion of wishing to convey to their relations in the

Transvaal authentic information regarding Mafeking. As our condition has been precarious, and as important information was surreptitiously carried to the enemy, it was perhaps natural that we should take steps to confine these ladies within their laager, and to place a guard upon it—precautions which were neither valued nor appreciated by them, and from which they suffered no hardships other than those which might be expected to accrue from the enjoyment of the somewhat restricted liberty, with which they, together with the entire garrison, must perforce rest content.

XXX.

POLITICAL ECONOMY

MAFEKING, *March 15th, 1900.*

Colonel Baden-Powell has recently issued an order to all ranks in his command requesting the names of those who are willing to enlist in the special corps which are to be raised for purposes of patrolling the country when the war is terminated. If this be a sign of the times, a token by which we may read the lines of the policy by which Africa will be governed during the next few years, it is satisfactory at least to understand that we do not propose to take the risk of successful risings in the months to come in different Dutch centres. This war has shown us the folly of courting "compromise and Exeter Hall" in dealing with dissatisfied areas of the Empire. We have policed Burma, we patrol Ireland (but in a different sense), and in India we have incorporated and turned into admirable efficiency many of the hill tribes, but we cannot translate the native-born Republican nor convert the rebel Dutch without the almost certain contingency arising of their proving traitorous. There are many who know the Boer, and, knowing him and appreciating his strange strategy, his curiously warped mind, his natural aptitude for breaking his bond, would not trust him in any transaction where integrity of character and probity were the essential complement. There has been much opinion among colonials that the Imperial Government might, anxious to be as conciliatory as possible, enrol the Dutch for constabulary duties, giving, indeed, to the younger generation the preference, and thus enabling them to possess an employment definite, if not altogether lucrative. But in this we should be perpetrating against the loyal colonists of Cape Colony a grave injustice, for until the present generation of Dutch has passed away, taking with it the memories of the war, it will be unsafe, it will be unwise, to employ in any administrative capacity whatsoever, those men who, themselves nursing a rancour against Great Britain, will omit no opportunity to foster the traditional hatred of their forefathers. We have in France, and in the French animosity against Germany, a case which is identical, proving, as it does, how the prejudices of a people can be nurtured and kept evergreen through the sheer force of malignant sentiment; and there can be little doubt that time, and time only, is capable of removing from the minds of the Republican Dutch that feeling of detestation and contempt which has maintained them in their attitude of hostility towards us for so many decades. To them, for many years to come, the

British will be a nation of iconoclasts; we may banish them, we may wipe out all traces of their misrule, and so obliterate the signs of their existence that historians may find it difficult to believe that they once lived. We may do all these things, but it will be impossible to govern their instincts by Act of Parliament, to curb their impulses by the rulings of the High Commissioner. It would therefore be thrice foolish to employ them in their own country and among their own people, and such action would imply that we intended to ignore uses to which the younger colonists can be so conveniently put. In South Africa, as in Australasia and in Canada, there is a large army of young men who loaf their hours away in the idleness of an agricultural life rather than seek some trade in the offices of the big cities. They achieve little that is profitable upon their farms, clinging tenaciously to such a livelihood, since it possesses finer natural elements in its intimacy with the life of the veldt than any form of metropolitan activity could give to them. There are, of course, many men who have been driven to the towns through the failure of their holdings, but in this present state of war these especially, and all those others, have answered eagerly to the call for volunteers, and in proving themselves worthy, have rendered excellent services to the State. The great majority of these men would willingly take service in the forces to which the order of the colonel commanding makes reference, and by this we have at hand an army extraordinarily adapted to colonial purposes, and needing only to be called out. Moreover, at a time when the Empire has seen how its various units have hastened to the aid of the Mother-country, would it not be well to create in each colony a permanent militia from the men who have so unanimously come forward; a force which would be to the colonies what the Imperial army is to India, and which would supersede the local defence forces in Australasia, approaching in its conception a fixed soldiery rather than one to which is given a certain number of exercises in the year? There would be no lack of numbers in any of the colonies, and in Africa we could make use of the Zulu, the Matabele, and the Cape Boys. We have long rested in fancied security, and not until China falls a prey to Russia and India passes from us, need we fear that Australasia can be taken from us by the combined fleets of the Powers of Europe; nevertheless, since we must reorganise our army, it would be no mean policy to place, once and for all, upon their true foundation the defences of our colonies.

To those who know the life of the mounted police in Burma, of the constabulary in the West Indies, and of the police in Canada, the duties of the corps that are raised for South Africa will be at once comprehended. They would both police and administer the areas of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, and it may be that they will be affiliated with the British South Africa Police corps that are already enrolled. The life is enjoyable, there is much sport, and for a few years to come there is sure to be trouble, at odd intervals, among the Dutch. It is, perhaps, doubtful whether the man from home will be quite adapted to such work, since, in a very high degree, a knowledge of the Dutch language will be indispensable, and much valuable time will be lost in acquiring some smattering of this tongue and in teaching the recruits to ride, to shoot, and to drill. But life in the mounted constabulary has also possessed so great a fascination for the average Englishman that, should the Government decide to make eligible the men from home, any paucity among the colonial applicants can be at once remedied. Care, however, should be taken that the colonial men who came forward on behalf of the colony in its hour of peril, should be given the first refusal, and a greater financial consideration should be meted out than, with the exception of the Canadian

police, has hitherto been customary. The economy of Africa is high priced, and it will be eminently difficult for men to live upon their pay should they have to forfeit any large proportion of it for extras, the cost of which might well be borne by the Government itself. There has been a great outcry about the higher rates of pay which are drawn by the colonial corps now serving at the front as compared with the wretchedly inadequate wages of the regulars, and it is a great pity that we, who can be so foolishly magnanimous, cannot disavow the petty economies of the service at a moment like the present. Five shillings a day is small enough when men have to provide their entire equipment, but to argue that because the War Office is supplying the kit the rate should be reduced, since the main source of expenditure be removed, is to incline towards a policy of expenditure which is penny wise and pound foolish. We read recently, and with infinite zest, that the artillery by which Mafeking is defended includes a battery of field guns and four heavy pieces. This, of course, is a grotesque exaggeration. We have no heavy ordnance, and our field pieces are obsolete muzzle-loading monstrosities. Had the War Office paid attention to its work, and supplied this advanced outpost of the Empire with efficient artillery, instead of rushing up to Mafeking an improvised field battery, it would be possible to ignore the attempt to curtail the pay of the colonial forces, since, if Africa had been prepared for war, it is improbable that Great Britain would have been compelled, in order to crush the combined forces of the Republics, to summon to her aid men from her colonial dependencies. But we did not do this, and if we be now reaping the fruits of an impotent administration, we should be sufficiently generous to accept the responsibility for the expenditure, and to desist from an endeavour to bolster up accounts by imposing upon the colonial contingents the effects of an economy which aims at sparing a few thousand pounds by saving some portion of their pay. Moreover, if it be true that the colonial contingents which have been enrolled since war began, are receiving ten shillings a day, why should not that rate be accepted as the standard of pay for all colonial forces under arms? In relation to Mafeking, where the question of compensation has become acute, such addition to the pay of the defenders of the town as would increase their rate to ten shillings would be a felicitous manner of recognising the gallant work which the garrison has performed, and provide at the same time, a practical exposition of official appreciation for the units of the defence.

If this be the one question of moment, in reference to the other problem—the pastoral and agricultural future of the country—there is little doubt that Africa—more especially these western districts, where agricultural and pastoral pursuits are widely followed—will require the assistance of the capitalist before the mere emigrant from England can make much headway. In a sense Mafeking is the central market for farm produce for areas which stretch far into the Transvaal, and which, lacking the propinquity of a local market, are compelled to send their products across the border. Many of these districts have proved to possess valuable mining qualities, so that it is possible we shall see in a few years the development of towns which, owing their existence to the mines, will attract the trade which now finds its bent in the Mafeking market. But the hope here is of railway communication with Johannesburg and Pretoria, and the consequent opening out and settlement of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, and it is in this respect the capitalist will be the Alpha and Omega of the countryside; for the youngster who goes to Australasia with five hundred pounds and leases a property will be unable to obtain a hearing up here until the economy of daily

life has been reduced to a less expensive order. There is a golden future here, but much gold will have to be poured into the lap of Mother Nature before any very satisfactory results are gained. The cost of transit is prohibitive, and there is a scarcity of water, which will make wells a necessity. There is much cheap labour, but the present mode of existence of the farming class is one which favours a bare sufficiency, and for the remainder a state of placid idleness.

The insufficient development of South Africa in respect to its agricultural and pastoral resources is largely due to the unprogressiveness of the Boer or South African farmer. He personifies useless idleness, and contents himself with raising a herd of a few hundred head of cattle; he seldom plants a tree; seldom digs a well; seldom makes a road; and has an unmitigated contempt for agriculture and agriculturists. His ploughs, harrows, and utensils of husbandry are clumsy, ill-formed, and, where they exist at all, are hopelessly antiquated. He cannot be prevailed upon to make any alteration whatsoever in the system of his agriculture. His ancestors were farmers, and he himself does not conceive it to be his duty to alter methods which were already obsolete when he was a child. The English farmer, with good training, active disposition, and accurate knowledge of how and where to institute radical reforms, possessing capital, might find both home and fortune in these areas. It is a good cattle country, and with a careful reorganisation in the management of the cattle-farms across the border—a reorganisation which should extend throughout all agrestic or nomadic communities in the Transvaal—it should receive material assistance from the farms of the western border of the Transvaal that are already stocked. The Dutch farmer, living the life of the patriarch of old, leaves everything to nature, and does not, as a rule, combine the varieties of farming which his property would sustain. He remains a stock-breeder, or a grower of cereals: the combination of the two is usually too complex. It will be therefore a good thing should a different basis of management be inculcated, and when this be accomplished, greater facilities for stocking their farms will be held out to the intending colonists who may favour the country, but for the time the new-comers should check their eagerness, since, above all things, capital will be necessary to their salvation.

XXXI.

"A HISTORY OF THE BARALONGS"

MAFEKING, *March 22nd, 1900.*

Beyond a few successful cattle-raiding forays on the part of the Baralongs, we have done nothing these past days but maintain courageously the glories of our splendid isolation. In a way we have been compelled to depend to no small extent upon the prowess of the local tribe. The Baralongs have done well by us, and have served us faithfully, and with no complaint. They have fought for us; they have preyed upon the enemy's cattle, so that the white garrison might have something better than horseflesh for their diet; they have manned the western defences of the stadt, and they have suffered severe privations with extraordinary fortitude. There have been moments

in the earlier stages of the war when they might well have considered the advisability of supporting a power that could not from the outset hinder their own arch-enemy, and one against whom they have been pre-eminently successful in other years, from invading the territories of the Empire. But whatever may have been the workings of the native mind, however they may have dallied with the treacherous overtures of the Boers, they have individually, and as a tribe, unanimously risen to the occasion, and given to the Great White Queen their absolute support. In the history of these people there is not much in the consideration which we have shown them to justify their allegiance, and if we have secured their loyalty at so critical a moment, let us hope that it may, in some way, epitomise the actions for the future, of the tribes that are allied with them, and, when the moment comes for compensation, let us at least remember the debt of honour which we owe them.

The Baralongs are, of course, identified with the Bantu peoples of Africa, but they come from a stock that is industrial as opposed to the military element of this race. The distribution of the military and industrial Bantu is significant, but in this latter we will consider one of the peaceable tribes. The military Bantu is found in possession of the most fertile regions, and it may be well to remember that they occupied the Southern extremity of Africa, contemporaneously with Europeans. They are now found between the Drakensberg Mountains and the Indian Ocean, fruitful areas about the Zoutpansberg and Kaffraria. It would seem that they held these grounds by right of might, and their district is in somewhat striking contrast to the regions in which the industrial Bantu are at home. These latter cling to the mountains, as in Basutoland, and are scattered over the high plateau which forms so great a part of the Free State and the Transvaal, or in the confines of the Kalahari Desert and those deserts and karoos which lie to the south of the Orange River. The desert has ever been their ultimate retreat, and as their more warlike kinsmen seized and held the finer qualities of the country, the arid and, so to speak, waste areas of Africa fell to the heritage of the industrial Bantu. Descendants from the same family, there is naturally an analogy between their tribal organisations which is yet curiously dissimilar. They are both armed with the same weapon, but the assegai of the military Bantu is short-handled and broad bladed; while the assegai of the industrial Bantu is long and sharp, light in the blade, and intended mainly for purposes of the chase. Among the former the chief is a despot, against whose word there is no appeal; his town is designed with a view to defence; the chief's hut and the cattle-pens of the tribe are placed in the centre, and around these the remaining huts are built in concentric circles. The power of the chief among the industrial Bantu is limited; first by the council of lesser chiefs, secondly by the general assemblage of the freemen of the tribe. His town is intended to serve the requirements of a peaceful people, while outside the ground is cultivated in a rough and unscientific manner; they are even acquainted with the art of smelting ore and working in iron. The pursuit of the military Bantu is directed to the successful cultivation of a bare sufficiency of corn and cattle, and he pays little attention to anything which is beyond his immediate requirements. The Kaffirs, the Zulus, and the Matabele Zulus are among the warlike tribes of this dark-skinned race; but the chief seats of the industrial tribe are Bechuanaland and Basutoland, and it is with the peaceful Bechuanas, with whom are identified the Baralongs, that we propose to deal.

