

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECOND DIVISION—A CASE OF THEFT FOUND OUT—
 FLOGGING—OUR DINNERS—LENDING AND BORROWING—
 MOVE TO CONFERENCE HILL—NEWS OF AN “IMPI”—
 CROSS THE BUFFALO—DOORNBERG—DONGAS.

THE three infantry regiments told off to the Second Division arrived about the same time, with two batteries of artillery, and the usual allowance of Engineers and Commissariat. Ten days must then pass at the least before the 17th Lancers and 1st Dragoon Guards could arrive; and after that, it was a matter of doubt if the Division would start for a further ten days or more. So all our hurry in leaving Durban and marching up country was thrown away, and we were proportionately discouraged.

Then came a whisper—growing louder every time it was repeated, until it became a certainty

amongst us—that forts were to be constructed at ten-mile intervals on the road to Ulundi, each one to be garrisoned by men of one of the regiments of our Division; and nothing else was talked about but the chances of each of them being the unlucky one. Thus a second scare began, and took away still more enthusiasm with it.

About this time arrived General Newdigate, who was to lead the Division to Ulundi. His round face, and short light hair and whiskers, gave him a smart appearance, which took with all of us at once. He was, as a man said, “ready for anything.” He was a little man, pleasant to talk to, rather fond of laying down the law, and always dressed in the neatest of uniforms. His buff-leather straps over both shoulders and round his waist were spotless, and his gold-banded cap shone throughout the campaign with untarnished lustre. We liked him, men and officers, and were only sorry that Lord Chelmsford’s presence with the Division allowed him no opportunity of proving his soldier-like abilities.

The General, like many others, had his own

idea of the Zulus, and at an inspection he made of the infantry at Dundee, put them through the usual Aldershot attack - drill modified by himself, winding up by telling the men, who straggled up breathless and upset by the rough ground, ant-hills, ditches, and mud-holes after the final "charge," that "this was the only way to advance against an overwhelming fire"—a totally new and somewhat disconcerting aspect of the enemy's tactics, against which we had been taught to stand in "close order," and give them the bayonet freely, as their fire was all rubbish. They were infamous shots, their fire-arms were mostly worthless, and they invariably put up the "sight" to its highest point, under the idea that the piece gained strength in shooting by the practice,—all of which we found was quite true in the future.

While waiting for the order to advance, a remarkable instance of the discovery of crime by circumstantial evidence occurred. The men of one of the regiments had been paid, each man receiving five shillings, the money being distributed in sovereigns, one to each group of four men, owing to the scarcity of silver. The re-

cient of one of the sovereigns happened to drop it in his tent, and though assisted by two comrades who were there at the time, never found it again. A complaint was lodged with the captain by the man who had lost his money, and it was remembered that a somewhat similar case took place on board the ship coming out, a man having dropped half-a-sovereign, which he was unable to find, being assisted by one of the two men who had so willingly given their services on the present occasion. Fortunately there were no shops at which the men could buy—there was only a regimental canteen in camp; and orders were given to the sergeant in charge of it to watch, and take a note of any money spent by the two men who had assisted in the search after the missing coin. That evening the man suspected of the theft on board swaggered in and changed a sovereign, spending fully half of it in drink. It was then easy to prove that he had not been honestly in possession of such a coin at the time, and the theft was clearly brought home to him, and with it the usual, indeed the only punishment, flogging.

Notwithstanding all that has been said lately

about this punishment, it must always remain in force with an army constituted now, as ours is, of the lowest class. In the field especially it must hold its own, no other deterrent being available. The nonsense that is talked of its debasing effects on the character of the men, is in practice mere sentiment. The cases of good men being flogged are so rare as to be almost unknown. To a bad character the penalty is compensated by the knowledge that if he bears it manfully he will become a considerable hero in the eyes of his comrades—a kind of reward not to be got out of any kind of imprisonment. The man who can take punishment in such a manner as to elicit admiration, will certainly make a better soldier in the field than one whose feelings are so tender as to break down at the appearance of pain. Men of late have been educated too much for the barrack-room, forgetful that the ultimate use of the soldier is on the field, hard and rough, death-strewn, with scenes of pain around so frequent as to be unnoticed.

It can be further asserted as true that there

is no spectacle which an officer dislikes more than a flogging, and yet there is hardly an officer in the army who would vote for its abolition.

Camp-life, into which we appeared to have dropped all at once, was dull work after the march, and many were the expedients to pass the time. Cooking became a great resource—the necessities of the situation required it; and all sorts of dishes were tried, and shown about in triumph. The man whose dinner was a little better than usual, talked about it, and got certain credit for his cleverness. An oven sunk in the ground, and closed in with the lid of a tin box, bore off the cordon of honour. Stews were in great request, as they contained food and drink in one—their popularity being much increased by the discovery that meat will not assume the consistency of leather if simmered gently, instead of being boiled as fast as the fire will let it.

The only occupied farm near gave us excellent milk for sixpence a bottle, and a few disreputable-looking Kafirs ventured in of a morning with more, too dirty for use, and some fowls, which were eagerly bought up. One

officer was lucky enough to buy seven, forgetting the difficulty of keeping live-stock in an open camp where "jumping" was the rule and honesty the exception, but eventually solving the question by putting the birds into a bag, and hanging it at night to his tent-pole. These were indeed days of luxury compared with the months that followed.

