

THE HISTORY  
OF  
THE BATTLES AND ADVENTURES  
OF  
THE BRITISH, THE BOERS,  
AND  
THE ZULUS, &c., IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

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CHAPTER I.

KAFIR WARS.

ALTHOUGH, for the sake of brevity, only the Zulus are alluded to in our title page, yet there are other Kafir tribes which played most important parts in several periods embraced in this little history. The Basuto tribe under their chief, Moshesh, immediately beyond the western boundary of Natal, and the Amaxosa Kafirs of British Kaffraria had many engagements with our troops; especially the latter, and they will be touched upon further on, but at present, following the diary of Sergeant Major Williams, we propose giving a sketch of an engagement of the British with the Basutos, which appears in fuller details elsewhere.

About the month of July, 1852, the Regimental Sergeant-Major having been appointed to a commission, owing to the death of Lieut. Pelachois, on our way to Fort Armstrong, the Sergeant-Major of the 2nd Division of the corps was called upon to take his place, and your humble servant was appointed Sergt.-Major of the 2nd Division, which removed me to Kaffraria, where I was but a short time when a fresh break-out took place with Moshesh's tribe. The war being nearly ended in Kaffraria, all that could be spared from the 1st and 2nd Divisions were ordered by General Cathcart, who had been sent out to

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relieve Sir Harry Smith, to march forthwith up the country to meet the new enemy. After a tedious march of about two hundred miles we reached our destination, a spot then British territory, opposite Berea, in Basutoland, just below latitude  $29^{\circ}$ , and exactly longitude  $28^{\circ}$ , near where the Battle of Berea was so shortly to be fought. On our arrival the General formed a camp on what was then English soil, and in what is now the Orange River Free State, and sent to the Chief Moshesh in order to try and settle matters amicably. A meeting took place the following day, when it was thought that everything was settled, but it proved otherwise, and the chief not sending in either the prisoners or the cattle promised on the stipulated day, the General ordered a number of troops, mounted and dismounted, to be in readiness the following morning to march in the supposed direction of the enemy; but, seeing nothing of him, they crossed the river which divided them from his territory. Col. Hare of the 73rd Regiment, in command, ordered a squadron of the 12th Lancers, and a troop of the Cape Mounted Riflemen, under the command of the Major of the 12th Lancers, to reconnoitre round the hills. They had not been long away when they observed the enemy in great force crossing the plains, evidently driving their cattle into the mountains, and the women and children carrying the food, baggage, &c., &c., towards the interior of their country. In the meantime the native commander sent another force of Kafirs to where it was expected we would cross over into their territory, and suddenly our mounted men found themselves surrounded by an overwhelming force of natives, with whom they fought desperately until their ammunition was expended. Finding it useless to compete with them any longer, as they were becoming too numerous, the Major gave the order to retire. The enemy, both mounted and dismounted, having the advantage of knowing the country, emerged from all sides, and pursued them so closely that they were compelled to make out of their way by jumping over rocks and places unfitted for horsemen; more particularly the Lancers, who were too heavy for their horses, and owing to which they lost twenty-nine of their number. One Sergeant of the Cape Corps, having been thrown from his horse, fell into their hands. Many men and horses were also severely

wounded, and many men had their horses shot from under them, or disabled in jumping over the rocks. Thus hotly pursued—two men on a horse—they retreated until they got to the river, about a quarter of a mile from the camp, from which they were observed by the officer in command. He at once sent a strong body of infantry to the river under cover, who as soon as the enemy came near enough, and after our men had crossed the river, jumped up from their hiding places, and poured such a rattling volley into them as to cause them to break, scatter, and retire pell mell, being pursued by fresh troops who had come up to the support. The Major of the Lancers had a narrow escape of falling into their hands—surrounded by seven of the enemy, he shot some with his revolver, and then drew his sword, but two of the Cape corps seeing his desperate position galloped up to his rescue, and aided him in polishing off the remainder; and so all of the seven Kafirs bit the dust. A horse, belonging to an officer of the Cape Mounted Rifles, after nobly bearing his rider, severely wounded as he was, safely into camp, dropped down dead. Col. Hare having communicated with General Cathcart, at the head of the infantry, with two field pieces, marched to oppose the enemy, who showed themselves in great force upon the hills. On approaching them, and finding that they were endeavouring to surround him, he formed up his troops, and waited till they approached sufficiently near to open fire on them with the big guns; which by no means dismayed his opponents, who still advanced before him in overwhelming masses. General Cathcart, on receiving this intelligence, ordered the whole of the troops he could spare from the camp to march to Col. Hare's assistance, with instructions to join him the following day; while he, at the head of one hundred and fifty of the cavalry, proceeded to join the fighting division. On his way about four hundred of the enemy shewed themselves on the hills. He at once formed up his men, and prepared to attack them; but as he was about to charge he found that instead of hundreds he had to deal with thousands. He was then obliged to retire, and take a different route to join Col. Hare's division, which he reached in the fore part of the evening, just in time to witness a severe contest between him and the enemy, who had kept concealed in the bush,

awaiting the force that he had met on the road. On the arrival of the General and the Colonel, the enemy emerged from the bush, not like a disorganized mob of natives, but like French disciplined troops. Three successive times that evening they furiously charged the division, and were repulsed; the last time was between seven and eight o'clock at night, when the troops were ordered to lie down under cover of an eminence, and commanded not to pull a trigger till the enemy came within a hundred yards. The big guns were loaded with grape and canister, and on their close approach volley after volley was sent in among them, which threw them into such utter confusion and slaughtered such numbers of them, that they fled helter-skelter to the bush, and were never seen afterwards. The following morning the bodies were found in great numbers, although many had been carried into the bush, traces of which were to be seen by the blood on the way. Our casualties were few considering—the dead were buried, and the wounded carried on stretchers till we overtook the rest of the troops when they were placed in the wagons for the sick. A flag of truce having been sent to General Cathcart with a request for the cessation of hostilities, and with a promise to send in the aggressors and the cattle demanded, the troops returned to their former encampment. The following day agreeable to promise, the chief leaders of the war and the cattle were sent in, accompanied by Moshesh and his followers. Moshesh stated that he was sorry for what had happened to the troops, as the steps taken were against his wishes, but that he and his people had got a lesson they would never forget. The prisoners and the cattle\* having been handed over, Moshesh departed on amicable terms with the General. That day the cattle were sent on in front to Bloemfontein, with a strong escort of mounted men to guard them on the road. On their arrival they were handed over to the Commdt. of the Garrison, who distributed them amongst the different settlers, who had had their cattle stolen by Moshesh's Kafirs. Some were

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\* The Sergeant-Major is in error as the facts shew that General Cathcart was glad enough to get away and abandon the rest of the cattle, after receiving the letter of Moshesh which has been described as a master stroke of diplomacy.

disposed of to realise prize-money for the troops, which, however, was never seen or heard of since by the soldiers ; similar to that realised in the two Kafir wars for the cattle taken from the enemy in Kaffraria. Twelve and sixpence per man was all that was credited in the accounts of the men of Her Majesty's Dragoon Guards."



## CHAPTER II.

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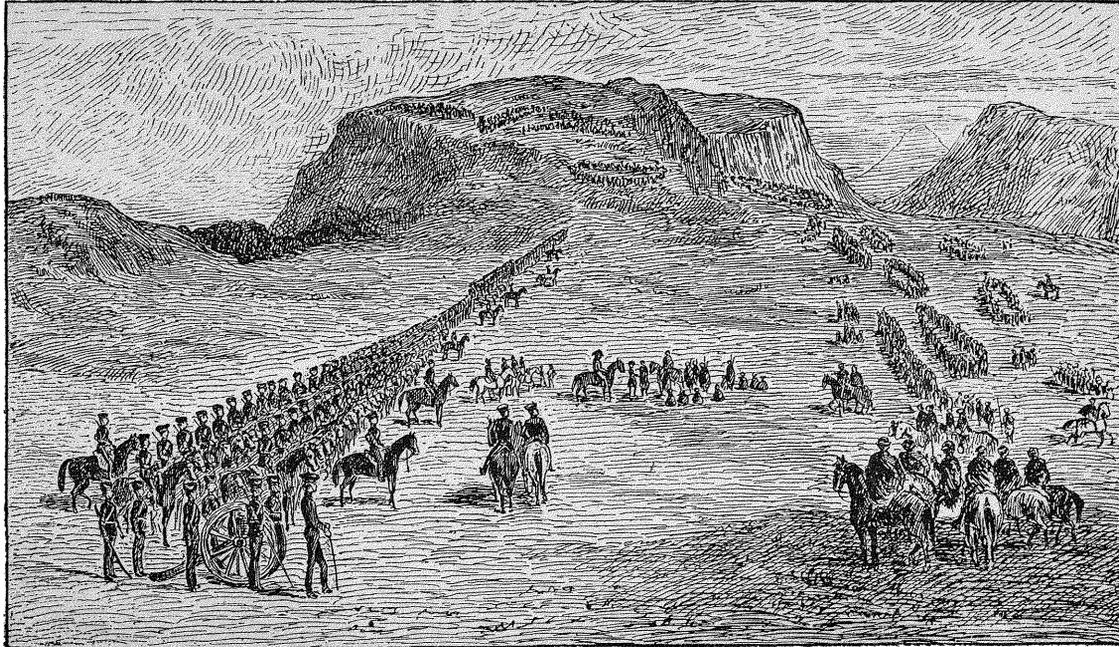
### BRITISH KAFFRARIA—THE WAR OF THE AXE—BATTLES WITH THE AMAXOSA KAFFIRS.

WITH savages wars do not arise from political causes, but chiefly from the wish of the young men to distinguish themselves and become warriors. Up to the age of sixteen the boys remain boys. The rite of circumcision is performed on all the young men at the age of sixteen, who are made men, or "amadodas." Although they then become nominally men, they only become warriors after a war or some other act by which they have distinguished themselves—hence after a few years there are so many young men that their counsels outweigh the counsels of the old men, and they declare for war. Once in this condition there is no difficulty in finding a pretext, and the war of which I am now writing (says General Bisset) was called the 'War of the Axe' from the trivial circumstance that gave rise to it.

Fort Beaufort and the town of that name were then situated on the very borders of Kaffirland. Two Kaffirs, men of some importance among the tribes, stole an axe from a shopkeeper in the town of Beaufort; they were caught in the very act and secured.

Criminals at the Cape are tried at the Circuit Courts about every six months; but the circuit judges do not go to all the small towns, and the prisoners from Fort Beaufort had therefore to be sent to trial at Graham's Town, a distance of over fifty miles, and the main roads from the two places ran almost parallel with the Kafir border.

The prisoners were sent from Fort Beaufort in charge of constables, and when they had got about twelve miles on the road they were attacked by a body of Kafirs from across the border, and although the constables made a fight for it, they were overcome, and the prisoners were rescued by the Kafirs. It so happened that the two Kafirs, whom they were most desirous to release, were handcuffed to two



*Murray & St. Leger.*

**THE CONFERENCE AT BLOCK DRIFT, KAFFIR LAND, JANUARY 30th 1846.**

*Cape Town.*

other prisoners, who were British subjects ; and as time was precious, in order to escape with their countrymen, they murdered the two men to whom they were attached, and cut off their arms at the elbow joints in order to free the Kafir prisoners. Hence the War of the Axe.