Historically, Bechuanaland will remain ever interesting to Englishmen as being the scene of the labours of Robert Moffat, David Livingstone, and John Mackenzie: three famous missionaries, who in their time did so much for the interests of our country in what was then the Dark Continent. The immense area lying to the north of Cape Colony possessed in itself one great political feature which made its possession of paramount importance. It was the natural trade route between that colony and Central Africa at a moment when Imperialism was a soulless conception, and when our ideas of the Empire in Africa shrank at the possibility of northern expansion. During all those years possession of Bechuanaland was the golden key to a future which, had we but realised it then, would have given us some right to claim the distinction of being a race of discoverers. We were, however, very diffident about accepting and recognising any greater responsibilities in relation to any enlargement of the areas of our African domains, and if a vindictive spirit had not encouraged the Boers to plunder and destroy the settlement in which missionary Livingstone abode, and thus driven him to pastures of a fresh kind, we might never have possessed the gate through which the stream of prosperity has flowed, until it reached to the limits of Central Africa. If the Boers had resolved to oust this intrepid Englishman, they failed lamentably, insomuch as they did but drive him to explore the interior, and to open up a magnificent reach of country to his fellow Englishmen. Bechuanaland lay at his feet when he first started forth, but today the point of exploration is many hundred miles in advance. Bechuanaland has flourished, and would have prospered more, had we but appreciated the doctrine of those Victorian statesmen who, recognising the wondrous wealth which lay in this new country, but fearing that the moment had not come for such gigantic undertakings, were regretfully compelled to delegate to posterity the duty of someday acquiring these very areas. Great Britain does not go very far back into the history of the native tribes of Bechuanaland. We are the later agents of a new civilisation, but we have yet to undo many wrongs to the lawful possessors of this proud heritage, to adjust many intricate questions, and to grapple, without fear and hesitation, with the problems which confront us—problems upon which it is surely not too much to say the effectual solidarity and stability of this great African Empire depends.

Tradition tells us that the Baralong branch of the Bantu came from the north under the leadership of Chief Morolong, and that the tribe settled, after a protracted exodus from the north, on the Molopo River under a chief who was fourth in descent from their first leader, Morolong. The combination of the military and industrial Bantu had been already broken by the character of the tribe itself. Before they had been settled very long, Matabele Zulus under Moselekatse attacked Mabua, and there was once again a complete division of tribe. They scattered in three directions. Thaba N'chu was selected by the leader of that party as their eventual resting-place. Two other sections, led by Taoane, the father of Montsioa, and Machabi, found their way into the country which lay between the Orange River and the Vaal. There they remained, leading a quiet and comparatively harmless existence until the Boers, under Hendrik Potgieter, entered into alliance with the Baralongs to attack Moselekatse. When the old lion of the north had been driven beyond the Limpopo, Taoane returned with his followers to the south bank of the Marico. By virtue of this conquest Potgieter issued a proclamation, claiming for himself and the Transvaal Government the country which had previously been overrun by the Zulu chief. Under this proclamation the

Boers claimed to exercise sovereign powers over the Bechuana tribes, but upon the protest of the British Government this was withdrawn, Taoane and Montsioa, who had by this time succeeded his father, refusing to recognise the implied sovereignty of the Boers. By the intervention of the Imperial Government on behalf of the native chiefs of a territory which was practically unknown, it became the eventual channel through which we pushed a benign salvation, and an indifferent protection upon the natives of Bechuanaland until that time when we were enabled to assimilate the country. The attempt of the Transvaal Government to seize the areas of Bechuanaland was the rift in the silver lining of the clouds of Transvaal prosperity. The question became, between the two Governments, one of great moment, and its existence, since the Republic declined to ratify the award of the Keate Arbitration, was a bone of contention which was never altogether buried. The attitude of this Republic, the indirect assistance which the Transvaal offered to Moshette and Massou for the perpetuation of civil strife among the Bechuana chiefs, undoubtedly hastened the annexation by Great Britain in 1877 of the Transvaal territory. When this happened, despite the fact that the border was immediately delimited, Bechuanaland passed through a period of the greatest anarchy. The chiefs were warring amongst themselves, and although the two parties claimed the protection of either the Transvaal or the Imperial Government, the country was not definitely pacified till the despatch of the Warren Expedition, an expedient which by its success made Bechuanaland an integral portion of our African Empire. Montsioa, the Baralong chief, was fighting with his brother Moshette; Mankorane, the Batlapin chief, was engaged in struggle with David Massou, who was head of the Korannas. Of these four chiefs Montsioa and Mankorane sought the protection of the Imperial Government, while Moshette and Massou acknowledged the sovereignty of the Transvaal. European volunteers or freebooters who would be rewarded for their services by grants of land, assisted each of the four chiefs. At this juncture the Imperial Government changed its policy of administration in relation to the natives of Bechuanaland, and the result was that the High Commissioner of the Cape became supreme chief of the natives outside the Republic and the territories of foreign powers. In pursuance of the new policy Mr. Mackenzie arrived in Bechuanaland as British Resident, for the purpose of giving effect to the newly proclaimed Protectorate which had been established over the country outside the south-western boundary of the Transvaal by the consent of the delegates from the Republic, who had visited London to obtain certain modifications of the Convention of Pretoria. An extraordinary state of things awaited the arrival of Mackenzie, for the volunteers in the service of the Bechuana chiefs, Moshette and Massou, had established two independent communities, the "republics" of Land Goshen and Stellaland. The freebooters of Stellaland offered no resistance to the authority of the British Resident, but the burghers of Land Goshen celebrated the arrival of the Resident by a series of outrages and the contemptuous rejection of the demands made to them by these new officials. With the successful resistance of the filibusters from Rooigrond, the capital of Land Goshen, President Kruger issued a proclamation in the interests of humanity, by which he brought under the protecting wing of this South African State, the contending chiefs and their European advisers; thus the anomaly existed of a power endeavouring to assert its authority over rebels in a country in which we ourselves had assumed control. The mediation of the Transvaal Government was brought about, partly by the situation of Rooigrond, partly by the unjustifiable

arrogance and assumption of the Transvaal President. The town had been so placed that it lay across the line of the new south-western boundary; the divisions lying partly in the Transvaal, partly in the Protectorate, and since it had become apparent that the Imperial or Colonial Government were unable to remedy the evils which arose from the depredations of marauders of Rooigrond, their leaders justified their actions by claiming that their town was the property of the Transvaal, and that they themselves were acting for that state, under the orders of General Joubert, and endeavouring to suppress conditions of anarchy in a country which, from the state of its existence, would appear to possess no controlling influences. If the outcome of this diplomatic feat were the proclamation of the Transvaal, it also aroused Great Britain to the true condition of affairs. The Transvaal had gone too far, and, in response to hints from the Imperial Government as to the feeling of the colony, resolutions were passed stating that public opinion in Cape Colony considered the intervention of her Majesty's Government for the maintenance of the trade route to the interior, and the preservation of native tribes to whom promise of Imperial protection had already been given, was an act dictated by the claims of humanity and by the necessities of policy. It was thus brought home to the Government that the Cape Colonists considered that it would be fatal to British supremacy in South Africa if we failed to maintain our rights which we derived from the Convention of London, and to fulfil our obligations towards the native tribes of the new Protectorate. After this assurance of moral support the Imperial Government despatched Sir Charles Warren, in order that he might remove the filibusters from Bechuanaland, pacify the country, and restore the natives their land, taking measures, in the meantime, to prevent a recurrence of the depredations and atrocities which had been enacted recently there. When the forces were finally withdrawn Bechuanaland was created a Crown Colony, and at a subsequent date, it was incorporated into the Cape Colony. Since this time we have continued to perform the duties of a central authority in respect to the native tribes beyond the borders of the South African Republic, the expenses of administration being paid from the proceeds of the hut tax which is levied upon natives, together with the revenue derived from trading licenses, and paid for by European traders. In the settlement of Bechuanaland we reached a critical point in the history of England's administration in South Africa. We have been compelled to accept the responsibilities of such a central power as we have become, and we can no longer disregard the adjustment of those problems which so burdened that office. Now that our Imperial interests are so strong and our holdings in the country so great, let us no longer continue to oppose the means which will lead to that eventual federation of the Colonies and States of South Africa, the union which, once secured, will do so much to rectify the mistakes that we have made in our African policy.

XXXII.

'TIS WEARY WAITING

MAFEKING, *March 31st, 1900.*

We have lived for so many months now under the conditions which govern a town during siege that we almost accept existing circumstances as normal. We have ceased to wonder at the shortness of our rations, content to recognise that we might grumble from sunrise to sunset and gain nothing by it. We are no longer surprised at the enemy; they seem to take the siege as a joke, but it is a comedy which has a tragic lining. We have astounding spirit; there is no question of the gravity of our situation; there is no doubt that if we were to relax our vigilance for a moment, if we were to withdraw an outpost, diminish the establishment of some trench, the Boers would be in upon us before the garrison had realised that any such alteration in the defences had taken place. Nevertheless, there is really an admirable exhibition of almost uncomplaining acquiescence in the hardships which have fallen to our daily lot. Here and there there is grumbling, but the man who grumbles to-day rejoices tomorrow, since no siege can be endured with fortitude and determination if one dwells unduly long upon the difficulties and trials which beset us. Lately we had an exhibition, and many people in the garrison have consumed the past three weeks in a feverish and untiring activity to complete their exhibits. Ladies accomplished something rather fine in lacework, the men turned their attention to constructing models of the town's defences, and one and all entered into this little break in the monotony of the siege with the cheering intention of getting as much out of the event as was possible. Prizes varying from £5 to a sovereign were offered, and indirectly, each endeavoured to foster the spirit of the town. It had a beneficial effect, this artificial method of killing time, and it realised some £50 for the hospital. There have been other things besides the exhibition to stimulate the spirits of the garrison. Native runners brought us the news of the fall of Bloemfontein, a feature in the campaign which adds fresh laurels to the reputation of Lord Roberts. His continued successes have been an *elixir vitæ*, and, indeed, so freely have we imbibed of this new medicine, that there have been many who have found themselves possessed of a fresh strength. There is, however, one thing which does not give any satisfaction whatsoever to the little band of men who have held this outpost of the Empire during so many weary months, and this is embodied in the absence of any very definite signs of a speedy relief. Lord Roberts has told us to hold out until the middle of May, but it is a weary wait, and we could well see the van of the column crossing the rise. Within the past few days the town has been swept by rumours about the propinquity of the southern column; we have understood Colonel Plumer has been within fifty miles of Mafeking for some weeks. The rumours anent the southern relief place this column at any point within two hundred miles of Mafeking; some days it has reached Taungs, upon others it has not left Kimberley, again it is a week's march north of Vryburg, and in the meantime we receive telegrams from London congratulating us upon our successful and happy release. Where do these rumours come from? How comes it that London should be in ignorance of our condition?

We, who have followed with so much interest the fortunes of the campaign, sharing in the success of others with all sincerity and feeling reverses like personal insults, are disinclined to deny the existence of a relief column; but perhaps it is not altogether understood that, while we have food lasting till the middle of May, it is not impossible to feel famished upon our present rations at the end of March. Of food in the abstract there is an abundance, but the condition and quality of the ration is such that it cannot be reduced any further without immediately affecting the health of the

garrison and proving a very serious obstacle to the successful execution of any work which may be detailed to the command. Experiments have been tried for the purpose of discovering whether it were possible to exist, and to work, upon an allowance of 8 oz. of meat and 4 oz. of bread, and, while it was proved that the garrison might exist upon such short commons, it would be very injudicious to issue this allowance, since it caused a serious deterioration in the stamina of the men; it has, therefore, been condemned. The bread is impossible, and, although every effort be made to improve it, it still resembles a penwiper more than a portion of bread. It is made from the common oats which one gives to horses. These oats are crushed, but, sift them as you please, treat them by every process which the ingenuity of the entire garrison can devise, they positively bristle all over with sharp-pointed pieces of the husks. Recently we have been promised Boer meal, but it would appear, according to Captain Ryan, that the Boer meal is to be held in reserve as long as possible. For the moment we rather hanker after that reserve, and we do not take much of the composite forage which is served us as bread. However, if we are eating the rations of horses, the unfortunate people of Kimberley ate the horses, and so, it would seem, our lot might be much worse. Horses have not become our daily ration yet, although they form the basis of a curious soup which is made and served out to the natives. The smell of that soup turns many weary pedestrians from their usual paths, although the spectacle of the starving natives swarming round the soup-kitchen is one of the sights of the siege.

