

## SHUTTLECOCK 1900-1901

THE PROFLIGACY with which the British Army used its resources was based on the belief that it would speedily terminate the war. Roberts' advance sowed dragon's teeth. Armed men sprang from the soil, the war was not ended and the profligacy produced pollution and contamination creating a more savage conflict than could ever be resolved by force of arms.

1 Shortly after its occupation, Pretoria was menaced by aggressive commandos in the west (where Baden-Powell, 'the hero of Mafeking', lost many horses dislodging them) and in the north where an attempt was made to attack the town from Onderstepoort, a few miles from Daspoort, with the same cavalry losses. They occurred also in the south. Determined men continued defiant. Roberts was compelled to initiate his 'scorched earth' policy by authorising the burning of farm-houses and other draconian measures. (The farmstead of Theiler's friend, 2 D. J. E. Erasmus at nearby Pienaarsrivier was burnt to the ground by General Paget.)

3 The dragon's teeth he had sown elsewhere produced a host of enemies other than guerillas which the Army was incapable of combatting. Immediately after it had left Kroonstad, for example, the local medical officer of health attempted to remove the carcasses of horses from the Valsch Rivier feeding the dam which supplied the town's water. Within the first month, he extracted 700. Then he lost count. Conditions around Pretoria were similar. Three months after 4 its occupation, one of its best known physicians, Dr J. A. Kay, wrote 'What is sadly needed in and around Pretoria is a scavenger corps to bury dead animals. Within four miles of Pretoria, I saw 60 and within 100 yards of the main road, 7 dead mules and horses lying in a small stream which is most certainly used for drinking by our troops. All over the veld as well as on the road, dead horses and cattle are plentiful.' Typhoid, dysentery and enteric abounded with high mortality.

5 The Army Veterinary Corps was totally inadequate to demand and was severely criticised by Roberts himself. Its director and principal assistants had been confined in Ladysmith when most needed and Hutcheon had had to post his civilian veterinarians to Army depôts with consequent 6 deterioration in animal care in his Colony. By the middle of 1900, about 185,000 horses alone 7 had been shipped to South Africa. A year later, it was calculated that 125,000 horses and mules had been supplied by a single dealer from Kansas, U.S.A. among others. Captain Horace 8 Hayes, that unexampled equine expert, himself conducted consignments. On one voyage to Port Elizabeth lasting 31 days, he landed 470 horses which had stood for the entire journey. Many of them immediately contracted laminitis on the two-mile walk to their camp. When horses were taken off a ship and put straight to work by the Army, he said 'they went all to pieces and there was a terrible mortality'. Their average life in South Africa was six weeks which greatly protracted the war. They brought and disseminated a large number of diseases and, unsalted and unacclimatised, contracted old and new local afflictions.

9 The exigencies of war had the further effect of nullifying the few legislative measures against stock diseases. Scab (Brandziekte), the scourge of Cape sheep, quickly resumed its hold 'in the presence of roving patrols who paralysed the efforts of the sheep inspectors appointed in the terms of the Scab Act'. Under Martial Law, captured infected sheep were sold by auction and distributed widespread. Materials for dipping were no longer available and, when obtained under difficulty, could not be transported nor men found to use them. Much the same obtained in the case of infectious Lung Sickness in oxen. 'Commandeering' by combatants on both sides further ensured the uninhibited proliferation of disease. 'Brigandage' as it was later called,



became the order of the day throughout the land and made stock control impossible. The whole of Southern Africa had become an incubus of lethal dangers to man and beast.

10 The Army's attempt to control conditions in Pretoria resulted in an endless spate of permits  
11 and passes. At first spies moved freely in the town and, by devious means, local inhabitants  
12 purveyed information to the highly mobile commandos. The official system reached ludicrous  
proportions, permits being needed virtually to cross the street or move furniture from one house  
to another. Theiler had immediately to obtain one to retain possession of his two personally-  
owned horses. 'One had', said one indignant lady, 'to go to the Military Governor to  
breathe.'

To find his way through this thicket of difficulties and somehow to obtain freedom of move-  
ment, Theiler came to town to interview the responsible officers. The Tommies had taken the  
13 Vierkleur that flew over Schutte's Magistrate's Office (it was returned to the Transvaal Province  
by the Inverness Town Council in 1974 with an appropriate exchange of politesses) and only  
military men conducted affairs. They looked at him askance, aware of his connection with the  
Staatsartillerie and his commando service but baffled by the swarthy foreigner 'dressed like an  
English gentleman', with his little billycock hat. Theiler made himself known and in his habitual-  
ly gregarious manner, talked to everyone. The provisions Emma had stored under the floor  
14 would soon be exhausted and he needed private practice. He was astonished and gratified by the  
'gentlemanliness' of the English and they by his command of the English language and his  
enormous scientific knowledge.