The Government demanded that the prisoners should be restored and the murderers surrendered ; but the demand was treated with contempt. The young men wanted war and war they would have.

First a 'palaver' took place at Block Drift Mission Station, afterwards Fort Hare, where the then Lieutenant-Governor and senior military officer on the frontier met the Gaika chiefs, with a large retinue of their people. The Lieutenant-Governor luckily had a small body of troops with him, who were drawn up in line while the negotiations were going on, in the presence of the three Gaika Commissioners. The Kafirs were in number as ten to one ; and as they were drawn up facing the troops in a great mass, they repeatedly opened out, extending their front, so as to outflank the European troops ; and this was only prevented by judiciously extending the rear-rank men right and left. This manœuvre probably saved the small force from being surrounded and attacked, as it was afterwards ascertained that the Kafirs had fully intended to attempt this treachery.

The meeting, however, broke up without collision, and the troops returned to Victoria Post, a new military position which had recently been established east of the actual colonial border, on what was formerly called the neutral territory, between the Kat and Kieskama Rivers.

After some considerable delay, the troops were ordered to take the field and enter Kafirland, with a view to bring the refractory chiefs to order.

Two columns of troops left Victoria, one under Colonel, subsequently General Sir H. Somerset, and the other under Colonel Richardson, 7th Dragoon Guards. Very little except ordinary skirmishing took place for the first two or three days. On the third day a combined camp was formed on the Debe Flats, just under the Taba n 'Doda Mountain. 'Taba n 'Doda' means "Mountain of the Men." This was the same locality where Sir Benjamin D'Urban formed his camp in the war of 1835 ; and I remember going to look at the very spot where Sir Benjamin's tent

stood when he was very near being assassinated by a Kafir who, favoured by darkness, had crept through the sentries into camp, and had penetrated into the Commander-in-Chief's tent, and was in the very act of stabbing him, when he was shot by the sentry over the tent.

On the fourth day the camp broke up, and the two columns, forming one division, entered the Amatola Mountains, in the direction of Burn's Hill, a missionary station, also the residence of the august paramount chief, Sandilli. I was sent on with an advance guard, or reconnoitering party, to take possession of the chief's kraal. The mission station was in the most deplorable state. The missionaries had fled, the furniture was smashed to pieces, and the Bibles and books scattered to the winds, but up to this time the houses had not been burnt. Sandilli's kraal was also deserted, but at the door of his hut I found his emblem of royalty, viz., two lions' tails dried, on sticks stuck into the ground on each side of the door of the hut; inside the hut I found a musket and some gourds of sour milk.

The troops soon followed, and a combined camp was again formed at the mission station. During the day Major Sutton also joined the force with a "commando" of Hottentots from the Kat River settlement, and formed a separate camp on a peninsula across the Keiskama River.

At daylight the next morning the troops took the field in three columns. The right or infantry column under Major Campbell, 91st Regiment, entered the Amatola Mountains at the gorge of the Amatola Basin, with Mount MacDonald on the right and the Seven Kloof Mountain on the left. The centre column consisted entirely of horse-men; the Cape Mounted Rifles under Major Armstrong and the Kat River burghers under Major Sutton. This column, after crossing the Kieskama River, climbed up one of the ridges of the Seven Kloof Mountain to its summit. The third column under Generals Somerset and Richardson, consisting of the 7th Dragoon Guards and Cape Mounted Rifles, continued on under the Seven Kloof Mountain in the direction of the Chumie Hoek.

I was with the centre column, and as we reached the summit of the Seven Kloof Mountain we could hear the infantry in action in the Amatola Basin on our right; but immediately on our right front a large body of the enemy

were drawn up in the shape of a crescent, with a dense forest immediately in the rear ; and to make the position more difficult there was a tangled mass of bramble, bush, and swamp between us and them.

The Kaffirs having challenged us to battle a consultation took place between Majors Armstrong and Sutton, who decided that we could not in their then position attack them. I (proceeds the General) was only a subaltern in those days, but I remember we were very much disgusted at the disappointment ; and, to make things worse, as the column was marching right in front, the Major wished to counter-march it in the face of the enemy to make the men front towards the Kaffirs when halted. My friend Johnny Armstrong (Lieutenant then) commanded one squadron and I another, and we both remonstrated against this move, but halted and fronted to our right. This brought us at once face to face with the enemy, although inverted by threes. We were both reprimanded for this afterwards, but I am quite sure it was the only thing to do. Had the counter-march been continued it would have appeared to the enemy like a retreat, and an immediate attack from them would have followed while the men were in confusion, for the Kat River volunteers knew very little of any drill. As it was, our front and advance dispersed the enemy at once, in so far that they moved back into the bush. But we had scarcely moved on in the direction to join General Somerset when the Kaffirs attacked our rear, and we had to make a sort of skirmishing fight until we cleared the ridge of the mountain and got somewhat into the open. All this time there was very heavy firing going on with the infantry column on our right. As we moved down a hill on to a low ridge dividing the Amatola Basin from the Chumie Hoek, at the base of the Hog's Back Mountain, the infantry column made its appearance coming up the face of a steep hill out of the valley of the Amatola. They had been attacked immediately after entering the gorge of the Amatola Basin, and had some desperate fighting all the way to where we saw them still in action, and were very much pressed by the enemy. There were no means of carrying the wounded, and most of them fell into the enemies' hands." (" God forgive," says Sergt. Williams in his diary, "any poor soul that fell into the hands of the

Kaffirs—the many tortures they were put to is almost too dreadful to relate. Some would be tied to the wheel of a captured wagon, stripped of every thing, a slow fire placed under them, and whilst in that horrible agony they would be prodded in all parts of the body with assegais, the latter being generally left to the women to practice on while the men were plundering the wagons and unyoking the bullocks, which they would drive away. Other poor fellows were crucified on the ground and stripped, and the women surrounding them would run at them in turn and prod and gash them with assegais until they were perfectly riddled. Moreover, they would cut their finger ends off, their toes, scoop their eyes out, cut their ears off, their nose, their tongue, and other parts of the body, and cram them down their throats.”)

“Between us and the infantry was a steep rocky ledge, so that it was quite impossible for the cavalry to go to their support. The infantry, however, fought their way towards us where the ground became comparatively open. Several men fell between the ledge, and where we were drawn up ready to charge should the enemy come into the open ; and as the Kaffirs showed in some force there we charged down on them, dismounted on the brink of it, and drove them back on foot. Two men were shot in this charge—Booy Daries and Witbooy Klein, one at my side and the other next Lieut. Carey, and some few men and horses were wounded. We very soon drove the enemy back, and held the rocky ledge until we were recalled, after having been reinforced by Capt. O'Reily's troop. Our holding the ledge enabled the infantry to carry back the wounded who fell after they passed over it.

By this time General Somerset had come from the direction of the Chumie Hoek to our support, with the two field guns which accompanied this column from the camp at Burns' Hill. These were soon got into position, and the enemy was shelled out of the bush and rocks in a very short time.

Here again, as in all Kafir wars, the Kafirs had such powers of dispersion that they soon disappeared except on the distant hills. The troops were ordered to re-form, the wounded men were placed upon the gun limbers, and the whole of the troops then marched down the slope to the

Chumie Høek. At the foot of the hill we were joined by Capt. Donovan, Cape Mounted Rifles ; Capt. Pison, who had been detached by General Somerset up the sources of the Chumie River, where they had captured about 2,000 head of cattle and a number of goats and other animals.

Major Gibson, 7th Dragoon Guards, and the remainder of the troops had been left in charge of the camp at Burns' Hill, and as it was now late in the afternoon, and it was quite impossible to guard these cattle back over the bushy country to Burns' Hill, General Somerset decided to form a camp for the night in the open plain just under the high point of the Seven Kloof Mountain between the sources of the Yellow Wood stream. Before so doing he dispatched a party under Lieut. Stokes to communicate with the camp at Burns' Hill, directing Major Gibson to march, guarding the camp the next day, and join us at the Chumie. This party had to fight its way the whole distance to Burns' Hill, losing two men and several horses wounded.

The camp at Burns' Hill had also been attacked during the day, and a number of the draught and slaughter cattle captured by the enemy, and a squadron of cavalry was sent out under a fine old Waterloo officer, Capt. Bambric, 7th Dragoon Guards, to endeavour to retake the cattle. This party, which consisted of the 7th Dragoon Guards and Cape Mounted Rifles, the latter under Lieut. Boyes, followed the Kafirs into the bush when they were attacked in such force that they had to retire, not, however, before the gallant old Captain had fallen a victim. The Kafirs stripped his body and held it up in triumph ; and although several attempts were made by the troops they could not recover the remains."

The Sergeant, before quoted, in alluding to this attack on the camp at Burns' Hill, says—"Capt. Bambric of the troop 7th Dragoon Guards left behind, who commanded my troop, had ordered a stripped saddle inspection, also one of the men's kits. Capt. O'Reily of the Cape Mounted Rifles with good judgment and prudence kept his horses saddled up, and the men in readiness for any emergency. The former officer was in command of the whole, and his men had their saddles and their necessaries all laid out on their horse blankets, and were most of them down at the river washing and bathing. Myself and another man were

sent out upon an adjacent hill on piquet duty to ride in and give the alarm should we see any of the enemy approach. About 4 p.m. we observed a number of the enemy coming towards the camp, from the direction in which the engagement took place in the forenoon. Before we could gallop in they had taken possession of a number of the cattle belonging to the camp wagons. Then followed an uproar—Captain Bambric roaring out to his men to saddle up, the trumpets and bugles sounding in all directions, the men to stand to their arms! Those of the men who were down at the river washing whipped up their articles of clothing and rushed in, half naked, to the camp, uttering many blessings for their Captain, particularly when they saw Capt. O'Reily with his men, two field pieces, and a company of infantry moving off to intercept the enemy with the cattle, which were soon afterwards abandoned by the enemy, who made for the bush. One half of the force on the arrival of our men, who came up by twos and threes as they got saddled, were headed by Capt. Bambric, and marched up to the bush which they strove to make their way through to get at the enemy. The attempt was a most ridiculous one, Capt. Bambric having been induced by a son of Barrack-Master Boyes, who accompanied him as a supposed guide, to follow him through the bush, which enterprise was speedily checked, he, Capt. Bambric, receiving a shot through the heart, fell into the hands of the enemy. The remainder of the force made their exit as speedily as possible out of the bush, some without caps and swords, scabbards torn off in the rush through the bush, and at length with torn faces and clothes regained the other division under Capt. O'Reily. Capt. Bambric's horse joined us shortly after covered with blood. The whole division was then taken by Capt. O'Reily to try and recover the body, which proved a failure. The troops were beaten back from the dense bush as fast as they made their approach, although the two field pieces were kept playing hotly on the enemy with shell and rockets. They stood their ground, and showed us the Captain's body which they held up in their hands at arm's length, and displayed in triumph from the eminence on which they stood "

I must now (says the General) return to the camp at

the Chumie Hoek. I had the formation of this camp, which formed a square of 120 yards each way, the men lying on their arms and facing outwards, the horses being linked in rear, and the cattle and goats in the centre.