But, doubtless, those people who send us ridiculous messages of congratulation may think that this is, after all, but the mere detail of the siege—the side issue which should be expected, and which should in any case be endured with a fine toleration. That is all right; we do not mind the bread, we do not mind the aroma of the soup-kitchen, but we do object to preposterous messages of congratulation telling us "the siege is over," at the very moment when the enemy is shelling us simultaneously from five different points. The other day they endeavoured to concentrate their fire upon the centre of the town, and, if they did not do this altogether, they most certainly fired into Mafeking a weight of metal that has exceeded every other day's. We had from sunrise until dusk 79 Creusot shells, 100 lb. each; 35 steel-capped, armour-piercing, delay-action, high-velocity Krupp, 15 lb. each; 29 9-pounder Krupp; 57 3-pounder Maxims; and such a merry flight of 5-pounders that these shells have become a drug in the market, and to such an extent that we would very gladly exchange between here and London, a few such stormy petrels as a polite and cordial memento of the day of our deliverance. It is true that in part we are relieved, since we have chosen to take the initiative into our own hands and expelled the enemy from a position on the south-eastern facing of the town which they have occupied since the beginning of hostilities. This has given us immense relief, since it has practically placed the town beyond the effective range of the Mauser rifle and the Boer sharpshooters.

The trench was exceedingly well made, divided by traverses, protected with a rear bank and a strong head cover. It was a mercy that we did not attempt to storm it, and its remarkable strength and composite construction goes some way to explain the difficulty which we have experienced in making much impression, either by shell fire or storming party, upon the Boer entrenchments. We did this in a single night, having led up to such a climax by devoting our attentions to this particular quarter. We bombarded them by day, we sniped them by night, and sapped them in the intervals.

For a brief moment the enemy checked us, but it was only for a moment, and our fire was so warm and so persistent that they relinquished their attempt to prevent our advance, leaving, however, in their trench at the moment of evacuation a little trifle, possibly forgotten in their scramble to the rear, of 250 lbs. of nitroglycerine. The mine was at once located, the wires were cut, the trench was occupied, and in the morning when day dawned, instead of there being the roar of a great explosion, there was simply the ruddy blaze of our artillery fire from the gun emplacements which they had constructed and which we had converted to our own use. But we have taken care of that little mine, and possession of the trench leaves us masters of the situation. This, however, is the only relief that has come to Mafeking.

The Boer possesses a natural aptitude for digging ditches and throwing up earthworks, since his instinct tells him what not to do, much as this same intuition teaches him how to secure the natural fortifications of a kopje, and has made him, as the war has proved, a foeman worthy of our steel. We have despised the Boer; we have contumaciously called him a barbarian; but, nevertheless, these nomads of the South African veldt have given the mighty majesty of England a lesson which will take her many years to forget. Boer tactics are unique, but one has to witness them to believe in their feasibility. Their horses are so trained that when the reins are thrown over their necks they remain immovable. Their fighting is based on this fact, combined with the dictates of common-sense and their empirical, yet successful manner of encountering us in the Gladstonian War. Each commando of one hundred men is their unit; these are concentrated in scattered groups in rear of their outpost lines, and upon coming in contact with the enemy they endeavour to encircle their adversary, cantering in eccentric circles until they are able to dismount in a fold of ground near some coign of vantage. They are extraordinarily adept at making the best of their cover, and they are most patient, waiting hours for a shot, prone upon the ground, under a scorching sun. It would seem that they have maintained their time-honoured system, applying to the present campaign tactics possessing great mobility, rapid powers of concentration on vulnerable points, and as rapid retreats therefrom if seriously threatened. This power of rapid movement incidental to all being mounted gives them great advantage, increasing their powers of offence and defence, and representing the crux of their theories of war. The Boer carries on his horse one hundred rounds of ammunition, and rations of sun-dried beef sufficient for four days. The horses feed upon the veldt. In four days the Boer can cover two hundred miles, and it is this ability to move from point to point with extraordinary despatch, that makes the Boer force a body of mounted infantrymen possessing great strategical value. It has been impossible not to admire the tactics which the Boers have pursued in investing Mafeking, and where they have detached a force for any special purpose the execution of their work has been accomplished with laudable celerity. They dismantle and re-set, at an emplacement some miles away, their big Creusot gun—a process which seldom occupies them longer than between dusk and dawn; sometimes we see them moving their guns northwards, and hear from natives that they arrived at a point some thirty miles from Mafeking by daybreak. It may be that in respect to the mobility of their forces we have much to learn, and let us at least profit by the lessons which are thus afforded us.

XXXIII.

TWO HUNDRED DAYS OF SIEGE

MAFEKING, April 15th, 1900.

There is now happily no longer any doubt of the truth of the native reports of important successes having befallen our arms in the vicinity of Kimberley. We hear with infinite rejoicing that Kimberley has pulled through, and is no longer invested by the enemy, and almost so soon as these tidings reached us, natives brought in the unconfirmed news of the capture of Cronje. This has since been officially published, and the garrison here is beginning to feel at last that their turn is about to come! We have waited long for this moment, passing many black hours in the interval, but even now it seems that the power of England may be successfully defied by these federated South African Republicans. Yet we hope and, in the changing of the fortunes which we anticipate, we express and share in the felicitous congratulations which the Empire is offering to Lord Roberts. The shrewdness and tactical genius of this gallant veteran has been a source from which the entire garrison has drawn an inspiring hope which encouraged one and all to resist to the uttermost the attacks of the Boers.

We have already been besieged six months, and although the internal situation does not appreciably differ from that which existed on the first day of the siege, the signs of the times betoken the gravity of our condition. During recent days there have been two separate indications of the straits to which the siege has reduced us. Colonel Plumer endeavoured to pass into Mafeking a mob of cattle; the Almighty sent a flight of locusts in such numbers that for many miles the veldt was brown beneath the thousands which alighted upon it. Now the locust is an article of diet, though it has not yet attained the dignity of the position enjoyed by the nimble prawn. At present the locust is compared only to a tasteless prawn, but it may be that when the siege of Mafeking be raised and the world knows that no small portion of the garrison were reduced to locusts without wild honey, this somewhat unconvincing appetiser may be relegated to the office of a *hors d'œuvre*. Dame Fashion is responsible for so much that she might well introduce to the social world such a toothsome delicacy. To catch your locust is almost as difficult as to eat it, but it may be done by turning out at night and throwing a blanket over any patch whose numbers suggest the possibility of a profitable return. This, of course, is not the native mode: the native, being as nimble as the locust, goes for them on the rush, and sweeps them into heaps before they have quite recovered from the shock of the surprise. By this method you certainly secure your locust, by the other you generally catch a cold, for the process of catching an individual locust is somewhat laborious. However, it may be done, more especially where there is the tedium of a siege to while away. Having caught your locust, you then immerse him in boiling water, a treatment which at once subdues him. You then proceed to sun-dry him and pluck away his wings and head. The locust is then ready for the table, when, after eating him, you discover that he has all the aroma and subtlety of chewed string. For all the world one might as well munch string, but since the possibilities of imparting to him an especial flavour be so numerous and so eminently calculated to test the qualities of the *chef*, he should again be commended

to the notice of society in so much that it is possible to create an altogether original locust. There is, of course, another way of eating locusts, and that is to eat them alive. This practice, however, is not held in any very great esteem, since the native who cannot afford to wait to cook his locust is *déclassé*, even if he be starving. Personally, I rather like locusts if they be fried, more especially if they be curried, for just now the great thing is to eat, and, having digested what has been laid before you, discreetly to ignore any question which might verify the truth of your suspicions: therefore in eating curried locusts, you thank Heaven for the curry, and pass on quickly to the next course. To eat just now upon this basis is to enjoy consolation, which, in relation to our food, is our sole form of enjoyment, since when you know that you are eating horse and you imagine that you are eating beef, your imagination is necessarily so strong and so triumphant that the toughness of the horse becomes the tenderness of beef. Moreover, everything is only a question of comparison, and as a consequence the toughness of horse-beef and the tenderness of ox-beef necessitates merely an exchange of terms which imply similar standards of perfection.

The pleasures of the table, however, are as nothing compared to the delights of the bombardment by which the Boers assail the town almost daily. We have had more time these days to recognise the precise value of the enemy's shell fire and its wide area of demolition—more time because the Boers have withdrawn “Big Ben”, and we no longer fear to walk freely in the streets, nor are we kept constantly upon the alert listening to the clanging of the alarm. The guns remaining do not appear to be able to reach the town from their distant emplacements. They are an array of minor ordnance, uninteresting to us, since their attentions would seem to be directed upon the outposts and the outlying forts. “Big Ben”, however, was no respecter of places, but gaily hurled defiance at us from a variety of points, maintaining with wonderful regularity an almost daily bombardment.

We who are anxious for his welfare, now spend many dreary hours upon the housetops, for, if we show appreciation of his presence by taking refuge in the cellars, we ascend to the highest points of our houses in order to make sure that he is gone. The sense of gratitude which inspires us to do these things is unrestricted, and were it not that there were smaller guns around us, we might have waved a parting salutation from a more adjacent point; but under the circumstances we are content, and although we feel sorry that he has left us, we shall more infinitely deplore his presence when he returns. It is almost pleasant in Mafeking just now, and if it were not for the scarcity of food, the coldness of the weather, the never-ending rains, the fever which exists (and of which we are all frightened), the entire absence of wood with which to make fires, and the appalling monotony of the days, the dreariness of the situation and the dulness of the people, we might be happy, possibly inclined to exchange our lot for that of anyone else who was not in Mafeking; but as it is, we are really rather anxious to get out and to see the siege raised. Our nerves are altogether raw, our tempers soured, our digestions failing. We were young men six months ago, impressed with the importance of our situation, invigorated with a determination to stick it out; but we have aged considerably since then, and we would willingly send the siege to the devil if we, by way of exchange, were permitted to indulge in the comparative comfort of another form of purgatory. It has become quite the accepted fashion to draw a simile between Mafeking and hell, and to give the early Christian fathers full credit for their

powers; they were nevertheless quite incapable of imagining a punishment so deliberate as the mental and physical torture of a siege. To use a colonial colloquialism, "we went in blind", but one experience is sufficient to guarantee that every member of the garrison just now would put a thousand miles between him and the next beleaguered town. In the situation itself there is nothing to write about, it so constantly repeats itself until the absolute monotony of the days settles down upon the nerves, depressing one's spirit like a wet blanket. The Boers still fire at us, and we still sit tight, nursing our hopes by a sublime confidence in the relief column. If we be sceptical at times, we endeavour not to take our scepticism too seriously, and we talk airily about the date by which the van will have arrived here. But in reality there are but few people who believe in the practical existence of any relief column.

XXXIV.

THE EPICUREAN'S DELIGHT

MAFEKING, *April 30th, 1900.*

We have duly celebrated the two hundredth day of the siege, and if one examines closely into the condition of a town which has withstood the attacks of the enemy during two hundred days, it is to find a spirit that is strong and self-reliant among the garrison and to realise the sadness of the picture which presents the aspect of a town slowly passing into ruin. The ravages of the siege have in no way been so prominent as has been the case during the last few weeks. Mafeking of yore was somewhat stately, although it was merely a colonial up-country centre, possessing nothing which was grandiose or even elegant. But its calm and unruffled dignity sprang from clusters of stately trees around which it had sprung up, and from which in these days of tempest and adversity it snatches something of their independence, something of their indifference to the press of battle. But now it is almost a treeless town, and it is difficult to go anywhere without meeting the signs by which one may read the stress and privation which a siege imposes upon a beleaguered village. Mafeking was never a tiny town; it rambles too far over the veldt to be considered even compact, but these natural features are now greatly aggravated by the ruin which has fallen upon the outlying areas of the town, causing even the most central streets to be disorderly in appearance. From a very early date in the siege we have been accustomed to the spectacle of ungainly structures stretching across those thoroughfares which were exposed to the enemy's fire. These traverses were among the earliest preparations of the war, but now, in addition to these, at frequent intervals in the streets one comes across shelter-pits which have been excavated in the various thoroughfares. These protections against the enemy's shell and rifle fire were not perhaps any lasting imposition upon the elegance of the place, but as the siege developed its effects became more formidable and were more calculated to leave traces of a permanent character. To-day, perhaps, we are achieving to the end of this enforced vandalism, since we have already utilised the garden fences and demolished for the value of the wood which they may contain any houses which may have been damaged by shell fire.