The scraps of conversation heard in passing through the tents were often curious. Says Brown to his friend Jones, who has dropped in for an evening chat—

"Have a cup of cold tea, old boy?" and to him answers Jones, in a sad and tragic voice—

"Brown, if you'd said that to me at Aldershot, I'd have knocked you down; but now I don't mind if I do."

Robinson, a portly captain, pokes his head into Smith's tent, and in tones not to be taken lightly, demands the return of a candle lent some days before—retiring happy and consoled, candle in hand.

"Where's the salt, Murphy?" cries a third, with angry voice.

"You've ate it up, sor!" exclaims the man.

“ Well, give my compliments to Major Johnston, and ask him to lend me a pinch.”

These and similar scraps represented the usual conversation in camp.

But sooner than was expected a forward movement was made, and it was decided to occupy Conference Hill, some thirty miles towards the front, as the new base of operations.

The regiment chosen was the 94th, and it started, not without envy from those left behind, played out of camp by the bagpipes of the 21st, almost a month since it landed at Durban. It was a pretty picture, and one fraught with hope to all of us, as the long, sinuous line, more than a mile in length, wound across the neck of land separating two hills on our front, which had till now blocked out the wished-for Zululand. The old farmer and his wife from whom we had bought the milk, came out of their tree-shaded cottage, the last we were to see for many months, and waved the regiment farewell; the regiments gave a parting cheer, and every man in the departing line put his best foot foremost, now he felt he was really going to the front.

A guide was required, for the road was one seldom used, leading only to the half-dozen Dutch farms which lie in the debatable ground between the Buffalo and the Blood rivers. Landsman's Drift, then a mere spot on the prevailing grass-land, but destined soon to be one of the army's principal bases, lies on the former river, there a slow-running stream of clear water between high and difficult banks—a boundary-line which brought the regiment to a halt for the night.

Across the river could be seen one or more farmhouses, now deserted, and a native kraal or so burnt, their places being known by fields of Indian corn waving in the wind, and the stone cattle-kraals with which each one is provided. A troop of ownerless ponies send out the mounted men, and after a hard ride one is caught; while on the river a flock of tame geese, wild now, made capital shooting for those lucky enough to have guns. Everywhere is a rolling plain of grass, except in front, where rises abruptly, barely a mile away, the great mass called by the Dutch Doornberg, or Thorn Hill. Hardly had the troops arrived when they

were met by a veritable old man of the mountain, or Rip Van Winkle. He was mounted on a sorry little pony, and wore a long white beard. His face was piebald with red and purple patches, and his clothes were worn and disreputable. The apparition announced himself as a farmer of the neighbourhood with important information, and asked for "square-face." This being supplied, he let out his information. A Zulu "Impi" was constantly quartered within a few miles of our right flank; a second Impi had heard of our intended advance to the Blood river, and lay across our way. If we persevered in our present intentions, a fight must follow, and in those days the results of any such rashness were considered to belong, as a matter of course, to the enemy. The intelligence was sufficiently authentic to warrant a messenger being despatched hot haste to Dundee, asking what was to be done under such critical circumstances—a message replied to by an order which sent the troops on their way truly, but by a circuitous road round Doornberg, thereby losing a day's march, and presenting a flank instead of a front to the expected attack. In

the days to come we were not so apt at believing the stories of semi-drunken farmers, and estimated at its proper value the Zulu Impi, for long the bogy of the British. The Impi itself is formidable enough, and requires special knowledge to stand against ; but it is but a mass of human beings like ourselves, and is incapable of turning up at all times, and in every place, like a Jack-in-the-box.

The method used by the Zulus to collect an Impi was to send round word to the villages, ordering the men to assemble at the king's kraal on a certain day, usually about new moon ; a grand ceremony of doctoring and savage rites then took place, and the Impi was despatched to some given spot. Once in motion it moved with enormous speed, and was at the given place to a moment, and in magnificent fighting order. But fight or not, that accomplished, the task set it was done, and the host melted away—returning each one to his own village, some few to the king with an account of their doings ; and, wish it however he might, the king could not induce the Impi to collect again until a given time. Like all natives of

Africa, they wanted change, wished for the enjoyments of their homes, were anxious to tell their deeds of daring there, and receive the praises of their women ; while, above all, the arrangements for feeding them when on the war-path were not calculated for more than three days.

Yet hardly a day passed that General Funk did not report the presence of an Impi as imminent.

A whole day was taken up in crossing the Buffalo—none too much for the number of wag-gons the column had to convoy. The drift was formed by the banks on either side being cut away into steep slopes, at a spot where the river-bed was smooth and hard. The soldiers were marched down to the stream by companies, and taking off boots, socks, and trousers, waded across, as some said, just like ready-made Highlanders. The wag-gons, each with a double team of oxen, jolted at a run down the near incline, and entered the water with a splash, and, amid a chorus of cracking whips, groans, and cries, such as none but Kafirs can give out, crawled up the far one. Conductors on ponies galloped backwards and

forwards; the transport officer shouted himself hoarse; and every one was busy from early morning till dusk, when the unwieldy vehicles were all across and safely in laager on the other side.

Amusing incidents were not wanting. An unfortunate non-combatant, here manifestly against his will, and sorely mistrusting the powers of his pony, supplied by Government, to face the stream, made several heroic attempts down the bank, but retreated each time before his steed wetted his feet; till, wearied out at last by the laughter he provoked, he was forced to accept another person's hand, and was so led across the water in mild triumph.