Sentries had to be posted between the horses and the cattle, and videttes at a short distance outside the square. The camp was twice attacked on one side during the night, and after the videttes ran in, that side only returned the fire of the enemy, although in the dark of night, the other faces of the square merely standing to their arms. This showed great steadiness on the part of the soldiers.

The next day was a most memorable one in the annals of Cape warfare. As the camp began to move from Burns' Hill, with its long train of bullock-wagons, over one hundred and twenty in number, besides Royal Artillery guns, limbers, and ammunition wagons, thousands upon thousands of the enemy were seen pouring down from the mountains in all directions. The road, a mere-wagon track, ran for the first few miles along the bank of the Keiskama River; the river then, turning suddenly to the right, ran round a peninsula of high ground, upon which Fort Cox was afterwards rebuilt. At the base of this peninsula, which the road crossed before descending to cross the Keiskama River, the wagon road ascended a stony, precipitous, and bushy space of about half a mile. The Kaffirs were all massing towards this point for an attack. The front wagons, which consisted chiefly of those belonging to General Somerset's column, were so well protected by the advance guard that they passed safely over this difficult point, and descended towards the Keiskama ford. The Kaffirs, however, made such a vigorous attack on the centre of the long line of wagons that they drove the escort defending them back on the main body of the troops in the rear, thus capturing the wagons in the narrow part of the road. The Kaffirs immediately cut the oxen loose from the yokes, thereby entirely blocking up the road, so that no other wagons in the rear could pass. During all this time all the available troops from General Somerset's camp were sent to the assistance of Major Gibson—Major Sutton, with the Kat River people, and Captain Scott, with one hundred and twenty of the 91st Regt.; but the Kaffirs came down from

the mountains in such overwhelming numbers that Major Gibson was obliged to abandon the whole of the wagons (fifty-two in number) belonging to Colonel Richardson's column. The baggage wagons of the 7th Dragoon Guards contained all the valuable mess plate, &c., belonging to the officers, besides their kits of some £900 or £1,000 in value. Some officers had two or three guns in their wagons by the best makers—Purdy, Rigby, Wilkinson, Moore, Westley Richards, &c., &c. These superior arms unfortunately fell into the hands of the enemy. Major Gibson had to make a detour to the left along a bushy slope with guns, limbers, and ammunition wagons, and with these had to fight his way across the Keiskama River, and up the long bushy valley under the Seven Kloof Mountain.

I had been sent forward by General Somerset to hold the ford of the Keiskama River, and to defend the rear of the first division wagons directly I was replaced at the ford by the advance of Major Gibson's force. I came up to the rear of the wagons whilst being fiercely attacked; and as Lieut. Cochrane (91st Foot) was at that moment wounded, the command devolved upon me. There was very hard fighting for some distance, but at last we cleared the bush country and gained the open. We reached the camp without further fighting. During this day my charger was shot under me, my gun was shattered to pieces in my hands, and several men were killed and wounded. General Somerset's orderly was shot, and the general's charger, which he was leading, fell into the hands of the enemy.

During all this time Major Gibson was fighting his way over the same ground, with the Royal Artillery guns, limbers, and ammunition wagons which he had saved from falling into the hands of the Kaffirs. As night was closing in Major Gibson's column made its appearance in the open, about three miles from our camp. As they were leaving the bush country the enemy made a general rush on the rear, but the guns opening almost in the dark upon them, they were repulsed, not, however, without two or three wounded men falling into their hands, as also a Royal Artillery limber wagon, with gun ammunition. This was on account of the bullocks knocking up and being unable

to proceed. Major Gibson then marched on and joined our camp. Early in the morning of this day Lieut. Boyes, with ten men, had been sent from Burns' Hill Camp with a despatch reporting the occurrence of the day before and the loss of Captain Bambric, and his small escort had to cut their way through large bodies of the enemy. Five of his men were killed or wounded.

The camp was several times attacked during the night, but the enemy were beaten off without much loss on either side. Orders were also given for the camp and troops to move the next day to the mission station at Block Drift. As daylight broke the whole of the mountain range above the camp was seen to be densely crowded with the enemy, and masses of mounted men were formed on the lower grounds of the Chumie Range. Before the troops moved off I was sent back with my squadron of Cape Mounted Rifles to endeavour to recover the ammunition wagon abandoned the evening before. As I marched towards the bush country large bodies of Kafirs moved down the mountain, but did not come into the open. As I approached the ammunition wagon, a most horrible and appallingly ghastly sight met our view. One of the wounded men who had fallen into the enemy's hands the night before had been lashed to the limber of the wagon and roasted alive. A most ghastly grin was on the poor man's face; his wrists and legs were lacerated with the thongs, and his belly ripped open so that the bowels protruded.

A portion of the camp had already moved off before I returned, and I was told off with my squadron to form a rear guard. As the leading wagons moved from the camp, the two great masses of the enemy poured down from the mountains, and extended along the whole line of route; and as the wagons approached the bushy country towards Block Drift, the whole line was simultaneously attacked in front, centre, and rear; but the guns being brought into action the enemy were driven back with considerable loss. Colonel Richardson commanded the centre and rear of the wagons, and the 7th Dragoon Guards had several times to charge the enemy.

Just as I was moving from the camp ground with the rear guard, I saw a splendid fellow of my regiment,

Corporal Telemachus, and one man, come galloping in from the direction of the affair of the day before. They turned out to be all that were left of an escort which had started from Victoria Post to follow the troops with Despatches from His Excellency Sir P. Maitland, the Governor and Commander-in-Chief, who had arrived on the frontier from Cape Town. The corporal had been despatched with six men, and followed the 'spoor' of the troops first to Debe Flats; then pushing his way towards Burns' Hill, he was met at a 'neck' dividing the Amabeles from the Taba n 'Doda by a body of Kafirs. These he charged, but lost two of his men. He then pushed his way on, and seeing the line of wagons taken by the enemy the day before, for a moment thought it was the camp on the move, but found the wagons in possession of the enemy, who were still burning them. He was then headed at the Kieskama River, where he lost two more of his men, and he reached the camp at the Chumie with only one man, both their horses being wounded, one through the saddle flap into the side, and the other in the thigh. I sent the despatches on to the head of the column by post orderlies, and mounted the corporal on a spare trooper.

A few minutes after this despatch party had left Victoria Post, Captain Sandes, of my regiment, with his mounted servant and a pack-horse, also started with the intention of overtaking the little party and accompanying it to join the troops in the field. He did not, however, overtake Corporal Telemachus, and nothing more was then heard of Captain Sandes and his orderly. They must have fallen an easy prey to the Kafirs. Some time afterwards it was known that they were killed before they got to the Debe Flats.

As the column approached Block Drift, General Somerset moved on with the advance and took possession of the fort on the Chumie River, moved two of the Royal Artillery guns over the water, and taking up a good position, brought them into action on the masses of Kafirs who were still endeavouring to break the line of moving wagons. About two miles from Block Drift there is a conical bush hill, which the Kafirs held in great force. As the wagon track passed at its base, and thence on to the Chumie Ford through a thicket of mimosa and other

bush, there was a good deal of close fighting all along this space ; and the rear was so hardly pressed that the guns had repeatedly to be brought into action, and the Kafirs driven back by canister and shell. Two men of the 91st were shot close to the road while defending the wagons, and the Kafirs were so daring that they rushed in and were stripping the bodies, when they were shot down and fell over the dead.

There was great delay owing to the banks of the river being very steep and slippery, and each wagon stuck fast in turn, and had to be assisted out by soldiers. During all this time the fighting in the rear continued. Lieut. Butler (7th Dragoon Guards), with his men, dismounted, holding the banks of the river below the Drift ; while Lieut. Ougan, with the 91st Foot, held it above.

The ammunition of the rear guard becoming expended, volunteers were called for from the cavalry, when both the 7th Dragoon Guards and Cape Mounted Riflemen stepped to the front, and proceeded on foot to replace the rear guard.

One wagon had to be abandoned between the conical hill and the ford, owing to the oxen being shot. This happened to be the hospital store wagon, and the Kafirs at once fell to plundering it, and not a few of them died on the spot from drinking bottles of poison. One Kafir was shot with a quantity of blister ointment in and about his mouth, their notion being that English medicine makes you strong.

To make a long story short, I may conclude by saying that the wagons were at last got over, the Kafirs beaten back, and a camp formed at Block Drift, taking advantage of the missionary buildings.



## CHAPTER III.

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### THE AFFAIR IN THE KOWIE BUSH.

THE troops, after the first three days' fighting near Burns' Hill and the Amatolas, marched to Block Drift (afterwards Fort Hare); and the Kafirs, having passed into the colony, were committing great ravages and depredations in Lower Albany—so much so that the greater part of the troops had to march back *viâ* Graham's Town and follow up the enemy into Lower Albany. A large body of Kafirs were seen just as the day was breaking, making from the direction of Oliphant's Hoek towards the Kowie Bush, not knowing that a column of troops had followed them into Albany. The Kafirs were pursued, and had taken cover in a wooded ravine joining the Kowie Bush, and were holding their own against a few men when we arrived. These men had cut off the enemy's escape into the forest by occupying a narrow part of the ravine below where the Kafirs were. The patrol consisted of a couple of squadrons of Cape Mounted Riflemen and a troop of the 7th Dragoon Guards under Capt. Hogge, and a couple of guns had also been brought from the camp. Half the patrol were dismounted and sent into the bush, while the party from the camp held the ground below, thus preventing the escape of the Kafirs. Savages, when penned in, will fight with great determination, and we found it so on this occasion. They "pre-occupied" the ground, and had selected their positions to great advantage. For instance, they held the bed of the river, with protecting banks in bends of it, that formed natural "parapets." We had to advance through thick bush, exposing the whole of our bodies, while only their heads would be above the banks; and, moreover, there was a tangled mass of "waghten betjee," or "wait a bit" thorn, through which it was almost impossible to make our way, and while so doing we were under heavy fire. Several men had been knocked over, and I was hesitating whether we ought not to retire, as it was quite impossible to get at the Kafirs. Other

men had been wounded on the right, and two were shot right and left of me, one a half slave sort of fellow, who roared like a bull when hit. We were so close to the Kaffirs who held the river banks, that the coarse-grained powder from the muzzles of their guns burnt my hands in several places. It was at this time that I suggested to old Joe Salis whether we had not better retire ; but the fine old fellow, a true soldier to the back-bone, said, in his own drawling way, "No, Bisset, we can't retire ; we must stay here and die." Now this was rather severe on me, for I was Joe's senior officer and commanding the troop. At this particular time the wounded men were sent to the rear, and the General who was with the supports, sounded the recall. "Noo, Bisset," said old Joe, "we can retire with honor ;" and I can assure you we were not sorry to do it. But the party extending across the narrow part of the Kloof was first reinforced and left in their position to prevent the Kaffirs from getting into the large forest.