Indeed, just now, we are buying up the deserted huts of Kaffirs who have either been killed or who have made their way with safety through the lines. These huts comprise no small quantity of wood, so we are pulling them to pieces on account of the props which support the reed roofing. But before we ventured into the stadt for our wood, the trees in town were trimmed of their branches, or, as in many cases, chopped down altogether, and as a consequence the outward and visible sign of the results of the siege is an infinite sense of desolation. There is now no longer the gentle rustle of the trees as the night winds sigh through them; no longer do the birds scramble amid the branches, screaming merrily. There is no bird life now, for we have been unable to consider sentiment in the ordering of our daily life. The best timber in the town enjoys no greater immunity, since young and old trees each serve their purpose. Where there was once order, there is now confusion. Streets blockaded at one end are also furrowed by the many shells which have come into the town; the walls of the houses have been riddled with bullets, or wide, ragged holes gape where the projectiles of "Big Ben" pounded their way through. Telegraph poles and lamp posts are bent and twisted, some lying completely broken upon the roadside. The roads and paths are covered with weeds, and everywhere the neglect of the seven months' siege is in evidence. It is a depressing spectacle, and it is well just now to close one's eyes to everything—to the famine which is stalking in our midst, to the fever which is raging round the outposts, to the ill-conditioned horses and cattle, to the weary, patient women, to the children who, unfortunately fortunate, have survived so much distress, and yet if one looks a little forward it is difficult to see that the remedy will be forthcoming. It has required the labour of years to rear the trees, and in many cases the houses that were wrecked and upon whose sites lie piles of rubble, represented the successful conception of a life's handiwork which, destroyed in the passing of a moment, can never be altogether replaced. There are many men and some few women who have lost everything they possessed, and even if they receive an adequate compensation will still feel the absence, in their new abodes, of those subtle sentiments which made the fruition of their efforts so dear and treasured to them. It is impossible not to feel this when one perambulates through the town; every spot recalls something to the mind of someone, an indelible association, emanating from the siege and which time cannot obliterate. Men remember where they stood when some particular house was shattered, others recall their proximity to a bursting shell, whose explosion tore up the roadway. It is these things which will never be effaced, since they are the impressions which have struck deep down upon the mind, leaving an afterglow. But as a rule we keep our cares, feeling that so many people have so much else to worry them, recognising also that upon one and each of us the siege hangs sorely. There can be no doubt that it has left its mark, not only upon the town, but upon the garrison. The men are just a little gaunt, just a little unkempt; the women are haggard and careworn, for it is difficult to keep up one's spirit when from day to day there comes no news, only that curious, ironical instinct, that perhaps it may be that we are not to be relieved at all. The garrison is famished, that is, in reality, the kernel of our situation. Our energies are exhausted because our vital processes are insufficiently nurtured. We are all listless; we all feel that the siege has been a strain of the most severe description, and we are holding ourselves in for the final rally, anxious to support the position, determined to hold the town and occupy till the end our posts. Yet there is a false note through it all, and in those moments when one finds oneself alone one realises how artificial is the

gaiety which we profess, feeling, by intuition, that one's own emotions are alike those of one's neighbour. However, each one of us endeavours to make an effort to maintain in public some appearance of interest in the daily conditions of the siege. It is difficult part to play, because, as I have said, there is so much that is unsatisfactory in our position. The signs of the times are read by little things, and if one goes for a walk round the outposts it is as well not to mention in the town the presence of the fever flags which float over certain areas near which it is not permitted to go. There are three such places; one is remote from our lines, well out into the veldt, where, isolated and apart, living in a world of their own making for the time being, is a family fighting against the ravages of diphtheria; between them and the stadt there is the smallpox reserve, where the yellow jack droops from the trees beneath whose shade the tents of the patients have been pitched. Still nearer into town at the hospital the flag of mercy protects a building in which there is much malaria, some typhoid, and a few cases of enteric fever. This is the gamut of our sickness, and it is in these quarters that we, who are hale and hearty, look with anxious eyes. There are many there who will pay their lives as tributes to the siege, for, as in Ladysmith, so are we reduced to horseflesh, being fortunate enough to possess, however, a small store of medical comforts. The sick cannot be given very much, but we are very solicitous for their welfare, and only lately the garrison as a body, surrendered the ration of sugar to the needs of those who were ailing. Our rations are sadly diminished; three-quarters of a pound of minced horse-meat occasionally interchanged with mule and donkey flesh; four ounces of horse forage, a microscopical quantity of tea and coffee, pepper and salt, comprises the daily issue. Few of us have extras, but there are many who indulge in experiments with certain toilet adjuncts of an edible nature. Scented oatmeal, violet powder, poudre de ris, and starch, have all been tested, and it would seem that starch is the more adaptable. Recently I was allowed to taste a starch blancmange, with glycerine syrup; it was excellent, and infinitely better than scented oatmeal porridge. We also fry our meat in cocoa-nut oil, in dubbin, and in salad oil—if we can "find" any. Indeed, there is quite a boom in grease-stuffs for culinary purposes. Aside from starch, violet face powder gives very fair results, but when used as an ingredient for brawn, it is a hopeless failure. It will be seen, therefore, that we are somewhat puzzled to know how to satisfy our appetites, and we attempt infinite devices in order to supplement our daily food supply; occasionally we shoot small birds and less frequently we catch fish, but the size of both birds and fish is such that a day's bag is seldom sufficient for a meal. If the Europeans be exerting themselves to discover new processes by which to cook inedible compounds, the natives also are at their wits' end, and have resource to a variety of dishes which under more favourable circumstances they would not touch. Pet dogs that are sleek, family cats that are fat, are stolen nightly from the hotels and empty houses, but they are invariably traced to native marauders, who, inspired by hunger, prowl around by night seeking what they may devour. These details give a somewhat gloomy aspect to our situation, and if the truth be told our plight is quite sufficiently serious, but it must not be imagined that by reason of these things we are faint-hearted; we are not so. If we can pull through, and we are proposing to make every effort, we shall be content, and we are content, even at the present crisis, to think that it is not altogether impossible that very earnest efforts are being made to expedite our relief, and so alleviate our distress. Our constitutions, perhaps, are somewhat impaired by the scarcity of food, by dysentery and by fever, but we are well

enough if the pinch should come and the Boers again make a serious attack upon the town. We will beat them off; possibly we may laugh at their efforts. It is only at odd moments that we become depressed, when the intelligence does not seem satisfactory, when our personal worries press too closely upon us. In those moments we may perhaps take an unduly gloomy view of the situation, but it is not so quick set that it cannot be dissipated by the receipt of some good news, by a cablegram from the Queen, or a message from Lord Roberts. It is these things after which we hanker, and it is these things by which we keep up our hearts. That there should be any possibility of a weak spirit manifesting itself at this late hour need not be considered seriously for a moment, since above all else, the garrison and townspeople of Mafeking have devoted themselves to the work of holding this important outpost to the Empire until such moment as the relief may come. In the beginning we withstood six thousand men, just now there are not two thousand men around us, and if they have more guns now than they had, we have also strengthened our weak places and thrown out a chain of outposts through which it should be impossible for an enemy to penetrate. Thus we have made ourselves secure against everything but the menace of starvation, and if there be anxiety upon our behalf in the centres of the civilised world, the message which we send touches not upon the question of relief, but asks that it should be remembered that, even if our spirits endure, our foodstuffs will not last for ever. That is the gist of our prayer, and we trust that it may receive some hearing.

XXXV.

THE LAST FIGHT

MAFEKING, *May 13th, 1900.*

From time to time intelligence has reached us from native sources that the Boers were still anxious to make a final attempt to capture the town. We have had this story repeated to us so frequently that there were many in our midst who had altogether ceased to pay any attention to it; but that there was some sincerity in the desire to attack us has now been proved to be true, and it would seem that the obstacle which existed, and which prevented an earlier realisation of the enemy's plans, was the absence of any leader sufficiently capable and enterprising to attempt the execution of so hazardous a venture. However, when General Cronje delegated full command to General Snyman, President Kruger sent from Pretoria his youthful but gallant nephew, Commandant Eloff, who had not only frequently expressed his desire to capture the town, but brought with him from Pretoria men whose special knowledge of our fortifications had been gained when serving as troopers in the Protectorate Regiment. It was these men who were destined to conceive and carry to a successful conclusion the work of projecting a body of the Boers within our interior lines. Weeks have elapsed since Commandant Eloff arrived from Pretoria, but he has bided his time, studying carefully our system of defence, our outlying earthworks, and collecting all scraps of information which would convey to him a more intimate knowledge of our position. For a time his plans matured, but, as he conned them well over, he began to

make his preparations, recognising that, if he allowed many more days to pass, the relief column from the south would be an additional and important factor in his scheme of operations. Upon May 10th the relief column had reached Vryburg, and Vryburg is only ninety-six miles from Mafeking. Upon May 12th this southern column had advanced to Setlagoli, a point only forty-five miles distant from the town, and the receipt of this intelligence, which was brought to Commandant Eloff by his scouts, revealed to him the urgency and absolute necessity of carrying out his attack upon the town. It was a well-considered scheme, whose eventual success was only nullified by the lack of cohesion and estranged relations which existed between General Snyman and Commandant Eloff. It was a glorious day for Mafeking; it was a day of honourable misfortune for the Boers. Mafeking fell heavily upon Eloff, recapturing the fort which the Boers had surprised and taken in the early morning, and thereby effecting the release of the thirty-two prisoners whom the Boers had caught, and causing known casualties among the Boers of killed, wounded, and taken prisoners, 139.

Commandant Eloff had designed to pierce our western lines under cover of a well-organised feint upon the eastern front of the town. Upon the morning of May 12th and a little before 4 a.m., the bells sounded a general alarm and the bugles summoned a general assembly of available arms to all posts. As in the early days of the siege, I ran from my hotel to Musson's Fort, where, upon similar occasions, I have served as a volunteer. There was no sign of disturbance in the west, but very heavy firing was breaking over the town from the main position of the enemy in the east. Gradually this fire was extended until the flanking positions of the Boers north-east and south-east were also engaged. As we stood to our arms in the fort, it seemed that they were directing an attack upon the brickfields, when, just as it appeared to be the usual innocuous fusilade, streaks of fire were seen leaping to the sky towards the west; there was a lurid glow across the native stadt and dense clouds of smoke were drifting and piling heavily towards the north. There was instant commotion in the fort, everybody exclaiming at once that the stadt was ablaze. At that moment we did not realise that the conflagration which we saw was the deliberate work of the enemy, although there were many who, catching sight of the blaze, concluded that the attack upon our eastern front was the blind to a movement of much greater importance upon the west. Thoroughly aroused and anxious to learn the reasons of the fire, I returned to the hotel. By this time rifle fire had slackened upon the east of the town, but bullets were coming over from the west, the town being under this cross-fire. There were few people about the town, and, save for an occasional group of frightened women, one saw no one. My horse was already saddled, and, riding to the front of the town, I at once recognised that the Boers were in the stadt. Huts were burning in all directions, the separate fires blending into a sheet of flame; dense smoke overhung everything. There was the crackle of the burning huts, and showers of golden sparks tossed themselves into the air. It was still dark and the hour was about five; a lemon-coloured dawn, sheathed in the golden glory of the fire and obscured by the grey-black waves of smoke, was slowly breaking, following closely upon the heels of a flame-coloured night. It was the hour when confusion reigns supreme, when it is impossible to tell tree from man, an outcrop of stone from a recumbent beast. It was the very hour in which to attack, but the Boers secured an additional advantage from the dense and heavy smoke which filled the atmosphere, making the gloom more impenetrable than ever and screening effectually the rapidity of their progress. Heavy firing was proceeding

from the direction of the stadt, and there was a confused babel of voices. Natives were running in all directions, and against the flames groups of figures were noticeable in silhouette.