The march lay through the valley of the Buffalo, a much-winding river in a broad expanse of grass. Close on the right hand rose Doornberg, green to the summit, which was irregular and flat; some miles on the left a range of hills across the river. The grass often rose to our shoulders, and the soldiers pushing through it looked thoroughly picturesque; path there was none,—the line just followed an old waggon-track, or the marks made by

our Engineers, who preceded us earlier in the morning.

Far out on this sea of grass we had been watching a speck moving constantly, which might be a horse, an ox, or some wild animal. The glasses made it out to be like an ox; to imaginations fired with accounts of South African sport, it was a wild buffalo. So a sportsman was soon in the saddle, and rode off with a rifle to solve the question. His progress was eagerly watched: the leaving the pony in a hollow, which instantly galloped home—the stalk, and the final shot, when the great beast fell over heavily,—were all intensely interesting. Our anticipations of sport were, however, rudely shattered when the sportsman returned with the news that he had only shot a tame ox, wandering about ownerless on the *veldt*. Like other things, we got to know even what this meant after a time,—learning that cattle in this country are very liable to a disease called “lung sickness,” when they become useless, and are allowed to wander where they like over the almost boundless plains till they fall and die.

Gazing over this expanse of grass-land, en-

tirely level to the eye, we were told that Zululand was but a continuation of the same; and the thought at once occurred to most, "What a splendid cavalry country, and how ours will score when they ride over it!" Yet experience soon taught us it was rather the reverse. Flat to the eye, on travelling over it you will find it a succession of huge rolling swells, in which the grass-land rises and falls almost interminably. The valleys between frequently hold at their lowest level a marshy stream, almost invisible even when quite near you—its sides boggy and sloppy, capable of taking in a horse bodily, and yet giving no indication of their danger by a difference of vegetation. Deserted cattlekraals, now mere heaps of stones, are very common; and being hidden up by a growth of luxuriant grass, are often unnoticed until the horse is amongst them. Holes made by lizards or ant-bears are everywhere—true pitfalls for the unwary; while the ants' nests themselves, though visible enough, are so numerous as to make the ride of a single horseman a regular zigzag; to keep in formation among them is nearly impossible.

But the real and unavoidable obstacle to riding is the "donga." The term is now well known in England; yet its features, as seen in the true type of donga met with in Zululand, are hardly yet understood. In Natal, all small valleys, water-courses, and depressions of the ground are called generally dongas. It is only in the northern part that the true donga is to be found — exception being made to the coast country. But it is Zululand that they flourish and abound in.

The donga proper is not a ravine, a gully, or a crevasse; it is actually a distinct thing — a donga. Dongas appear in the most unlikely places, and are often modest, hiding themselves in grass or amongst stones, and only to be stumbled upon by accident.

To picture a donga, one must imagine a thick slice taken bodily out of the earth; the slice itself has utterly disappeared, leaving in its place a yawning gulf. This may be from a dozen to a hundred feet across; its sides are absolutely perpendicular, with buttresses here and there, always sharp as knife-edges, jagged and irregular, the opening almost as though one

had laid two cross-cut saws on the ground, the teeth pointing at one another, the whole of the earth between them being removed. The chasm thus described will be from ten to thirty feet deep, the actual bottom flat, but varied by irregular columns of earth mixed with stones, always hard and always pointed. The sides are sharp cut as with a knife, quite precipitous, and with no sign of fallen *débris* at the bottom. To finish the description, the donga is always a fair length, usually forming a radiation from a principal one of the series—the shorter ones a hundred yards or so in length, the longer ones frequently a mile or more.

To cross a donga on foot is difficult, and can only be managed by following its course till you meet a native track, which will always take you across the only place possible. To cross on horseback is impossible, unless the native paths are well marked, or the sides have become worn by the action of the weather,—not a frequent circumstance. I believe the donga is peculiar to South Africa. The action forming one is evidently subterranean. Water—probably from a hidden spring, or collected suddenly in the

frequent thunderstorms—percolates through the earth; at a distance from the surface the soil is dissolved away, and the mass above sinks a foot or so. This subsidence is seen at the head of most dongas, the line of subsidence being guided partly by the action of the water below, and partly by the surface cracks. Fresh percolation ensues, and the earth again sinks, till some heavy fall of rain takes place, when the whole mass, already loosened, is torn away and carried bodily down the hill.

When it is necessary to take a waggon across a donga, there are two courses open; one to go sufficiently far up the hill or valley side to head it off—the other to go low enough to where, by age and water-action, its sides have become sufficiently abraded to allow of a ramp being cut down one and up the opposite one.

At the northern extremity of Doornberg was a party of the 80th Regiment, snugly quartered in an earthen fort they had made for themselves, and engaged in cutting down and sending away to the front the prickly mimosa-trees which studded this end of the mountain, and ministered most gratefully to the wants of the troops

in this country, so entirely destitute of trees. On the return of the Dutch proprietors of this part of Natal at the close of the war, a new name should be chosen for their mountain, the "thorns" having almost entirely gone for fire-wood during the months which it lasted.

CHAPTER IX.