When we got back to the dear old General, who was always most considerate about his men, he exclaimed—"Oh, this will never do, to have my men killed in the bush in this way—we must leave them alone." But Armstrong and I both implored him not to do so, as in that case the Kaffirs would book it as a victory to them, and would give them more courage in their attacks on the colony. After a deal of persuasion the General said—"If you must go at them again you must take volunteers ;" but when both our squadrons immediately stepped to the front he said, "Oh, this will never do—tell off from the right and left of squadrons, and the centres of threes stand fast." Thus we got two-thirds of the men, and the remaining third, or centres of threes, were left to hold the horses.

We proceeded to where the Kloof was held by the party posted to prevent the enemy's retreat, and extending so as to take up the whole breadth of the bush on the banks of the ravine, we advanced up it. A great many of the Kaffirs must have been panic struck, and were hiding in great antbear holes and caves. Those near the surface, or at the entrance of the caves or holes, could make no resistance ; and I am sorry to say the men were so embittered against the enemy from the sight of their

wounded companions that they showed no mercy, and a promiscuous fire was poured into these places, which killed the Kafirs who were fighting as well as those who were unable from their position to fire outwards. No less than eight dead Kaffirs were taken out of one of these holes.

I was leading my men up the bed of the river, most of it dry, but here and there we came upon pools of water. As we came to one of those the thin or wooden ends of a bundle of assegais floated up to the surface of the water, thus we knew that a Kaffir or Kaffirs must be there, and, as we supposed, under the water; so we remained some short time for him to come up to breathe; but no, there was no appearance. A yellow Hottentot next to me, named Groenwald, went to the edge of the pool to where there was the smallest possible tuft of grass, and stooping down, he divided it with his hand, and there appeared the nostrils of a great Kaffir, not another part visible. He gave the spot a poke with the ramrod of his gun, and up jumped a great big greased Kaffir, the water running off him as it would off a duck's back. Kaffirs never give or take quarter, and this one immediately seized his assegais, and was in the act of throwing one, when he was shot down, although I tried to prevent it. We then advanced, and about fifty yards ahead we came to a perfect stack of skin robes, blankets, and black sticks, which they always carry to heat and drive cattle with. There was a pile some four or five feet high of these things, and we all knew that when they throw these articles aside they mean to fight. It was just at the spot Joe Salis and I had been trying to get at, near the bank of the river, and where the channel gave a bend in the shape of a reaping hook or sickle. I was leading, and about to step across the bed of the river at the very bend, when a little Hottentot of my troop named Hendrik Dragonder caught hold of me by the pouch belt and pulled me back, saying, "Waght Baas," or "Wait, Master." At the same time he picked up one of the black sticks, and putting his forage cap on the end of it he held it across the bend of the river at the exact spot where I was going to step. Instantly twenty bullets riddled the cap and splintered the stick to pieces. The "tottie" then said, "Nouw Zuur,

gaat aan;” “Now, Master, go on.” We rushed across and found about fifty Kafirs standing in water up to their knees, just round the bend formed by the wash of the rivulet, nearly the whole of whom were shot before they could reload, the remainder escaping into the bush. This was the same position they had held before the recall, but from the direction in which we were then approaching, they were entirely protected by the high bank of the river. For nearly all the rivers or water washes have a high bank on one side and a flat or slope on the other.

As we continued to advance a curious thing happened. Some of the Kafirs had got into the tops of trees to hide themselves. One great fellow had got so far into the branches of a Kafir plum tree, which is very brittle wood, that as we were passing under the tree, the branch broke, and the black warrior fell some forty or fifty feet, and did not require any further killing. By this time we were near the head of the ravine. Two guns had been brought up from the camp, and a troop of the 7th Dragoon Guards under my old friend Capt. Hogge, and several charges of grape and canister had been fired into the bush and caused a great panic. Capt. Hogge’s troop and these guns were on the opposite side of the Kloof to that of the General and the Cape Mounted Riflemen. The residue of the Kafirs, or those who had not found secret cover, made a rush out of the bush just at the spot where the troop of the 7th Dragoon Guards was; and although the troop charged only three Kafirs were killed before they got into the next ravine adjoining the Cowie Bush. This was the end of the day’s work, and the troops returned to camp at McClucky’s Farm.



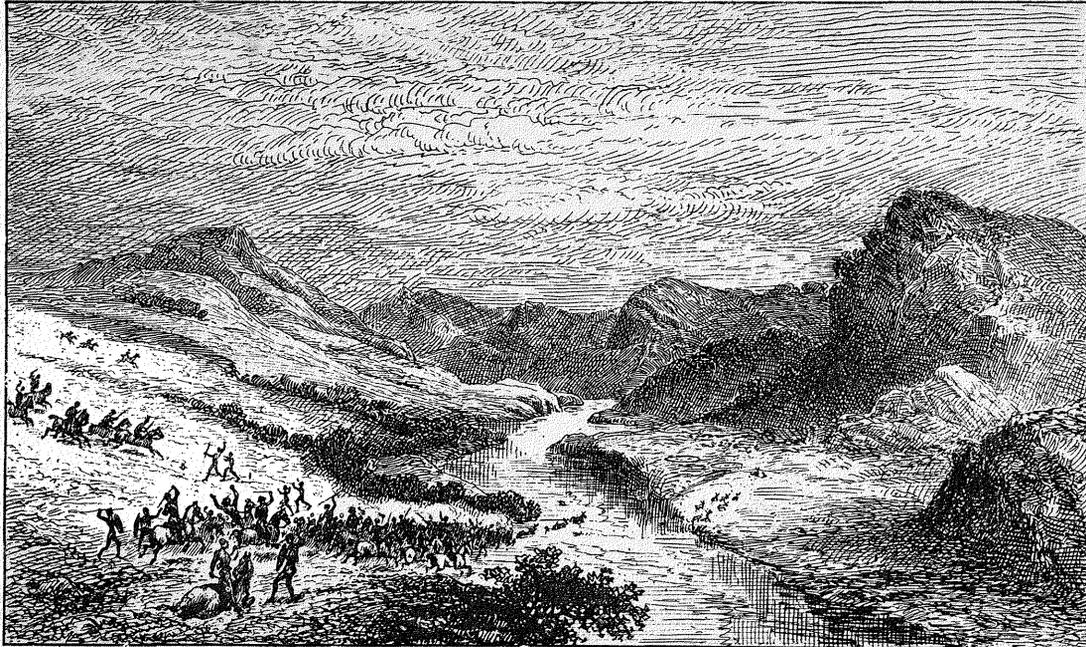
## CHAPTER IV.

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### THE PASSAGE OF THE FISH RIVER.

DURING the early part of the Kafir war of 1846-7, Fort Peddie was besieged by the enemy, and it became necessary to send a column of troops with a convoy of supplies to its relief. This force consisted of Cape Mounted Riflemen, under General Somerset; 7th Dragoon Guards, under Colonel Richardson; and detachments of infantry, native levies, Fingoes, &c. They marched from Graham's Town, and halted the first night at Commety's Drift, on the Fish River.

From Commety's Drift to Breakfast Vley the road wound up the bush-covered heights of the Fish River. The troops marched early, and were allowed to proceed for some distance unmolested. There was a large convoy of wagons, which extended for some miles along this narrow road in the bush, and as the head of the column commenced to ascend the steep hill towards the first "open" in the direction of Breakfast Vley, the advance guard was attacked by a strong party of Kafirs, who held a ledge of rock in the bush on the right of the advance. It was in such a position that they could not be outflanked or dislodged from it. Lieut. Armstrong (says the General) dashed forward to support the advance guard, with a troop of the Cape Mounted Rifles, followed by Major Gibson, with a squadron of the 7th Dragoon Guards. Each party in succession had to fight its way through the rocky position held by the Kafirs. I was as near losing my life on this occasion as I ever was. After joining the advance guard, we were advancing, when a volley was fired by some Kafirs holding a second rocky ledge to the right, which knocked over several men and horses. I was carrying my double-barrelled gun at the advance, or rather with the butt of it on my left thigh, when a ball grazed my forehead and struck the right-hand barrel of my gun entirely denting in the metal. I felt the shock in my hand, and looking down I saw my left thumb bleeding profusely.



*Murray & St. Leger.*

**TROOPS CROSSING GREAT FISH RIVER IN PURSUIT OF CATTLE 1835.**

*Cape Town.*

Many of the Kafir bullets were made of zinc, or pewter, stripped from the farmers' houses, and were of so hard a nature that when they struck anything they would break and fly in all directions. It thus happened that my hand became lacerated from the ball.

These Kafirs became so daring that they were rushing in upon us, and one was in the act of seizing my horse's bridle when I shot him. Luckily I pulled the trigger of the left barrel, for at that time I did not know that the right barrel had been flattened by the ball which had splintered and wounded my hand. As it was, I shot the Kafir; but had I fired the right barrel the gun must have burst, as the ball could not have passed the flattened part. We, however, had to push on, as it was important to gain the top of the hill, where there was a small open space, and to hold it until relieved by the next advance.

Major Gibson was also warmly engaged at the same spot, and his first charger was shot dead under him. After we once gained the top of the hill the enemy deserted their stronghold, in order to take possession of other ground in the bush as we advanced.

From the top of the hill there was about three miles of thick bush to pass through, with only a narrow wagon track cut through it. The Kafirs held this bush in considerable strength, but the column of cavalry forced their way through it on to the open ground beyond, the wagons being guarded by the infantry. As they entered this bush there was a general attack upon them along the whole line.

The fight became hottest in the middle of the bush. The cavalry having formed up upon the "open" beyond, detachments were sent back on foot to support the infantry. Both Armstrong and I had volunteered, and went back in this manner, accompanied by Captain Walpole, R.E., who obtained on this day the name of the "British Lion."

We reached the leading wagons at a moment when there was a complete block. Several of the oxen in the leading teams had been shot, and, until they could be cut loose from their yoke gear and pulled by main force out of the road, no other wagons could pass. It was during this affair that Walpole's peculiar bravery became conspicuous. During all this time we were under fire from the Kafirs in the

thick bush, without being able to see any of the black devils themselves. You had to take the oxen by the horns and tail, and so pull them by main strength out of the road.

Walpole was short-sighted, and carried a double-barrelled pistol. The Kafirs would creep up and fire from the edge of the bush; Walpole would make a dash at the spot where the smoke was visible, stoop down, open the bush, and look for the Kafir. Probably at that moment another shot would be fired at him from the other side of the road, when he would bound over there, just as a lion bounds to where the ball strikes, and the same search would take place until another shot would be fired at him and the same thing repeated. Nothing reminded me more of a lion or a bulldog than this brave folly; for directly the Kafir fired he would rush back into the thicket—and you might as well look for a needle in a bundle of hay as for a Kafir in a forest.

It took several hours before we could successfully fight the whole of the wagons through this three miles of bush, and there was not a span of oxen that had not two or three of the team killed, but very few of the troops were shot. It was quite dark before we got all the wagons up and the camp formed for the night. The latter duty devolved on me as staff officer.