There seemed little doubt that the situation at this moment was grave in the extreme. The Boers in the stadt, dividing rapidly, had advanced upon the British South Africa Police Fort, in which from the beginning of the siege the regimental headquarters of the Protectorate Regiment have been installed. At this moment Colonel Hore and the officers and men attached to the regimental headquarters staff, including four belonging to the British South Africa Police, numbered some twenty-three. Preparing to resist the invasion, Colonel Hore had already manned the earthwork, which from the days of the Warren expedition has been designated as a fort. The distance between the stadt and the fort is about four hundred yards, and around the regimental headquarters lie scattered numerous outbuildings. It is an impossible place to hold with a small number of men, while the outbuildings are so situated as to afford very excellent cover to any troops which may be advancing with the intention of surrounding the main buildings; and it was this manœuvre which Commandant Eloff was endeavouring to carry to a successful issue. Scattering quickly, and under the cover of the different houses, he advanced within a very short distance of the fort. In the dim light, obscured by smoke, and in part concealed by the native refugees, it was impossible to tell whether these men were the van of a Boer force or our own outposts in process of retirement upon Colonel Hore. Under the guidance of Trooper Hayes, a deserter from the Protectorate Regiment, seven hundred Boers had rushed the interior lines of the outposts, making their way along the bed of the Molopo and through Hidden Hollow into the stadt. The movement had been noticed by the outposts, who, unable to do anything against such overwhelming odds, had given the alarm and fallen back upon either flank, delivering a flanking fire when the Boers were discovered. Arriving in the stadt, Commandant Eloff had ignited the huts in various directions, in this manner giving to the main body of the Boers their signal to advance. Before the rush of Commandant Eloff's men the Baralongs separated, reforming behind the enemy, in order to cooperate with our advanced outposts in repelling the progress of the main body. From the moment that this was accomplished the Boers outside our lines and those who were within the stadt were cut off from one another; but, leaving half his force in the stadt, Commandant Eloff, with whom were Captain Von Weiss and Captain de Fremont, prepared to assault the fort, and, advancing rapidly upon it, had surrounded it with but little difficulty. When the little band of men saw the Boers emerging from stadt, fire was at once opened upon them, but, as they claimed to be friends, and as it was understood that they were our own outposts, the fire from the fort ceased until the enemy were within sixty yards of its front face, being at the same time, unknown to the inmates of the fort, in occupation of the buildings upon either flank and in the rear.

This, then, was the situation which had come to pass within three hundred yards of the railway and about seven hundred yards from the town. In the town itself the Town Guard, the Bechuanaland Rifles, and the entire strength of the Railway Division had been ordered at once to man the railway line. The men from the Hospital Redan and the establishment from Early's Corner Fort were detailed to the line in addition to the Bechuanaland Volunteers, while the Railway Division, screening their movements

behind the corrugated iron fencing which encloses the railway yards, and perforating rifle holes in the sheeting of the fence, were given charge of the railway yards. Lieutenant Feltham and his troop of C Squadron supported Major Panzera and the artillery at the railway bridge, while, under orders from Colonel Baden-Powell, Lieutenant Montcrieff advanced a section of the Town Guard to occupy a house a little removed from the new line of defences which had been already taken up. The town itself, agog with excitement, had been reinforced by the Cape Police from the brickfields and the British South Africa Police from the kopje, and with these forces opposing them, the Boers at the fort found their further advance cut off, while, unless General Snyman forced the passage of the outposts and brought up his artillery, the entire body would be hemmed in.

In the meantime Commandant Eloff demanded the unconditional surrender of the twenty-three men who were established at the fort, an order which, had Colonel Hore refused, implied that every man with him would be shot. Then, in that moment, it was known that the cheering which had been heard in Hidden Hollow a few moments before was the triumphant chortle of the Boers as they stepped within the inmost lines of our defences. Around the fort there was silence—there was a terrible silence; there was a man who was weighing in his hand and in his heart the lives of twenty-two others, who was considering in a fleeting moment of time the flight of an honourable career which had brought to him a string of six medals, and who saw in one of two steps instant death for his little band and irrevocable and almost irretrievable ruin in the other. The pause was indeed death-like; there was the hallowed uncertainty of a future existence, but there was the moral certainty that no living future would fall to the lot of any of the twenty-three men upon whose ears the cry had fallen of surrender. The position was hopeless. With the Boers behind them, with the Boers flanking them, with the Boers in front of them, with three hundred of the enemy within a circumference of seventy yards, what more could an honourable man and a gallant officer do than accept the responsibility of his situation and save the lives of his men by complying unconditionally with the demand of the enemy? Thus did Colonel Hore surrender. It was impossible to withdraw to the town. Such a movement would have meant retirement over seven hundred yards of open, level ground without a particle of cover and with a force of three hundred of the enemy immediately in the rear; moreover the situation imperatively demanded this action in consequence of events over which he had no control. It was, perhaps, a moment as pathetic and great as any in his career. The surrender was effected at 5.25 a.m., and was not without incident, for with the garrison holding up their hands, their arms laid down, with five Boers within a few yards of the Colonel with their rifles at his breast, there was one man who went to his death. "I'll see you damned, you God forgotten—" said Trooper Maltuschek, and he went to his Maker the next moment. The news of such a catastrophe did not tend to relieve the gravity of the situation. With the Boers in the fort and in occupation of the stadt, it was necessary so to arrange our operations that any junction between the stadt and the fort would be impossible; at the same time we were compelled to prevent those Boers who were in the stadt from cutting their way through to the main body of the enemy. The situation was indeed complex, and throughout the remainder of the day the skirmishing in the stadt and the repulse of the feints of the enemy's main body, delivered in different directions against the outposts, were altogether apart from the siege, which we were conducting within our

own investment. From the town very heavy rifle fire was directed upon the fort, which the Boers in that quarter returned with spirit and determination. But the position in the stadt had become acute, since, behind our outposts and our inner chain of forts, which are situated upon its exterior border, were a rollicking, roving band of four hundred Boers, who, for the time being, were indulging in pillage and destruction wherever it was possible.

Gradually, however, the situation changed. The rifle fire from the town had forced the Boers back from the limits of the stadt adjacent to the fort, enabling Inspector Murray and a troop of the Cape Police and Lieutenant Feltham with his troop of C Squadron to fight their way to this same border, affording to the town a definite and established barrier against any possible communication between the enemy in the fort and the Boers in the stadt. Skirmishing thenceforward progressed over the entire area of the stadt. Major Godley, with Captain Marsh and Captain Fitzclarence, and B and D Squadrons, effectively supported by the Baralongs, cheived and rounded up the Boers from point to point, until, shortly after noon, they took up a strong position in a mule kraal and upon the facings of some neighbouring kopjes. To dislodge these men was the work to which Major Godley now directed his attention, and, manœuvring carefully and with discretion, he surrounded the position upon three sides and emplaced a seven-pounder under Lieutenant Daniel, of the British South Africa Police, within two hundred yards of the kopje. The enemy were now compelled to fight or to surrender, and, refusing the request to surrender, they fought pluckily, and with such stubbornness that they kept Major Godley's men some time at bay. But, gradually drawing his circle closer, he poured in a few terrific volleys and charged the position at the point of the bayonet. There was a rapid volley from the Boers, but it was of no avail, and, as the glistening steel was poised for a moment over the walls of the kraal, a flutter of white from the interior betokened that at least this body of the enemy had surrendered. Major Godley then proceeded to shell the kopjes, but the Boers at this point were not proposing to increase by their numbers those of the twenty-five who had laid down their arms in the mule kraal. They scattered and broke into the stadt, fighting from hut to hut, from rock to rock, from snug hollows to the broken points of the many rugged mounds which characterise the configuration of the stadt. These skirmishes continued, and Major Godley contrived to drive the scattered Boers in the direction of Captain Lord Charles Bentinck, who, so conducting his operations, managed to hem the enemy in between the fire of Major Godley and that of his own men. It would have been impossible for the Boers to escape; but dusk was falling, our men were weak and hungry, and we already had a number of prisoners, and, after a sharp rally between the three squadrons, Major Godley instructed Captain Lord Charles Bentinck to withdraw C Squadron and assist in driving out the enemy.

These, then, were the events which were occurring in the stadt, and, if Major Godley had been successful in circumventing the Boer plan and checking any very definite occupation of the stadt, the outposts had also successfully repulsed the indifferent and weak-hearted attempts which General Synman had made to assist his colleague. There had been a definite plan of attack, and, although a portion of it was successful, its main features had failed because their execution had been left to a man who, faint-hearted and cowardly, was altogether unworthy of the command with which he had been entrusted. Upon General Synman must fall the responsibility of

Commandant Eloff's capture, inasmuch as he failed to support his share of the operations. The Boer movement upon the town was carried out with remarkable precision and extraordinary dash, but, despite their splendid gallantry and enterprise in penetrating so far within our lines, the fatality which would seem to attend their attacks upon Mafeking rendered their present efforts again unprofitable, causing their assault to recoil upon their own heads. It had been the intention of the Boers to make the fort the key of a position from which they were proposing to shell the town with the guns which would have been brought up by the main body. But General Snyman did not fulfil his obligations to Commandant Eloff, and, as a consequence, when the siege of the fort had been effected the little which they could accomplish had been concluded, and they found themselves compelled to defend their newly-won position from the galling fire and spirited attacks of the townsmen. Their position, only seven hundred yards from the town, would have proved untenable much earlier in the day, had not the Boers secured the officers and staff of the regimental headquarters as their prisoners. We should have shelled them and in all probability caused tremendous carnage; as it was, however, killed and wounded upon either side were not numerous, although there is some ground to believe that the Boers were successful in carrying off a large proportion of their wounded. Upon the following morning, when the returns for the previous day were made up, it was found that 110 had been taken prisoners, ten had been killed, and nineteen had been wounded. Our own casualties were four killed and seven wounded, while there were five natives who had received slight wounds. These are the figures, correct, so far as we can ascertain, of this very remarkable day—a day which is almost without parallel in the history of war, inasmuch as the garrison, who in themselves had sustained a seven months' siege, were yet able once more to turn the tables upon their enemy, who, although penetrating into the heart of the invested town, failed to carry the position.

During the morning of the fight, after accompanying Lieutenant Montcrieff to Major Hepworth's house, where he was engaged in installing a section of the Town Guard, I thought that I would attach myself to Colonel Hore, since his headquarters appeared to be a central position in the engagement. It was only a short ride—a few hundred yards. The bullets whistled over from the stad, and I scampered rapidly across in order to gain what I thought was protection from this fire. The light was not clear, and the smoke was still drifting across the line of vision. Men were standing about the regimental headquarters, some were scurrying, many were sitting upon the stoep facing the town. It did not seem to me possible that these could be Boers; but, as I galloped on, my horse was struck, and, swerving violently, I found myself pulled up short by a peremptory demand to surrender. They were Boers, or rather they were the enemy, for there were Germans, Italians, and Frenchmen, and a few Republicans.

They ordered me to hold my hands up, they ordered me to give up my revolver and to get off my horse; they asked me a dozen questions at the same time, speaking in Dutch, French, and English. As I sat upon my horse we conducted quite an animated conversation, but the bullets were coming from our men in town rather rapidly, and it seemed to strike the Boers that they had best take cover, advice which I pressed home upon them with much irony. In the meantime I had not dismounted, nor had I given up my revolver, nor were my arms thrust upwards in the air. "Will you hold your damned hands up?" said one, playfully thrusting a rifle into my ribs. "With pleasure,

under the circumstances", I replied with alacrity. "Will you hand over that revolver?" said another. "What, and hold my hands up at the same time?" asked I, quibbling to gain a little time in which to think. "Get off your horse", said another, when, as they unstrapped my belt, I rolled to the ground. It was only then that I knew my horse had been shot in the shoulder, and as they dragged me to the shelter of the building, I asked them to shoot him. They refused. "Your men will do that soon enough", said they, and it seemed to me that this was the unkindest cut of all. The poor animal stood there looking at me. When I saw him again his throat had been cut, and there were seven bullet wounds in his body.

The fort had surrendered. Colonel Hore, Captain H. C. Singleton, Veterinary-Lieutenant Dunlop-Smith, with fifteen non-commissioned officers and men of the Protectorate Regiment, Captain Williams and three men of the British South Africa Police, and five native servants were prisoners in the hands of the enemy. Around them were numbers of the enemy talking rapidly in French, German, Italian, and Dutch, while there were also many who spoke English. They were all well-armed, carrying some 250 rounds of ammunition with eight days' rations in their haversacks. Some were eating breakfast, many were drinking from bottles which they had looted from the regimental mess; occasionally the group around us was swelled by the numbers of those who, hitherto engaged in looting the quarters of the officers, were now mostly anxious to preserve their skins from the fire from the town and to enjoy an inspection of their plunder. In the short time which the enemy had been in possession of the fort many of them had ransacked the premises, breaking open boxes, cutting open bags, and generally appropriating all the effects which they found. It seemed to me at this moment that the men engaged in this work were Boers, as distinct from the foreign element in their force, and I thought that I caught a current of conversation which was passing in French between two of our captors, and which denounced the unnecessary and almost wanton destruction which was in progress.