A SCARE—CONFERENCE HILL—A SOLITARY TREE—CETEWAYO
 AND THE LAND COMMISSION—OUTPOSTS—A WET NIGHT
 —ANOTHER SCARE—LORD CHELMSFORD—GENERAL WOOD
 —VISIT TO OHAM—RECONNOITRING.

IT was about this time that our second scare took place, and it is worth telling, as an illustration of the pitch to which officers and men had been needlessly worked up, being ready to magnify the smallest incident into an attack by the omnipresent Zulus.

About eight in the evening, when the troops were safely in their tents inside the laager, several shots were heard at no great distance, and the men were at once got under arms. The laager was strengthened, the wheels of the waggons locked, the opening secured, and squads of men, rifles in hand, told off to their places, —some on the waggons, others underneath.

Meanwhile a party of irregular horse, under Captain Bettington, which was attached to the column, was sent out in the direction of Zululand, some few miles distant, to reconnoitre. It was a bright moonlight night, and the laager, bristling with steel, looked impregnable, as indeed it was. Hour after hour passed without the return of the patrol, or the sign of any hostile Zulus. A staff officer venturing outside for a look round was thought rash in the extreme, and very venturesome to risk his life so wantonly. Another officer following his example was recalled to his post inside with stern decision. At last the patrol returned. It had been miles round the frontier and along the Blood river, and had not seen a living soul. Then one hitherto silent, emboldened by the evident absence of the enemy, suggested that certain boxes on the sides of our waggons, on being shut quickly, might have given out the noise of shots fired. The boxes were applied to, and the lids being slammed, gave out a distinct series of shots, fired at just the distance at which the original ones had been heard. The mystery was solved, and the men,

chilled and humbugged, crept back into their blankets.

The worst part of the Blood river is its name. In itself it was, when we came up to it in May, a slow-running stream, some fifteen feet in breadth, twisting considerably more than is considered necessary by well-regulated streams, through a vast grass meadow. The banks were high and the bottom muddy, so that it forms a slight obstacle to an advance, which the Zulus, as yet, had appeared disinclined to cross.

The column, marching from Landman's Drift, found the river totally deserted, its tents the first sign of life at a place shortly to bristle with armed men, forts, stores, and waggons, known as Conference Hill. Our camp and the inevitable laager were made on the slope of a long spur of grass-land, trending down from a curious terraced hill, which is that of Conference, to the river. At the end of this spur were the white marquees and piles of stores, hourly increasing, belonging to the Commissariat, and forming the nucleus of three months' supply for the army. On either side of these a company of Engineers were

busy building two square forts to protect the supplies.

Across the river, almost invisible between its steep banks, were the blackened remains of a kraal, with the lines of intrenchment made by Wood's column in the January previous. Above these rose Bemba's Kop, a rounded hill with scarped and rocky sides, sticking straight out of the plain. On the top were posted two scouts, sent from the Native Contingent, their black bodies dark and distinct against the sky; and beyond all, a rolling sea of yellow grass, leading up to a range of mountains, from whose recesses the smoke of Zulu fires was constantly ascending: and this was Zululand, and our onward way across it.

To the left the fires of Wood's camp at Kam-bula flung their smoke over a second range, Zlobane among them in the far east. In rear from the hill-top could be seen the tents at Balder's Spruit, where detachments of the 80th and 13th Regiments kept his communications open with Utrecht. Close behind the camp was a small farmhouse belonging to one of the Piet Uys family, but now deserted. It was

but a ruin, after all: the roof was gone, every scrap of furniture had disappeared, and the grove of blue gums which surrounded it were rapidly falling under the axes of the soldiers. One solitary mimosa weathered the storm for some time on the hillside opposite, until one morning it fell a victim to the universal want of fuel, and made the acquaintance of the company's cook.

The Dutch are said to have named the river after a great victory over the Zulus, when they defeated their army with great loss, the honest "vrows" doing good service by chopping off the hands of the savages as they tried to climb into the laager. The bodies were afterwards thrown into the river, which ran red for some days in consequence. Some time in July the Boers rally at the hill above our camp, and celebrate the anniversary of the victory. The tale rests entirely on tradition, which never loses in the telling.

Between the Buffalo and Blood rivers the strip of land has more than once been a disputed possession, and was naturally imported into the history of the late war.

So far back as 1861, two of Cetewayo's brothers, flying from his anger, took refuge at Utrecht, a town inside the Transvaal borders. The Dutch, at his request, gave the unfortunate men up, receiving as their reward a good slice of Zululand proper, which lies east of the Blood river, and across which our camp looked. After some years it suited Cetewayo to deny this agreement—a lesson to those who are partial to treating savages as men and brothers; and he turned to Natal, strongly urging on the Government the manifest advantage that would accrue to it if it took possession of the land under dispute. This was in 1870. Natal, however, would not accede, but sent a Commission to inquire into the whole boundary question thus opened up. The inquiry dragged along after the half-hearted way common to such measures, till the Zulu, sharp enough to see his advantage in others' indecision, increased his claims so as to include a tract of country undeniably under the Transvaal Republic, the strip which lies between the two rivers among the rest, together with a portion belonging to an inde-

pendent tribe, our late allies, the Swazies. Thus pushed into a corner, the Commission awarded to Cetewayo the Blood river as an extreme boundary westward, with the Pongola as his northern limit—ignoring entirely his claims upon territory not his own, but his neighbours'. The award not being to his liking—in which he had hoped, indeed, to find the English as dishonest as himself—he commenced a series of raids and hostile demonstrations, which in the end rendered the late war necessary.