In Kafir wars a good deal depends upon the judgment of taking up ground for a night camp, because you are sure to be attacked and fired into before daylight. So it happened on this occasion. We formed on the slope of a hill leaving the horizon of the slope a little beyond the line of sentries, so that they could see the enemy approach over it without being seen. On the other side of the lower end of the camp piquets were posted in such positions as entirely to command the camp. Only two or three men were wounded during this night attack. The next day's march was through comparatively open country, and the troops reached Fort Peddie without any more fighting, and so relieved that outpost, which had been surrounded by the enemy, and had had its supplies cut off for some time.

(It must be borne in mind that the foregoing description of fighting alludes solely to the Amaxosa Kafirs of British Kaffraria, for, as is elsewhere pointed out, the Zulu mode of fighting is entirely different, as the latter generally fight in the open, and carry any desired position with a rush.)



*Murray & St. Leger.*

**THE BATTLE OF THE GWANGA, CAPE OF GOOD HOPE, JUNE 8th, 1846.**

*Cape Town.*

## CHAPTER V.

### THE BATTLE OF THE GUANGA.

At the beginning of all wars at the Cape of Good Hope the Kafirs generally have it all their own way, from the fact that neither the Government nor the colonists are prepared for the outbreak; hence the enemy overrun, devastate, burn the homesteads, and carry off the flocks and herds throughout the frontier districts before sufficient force can be organised to stem the savage torrent. Such was the case (says General Bisset) just previous to the battle I am about to describe.

Several of the outposts had also been besieged by the enemy, and convoys of provisions sent to replenish them had been attacked, the escorts driven back, and in one case a large convoy of wagons had been captured by the Kafirs. In consequence of this state of things a strong column of troops, under the command of the gallant General Somerset, forced the passage of the Fish River Bush and relieved the outpost (Fort Peddie), which had up to that time been surrounded by the enemy, and cut off from all communication with the rest of the colony.

At the same time two of the most powerful and warlike chieftains, Umhala and Seyolo, had massed their warriors on the Keiskama River, and a discussion arose between these two chiefs, to the following effect:—Seyolo, the most daring chief, at a council of war proposed that as they, the Kafirs, had so far beaten the white man in all encounters, their combined force should march the next day and attack an outpost situated on the Fish River—Trumpeter's Post—take the place by storm, possess themselves of the magazine, and thus obtain a supply of ammunition. Umhala, the more wary old chief, replied, "Yes, Seyolo, your advice is good, but we cannot cross the open country between the Keiskamma and the Fish River Bush in the day time—we should go by night." Whereupon Seyolo exclaimed, "We have beaten the Englishman at all points and taken his cattle, we only

require this ammunition to drive him into the sea." Again the old chief replied, "Seyolo, do you know my war name?" "Yes," said the more impetuous Seyolo, "you are called Umbozhlo." "And do you know what that implies," asked Umhala. "Yes," replied Seyolo, "it means 'wild cat.'" "It is well you know it," answered Umhala; "we have just received intelligence that white troops are near us, and the 'wild cat' does not roam by day—he prowls by night." On this further words passed between the Kafir Chiefs, and the word "coward" was used, but the elder chief terminated the dialogue by saying that he would not take umbrage at the epithet used by the more impetuous warrior. He, "the wild cat," would cross the open country that night in the dark, and wait for the brave man who might cross the open in the day time under the sun.

It thus happened that Umhala and his warriors crossed the open country between the Kieskama and the Fish River Bush during the night, about the same time that a column of troops under General Somerset was moving from Fort Peddie up the belt of open country dividing the two rivers in search of the enemy.

As daylight broke we, for I was with the column, came upon the track or spoor of this body of Kafirs at right angles with our own march, who must have passed over the open just before us. The track showed a broad space of about twenty yards wide, with grass trodden down and the dew dispersed from it. The General at once followed up this "spoor," and as the sun rose we came suddenly upon a large mass of the enemy, who had fires lit, and were at their morning repast of dried flesh and parched Indian corn.

We were on a slope looking down on them at about 600 yards distance, the Kafirs being in an open, surrounded by bush, with the Fish River jungle immediately in their rear.

Our forces consisted of two six pounders, two twelve pounder howitzers, and a rocket tube; two squadrons of the 7th Dragoon Guards, two squadrons of the Cape Mounted Rifles, and detachments of infantry of the line, levies, Fingoes, &c., The cavalry and guns were in advance, and while the infantry were coming up the cavalry

wheeled outwards, to allow the guns to come to the front and come into action. Unfortunately it was the beginning of artillery practice. The shot and shell had been in store since the previous Kafir war of 1835 (some twelve years back), and the fuses were all wrong. The first discharge of shell burst at the cannon's mouth, and the rocket exploded in the tube, while the round shot did little or no damage. The second discharge was equally ineffective, as the shells burst far beyond the then fast dispersing mass of Kafirs.

By this time the infantry, having come up, were sent to the attack, and the cavalry was detached to the flanks to intercept or attack. The Kafirs fought desperately at first but as in all Kafir wars or bush fighting, when the savages find the tide of fortune going against them, they disperse in a manner which no other troops in the world possess. They disappear like needles in the straw. Detached knots, however, held their rocky fastnesses or in gullies protected by bush and natural banks, until they were eventually routed.

I myself was a staff officer, and had been carrying orders to the detachments engaged. On one occasion, after the enemy had been driven into the bush beyond our reach and were firing long shots at us (in two senses of the word), I was watching the result, when all at once I heard a wabbling, whizzing sound approaching me; and looking to my front I saw a blue line in the air falling at an angle of about sixty degrees direct for my head. I had only just time to bob on one side. A long piece of lead grazed my cheek and struck Major Walpole, R.E., who was standing immediately behind my horse. It sounded like a thud as it struck him on the thigh, tore out a piece of cloth about two inches long by one broad, and fell to the ground, but did not enter the leg. The pain for the moment must have been excruciating, for it made the Major jump about on one leg and grind his teeth.

The Kafirs firing these long shots were in almost inaccessible places, but a fine old soldier of my regiment (Colonel Donovan) rushed at one spot with only three or four men, and got amongst a lot of them before they could reload, for they used powder horns in those days, and long junks of lead or the legs of iron pots, and thus took a long

time to load. On this occasion this brave athletic officer killed three warriors with his own sword, one of them being the chief Zeto. Some others were killed, and the remainder put to flight.

By this time it was nearly 12 o'clock, and the desultory fighting nearly over; for natives have, in this way, the power of terminating a fight whenever it is going against them, merely by dispersing in the bush. The enemy had, however, been beaten at all points, and the General sounded the recall, directing me at the same time to go back into the open in the direction of the Guanga River and take up ground for the troops to encamp upon, or rather to "form" upon and get a meal, as they had been under arms since three o'clock in the morning, offering me his spare horse, my own being a little done up from galloping from one detachment to another. This horse was a vicious chestnut brute, which the General rarely mounted himself, and I mention this because I shall have to allude to the horse again.

My old friend and companion through life, who was also on the staff (General J. Armstrong) said he would accompany me, and when we started the fresh horse commenced "bucking" as only a Cape horse *can* buck; but by good luck I sat him, and to take it out of the beast we raced up a long slope; but when we got to the top the brute had got the bit between his teeth, and no power on earth could hold him. He passed over the brow of the hill like a rocket, and was gone headlong down the opposite slope leading to the bank of the Guanga River, which I knew to be about twelve feet deep. To avoid this by dint of pulling I circled to the right round a rising contour of ground, and my astonishment may be imagined when I found myself running parallel with another large column of Kafirs entirely in the open, about a mile in length and twenty or thirty yards deep.

These Kaffirs were equally astonished, for I heard the exclamations of "Ogh!" "Marwow!"—meaning "a wonder!" "an apparition!" I no longer held my coursing steed, but by dint of the off rein and near spur I managed to run a circle and pulled up at the very head of the column of troops, led by the gallant old General, to whom I reported what I had seen. He exclaimed "Hurrah!" and

drawing his sword directed the cavalry, led by the 7th Dragoon Guards, the Royal Artillery next, and the Cape Mounted Rifles, which were in column of route, to form troops and squadrons; the infantry were following in loose order, or rather as they became formed after coming out of the bush.

The cavalry and guns advanced, as indicated, at the trot until we passed over the brow before mentioned, when we came in full view of the column of Kafirs under Seyolo, the "brave man," who *would* march over the open country in the day time.

It was a grand sight, and the General gave the word to the 7th Dragoon Guards, who were in advance of the guns, to open out and allow the guns to trot through the space, come into action, and fire two rounds; the 7th Dragoon Guards forming line on each flank of the guns and charging; the Cape Mounted Rifles forming line in extended order and charging in succession to the 7th Dragoon Guards.

The shot and shell did good execution, and the charge was the prettiest thing I have ever seen in real fighting. You might have placed a long table cloth over each troop, they kept in such compact order; and the Cape Mounted Rifles went through the broken mass of Kaffirs in one long line. But by this time the enemy had turned, broken, and fled back over the open country in the direction of the Keiskama River. I could not resist the charge, and passed through to the front, but could not hold my runaway horse, and therefore could not use my sword. The cavalry wheeled and came back, recharging the enemy, and when I did pull up I halted, and dismounted a bugler of my regiment, taking his horse and giving him mine; and after this we plunged pell-mell into the routed column of Kaffirs.

It was strange how few Kaffirs were killed in this charge. Though there was a clean sweep through them the width of each troop, and you saw them tumbling head over heels like ninepins, they nearly all got up again, and but few men were found the next day that were killed by sabre cuts.

The gallant major of the Royal Engineers, who was hit in the early part of the day by a spent ball, also went

through with the charge, and a Kaffir seized his bridle and stabbed him with an assegai, the blade entering at the upper lip, passing down the chin and throat, and entering at the collar-bone. The savage was trying to jag it into his heart when he was killed; and strange to say, this wound healed in a few weeks, while the one in the thigh took months. The blow of the first wound was so severe that it turned black, blue, and then green; and a mass of flesh the size of a small basin fell out, which had to be replaced by new material.

After the charge I returned my sword and unstrapped my double-barrelled gun, and for some six or seven miles the troops were mixed up with the running Kaffirs, and a deadly slaughter ensued. I do not wish to boast—it is with much modesty and humiliation that I mention it now—but I fired away thirty rounds of ammunition that day, and did not fire at a Kaffir that was above twenty yards' distance from me. I have the satisfaction, however, to say that I was the only person who took a prisoner; I took three of them, one being a great chief, who turned out to be of much importance in a political point of view.

In this *mêlée* or stream you had to look as much behind you as before, from being so mixed up with the enemy for miles. Seven extra notches were cut on the stock of my gun after that day, and I fired at no Kaffir that was not in the act of firing at me or throwing an assegai.

One fellow who had fired at and missed me, and at whom I had also fired two barrels, stood not ten yards from me to reload; and I was doing the same on horseback, loading both barrels against his one, but watching for the time when he would prime, for I saw that he had a flint-lock musket. The Kaffir, however, was ready first, before I had capped, but he omitted to prime. My friend Armstrong, who was on my right, also with his discharged gun, exclaimed, "For God's sake make haste, or he will be ready first," when the fellow put up his gun and snapped it in my face. I did not give him a second chance, for if it had been fine powder the pan would have filled, and I should not have been here to tell the tale.