From the remarks which were passing round us it seemed that the majority were discussing the precise treatment which should be dealt out to the prisoners. At this moment Trooper Hayes, deserter, swaggered towards the circle; he sported Colonel Hore's sword, and a gold chain and watch dangled from his belt. Hearing the subject of the conversation, he at once suggested that we should either be made to stand upon the verandah, a mark to the fire of our own men, or be given the opportunity of taking up arms and joining in the defence of the fort. "You cannot do that, I'm a war correspondent," said I in English to a Boer who was speaking fluent English to a friend. "You be damned!" said he, pleasantly enough, "we'll put you upon the roof." But at that moment Commandant Eloff approached and ordered our removal to a building in the centre of the fort, which hitherto had been used as the storeroom for the regimental mess. Into this they crowded us, together with three others who, visiting the fort in ignorance of the turn of affairs, had likewise been taken prisoners. We were thus thirty-two, and were confined for the day in a space which was not only short and narrow, but ill-ventilated, dirty, littered with rubbish, and already smelling horribly. Firing from town had now begun in earnest, and the bullets whistled and cracked and spat all-round the fort. They struck upon the stones and spattered the roof with splinters of rock and lead, while we could detect from these signs how ably directed and how fierce was the rifle fire which was delivered from the town. When they had

safely secured us in the storehouse the space in front of the building was at once occupied by some sixty-seven men, who crouched up against the walls of the house or lay within the lee of the exterior wall of the fort. From time to time these men moved to points whence the fire was hottest, seeming to take their share of the work in pleasing earnestness and with much keenness. Occasionally those who were without and around the door handed in fragments of dried meat and broken biscuits, but the quantity was not great, and there were many of us who had nothing to eat all day, while few Boers or prisoners had anything to drink. Early in the morning bullets from the town had perforated the water tanks, and as a consequence there was no water to drink, nor was there anything with which to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded. As the day wore on many casualties occurred among the Boers in the fort, and the absence of efficient medical aid among his men prompted Commandant Eloff to appeal to us for assistance, whereupon Veterinary-Lieutenant Dunlop-Smith, Farrier-Corporal Nichols and Forbes, the regimental canteen-keeper, offered and rendered valuable services to the wounded Boers, running the gauntlet of our own fire in the cause of a common humanity. Early in the fight the Boers took over the Children's Hospital, which was located some two hundred yards away from the fort, and in which those devoted nurses, Mrs. Buchan and her sister, Miss Crawford, remained the entire day, attending indiscriminately to the sick children, to the wounded Boers who were brought there, and bringing upon two occasions tea to the prisoners. During the progress of the fight we constantly caught glimpses of the Red Cross flag escorting one or other of these gallant ladies to points where wounded Boers were lying. Throughout the fight the Boers respected the conventions, repeatedly expressing their appreciation and their gratitude for the services of these ladies. For this courtesy Commandant Eloff was largely responsible, and indeed if there was any abuse of the Red Cross flag the blame of such disrespect cannot be charged against the enemy, since our side, I understand, issued orders that the men of the firing line were not to take notice of any white flags which the Boers displayed. The enemy respected its conventions, treated the prisoners humanely, and behaved throughout a situation almost maddening from the strain which it must have imposed upon them with conspicuous gallantry, coolness, and consideration.

In our prison the situation was more than uncomfortable, and when towards evening they locked the door the atmosphere became fetid, and was seriously aggravated by the condition of a man who was suffering acutely from the agonies of dysentery. In a recess, piled up, were the stores of the regimental mess, comprising principally cases of liquors—whisky, Beaunne, pommade, and lime-juice. In a big open crate were tinned provisions of an indefinite character—fruits, peas, and parsnips, and other canned luxuries. These were at once looted by the troopers, who in this respect and the indifferent manner in which they received the orders of their officers, did not set a particularly praiseworthy example. Within the storehouse, however, the prisoners mingled irrespective of rank, and mutually sympathetic in the face of common misfortune. At first every man seemed to be smoking, but gradually the atmosphere became so bad that it was absolutely necessary to desist, and all pipes, cigars, and cigarettes were ordered to be put out. Commandant Eloff returned constantly to the prisoners, chatting brightly with them and sympathising upon the fortunes of war. He sat within the door upon a case of Burgundy, his legs dangling, his accoutrements jingling, and the rowels of his spurs echoing the tick-tacking of the Mauser rifles.

Herein and within our presence the drama of the situation was slowly passing; orderlies came and went, but the Commandant, still tapping with his spurs, continued to issue his instructions and his orders. He seemed to possess the complete mastery of the situation; his buoyant face was impressed with the confidence of youth, reflecting the happiness he felt in so much that his ambition seemed to be about to be realised. But as the situation became more critical, beneath the brightness of his manner he seemed to be feeling the gravity of his position. At times he lost control of himself and complained querulously in Dutch about the non-appearance of his reinforcements; at other moments he regaled the prisoners with scraps of information relating to the situation, and by this means we learnt that Limestone Fort had fallen, and that the trench beneath the railway bridge had surrendered. This news was, of course, not particularly pleasing, and it somewhat added to our dejection when we learnt that, when night arrived, we were to be marched to the south-western laager and thence to be conveyed to Pretoria. I never wished less to see a place than I did the Transvaal capital at this moment. Since Commandant Eloff made himself so agreeable I was moved to chat with him. We discussed the situation in China and the feeling which America was showing for the Boers. To this latter he did not attach much importance, shrugging his shoulders as he said, "Americans and the English"—The pause was eloquent, and I changed the conversation, requesting his courteous permission, should the fortunes of the day go with him, to communicate with the *Times*. He expressed surprise at my being a correspondent, and said that he thought the correspondents had more sense than to get themselves captured. Then he laughed and asked my name. I told him, upon which he replied, "I have heard of you, but I have not read any of your stuff; you have been writing unpleasant things about the Boers". I retired crestfallen to the darkest corner I could find and reflected upon the character of the punishment which General Snyman would mete out to a man who had been so iniquitous as to write "unpleasantly about the Boers". Night was coming on rapidly now, and we were rather glad, since it removed from us the horror of being with the enemy and watching while they fired upon our own men. It seems to me that the strain which emanates from such a sight is more awful than anything in the world.

As dusk settled down we prisoners, crowding in a small room, could hear echoes of desperate fighting outside. Bullets penetrated the wall, perforated the roofing, crashed through the windows, splintered the door. Ever and anon the fire would die away, breaking out again spasmodically within a few minutes. Through the grating of the windows we could see the enemy keeping an alert look-out; we could see them scurrying and scrambling to defend the points against which the firing was heaviest; we saw the limping figures of the wounded; we heard voices cursing us, threatening the prisoners, and urging Commandant Eloff to handcuff and march us out across the line of fire while the Boers used us as a screen to escape; while upon one occasion the door opened suddenly and three wounded Boers precipitated themselves violently into the room. The inside of the building was pitch dark by now, and lighted only by the fitful flashing of the rifles, which made almost a glow within. Straining eagerly at the windows, we caught glimpses of a number of Boers scrambling over the exterior walls of the fort, in order, we afterwards learnt, to make good their retreat. This movement to the rear surprised us and was followed by a terrible outburst of firing, caused by the order of Commandant Eloff to shoot down the fugitives. Then time dragged heavily, and we were hungry and tired and faint when there seemed signs of a rally among the

Boers. After an interval of extraordinarily heavy firing, in which the noise from the snap of bullets and the reports of the rifles were deafening, there was a sudden silence. Commandant Eloff rushed to the door, and, summoning Colonel Hore, stated that if he could induce the town to cease fire the Boers would surrender. It was an altogether unexpected *dénouement*, and in that moment there was not one amongst us who did not think that each in his turn was about to be summoned to an instant execution. We feared a ruse, and whispered to Colonel Hore, as he advanced to meet the commandant, to be careful. Our momentary hesitation caused Commandant Eloff to surrender himself as a hostage until the cessation of fire could be arranged. The Boers, like ourselves, were unable to grasp the situation, and seeing their commandant in our midst, made an attempt to rescue him, which only helped to increase the confusion of the moment. Commandant Eloff called out, "Surrender, surrender", and endeavoured strenuously to pacify his men. We, upon our part, shouted to the town to cease fire; this was at once done, whereupon sixty-seven Boers laid down their arms, handing them to the prisoners, who piled them up within the storehouse. Those of us who were not engaged in this work seized rifles and bandoliers from the heap and manned the defences of the fort until the prisoners could be delivered into proper custody. The Boers were then marched off and were found accommodation in the Masonic Hall and in the gaol. As I retraced my steps to the town and was passing the stables of the British South Africa Police Fort, the groaning of a wounded man caught my ear. I ran to him to find that lying within the shelter of the stables, with a wound through his thigh, was the man to whom I had surrendered myself in the morning. We smiled as he handed over to me his rifle and bandolier. My revolver he had lost, but lying beside him, stiff and dead, with a bullet wound through his forehead, was, by one of those extraordinary coincidences which do happen, the man who had shot my horse. And thus this day of melodrama passed; dramatic in its beginning, dramatic in its conclusion, with enough bloodshed, firing, and animation to satisfy the cravings of the most dispassionate seeker after excitement. Commandant Eloff, Captain von Wiessmann, Captain Bremont, dined at Headquarters. The town came to greet the prisoners, drink was unearthed, and everybody seemed to be congratulating somebody upon their mutual good fortune. We who had been prisoners and were now free rejoiced in the liberty which was restored to us, yet it was difficult to restrain oneself from feeling compassionately upon the great misfortunes which had attended the extraordinary dash and gallantry of the men who were now our prisoners. They had done their best. They proved to us that they were indeed capable and that we should have kept a sharper look-out, while it was indeed deplorable to think that it was the treachery of their own general, in abandoning them to their fate, that had been mainly instrumental in procuring them their present predicament.

XXXVI.

RELIEVED AT LAST

WEDNESDAY NIGHT, 7.30 P.M.
MAFEKING, May 16th, 1900.

The relief of Mafeking is now an accomplished fact, and the first Imperial troops to enter our lines were eight of the Imperial Light Horse, under the command of Major Karri Davis. They had ridden in advance of the main body in an effort to pierce our lines while General Mahon, who had already formed a junction with Colonel Plumer, was engaging the main body of the enemy along the watershed of the Molopo, some seven miles north-west of the town.

We had known since Sunday that an Imperial force was approaching Mafeking from the south, and during Monday immense activity was displayed in the Boer laagers, while towards the south-west a thick fringe of dust was drifting slowly under the commotion of a column of Boers who were retiring rapidly before the approach of the Southern force. During Tuesday we thought we heard the distant booming of the guns, and we could see the Boers preparing to take up positions along the north-western ridges of the Molopo River. At an early hour on Tuesday morning news reached us that the respective commands of General Mahon and Colonel Plumer had joined at Saane's Town, a few miles up the valley of the river. From the moment that the town received this news the memory of the past seven months was dissipated in the first flash of the glad tidings. Speculation was rife as to the precise hour of the arrival of the relief, but the day passed without much prospect of the siege being raised before nightfall. However, this morning the most positive information had arrived during the night, and it seemed that within the next forty-eight hours the combined forces would be here. The morning passed uneventfully. No one seemed quite to know how to spend the few remaining hours which were all that remained of the siege. About noon it became known in town that the forces would not enter Mafeking without having a smart brush with the enemy. We had observed small, detached forces of Boers making from north and south of the town for the ridges about the western areas of the Molopo. Artillery accompanied these men, whose numbers had been drawn from the various Boer positions around Mafeking. A large contingent had moved from the eastern laager and similar bodies had been called out from the south-western and northern camps. It was an anxious time for us in Mafeking, and, although there was no doubt about the final result, we still felt that the fate of the relief column hung in the balance. About half-past two General Mahon's guns opened upon the enemy, the smoke of the bursting shells being plainly discernible away towards the north-west. There was a constant booming of artillery, and the smoke of heavy rifle fire just above the horizon. As the news swept through the town there were many who gathered upon coigns of vantage to witness the action. It was impossible to see details, and indeed it was about half-past four before we even caught sight of the moving masses of men. It seemed then that the Boers were falling back; the artillery had ceased to play, and we were under the impression that they were engaged in taking up fresh positions. About five o'clock a large force of Boers was noticed moving rapidly along the ridge to the east, while a smaller body of three hundred men, detaching themselves from the main column, were riding rapidly towards the west.