On arriving at the Buffalo, each corps had established a rigid system of outposts, by day and night—a system only abandoned when the war was at an end, and quite as fatiguing and as much disliked by all ranks. The day outposts were shortly given up; indeed they should never have been instituted, the cavalry vedettes round a camp being sufficient to give warning of approaching danger. But then in those first days General Funk was a great authority, and most of the useless and irritating orders of that time can be traced to his interference.

Night outposts are most necessary, and at the same time the most disagreeable duty

which a soldier is called upon to perform. In the late war the duty was the greatest hardship of the campaign. The first night I was on outpost duty the moon was shining brilliantly, and the sky-line was sharp and distinct as by day. The bayonets were fixed, and rifles loaded. What orders were necessary were given in a low, serious tone, "To keep a sharp look-out for the enemy over the ridge: if only a few men are seen, send back word at once; if more, fire—and fire low!" The poor sentry's answer to my "Do you understand me?" was low and serious too, as he turned away to pace his lonely and dangerous post.

Some, on giving up their orders to the patrol, mixed them queerly: one, I remember, said he had to look out for any "crowds or bunches of men a-crawling and a-creeping forenent me post;" while another, surprised unawares, gave the reason of his inattention that "he was watching a horse coming out 'of a tree."

On the night I was on outpost duty, about one in the morning, a man came in breathless from the front to say that there were some

half-dozen men creeping towards the line of sentries. So off we went with a patrol, stealing up cautiously towards the crouching forms, black and distinct, against the sky, till we got to near quarters, when they melted away like phantoms, and were no more seen by us, passing on to Landman's Drift, and stealing eighteen head of cattle from the too confident troops there. Hardly had we taken the patrol back when the moon went in behind the thick fog-wreaths which came rolling up the valley, and in a few seconds every landmark was swathed in white mist, and utterly hidden. To leave one's lair by the reserve was to wander helplessly over the dim-lighted plain, or to get entangled in the windings of the river, its water meeting you silently out of the reeds and dripping bulrushes, with a cold glare at each fresh turning. The long grass was sappy with water ; boots and clothing were quickly soaked. One stumbled against ant-hills, or fell bodily into holes or bogs, till hope itself fled, and a dead halt ensued, the feeling creeping over one's numbed body of being totally, helplessly lost. Then, when all was blank despair, the distant cry of a sentry in

the laager, half a mile away, came across the fog, and we knew where we were, and started once more, stumbling and tumbling, till brought up by the rough challenge of our sentry, his bayonet-point within an inch or two of our limp bodies. After that came long hours, wet and cold, weary and sleepy, till the relief arrived at eight o'clock, and we shivering ones, with boots full of water, got away to the tents like the proverbial drowned rats. Yet this was only a nightly specimen of a Zulu fog for months to come.

That there were parties of the enemy sneaking about after plunder during the nights, was not only most probable, considering the habits of the people, but was further shown up by the events of the very next night, when the midnight wanderers caused scare number three in the laager, to which came in breathless, as usual, a messenger from the guard, to say that a party was to be seen crawling up towards it. The bugles rang out the "alert," the men tumbled anywhere in their hurry, bayonets flashed in the moonlight, the loose ammunition rattled in the pouches ready for action, the breeches of

the rifles clicked ominously as they were loaded, and in came the outposts at the double, a fat sergeant well in rear, panting, and dropping with perspiration and terror. Then followed some irregular shots from our own guards outside, who shortly after came inside also; and the certainty of some real work at last brought out a flush of excitement on many faces. Then came a rush of our own natives pouring into the laager, assegais and shields in hand, and abject funk on their faces, their bodies muffled up in a blanket, all eager to dive under the nearest waggon as the safest place, from which refuge they were as quickly pushed out again by the kneeling ranks there already. In came, too, half-a-dozen of our mounted volunteers, stuck round with cartridges, and maudlin with drink. A shot inside the now crowded laager followed, then a short struggle; it might have been Zulus for all any one knew, but was only the interpreter, strangely attired in a semi-military dress, clutching a rifle from which the smoke was still issuing, and protesting loudly. In his excitement, or worse, he had loaded and fired straight away into the thick of us, the

bullet being dug out next morning under the feet of the guard itself. But a sharp volley at that moment made us forget him and his freak ; for an instant the night was lit up with the flash, and men said to each other that it had come at last. One I saw cleverly lay his helmet down beside him, and, taking out his ammunition, open the packets, and empty his whole seventy rounds into it, ready for action.

But we waited for another long and in vain ; the echoes died out unanswered, not a sign of living thing was there outside our face of the laager, and after a time the whole coast was reported clear ; the party, whatever it was, had gone away, and we went back to our beds once more. Next morning two oxen, standing alone outside the laager, refused to turn out with the rest to graze ; their legs, wounded in the late scare, declined to carry them. Poor beasts ! they alone had fallen victims to our first volley in Zululand.