The next man I rode up to had a musket, and as I

pulled up to shoot him he sat down, put his gun across his knees, and his fingers in his ears, exclaiming, “ Fingoe, Fingoe ! ” I therefore jumped from my horse, took the gun from him, broke it in two, and handed the man over a prisoner to a soldier of the 7th Dragoon Guards.

The Fingoes were serfs or servants of the Kaffirs, and were coerced to join the enemy, although the main body of their tribes were our allies.

Passing on I came up to Lieut. Boyce just in time ; he was carrying a single barrelled gun of mine, and had fired at a Kaffir but missed him. The Kaffir ran up and seized the bridle rein of his horse, and was in the act of stabbing him with an assegai when I prevented it.

Further on there was a Herculean Kaffir with a bundle of assegais, who, as I turned on him, threw himself on his knees, held up his hands and said “ Targho ” (mercy.) I could not shoot him, but he is the first and only Kaffir I ever knew that asked for mercy. I handed him over a prisoner to Sergt. Crawford of my own regiment, and passed on with the stream.

After a while I came up with a chief, recognisable by his tiger skin kaross (robe) ; he had only assegais, of which they carry seven. He drew one and hurled it at me, and in return I missed him with both barrels ; running a little way he turned and threw another assegai, which I parried with my bridlearm, but it nevertheless passed through my jacket and underclothes, and gave me a severe cut in the arm. I again missed him, and he turned and ran.

At this time the “ recall ” was sounding, but I was loth to let a chief escape ; and without reloading I charged him. Now my horse was a high actioned old brute (a band horse), and his knees struck the chief between the shoulders, bringing him down on to his hands and knees with great force. Before he could rise I was off my horse, and had seized him by the bundle of assegais. Unfortunately I got hold of them in the middle, and he held them by one of his hands on the outside of each of mine, thereby having the leverage. My horse was standing panting by my side, my gun was unloaded and upon the ground, and other Kaffirs were passing me in all directions. The chief was bleeding from the hands and knees, but kept up the

struggle for life. At this moment Armstrong came to my assistance, and threatened to blow the chief's brain's out, whereupon he relinquished his hold and fell back in a faint.

I was very anxious to take this great chief back a prisoner myself, so I called a Cape Mounted Rifle soldier near me and directed him to go to the Guanga River, close by, and bring me his forage cap full of water, intending to bring the old warrior to therewith. Now, there was a reach of water at this spot, known as the Sea Cow Hole, or pool where hippopotami used to hide; yet the man came back and said to me, "Master, I cannot bring back the water; it is all blood." This was from the number of wounded Kafirs who had jumped into this water to hide themselves, there being little or no cover in the open. However, by this time the chief had recovered from the faint, and I had got my horse's "reim" round his neck to lead him back a prisoner.

On my way back, however, I was very near losing my prize. The Commander of the Forces had allowed a "free troop" to join the army. It was composed of farmers and other who had been burned out by the Kafirs, They equipped themselves and received no pay, but were allowed to retain all the cattle, &c., which they captured. They were under little or no discipline, and were very bitter against the Kafirs.

The captain of this troop, seeing a prisoner in my hands, galloped up, and was in the act of shooting him, when I saved his life only by taking my oath that I would blow his (the captain's) brains out if he fired.

In extenuation, however, I must say that this man had much provocation; his stock had all been carried off, his homestead burned down, and his wife and children all murdered in cold blood by the Kafirs.

On my return to where the troops were mustering on Somerset Mount, the General was pleased to see one of the chiefs a prisoner, and when I reported having made two other prisoners, they were called for, but "like spirits from the vasty deep," they did not come. I did not know the 7th Dragoon soldier, and no man would confess to having received over a prisoner. Sergeant Crawford (Cape Mounted Rifles), whom I knew, however, came to the front and stated that as he was returning with the second

prisoner two other Kafirs jumped out of a bush where they were hiding and tried to secure the prisoner, on which he shot him and one other Kafir.

The General sent me at once upon express duty, to carry a despatch with the account of the battle to the Governor, Sir P. Maitland, then at Graham's Town, sixty miles off, which place I reached at midnight, and was back in camp at nine o'clock the next morning.

During that night it transpired how the other prisoner had been disposed of. Round the camp fires the battle was being fought over again, when the man confessed he was not going to take a black blackguard to the rear while there was so much going on at the front. Alas ! what is man not capable of when his blood is up.

The chief turned out to be of much political importance in this way : It was the frontier Kafirs, under the great chief Sandilli—that is, Kafirland proper—who had made war on the colony. Krilli, the paramount chief of all Kafirland, lived with the tribes beyond the Kei River, and he was known to be so far implicated that he had received the cattle of the chiefs who were at open war, and also the plunder from the colony ; but it was not known that he had actually taken a part in the war or entered British territory.

The prisoner chief, however, convicted him, for he was at once recognised by Mr. Hoole, the Kafir interpreter, as one of Krilli's chief counsellors, and was that day in command of a large contingent of the paramount chief's warriors.

Lieut. Boyce was sent out the next day, and counted two hundred and seventy dead warriors on the field of battle ; but very many must have hid themselves and died who were not counted ; and the number of wounded men must have been great, for I myself saw many running covered in blood, and some with bullet holes plugged up with grass. It was reported that more than 600 were killed.

Seyolo himself was badly wounded, and did not recover for many months, the Wild Cat only exclaiming “Marwow !”

This was the only time the British troops ever caught the Kafirs really in the open ; and it will doubtless be long before the Kafirs give us another such opportunity of attacking them as was afforded at the Battle of Guanga.

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## CHAPTER VI.

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### MURDER OF FIVE OFFICERS AT THE SOHOTA MOUNTAIN.

WHILE halted for a few days and in camp on the Koomgha near the Kei River in the war of 1846, six British officers left the camp without making it known to those who would have prevented their going, and proceeded to the Sohota Mountain, which overlooked the Kei River. This mountain is about four miles from the camp, is table-topped, and detached from the main ridge of land by a very narrow neck.

These officers started about nine o'clock in the morning, with their guns, no doubt considering that of themselves they were a sufficient escort. One of them, Lieut. Littlehales, 73rd Regt., fell ill soon after leaving camp and returned, and it was from him we learned later where these officers had gone, with the intention of viewing the beautiful scenery of the Kei River.

They were not missed from camp until evening, and when darkness closed in and the circumstances were reported, all hope of their ever returning was abandoned.

I was at the time (continues General Bisset) a staff officer, and the only one acquainted with that part of the country. Happily I never forget a road I have been once over, and if I ride over a country once and do not re-visit it for ten years I remember every hole and inequality of the ground as if it were but the day before, and the scene comes vividly to my mind as I approach the spot, even in the dark.

It happened on this occasion that my local knowledge was called into requisition ; but, alas ! it was not in the power of anyone to save the lives of the five wanderers. Their absence was reported to the General commanding, Sir George Berkeley, and at nine o'clock of night he ordered a column of troops to march out in search of them, but that night owing to the intense darkness the search was unsuccessful.

The next morning the General again accompanied the

troops, and as staff officer I led them to the exact spot where we had been the night before. We reached the end of the first plateau or ridge as daylight broke, and on the tops of the trees in our immediate neighbourhood were seen the great carrion vultures of South Africa waiting only until the sun rose to pounce down upon their prey. I knew at once what we had to expect, and led the column down the steep narrow defile to the narrow ridge where, not a hundred yards from where I had stopped the night before, we found the trunks of the five dead officers. I say the trunks, for their heads had been cut off and carried away to have diabolical processes of witchcraft and other "devilry" perpetrated upon them.

It is quite evident that these officers had been watched by the enemy the day before, and allowed to pass through this defile and ascend the table-topped mountain beyond it. The Kafirs must then have closed in on the neck, and attacked the officers upon the plateau above, for the footprints of their horses showed that they had made a rush to get down from the mountain, and had been compelled to descend at a very steep part. Unfortunately they were waylaid on the neck, and a struggle must have ensued there. The five bodies were quite near each other and all had received more or less wounds except the doctor's, which did not appear to have received a single wound. His body was on a flat stone surface, quite naked, minus the head; and the quantity of blood which had flowed from him was equal to that of a bullock. It was a horrible sight.

The bodies were sent back to camp in charge of an escort, and the troops proceeded on to attack the Kafirs, who had assembled in large numbers on the peninsula towards the Kei River, with a ford across the river in their rear, through which they could retire when beaten and escape to the hills on the other side. The General and a small body-guard climbed to the top of the Sohota Mountain, from which he had a good view of the operations. The ground was most intricate and bushy, and the Kafirs at first made a very determined stand. Troops were sent along on each side of the hill, and there was a good deal of bush fighting; but the enemy made the most determined resistance on a long bushy spit of ground in the far

bend of the river, and some reinforcements had to be sent on in support of the native troops who were in advance. It was not until the ford itself was "covered" from the top of a precipice immediately below it that the Kafirs gave way. You could see them carrying their wounded through the river, but they left a good many dead warriors on the field, while we had only three killed and about ten wounded. As usual the enemy were enabled to escape when they found the fight going against them, and there was nothing more then to be done, so the troops returned to camp.

The next day the five officers were buried at the Koomgha Camp, the officer commanding reading the impressive burial service over them. The funeral was attended by all the officers in camp, the 73rd Regiment being the chief mourners.

As a tribute to the memory of Major Baker I must mention that there was not a dry eye amongst the men of his company, he was so beloved by them. I have seen him on the line of march dismount and give his horse to tired men to ride upon; nor would he ever allow his own tent to be pitched until he had seen his men under shelter; and he would then go and secure a hole of water and make a small reservoir of it for the men—generally a scarce article in camp from the number of draft oxen that would go in and muddy the pool.

The bodies of these officers were afterwards disinterred and removed to King William's Town, under the authority of the Bishop. They are now buried in the Church of that Station, to which Lady Elizabeth Baker contributed a large sum of money.

After the war a gold watch which belonged to the doctor was recovered from the Kafirs by Mr. John Crouch, and sent home to his family. An assegai, evidently thrown at the doctor, had struck his double-case hunting watch in the centre, for it had penetrated through both cases and into the works—which had stopped at that moment—showing that they were attacked at two o'clock in the day.

The five officers whose terrible fate I have been relating were Major Baker, Lieut. Faunt, Ensign Burnup, Surgeon Campbell, 73rd Regt., Asst.-Surgeon Lock, 7th Dragoon

Guards, and the officer who turned back after starting was Lieut. Littlehales, a cousin of Major Baker.

These five officers fell not far from the spot where three other gallant officers were killed in the same war, about a year previously, viz., Lieut. Chetwynd, Captain Gibson, Rifle Brigade, and Assst.-Surgeon Howell. These officers were cut off from their men on a similar table-topped mountain. They were buried on the heights on the east bank of the Kei River inside a Kafir hut. The hut was then set on fire and burnt, to hide the grave from the Kafirs, who were thus prevented from either disinterring or mutilating the bodies.