In the meantime Colonel Baden-Powell, Colonel Hore, Colonel Walford, of the British South Africa Police, and Captain Wilson, A.D.C. to the Colonel commanding, had taken up their position upon the roof of the railway sheds, where during the last few days a special outlook had been prepared. The scene in the railway yards was animated and dramatic, and in order to be close at hand I secured permission to sit

upon the ladder which led to the outlook. In the town people were taking events quite calmly. The final in the siege billiard tournament was taking place at the club, and in many other respects it seemed difficult to realise that our deliverance was at hand. Between the railway yards and the outposts there were men shooting small birds, while in the yards around us natives were engaged in skinning and cutting the carcase of a horse which, shot overnight, had been handed over to the soup-kitchens. For perhaps an hour everything was calm and peaceful, but ever and anon the bubble of voices reached me from the roof as orders were transmitted over the telephone to Headquarters. Of a sudden Captain Wilson scrambled down the ladder, calling an order to Lieutenant Feltham to saddle up the horses and mount. While this work was in progress orders were issued to Captain Cowan, of the Bechuanaland Rifles, to march his men at once to the barracks of the Protectorate Regiment, while in a cloud of dust and with a cheering rattle Major Panzera galloped by with the guns. "I think we can catch them", said Colonel Baden-Powell, and a minute afterwards he had mounted his horse and was off. I found that he was referring to the detached party of three hundred Boers who were making their way from the scene of the fight in a south-westerly direction. I mounted and followed, and the small force which had thus been rapidly collected moved quickly towards our extreme position in the north-west of the town. It was just possible that we should catch them between the fire of General Mahon's guns and our own, and there was every necessity for speed. In a short time we were out at the "Standard and Diggers' News Fort", where, while our horses were given a short rest, the guns were unlimbered. That particular body of Boers who had been our objective seemed to be unconscious of the movement which had taken place in our own lines. As they emerged from the valley we opened fire and turned their head. For a moment they did not seem to realise their situation, when they rapidly wheeled about and put themselves out of range by a hurried retreat towards the main body. Dusk was now falling, and it was impossible to see any longer, and as a consequence the guns were ordered to retire to town and the men to return. It was half-past six when we reached town, and General Mahon's artillery had not been heard to fire for quite an hour. We went to dine, cheered by the comforting and consoling thought that by noonday upon the morrow the siege would be raised. However, about seven o'clock, in the bright moonlight, and totally unexpected, eight mounted men suddenly appeared in the Market Square. In a short space of time the news flashed round the town, and a concourse of people gathered to cheer vociferously about the precincts of the Headquarters Office. As round after round of cheers broke out it became known that these mysterious horsemen had galloped in under Major Karri Davis with a despatch from General Mahon. In a trice they were surrounded, besieged with questions, clapped upon the back, shaken by the hand, and generally welcomed. These plucky troopers seemed as surprised as ourselves and as glad. Major Karri Davis called for cheers for the garrison, while the crowd took up with tremendous fervour the National Anthem and "Rule Britannia". It was an exciting moment and a picturesque scene, bathed in the soft moonlight and irradiated by the glow of countless stars; but the men were hungry, and Major Lord Edward Cecil, the chief staff officer, busied himself in making arrangements for the care of these eight Imperial Light Horse, who, not content with relieving Ladysmith, had insisted upon being accorded the privilege of making the first entry into Mafeking.

That night the town retired early, but about two in the morning a subdued roar came from the direction of the north-western outposts, and in a very little time word was passed round that the troops were making their entrance into Mafeking. Just as the relief column had proceeded from Vryburg without any flourish of trumpets, so was their entry into Mafeking unexpected and unostentatious. But the town had aroused itself and was soon flocking across the veldt to the ground where the combined columns had already begun to form their camp. It was not a large force; its full muster was below two thousand men; but amid the soft and eerie shadows of the starry, moonlit night there seemed no end to the lines of horses, mules, and bullocks, to the camp fires, to the groups of men, to the number and variety of the waggons. In a corner, as it were, were the guns, a composite battery of the Royal Horse Artillery, eight pieces of the Canadian Artillery, and a number of Maxims. It was these which we had heard booming to us the first distant echoes of relief, and we were of course proud of them. Then and there we examined them, felt them over, pondered upon them, and then and there we thanked our God that we had in our own hands at last some really serviceable artillery. But there were other sights to be seen, early as was the hour, tired as were the troopers. There were the men of the Kimberley Light Horse and their comrades of the Imperial Light Horse to be inspected, to be patted upon the back, to be admired, and to be congratulated. There was scarcely any one who could not claim a friend among the mere handful of men who had marched from Vryburg to our relief, but if by chance there were such a one he quickly placed himself *en amitié* with the first group of troopers with whom he came in contact. Alas! such was our plight that we could not give them anything to drink, but we most willingly had prepared cauldrons of steaming soup and boiling coffee. A cup of coffee is not much to offer, but the goodwill was taken with the spirit, and there was no one who did not seem glad to receive even so small a thing. It was not possible to stay long in the camp. The men were weary, and, moreover, there was much to be done before, with their martial cloaks around them, they were able to snatch a few hours' repose; and so the town returned to its bed, drunk with enthusiasm, in an abortive effort to calm its excited brain with sleep. But, good heavens! was such a thing possible? It was now four, and although it was somewhat early, in the morning we began to call upon one another, passing the hours between dawn and sunrise in hilarious uproar. About seven the camp was all a-bustle. There were rumours that the men were to move out and attack the Boers, who were still in position upon the east side of the town. Presently, as we moved about the streets down by the western outposts, clouds of dust were tossing themselves in the air. The guns were coming—our guns, if you please—and thereupon a pandemonium was raised. Everyone seemed to be screaming, and as the Royal Horse swept through town we streamed after them, feebly endeavouring to keep pace with them, so as to be able to witness the effects of their power. The Market Square at this time presented a picture of military life which has never been equalled by any of the scenes that have been enacted there in its earlier days. Men in uniform were hurrying from point to point, troops from the various squadrons were coming in, squadron-leaders, majors and colonels were falling over one another. These were the beginnings of the fight, and much as the relief had fought its way into Mafeking so were they now going to secure definite freedom for the townspeople by driving out the Boers. As the guns came into the Square willing hands tore down and pushed aside the line of carts and fencing of corrugated iron which for these seven months had served duty as a

traverse. Then the guns of the Horse Artillery swept on, taking up positions upon the veldt in front of the town, in readiness to begin the bombardment of the Boer position, while, in simultaneous co-operation with this movement, the Canadian Artillery were sent out with orders to shell Game Tree. However, the fight did not last long. In a very short time the Game Tree fort was deserted, the Boers from there hurriedly joining their main body. But the presence of the guns had terrorised the Boers, and they fled precipitately, leaving their camp, their guns, their stores behind them. We shelled for an hour with the composite battery of the Royal Horse, comprising four 12-½-pounders and two pom-poms. Then we advanced in skirmishing order, extending our line rapidly until we had outflanked their position. Then we charged, and the day was ours. The enemy had vanished, and we were in possession of their camp, while so undignified had their retreat been that they did not even wait to remove their hospital. Upon General Snyman's house there was still floating the Republican flag, while the Red Cross hung drowsily in the air above the hospital. There were thirty wounded in the hospital, and these, for the time being, were placed under a guard, but otherwise left undisturbed; in this manner did the siege come to an abrupt conclusion.

XXXVII.

THE END

MAFEKING, *May 26th, 1900.*

The imprimatur has now been given to the siege, and that chapter of the war which bears reference to the investment of Mafeking must now be considered as closed. The end of the drama is with us; the curtain has dropped, and the people of the play are scattering—some are dead, some have been wounded, lying nigh to death in the Victoria Hospital, some have passed through this seven months' ordeal suffering neither monetary loss nor physical hurt, but bearing with them, in their minds, the almost indelible impress of an interesting but terrible experience. And so the play is ended, and the great historical drama in which we have enacted our part is soon to present fresh scenes, and with the transformation, let us hope some stirring incident and a picturesque scenario. To the end, of course, there is the story, but it is simple of fact, it is plain of feature, it deals only with what one may consider as the final obsequies of the siege, and in a brief space we will consider them.

The siege is now officially returned as having been raised by General Mahon's force at half-past ten upon the morning of May 17th. It has been quiet since then. The garrison has mainly rested, taking itself idly and participating in the few last deft touches with which Colonel Baden-Powell has adorned the siege. These issues to the relief have been sad, have been pleasing, but mournful or gay they have served their purpose, fitting in most accurately with the long chain of circumstances which has enclosed the siege. There was the time when the garrison attended just beyond the precincts of the cemetery, where the rank and file of the forces which have been beleaguered, stood to attention as they paid their last honour to the dead, to all of those who died so nobly, to those who had been the victims of disease, and who, one

and all, had paid the penalty of our success. It was a mournful retrospect which was thus forced upon our notice as the names of our dead were passed slowly in review; but as the mournful cadences dropped from the lips of the preacher we braced ourselves to think that such an end, as we had gathered to conclude, was but the inevitable. As the Colonel stood before us—the man who reaped the glory of the siege—we wondered whether beneath the calmness of his demeanour there lurked any feeling of regret, any half-cherished desire to express aloud to those who stood around him the potency of his sorrows. To him it was but the simple ceremony, and one, moreover, to be got through quickly, and indeed there was but little in the service. Occasionally the breeze, which sighed so tremulously through the hedge of trees that fringe the graveyard, wafted to us snatches of prayer. And that was all, so far as we were concerned—the mere fragments of a passing communion, ending as abruptly as it began, seeming all to concentrate in that one moment when at command three rounds of blank cartridge were fired across the graves. That was the full weight of our honours to the dead, since afterwards—for it does not do to dwell too much upon these things—the Colonel commanding reviewed the remnants of his force, unbending insomuch that he addressed to each unit, a few words of appreciation and of thanks. And then where we had assembled, there did the Town Guard and other corps of the garrison receive their dismissal, since now that the siege was raised they might return to their businesses, to their homes, and to their families to spend a cheering hour or two in an endeavour to compute some estimate of the ruin which has fallen upon their fortunes.

Now that the siege is over, it is not without interest to know to what extent the garrison has suffered. We have had 1,498 shells from the 100-pounder Creusot, but in addition to this the enemy has fired into Mafeking some 21,000 odd shells of a smaller character. These have ranged from the 14-½-pounder high-velocity, armour-piercing, delay-action shell, down to the high-velocity one-pound Maxim, embracing in the series a variety of nine-pound shells—common, segment, shrapnel, and incendiary—several hundred seven-pound shells, and a multitude of five-pounders. This has been the weight of the enemy's artillery fire which has played upon the town since October 12th, and which has supported commandos of Boers which were reckoned as 8,000 men in October, and whose numbers are believed never to have fallen below 3,000 rifles. Throughout the siege there have been some eight guns around us, including the big Creusot piece, but at times there have been eleven, and at rare intervals our spies reported that the strength of the enemy's artillery was fourteen guns. And we have stood this with a certain cheerfulness and with a pretty spirit of determination: moreover, we have returned their fire, claiming to have disabled three guns and killing and wounding several hundred men. Our own casualties from shot and shell and sickness until the end of April were 476. In October there were 77; November, 49; December, 101; in January, 47; February, 68; March, 67; and April, 67. The admissions into the base hospital during this period were 685, while 496 were discharged. Among those who were admitted to the hospital there were 106 deaths. During a similar period and through identical causes, 180 natives were admitted to this hospital, 115 were discharged, 56 died, but irrespective of these figures 398 deaths were registered from amongst the natives. That their mortality was great, the monthly returns from the native population will show. In October 12 natives died; in November, 13; December, 46; January, 64; February, 44; March, 84; April, 135. These figures relate to those patients only who were passed through the base hospital, but the monthly returns bear

upon the available strength of the garrison, and are in themselves an index to the conditions of the siege. The town itself has suffered to a great extent, although the amount of damage which the enemy's shell fire has created is insignificant when compared to what would have been the result had the main elements in its construction been bricks and mortar. The tin shanties and the mud walls have given to Mafeking a remarkable salvation, making it possible for the little town to compare, when the weight of metal brought against it is considered, even favourably with Ladysmith. Among the men forming the relief column there are many who were with Sir George White, and from these one gathers that the damage which Mafeking has sustained is infinitely greater than the injuries which Ladysmith can show.