Camp "shaves" relieved the monotony of our life a little ; but delay, seemingly without end, worked upon the men, and made them and officers dull and dispirited. So any talk of a

move was eagerly caught at. Wood's officers, often through the camp, brought the newest, and it did much to make men forget the stupidity of so many scares. It was, that their column was to march some few miles parallel to our own in a general advance in about ten days' time on Ulundi. The march was to be pushed on with all despatch; and when the columns came near the kraal, the Lancers were to ride ahead, burn it, and return, after which the whole would retire into Natal. Not a soldier was to be in Zululand after 20th June. Should the attack be unsuccessful, all were to go into winter quarters at Maritzburg, and wait till next year, or at least until November.

Alas, our ten days expanded into a month! and on the given day in June by which we were all to be out of the country, we were just contemplating the advance towards Ulundi, still some fifty miles away. Just then, too, Lord Chelmsford paid the camp a visit, accompanied by the Prince Imperial and General Wood, and to tell the truth, met with small enthusiasm. Yet there was no distrust entertained as to his

ability to beat the Zulus in the best way possible with such a slippery foe; men met him coldly because they were sick of the delay for which he got the credit, when it would have been more just had they blamed those about him for want of energy, and loitering by the way. The war in the old colony was a mere picnic, and gave a general a capital opportunity of obliging his friends and acquaintances; but sterner stuff was needed to stand against so formidable an enemy as the Zulus proved themselves. So we set out on the campaign which ended at Isandlwana as if it were but a continuation of our easy picnic-times, and when disaster overtook us, went into an opposite extreme, and doubted if success could ever be ours again.

Lord Chelmsford as often as not wore "mufti"—uniform was not easy to replace at the front—a light grey suit, with grey-canvas tops to his riding-boots, always kept beautifully clean; a Norfolk jacket, and a revolver slung over the shoulder, with sometimes, though rarely, a sword below. From under a rather low white helmet his anxious face peered out; a nose

long and thin, and, if anything, hooked; the principal feature black bushy eyebrows, from under which his dark eyes seemed to move restlessly, ever on the watch for something sudden coming. A pleasant manner; sharp, rather jerky sentences; and a general air of watchfulness pervading all his actions. He walked quickly, turning his head from side to side, and stopping frequently to remark on some arrangement which required alteration. He gave one the idea of a man preoccupied, under a spell, and glad to get rid of his thoughts by an incessant attention to details. The sad day of Isandlwana had left its traces plainly marked on his face and manner.

Later on, when the column crossed the Umvolosi just previous to Ulundi, his face was deadly pale, and he spoke but little, seeming to be absorbed in the unknown results of the next few hours. During the battle he gave his orders calmly and firmly; his mind, depressed by the unknown, rose fearlessly to meet the danger he could see; and on all sides praises of his manner during the fight were heard. After the firing ceased, and the Zulus were in full

flight, he seemed like a man with a load taken off his shoulders; his manner brightened, he laughed and chatted with those near him, and rode about praising some and speaking kindly to all. It was the happiest moment since that fatal January day, and all were sorry to lose him so soon, and under circumstances none too pleasant.

The Prince gave one the idea of a small-sized young man, with a sallow face. His manner was pleasant and open, and he was perpetually asking questions the most minute, noting the answers carefully in a book after each was given him. That he was brave and bold there was no question; though rashness would have been in English eyes the better term for his wish to accompany every trifling reconnoitring party towards the front.

Behind them rode General Wood; and Buller, the leader of his cavalry, all irregulars, almost the most useful troops for the work.

The former is a tall, thin man—like Lord Chelmsford, in mufti. His face is long, and ends in a short pointed beard. He also looks about nervously. His features are browned by

exposure to the sun, and his manner is cheerful but decided. With his column he was far more popular than the General was with the Division, allowing men under him to settle matters of detail as they pleased, so long as the general dispositions were observed. It was the fashion to say that, were he in supreme command, he would make small work of the Zulus, and that his column alone was quite strong enough to beat them,—ideas hardly borne out by subsequent events, when his column gradually got nearer to the Division as Ulundi approached, until at the crossing of the Umvolosi the two bodies joined together for the final struggle.

Buller was likewise dressed in mufti, rather seedy, with a grey wideawake hat, tied round by a bit of red cloth, the badge of the volunteers. His face is thin; his manner taciturn, not given to many words except when needed, and then sharp and decisive enough. By him rode Lord William Beresford—"Bill Beresford," as he is usually called—in a most correct suit of mufti. He sported a scanty crop of light whiskers and beard, and was easily known amongst the rest by his Elwood helmet

and grey silk puggaree, used by the staff in India.

The officer in rather worn uniform is Colonel Harrison, the Quartermaster-General. He, too, is thin, very thin, with an expression of trouble and hard work sitting on the lines of his face. He worked hard at road-finding,—no easy task across the trackless hills of Zululand, and one, at times, quite hopeless. The inevitable donga was always in the way. Out before daylight, he was seldom to be seen in camp till late in the afternoon.

A younger man, with a square figure, and bushy black whiskers and beard, was Carey, in those days busy with a compass and surveying-block setting out the positions.

Conference Hill was a place of considerable importance, forming the base of the centre column on its advance against the king's kraal. This was to take place on the Utrecht-Ulundi road—a route beautifully drawn on the official maps supplied to the army, marked with a double line, as one of the principal roads of the country, and further honoured with a descriptive report in the "Precis of Information."

It crossed the Blood river some two miles above the camp, led almost straight for the northern side of the Inhlazatsi Mountain, turning the eastern end of it, and thence leading straight south on Ulundi.