It is remarkable that an officer also escaped on this occasion by chance. Capt. Cartwright, Rifle Brigade, had been detailed for this duty. On the patrol parading to start he felt ill, and Lieut. Chetwynd, who was also a cousin of Cartwright's, took his place and fell.

Poor Cartwright was afterwards killed at the battle of Inkermann.



## CHAPTER VII.

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### THE AFFAIR OF THE GOOLAH HEIGHTS.

IN May, 1847 (says the gallant veteran Bisset), while Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General at the headquarters camp at the Goolah Heights in British Kaffraria, I had occasion to go up the "Buffalo line" to examine the Quartermaster-General's stores at the other camps. Sir George Berkeley, in chief command on the frontier, was at this time at Fort Peddie. Sir H. Somerset was in command of the camp on the Goolah Heights, and Sir George Bullen in command of another camp at King William's Town; with two intermediate posts of communication between, viz., one at Need's camp and the other at Mount Coke.

General Somerset had gone to head quarters to consult with the commander of the forces, and Colonel Armstrong was in temporary command of General Somerset's force.

The evening before I was starting for King William's Town we received intelligence that Need's camp required provisions; and as I was taking up a small escort with me up the "line," two mule wagons were detailed to accompany me, with a supply of biscuit for that post. The escort consisted of one sergeant (Crawford) and ten of the Cape Mounted Rifles, the two wagons being in charge of John Crouch. He was sometimes a conductor of wagons, and sometimes guide. Another celebrated character volunteered to accompany us—no less a person than Walter Currie, afterwards the well-known Sir Walter.

We started early one morning, and had proceeded about eight miles along the Goolah ridge, the road winding between clumps of forest trees or round the head of ravines leading down from the ridge to the low lands on each side of us. We were riding leisurely along, with an advance and rear guard, knowing that near this spot a strong party of Dutch—part of the field force called a "Commando"—had been attacked by an ambush of Kaffirs only a few days before, when three of the party were killed, viz., two Pexters and a Ferriera. It was a most discreditable

affair. Commandant Muller had eighty men under his command, and was proceeding to form a camp of communication between Need's Camp and Mount Coke. They must have been marching without advance guard or flankers (side videttes), when they were suddenly fired upon from bush and rocks. The three men whom I have alluded to immediately jumped from their horses to make a standing fight of it, but strange to say, the remainder rode away, and these three men were surrounded by the Kaffirs before they could remount. They, however, made the best fight they could, and retired on foot towards the camp they had left, until they were overpowered and killed. It is not known what number of Kaffirs fell, as savages carry off their unstiffened dead and wounded. I say unstiffened dead, because the Kaffirs will not touch a really dead body—that is to say, one that has become rigid. So long as the body is warm and the limbs supple they have no dread, but when the body is once cold they will not touch it. For this reason the sick are often carried out of their huts long before they are dead, and left to die in their last resting place.

I have somewhat diverged from my story. But to proceed. As we approached this spot, ever afterwards known as Muller's Bush, Currie advised us all to look to our guns, and see that the caps and priming were dry; for we all, officers and men, carried double-barrelled guns in those days. My caps were the only suspicious ones. The gun had been loaded for some days, and the caps very soon corrode from the dew at night. My friend Currie actually scraped the caps off my gun with his knife, pressed a little fine powder into the nipples, and recapped the gun. We had proceeded about a mile after this, and had entered into a long narrow glade, with high forests on each side of us, varying from fifty to eighty yards from the wagon track, this open being interspersed with thorn trees (mimosa) and rocks. This narrow ridge extended for about another mile, and it was quite impossible to see a single yard into the thick bush on each side. The Kaffirs very wisely allowed us to pass some distance into this narrow glade, when suddenly a strong party of them extended across the open behind us, and at the same time commenced to fire along the edge of the forest on both

sides. There was no alternative but to draw the two wagons up, dismount our party, get under cover of rocks and bush, and so endeavour to beat off the enemy. During all this time naked black fellows were seen running along the edge of the bush and our front, towards the identical spot where Muller had been attacked; and it was amusing to hear their jeering cries, such as, "You must look at the sun, for it is the last time you will see it." "You are like a mouse in a calabash; you have got into it, but you cannot get out." By this time we had pretty well beaten off the Kafirs in our rear, except those holding the ground, like us, from behind rocks; and I had ordered the men to mount, that we might push on. One horse was hit while the trooper was mounting, and, swerving, threw the rider, upon which there was a great shout of exultation. John Crouch's horse also became restive, and Currie had to hold him while "old John," who was lame, mounted. During this time we were all more or less exposed; but knowing the narrow defile we should have to pass through, I ordered the wagons to advance. Just before we came to the spot where I knew the hot part of the attack would be made the road slightly diverged to the right, and the view from the rocks already occupied by the Kafirs was hidden by some large mimosa trees. At this spot, and before turning the corner, I halted the wagons, leaving Sergeant Crawford and five men with them. The Kafirs were holding the ground on the right of the road in considerable force. Immediately opposite to where they were the ground rose to a sort of hillock, dotted over with rocks, and the road ran between this hillock and the rocks held by them, which also adjoined the high forest wood, falling in one continued extent towards the Buffalo River. Currie, John Crouch, and myself, with the other five men, diverged from the road to the left, and so got out of view from the cover of the hillock. We at once dismounted, handed our horses to one man, and ran up the mound, each taking advantage of a rock for cover. An extraordinary scene at once met our eyes. There were about eighty black fellows, with guns, all "lying on" or taking aim over the rocks, their guns pointing to the road just where it came into view from behind the thorn trees. They never dreamed that we were exactly opposite, under cover of rocks, and within forty

yards of them ; and it was not until we had discharged our one barrel at them, knocking over several, that they were aware of our manoeuvre. Their astonishment was so great that they turned their guns to the right, and almost without taking aim, fired a volley at us. At this moment I shouted to Sergeant Crawford to push the wagons through, which had to pass slightly in a hollow between the Kafirs and ourselves ; but as very few of the enemy's guns were held in reserve or reloaded in time to fire them, the men escaped unhurt, and only three or four of the mules were wounded. After passing through the narrow pass the wagons turned off the road to our side, and also got protected by higher ground. It is well that this precaution had been taken, for had we kept the road and come in view round the thorn trees, very few of us would have been left alive to tell the tale. About eighty guns were bearing upon the spot at eighty yards' distance ; but as it turned out it was the most absurd thing I ever saw. The leaders and drivers of these mule wagons were Malays, from Cape Town, with large umbrella-shaped straw hats on. They usually sit on the box in front of the wagon, one man holding the reins and guiding the six or eight mules, and the other, with a long whip fastened to the taper end of a long bamboo, whipping them on. But on this occasion both of them were on the ground and running alongside the wagon, one opposite its front and the other opposite its hind wheel ; nothing but the monster hats to be seen above the ground, looking more like monkeys or moving mushrooms than anything else. It is astonishing how they contrived to drive and guide the mules in this position.

Unfortunately this did not end our dilemma. The Kafirs were strong and confident ; we were weak and with but little ammunition—thirty rounds per man—and each force held their position, firing shot for shot from behind these rocks. Need's Camp was within sight, but about three miles distant. The post consisted of a company of the Rifle Brigade and a despatch party of twenty Cape Mounted Rifles. They could see us in action with the enemy, but their horses were generally turned out to graze, and it took some time before they could be called in and saddled. We heard the “assembly” sound, and then “horses in” and “boot and saddle,” but in our situation it

seemed an age before they were ready to come to our assistance; and it reminded one of Sister Ann in the nursery tale of Bluebeard. All this time we were firing shot for shot, and our ammunition was all but expended. Some Kafirs had got into the forest trees, and were potting at us from above. Their position gave us this advantage—that they could also see the preparation making at Need's Camp for reinforcing us. All at once we heard a great commotion and calling out to one another amongst the Kafirs, and I heard repeated the name of "Tandanna," which I took down in my pocket-book. Thinking it was preparatory to a rush upon us, we all held both our barrels loaded and in reserve; but it was with quite a different motive. The Kafirs in the trees could see much better than we could, and they *did* see the Cape Mounted Rifles racing along the road from Need's camp at the top of their speed. Soon we saw them approach, although in no order save the fastest horses to the front; and then Currie, Crouch, and I rose, with our party, charging on foot across the space dividing our rocks from those held by the Kafirs. The whole space was only about fifty yards, with the road in a slight hollow between us, and the rest of it was covered with long grass, stones, holes, and other impediments. We rushed across this space like mad, and down went Currie. Only a few shots were then being fired at us, but the idea passed through my mind that he was killed; but almost before the thought he was alongside me again, and we just got up to the tail of the Kafirs as they were rushing in the opposite direction from us. We found ourselves amongst the dead and dying, or rather amongst the dead, for nearly every Kafir we had hit was struck in the eye or through the head, the head and shoulders alone being exposed from behind the rocks whilst taking aim at us. Seven great Kafirs lay dead at our feet; two others were just alive. We followed the mass of the retreating enemy some distance into the bush. There was a good deal of blood from wounded men being carried to the rear, and we could hear the retreating enemy breaking through the bushes like a herd of buffaloes.

We then returned to examine our respective positions. I had taken cover behind a not very large rock, with a second rock on top of it, with a wedge-shaped chink

horizontally between the two. It was through this chink that I was enabled to take deliberate aim ; but mine being a smooth-bore gun, I gave the palm of those killed to my friend Currie, who was one of the best rifle shots of the day. Strange to say, I had placed my forage cap, with a silver-bound peak, on another stone, about a yard to my right, and this took off the fire from me. Full five and twenty shots hit this stone, and the fine splinters from the rock often struck me on the hands and face, but not one of the bullets hit the cap. This rock is still seen by passers by, almost covered with lead in star-shaped forms from the flattened balls. General Sir H. Somerset happened to arrive on the ground soon after the action, and he sent on my report of the affair to the General commanding, and I received in reply the thanks of the Commander of the Forces. A strong patrol was despatched in pursuit of the enemy, and although they did not overtake the Kafirs, they found quantities of blood where the wounded had stopped to rest.



## CHAPTER VIII

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### THE BEEKA MOUTH.

DURING the war of 1846-7 such a drought prevailed throughout the frontier districts of the Cape of Good Hope and in Kaffirland, where operations were being carried on against the Kaffirs, that the Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Sir P. Maitland, was compelled to fall back with the troops and form a camp on the coast at Waterloo Bay, near the mouth of the Fish River. This was done in order to establish a landing place on the coast for supplies instead of having them carried overland from Port Elizabeth, a distance of about 150 miles, to form a base for renewed operations, and also to save the few remaining draft oxen with the army, as it was almost the only portion of the colony where there was still any herbage or grass left.

“Where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together,” and so it is with the Kaffirs. For the sake of plunder they follow all large camps and live by stealing and capturing stray and ill guarded cattle. The draught and slaughter cattle had to pasture some distance from the camp to obtain food, but cattle guards and pickets were invariably posted.