And so the siege is ended; but if this were taken in its more literal sense it would imply that there has been an immediate change for the better in our condition. But such is not the case. We have been relieved of the presence of the Boers, a matter which did not greatly trouble us, but there has been no alteration in our scale of diet—a matter which does greatly trouble us; we are still issued four ounces of rusty bread and a pound of scraggy meat, and there is still an absence of table delicacies. We have no sugar, we have no milk, we have neither eggs nor fowls. In point of fact we have nothing, and indeed there has been no change. Yet we understood that Field-Marshal Lord Roberts in his kindly and generous way had sent us a mob of prime bullocks, and a convoy of something other than hospital luxuries. This is told to us upon the authority of Major Weil, who controls the commissariat, and if it be true, it is still most certainly the case that the commissariat officer who has controlled the food supplies of the garrison during the siege is still, relatively speaking, doling out his sugar by the thimbleful, and ladling his flour with a spoon. However, there is to come a time some day when Captain Ryan will be far away, and the hours of meal times will be graced with such luxuries as we have not seen for seven months. It is only recently that the issue of horse meat was stopped, but there is a very general belief that if the horses are not being slaughtered for human consumption, their carcasses still play an important part in the soup with which the garrison is served. Of course, the days of starch puddings and other table delicacies which were manufactured from toilet necessaries are over, while we believe that an effort is to be made to improve, but not increase, the bread allowance and to put fresh meat on the public sales. But these are the boons of the future; since we are relieved that is held to be sufficient for the present. However, our thoughts do not dwell much upon our food, we rejoice so much over our liberty that we can spare but little time for grumbling, and indeed feel but little inclination. The town is bright again, and people throng the streets as though a load had been lifted from off the backs of every one. The shops are open, the post office has resumed its work, and now once more accepts telegrams and letters. During the siege there has been but little opportunity to send to the outer world any message of a private character that contained more than a few words. Letters were almost out of the question, and were expensive luxuries even to war correspondents, who were compelled to employ special runners at high prices to carry their despatches to the nearest office. Lately, and when the investment of the enemy was not so close, the intelligence department did manage to pass through the lines small parcels of mail matter. The occasions have been infrequent, and there were so many people who were anxious to write that it became necessary to restrict the general public to a certain limit of space. It does not seem that many letters got through, since now that we have

had time to overhaul the laagers of the enemy we have found much correspondence in their waggons. We have also found a number of telegrams, and these provide interesting reading and bear importantly upon the situation. Moreover, it would seem that our estimate of the Boer forces in the field is much exaggerated, for President Kruger complains bitterly to Commandant-General Botha of the paucity of numbers at the command of the State President. The Commandant-General had but fifteen hundred men with him in Natal, while General Snyman mentions the numbers of the various commandos which he has summoned to his assistance, and by which he hopes to secure an additional eight hundred men. But from the telegrams it would seem that, for the most part, the Boers are timorous and tired of fighting. The Field Cornet of Christiana asks what he is to do with twenty men, and states that the Johannesburg Police are bolting. "What, then, am I to do with my men?" At this moment the British troops were within one hour's ride of Christiana. General Snyman has many interesting comments upon the situation on the Molopo, and if President Kruger believed one half of the intelligence that General Snyman telegraphed to him, his knowledge of the situation must have been obscure. From the despatches which passed between this worthy General and the State President, mention is made quite frequently of the desperate assaults upon our lines which General Snyman organised and in some cases personally carried out, and which upon many occasions resulted in the capture of one of our outlying positions. If this be true such positions as were captured must indeed have been outlying, in fact so far beyond the perimeter of our defences as to altogether have escaped the notice of the garrison. But it does not seem that President Kruger believed everything that General Snyman communicated to him. In one message Oom Paul requests immediate information upon the whereabouts of Colonel Plumer. There is a certain pathos in the question of the aged President asking General Snyman, "Where is Plumer? You must know", and one gathers that the old man saw somewhat further into the future than the majority of his councillors, since he gives it as his opinion that Mafeking will be relieved. But prophets have never been respected in their own country. General Snyman does not seem to have found favour in Pretoria; perhaps the character of the man was too well known, since the State Secretary, Mr. Reitz, is ordered by the State President to inquire as to whether the failure of General Snyman's reinforcements to support Commandant Eloff in his attack upon the town on May 12th was due to drunkenness or to cowardice. "If it be drunkenness, let us say so", advises Mr. Reitz, "since it would be better that the truth be known than that it should be believed that General Snyman was a coward". Does this sentence contain the secret history of the failure of Commandant Eloff? If it be so one can afford to be generous and to sympathise with President Kruger, even to feel a certain pity for Commandant Eloff.

The Commandant, since he surrendered to us, has taken life very philosophically. He is confined in the gaol, and with him are Captain de Fremont and some half-dozen others. The majority of the prisoners are lodged in the Dutch Church and in the Masonic Hall. Their time hangs heavily upon their hands, but when the tedium of their imprisonment becomes too great they indite long letters to their friends, using much paper, in villainous denunciations of the English, in complaining bitterly of their food, and in villifying Snyman.

Commandant Eloff smokes and reads and talks. Sometimes he becomes abstracted, and again upon Sundays he is dejected. As I had the pleasure of meeting him in the British South Africa Police Fort upon May 12th, the occasion upon which he captured me, I called upon him in the gaol. He was pacing the courtyard, but he stopped and smiled when he saw me, and as I saluted him he held out his hand. "My prisoner", said he, amiably. "The fortunes of war", said I, and he waved a hand in the air as he accepted a cigarette. His costume was free and comfortable. He wore a brown jersey, a pair of riding breeches, and slippers. The jersey fitted him, and he seemed to take some pains in showing the physical development of his shoulders. His arms also were strong, and with every move of his body his muscles quivered. He was lithe, supple and active, and as he stood there with the whitewashed walls of the gaol behind him, with his companions around him, and a guard upon each of the four walls which enclosed the courtyard, an air of romance clung to him and he might have been for the moment some creation of Anthony Hope, casting in his mind for some entrancing but desperate situation. He puffed my cigarette vigorously and began a conversation. "You know", said he, "I don't like horseflesh". "I am sorry", said I, "but you should have taken Mafeking before". "We shall have it yet", said a man at the table, whereupon the Commandant shrugged his shoulders and threw the end of his cigarette somewhat petulantly from him. "If", said I. "Ah", said the Commandant, and there was a pause in which we all laughed. He looked at me for a moment as though he thought. "It is possible", said he, and he punctuated his words with little nods. As he finished Captain de Fremont joined us. "My God", said he; "you English". Eloff laughed. "Do not let us make this Fashoda", said he. "Yes, it is possible", he began again, "and I think we should have captured your town, but Snyman"—he paused and spat. "I wish to God you would make Snyman a prisoner", said he. The conversation had become interesting, and I passed my cigarette case around again. It returned to me empty, but Commandant Eloff had begun to smoke a pipe. "Are not you Dutchmen tired of the war?" said I; "the end, after all, is inevitable". Captain de Fremont spoke again. He twisted his cigarette between his fingers and remarked with an air of incisive inanity, "Life and death are inevitable". "And the English", said Commandant Eloff, whereupon I laughed. The Commandant once more took up the thread of the conversation. "We attacked you because it seemed to me that you had relaxed your vigilance. How could we otherwise have pierced your lines?" His view was right—at least I thought so. "We expected you", said I. The Commandant shook his head and looked at me somewhat quizzingly. After all it was a palpable lie. "No", said he; "you should at least allow us that amount of energy. You did not expect us, and had Snyman pressed home the attack upon your eastern front and supported me with the guns and reinforcements, I think that Mafeking must have fallen". He paused for a moment, and said, slowly, "I am certain that we should not be prisoners". "It was bad luck", said I, "we would rather have you with us than against us, but this time you will remain with us". He glanced at the four walls, upon each of which there was sitting a guard. "I notice", said he, "that I am well protected". The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders, as I suggested he would rather be outside. "Give me a chance", said he, and he snapped his fingers. "What, don't you know", said I, "what has occurred this morning?" In a flash his mind reverted to the firing upon the previous day. "Tell me, what was that firing last night?" "Mafeking has been relieved", said I. The Commandant said nothing, and once more there was a pause; but before we spoke again the sergeant of the guard clanged upon

the door with his musket. "Time is up", called he, and the door opened. For a moment the Commandant could see through the open space of the doorway, beyond and above the heads of the five guards who were waiting outside, the glimpse of blue sky, a line of trees, a stretch of veldt. "Is there anything I can do for you?" said I, before I went. He waved his hand. "Nothing", said he, "except fresh meat" I stayed for a moment and pointed outside. "Fresh meat and fresh air are both outside." I thought I caught a sigh: it seemed to lurk for a moment amid the harsh and grating noises of the bolts as they were thrust forward in their sockets.

From the prison I strolled to my hotel. The day was fine, the cold of the morning had given place to a warm and brilliant sunshine. It was the Queen's birthday, and our little world seemed at peace. For the moment we were forgetting the strife and tribulations of the past seven months, and in our anxiety to do honour to her Majesty there was much commotion in the town. Flags were flying and bunting was fluttering from the verandahs of the houses. Here and there, passing in a cloud of dust, were the troops marching to the parade. There was to be a review and there was also a general muster of arms. In the centre of the Market Square were the guns which we had captured from the enemy. In a corner, but surrounded by an admiring crowd, were the two pieces which we had improvised during the siege. There was "B.-P.", there was also "The Wolf", and acting as guard to these guns, were two men who, the day before had reached Mafeking from Pretoria, having eluded the vigilance of their sentries and walked one hundred and eighty miles in a gallant and successful attempt to gain liberty and freedom. The men were almost as interesting as the guns. But time was speedy and the war correspondents were anxious to attend the parade. The review was a study in contrast, the contrast between a birthday parade and that review at the cemetery where the souls of the dead were passed in inspection and for whom prayers were offered. The parade stretched from end to end of the ground immediately in front of the British South Africa Police Fort, taking place upon the very spot where the town had so valiantly contested the attack which Commandant Eloff had organised. Behind the lines of the men were the white buildings of the Protectorate Barracks, while from the flag-mast, which stands aloft in the centre of the fort, there floated the Union Jack. The scene was indeed a study in contrast. We were at peace now with the elements of war within our midst. We were fighting then, a grim and determined struggle waging all round us, and in a way this birthday parade was the issue of that day's fighting, since had the end been otherwise, it might have been Commandant Eloff who passed in review order upon the birthday of our Queen Empress. We formed up, detachments from the different corps and the artillery upon the right of the line. It was only the siege artillery, and nothing very much at that. The pom-poms and the guns of the Royal Horse Artillery were guarding the front of the town, and could not be spared.

And so we waited, when of a sudden there came a cheer from the rear and we realised that General Mahon was approaching. There was no band, there were no horses, the entire parade were dismounted. The Colonel inspected, the men dressed, and the Colonel returned to the saluting base. He seemed conscious of the crowd, and stood as though he realised that the parade which he was now holding meant to him so much more than the mere abstract honour to the Queen. It signified the end of his labours, epitomising his successes, touching with ironical glory the honours which the near future must surely bring to him, and as he stood he seemed quite nervous. It was

one of the few occasions upon which I have ever known him to be moved. The men who had come to his relief were passing by him, and ever and anon one heard the commands of the officers calling to their squadrons as they gained the shadow of the saluting base, "Shoulder arms; eyes left." Then Colonel Baden-Powell would raise his hand, taking and returning the salutes as they were made. In the distance there was a haze of dust through which a gaudy sunlight was flickering, and in the distance and, beside us, there was the heavy music of the armed tread, as squadron after squadron marched by. The air was filled with sound and sentiment, but yet the crowd that stood behind was quiet and quite subdued. It was no wonder that they were impressed, that they recognised in the rumble of the distant feet and in the flowing masses of men the hour of their deliverance. Their troubles were indeed past, their siege was over, and the moment was approaching when those who had been in their midst during so many months would be again upon the move, advancing this time against the enemy upon Pretoria. But the hour was not one in which to say farewell. It was an hour which lived for itself, an hour that bore to each of us some knowledge of our liberty, and a secret appreciation of the duties which our Empire asked of us. We were all contented, happy in the knowledge that the siege was over, but imbued with even a greater happiness since, upon this day, her Majesty was sharing with us the joys of our good news. And presently the ceremony concluded, and for the remainder of the day we attended sports and organised a concert; while that night there was a dinner and a pyrotechnic display in Market Square. We dined and drank the Queen, and drinking this, streamed to the air where the rockets were already rushing to the *ewigkeit* with the roar of the racing tide. And then beneath the steely beauty of the moonlight and the soft radiance of countless stars we sang "God Save the Queen" and wandered home, chanting as we went the strains of "Rule Britannia". Thus in a cloud of loyal enthusiasm were brought about the closing scenes of the Siege of Mafeking.