The army having once got so far north, and thus out of the direct line to the kraal, no more suitable or convenient route could be found. Strategy—perhaps almost unneeded against a foe like the Zulus—was the consideration which placed the army in this far-distant place, neglecting the far nearer and more direct roads by Middle and Rorke's Drifts. Its selection "covered the Transvaal;" and so time and energy were wasted, while the science of strategy was observed.

So Conference Hill became a formidable position. Two stone forts, with faces twenty yards long, and surrounded by a V-shaped ditch, were constructed on either side of the incessantly increasing mountains of stores, their fire arranged so as to cross every exposed face. Two large iron buildings were built, and filled with the more perishable things; coal was brought in daily under escort from a hill some miles

inside the Zulu boundary, and an enormous abattis of firewood collected round the whole. Close by was a fort built by the 94th, with sides forty yards long, and surrounded by a ditch plentifully strewn with broken bottles. Inside were the tents and marquee of the "base hospital," doctors and other staff included. Altogether, many hundred waggon-loads of stores had been brought up and unloaded; while every day the dust from fresh convoys told us that yet they came.

Visitors were abundant; generals got quite common; officers on their way somewhere else rather a bore; newspaper correspondents an infiction. The most amusing among them was the little, short, fat, good-humoured "Figaro"—French altogether, martial somewhat, but very unacquainted with the habits of his horse, and so in frequent grief in consequence. Once, on his way to Wood's camp, he lost his way, and had to sleep out on the *veldt*, in a place which, to his imagination, swarmed with Zulus. So he chose a patch of long grass, and hid away in it in much fear and doubt as to what the night might bring forth. What was his horror, when

it was half gone, to find that his friendly shelter had disappeared, and he lay exposed to every eye! his horse, tied up to his side, had eaten the whole of the grass for supper. Poor little man! with the death of the Prince his own mission was over, and he followed the body home, much lamenting, and gesticulating freely.

Utrecht, a straggling, out-of-the-way village some twenty-five miles away, was the only place within reach where a little dissipation could be got—the gaiety consisting of a mess in a turf hut, with beer to drink, and hovels in which a bed might possibly be obtained. So at the doors of these we went about knocking, and telling our sad tale to the Dutch people inside. For more than a month we had slept on the ground, and our bones ached for one good night's rest on a bed: would none of them take compassion on us? A great many said they would if they could, and we believed them. Houses were very full then at Utrecht, and prices ran high: I paid 3s. 6d. at a public-house for a pint of ale. A few said they would not, and they looked it. One good Samaritan at length said she would, and we blessed

her and her blankets for the kindness. Her name was M'Donald, and she deserves to be remembered.

It was not until I got into the bed that I missed the lumps and stones, and realised how wretched was the life we led as far as small comforts were concerned. Yet the bedstead was very crank, standing on three legs, the wall representing the fourth; and the sheets bore decided evidence of having been used before.

The previous night I had slept on a boulder, upon which my hip-bones pivoted alternately throughout the night—an event, by the way, not uncommon, as the earth of South Africa, for lying-down purposes, is as hard as any boulder. The tent, too, was not my own, but kindly lent by a brother officer, who turned out to do the stranger honour. In the morning his soldier-servant arranged my bath—only a hole in the earth—the sponge, soap, brushes and comb,—the whole topped by a teacup full of water, across which was laid an old tooth-brush of his master's, with which to complete my own toilet.

My hostess entertained us during the evening glass of "square-face" by the customary doleful anticipations of the coming campaign; there could be only one end to it—we should be beaten, barely escaping with our lives before the redoubtable Zulu king. General Funk had been quartered for some time past in Utrecht.

The town lies under the shadow of great hills, scarpèd precipitously, and seamed with dongas. These are the feature of the surrounding country, and an ugly and troublesome one they are. Once leave the road, and you find yourself in a network of ravines some twenty feet deep, the sides, when not perpendicular, leaning forward, and furrowed in the most fantastic manner. All about is as dry as death, and the sun strikes on your head fiercely between the dirty grey walls. After a thunder-storm the beds of these dongas become raging torrents—impassable; in dry weather they are sandy and soft, the wheels of a waggon sinking hopelessly up to the axles.

The town itself is merely a collection of hovels, scattered about without order or regularity, the stores the only decent houses; the streets

crossed by gutters of running dirty water, the walls and enclosures ornamented by a few blue-gum trees. The most noticeable thing is a number of erections in the form of gallows, with the noose dangling from the centre of each. These are used in the manufacture of "reims," which are strips of raw hide, used instead of rope throughout the Transvaal. Drunken men were a common object about the streets, notwithstanding the confiscation of all liquor by the military authorities—an order necessary enough, but for which Government had to pay heavily in damages when the war was over.

"Well, Fanny, and what can I do for you?" said one of the storekeepers from behind his counter, to a pleasant-looking young lady in deep black, who came in just then. The lady was one of the daughters of Piet Uys, killed just a month previously at the Zlobane, and appeared quite used to the tone of familiarity used by the shopman. Equality takes strange modes of asserting itself in the Transvaal.

Utrecht is also rich in Kafir belles, and the shops are thronged with them, their ample forms dressed in the scantiest of clothing.

They touse up their wool with red earth, the married ones twisting it in a round thick bunch behind—not becoming. Some wear a blanket over one shoulder, and a bead girdle round their middle, so that a view from behind leaves little to the imagination—a pair of legs, stout and sturdy, quite innocent of any covering, completing their costume.