One day an alarm arose in camp that the cattle guard had been attacked by the enemy, several of the herdsmen killed and a large number of draught oxen carried off by the enemy.

In consequence of the scarcity of forage the horses of both the Cape Mounted Rifles and 7th Dragoon Guards were in the day time knee-haltered and turned out to graze; but His Excellency invariably kept a small body escort of cavalry ready saddled in camp. On the alarm or the report of the attack reaching camp, and while a patrol was being formed to follow up the enemy, Sir P. Maitland and his personal staff, consisting of Col. Cloete, Deputy Quarter Master General, myself (says Bisset) and one or two others, at once mounted, and with the body-guard of

about twelve men (Cape Mounted Rifles and 7th Dragoon-Guards) followed up the Kaffirs. I knew the country well, and was aware that the Kaffirs must either pass inland with the cattle for some distance before they could cross the several rivers that enter the sea between the Fish and Keiskama Rivers, or else they must at once turn down to the coast and cross the rivers on the beach at their mouths, where there is a bar and generally shallow water. I therefore led the Governor and escort at a gallop to the mouth of the first river, the Dart, and there, sure enough, the Kaffirs had crossed; and the spoor or trace showed plainly along the beach to the next river, the Wolf River, a distance of about six miles, the cattle had evidently been driven along here at a great pace. The tide being in, the sands were heavy, and the horses became somewhat "blown" before we reached the Wolf River. The Kaffirs must have been in the same plight, for after crossing its mouth they turned inland with the cattle, passing through a bush of about half a mile in extent. This bush extended all along the coast, between the open downs or grass country, and the sand hills and open beach. After passing through this bush the Kaffirs continued eastward along the downs, but skirting the bush, and although the country was undulating, it was more easy to drive the cattle over from being open.

The escort horses with the Governor being rather blown I started ahead with a single orderly through the bush path, and came upon the trace of the cattle in the direction of the Beeka River. After galloping about three miles, and rising a brow in some undulating ground, I came suddenly in sight of the Kaffirs with the cattle, about 200 yards ahead of me. They appeared to have no knowledge of the pursuit, and were driving the cattle at a sort of hand trot. I immediately drew back over the brow without the enemy having seen me, and from my recollections of a vidette's duty commenced circling to the right, directing my orderly to follow me in the circle. By this time the Governor and the escort made their appearance through the bush path; and Cloete, seeing me, exclaimed, "Look, look! there is a Kaffir chasing Bisset." But the old General said, "No, Cloete, he is circling to the right; the enemy is in front," and at

once came tearing down to me. I reported what had happened, and added that if we galloped hard we should overtake the enemy before they rounded the mouth of the next or Beeka River. This river is the largest of all the rivers between the Fish and Keiskama; and moreover from where the Kaffirs would strike the bank of it, at the commencement of the bush, there is a long stretch of narrow beach between the water, which is deep, and the sand hills, which are covered with thick bush. This narrow beach varies from fifty to twenty yards in width, and is about a mile in length before reaching the mouth of the river, where alone the water is fordable.

I was very well mounted on an old favorite horse called Rattler, and rode forward with about half of the fastest of the escort horses. We were about 100 yards ahead of the Governor and the rest of the party; and as we dropped down the bank of the river on to the narrow beach, where the direction turned suddenly to the right, we saw the Kaffirs, about fifty in number, two or three hundred yards ahead driving the cattle as fast as they could along the deep sands. I called the six or eight men together, and standing in my stirrups I said in a low voice to the men "Charge!" and we raced until we came within fifty yards of the Kaffirs and the cattle. Up to this time they had never once looked back, being apparently quite unaware of our near approach; and the sand was so deep and soft that there was not the least noise from the horses' hoofs. I saw that most of the Kaffirs were armed with guns, the remainder with assegais, and I felt that we should be amongst them at a disadvantage, because half the effect of a charge is caused by a panic to the other side. I therefore again rose in my stirrups and shouted a great shout, and with that we were upon them. Our horses were perfectly pumped; and as I pulled up suddenly to shoot a Kaffir who was taking aim at me, two of the seven troopers pulled up so suddenly in the deep sand that they flew over their horses' heads like shuttlecocks. Each of these men shot a Kaffir before they rose from their sitting position. My opponent could not stand the two barrels which were staring him in the face; missed me, and as he turned got the contents of one barrel, which tumbled him over. Three other fellows were shot before they got up the sand hills and into the bush.

The firing made the cattle "spurt" to the front along the narrow beach, and I and two men had to gallop through the water (up to the horses' girths) to get in front of them; and here we found a nearly equal number of Kaffirs, who were running, as is their custom, in front of the cattle. These warriors were chiefly armed with assegais, which they began to hurl at us. One great fellow drew a second spear, and as he raised his arm to throw it at me I let fly my second barrel, putting the contents into his left breast, and he immediately subsided. This firing checked the cattle, and we turned and drove them back. As the rest of the Kaffirs escaped into the bush I noticed that the Kaffir whom I last shot was carrying one of their knapsacks over his shoulder, which bulged out and appeared to contain something unusual. I therefore jumped down from my horse and slipped this sack or bag from off his neck and placed it over my own shoulder. The poor fellow was still breathing, for both these men were shot with partridge shot. I had lent my gun the day before to Major Burnaby, R.A., to shoot partridges near the camp, and had quite forgotten to reload with ball in the hurry of leaving the camp.

The Governor dropped down the bank of the river on to the level beach just in time to see the charge, and was highly pleased at the success of the pursuit; and with the additional aid we soon got the cattle back into the open country.

I urged on His Excellency that we should not delay in getting them past the bush path at the Wolf River, that our party was very small, and that I had seen over fifty Kaffirs with guns, besides those with assegais; and that seeing our small numbers they would be sure to head us at the bush path.

Dear old Sir Peregrine said—"Oh no, Bisset, you have taught them such a lesson that they will not venture to come near our camp again."

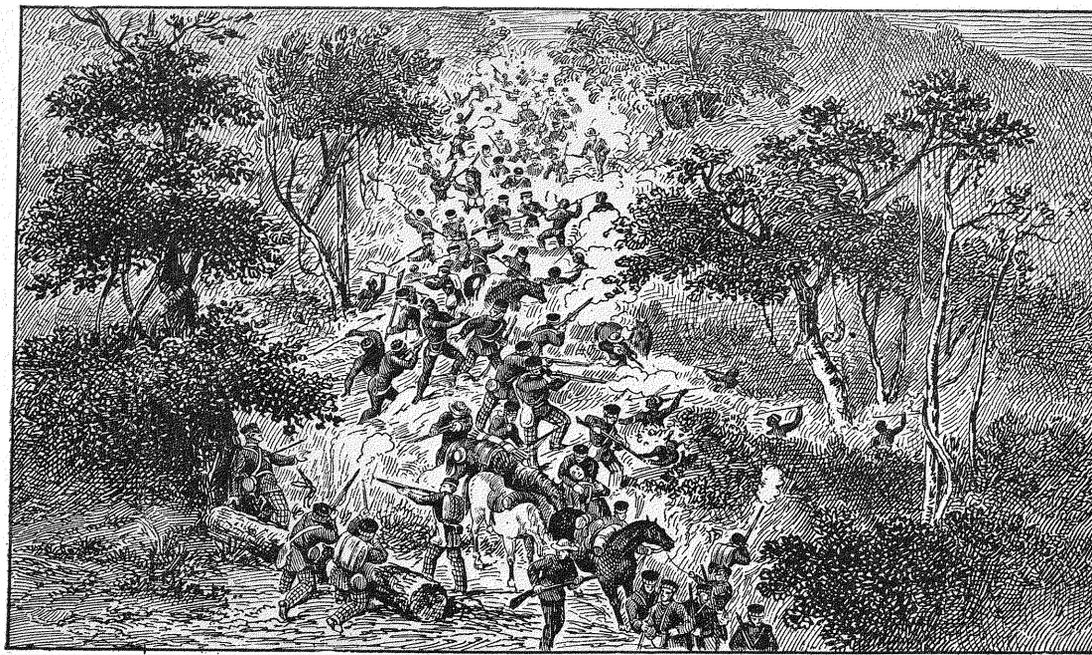
The words were scarcely out of my mouth when we heard "Ping, ping, ping, ping!" and saw the dust flying up all about us, and the white smoke at the edge of the bush not one hundred yards from where we were standing. The General said, "You are right, Bisset; and I should not like to be shot by a Kaffir from behind a bush after going through Waterloo." Putting spurs to our horses we

hurried the cattle along as fast as we could. Before we reached the narrow bush path at the next river we were met by a strong force of cavalry, which had "called the horses in," saddled, and followed as fast as they could ; and before long we also met a strong party of infantry from the camp.

As we had now more leisure, I began to examine my knapsack—this means the skin of a buck, skinned whole, and open only at the hind legs. The skins are dressed and made as soft as a glove, and are very convenient for carrying anything. Mine on this occasion contained, to my surprise, several pieces of real English plate, in the shape of an old fashioned silver tea pot, a snuffer tray, two silver forks, a table spoon and two tea spoons, besides the usual tinder box, tobacco and pipe, and some other trifling articles. There was no mark or crest on the silver, and although I advertised for the owner no person has ever claimed the articles.

The Kaffirs were no doubt on a return foray from the colony, where they had probably murdered a whole family at some homestead, and plundered the house before burning it. In many instances not a soul was left out of whole families that were fallen upon in isolated positions. However, this party paid dearly for *their* foray.





*Murray & St. Leger.*

**Attack of the Kaffirs on the Troops under the command of Lt.-Col. Fordyce of the 74th Highlanders.**

*Cape Town.*

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE BOOMAH PASS.

IN December, 1850, the Kaffir war broke out that lasted until 1853. British Kaffraria had been held in military occupation from the termination of the previous war (1848). The military head-quarters were established at King William's Town, and several minor posts were occupied in different parts of the country to keep the Kaffirs in subjection.

The Kaffir chiefs, however, formed a combination to throw off the white man's supervision of their country, and committed several overt acts with the intention of bringing on a war. Cattle were stolen from the colony, and although traced into Kaffirland, and to the marauders' kraals, the chiefs refused either to give up the beasts or to surrender the thieves. Wagons were also stopped upon the high roads and plundered, and in some instances the leaders and drivers killed.

General (then Colonel) Mackinnon commanded in Kaffraria, and was also Chief Civil Governor of the Province. This officer's rule in Kaffraria had been most temperate and just towards the Kaffirs, and his word was like the laws of the Medes and Persians. Sir Harry Smith was at the time Governor and Commander-in-Chief in the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope.

The rebellious and warlike indications of the Kaffirs were reported to him at Cape Town. He was, however, at first incredulous of their intentions, and in reply to a petition from the frontier farmers quoted the non-existence of certain indications which always precede Kaffir wars. He was, therefore, much surprised afterwards to find that the very circumstances on the absence of which he relied were actually at that moment taking place on the frontier, Sandilli the paramount chief of all Kaffirland proper, was at the head of the war party; and seeing that war was inevitable, Colonel Mackinnon, ordered a column of troops to march from King William's Town to Fort Cox, where a