A couple of miles outside the town was the kraal where Oham, Cetewayo's brother, who gave himself up to Wood early in the war, was permitted to live in ease and idleness, surrounded by his numerous wives.

At a visit I paid him at that time, I found him taking his evening stroll, accompanied by three truculent-looking Zulus armed with assegais.

Oham is a fat, sensual-faced man, and wore, when I saw him, nothing but a gaudy blanket of the favourite "chess-board" pattern over one shoulder. His features were stolid and impassive, frequently holding forward one ear as we spoke to him in English—to explain that he did not understand. The conversation was thus not over-much enjoyed, till I mentioned the magic

word "square-face," of which he is known to be immoderately fond, when a genial smile burst out from his hitherto stupid face, and his hand crept stealthily out of his blanket over his fat stomach, with his fingers outspread ready to grasp the promised stuff. His heart thus opened, we were asked into his private kraal, following him on hands and knees through the low opening, and sitting in the dark and dismal den, while some of his wives, ranged round the opposite side, gave out a native chant.

In the little book of information published officially, and served out to each officer, the Natal Zulu is described as "an intelligent and precocious boy, with the physical strength of a man." The description is concise, but hardly does the subject full credit, as the following trait will show. Utrecht grows capital cabbages, and for some nights the mess-table had been graced by one or more of these delicacies. But one day the cabbage was not there as usual, and the Kafir boy who provided the dinners was called in and asked how it was that he had been so remiss as to forget the cabbage. "Master," replied that ingenuous one, "nights too

much light got now ; when moon go away, me catchee plenty more cabbage !”

But all this while time went on. It was now nearly two months since we landed, and still Zululand was to come. The delay seemed interminable. The stores increased in bulk daily ; surely there were more than we could carry as it was. A correspondent, as usual with more knowledge of matters than any one else, spread the scare that the horses ate up the forage as fast as it arrived, or very nearly, the arrivals being only a few loads in excess of those consumed. From stragglers we learnt that the Division was all on the spot ready for action ; the cavalry and most of the infantry at Landman's Drift, the rest wood-cutting at Doornberg. Everywhere *ennui* had seized upon all, men and officers, not so long ago fired with martial ardour. Listlessness crept in, and floggings increased. Amusing incidents there were. A favourite pastime with those vested in authority was to sound the alarm, and note the time which it took the men to dress, pull down their tents, and run into the laager. On one such occasion, as usual, a hint was given

that the alarm would sound at 4 P.M., but that it was only a case of drill, not of danger. Of course the caution filtered through the officers to the men. On the first sound of the bugle every soldier stepped out of his tent fully dressed and armed, his seventy rounds at his waist, his rifle in hand; down went the tents behind them as a run was made for the laager, in which the irrepressible one, smiling approval, and looking at his watch, remarked, as the last warrior bolted inside, "Ah, capital work! three minutes and twenty-five seconds! No chance for the Zulus with us." And indeed there was not, providing always that they sent us notice of their intentions an hour before they attacked.

Small reconnaissances were frequent, at most of which the Prince assisted, doing a little fighting on his own account, at a risk to himself hardly equal to the occasions—a few kraals burnt within sight of the frontier, a native or two killed, an old woman interviewed, and a few scraggy cocks brought in, representing the general results. One of these on a larger scale,

under Buller, did more service by bringing in a report of the country passed over; while a second one, under General Marshall, to Isandlwana, fairly drove the natives who infested the place away, and recovered some forty waggons.

CHAPTER X.

THE COLONIAL PRESS — MISSING FRIENDS — KOPPIE ALLEIN
 AND A NEW LINE OF ADVANCE — THE DIVISION COL-
 LECTED — THE ADVANCE — OUR FIRST CAMP — ZULU SPIES
 — BAD NEWS — THE PRINCE KILLED — THE TALE OF THE
 SURVIVORS.

FORTUNATELY for our peace of mind, already sorely tried, the letters from correspondents had not then been published in the English papers. We only read them long afterwards, when the events they commented on had passed away with our own disgust at delays, of which we could not see the end.

The 'Natal Witness,' a colonial paper, renowned for the outspoken character of its remarks, was our only means of knowing what was going on in the neighbourhood of the war. Its columns, cleverly written, abused pretty near all alike, and so afforded what little entertain-

ment there was. It was in advertisements, however, that the colonial press shone. Properties for sale were often headed by some appeal from the auctioneer such as, "Here's your chance!" or "Who'd have thought it? a speedy road to a large fortune almost begging!" A colonist wants to know, in print, "the individual who, after inducing one of my coolies to abscond, drove up and tried to persuade another by offering higher wages—wanted to know the address of that gentleman." Losses are frequent, and always about "one black ox, upright horns turning inwards, swelling under jaw," or something similar. One that under our actual teetotal habits did not strike us very forcibly, was headed, "Hope for the hopeless," and puffed an "anti-bacchanalian elixir, a certain cure for the craving after alcoholic stimulants." Further on, Mr and Mrs Blank give notice that the funeral of their father will take place at such and such an hour, winding up by a paragraph in which "the Blanks beg to thank all friends for their kind sympathy."

While, sadder than all, in those early stages of the war, were often-repeated appeals as the fol-