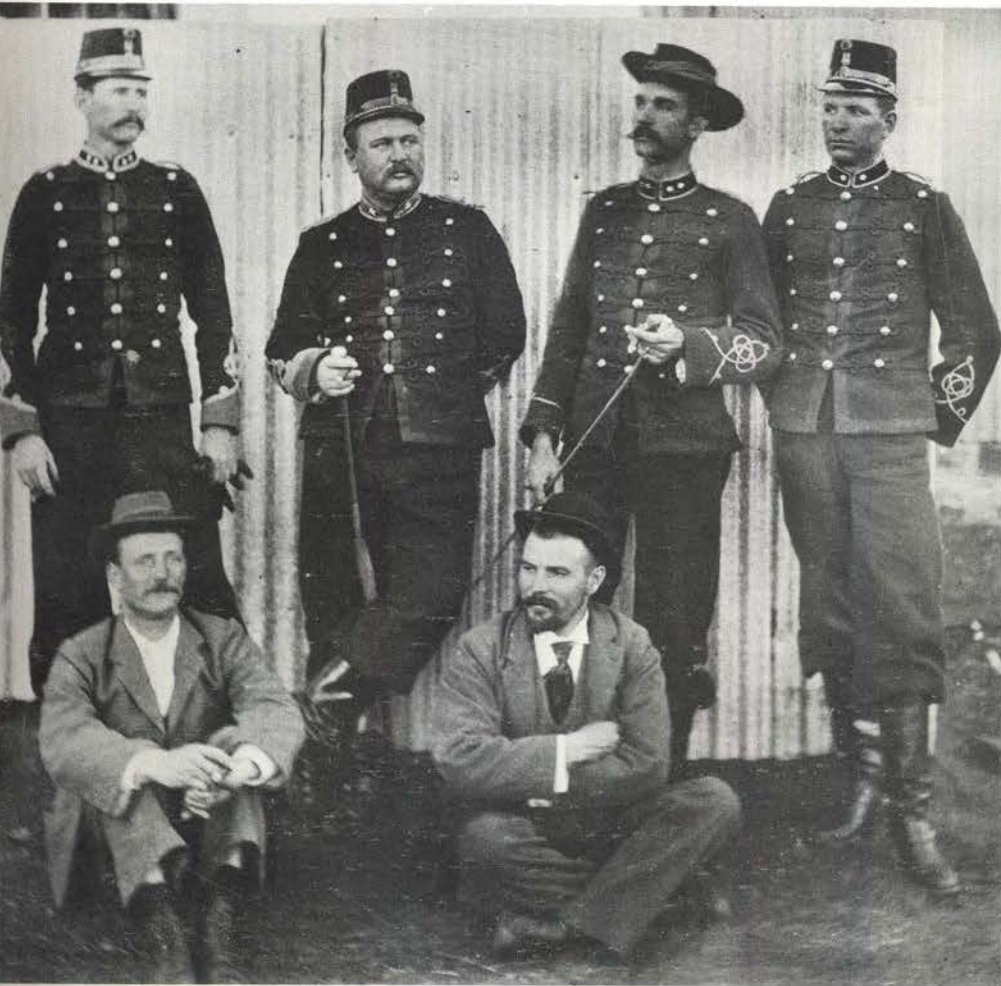
Apart from the Royal Army Medical and Veterinary Corps, Pretoria now abounded with  
15 scientific men. The Hollander Dr Gunning, quickly restored to his museum and zoological  
garden, was confounded to find a tall British private in battle-stained uniform enquiring after  
'flies'. After careful overtures suitable to the level of an ordinary Tommy, Gunning discovered  
that he was addressing Professor E. E. Austen of the British Museum, the reigning authority on  
16 tsetse flies. Theiler too made the acquaintance of Major Fred. Smith, previously a professor at  
the Royal Army Veterinary College and examiner for the R.C.V.S. who now struggled to pro-  
duce order in the 'sick lines' at Daspoort where daily scores of afflicted and debilitated horses  
arrived on foot from various battlefields. Smith was one among many who knew what Theiler  
was about; but it had no place in the rigid order of the British Army. When the Principal Veteri-  
ary Officer Colonel Matthews arrived to take charge toward the middle of July (Smith was pro-  
17 moted to officer-in-charge of the Free State with his headquarters at Kroonstad), Theiler de-  
18 lighted further in 'scientific conversation'. In the meantime, though he could move fairly freely,  
he had time on his hands. His house was surrounded by tented encampments and, locked in it  
every night during the curfew hours of 7 p.m. to 6.30 a.m., he spent many hours with Emma  
19 putting his massive collection of notes and observations in order and planning a series of mono-  
graphs. For the whole of June 1900, he professed himself 'unemployed'; but during daylight,  
he actively made himself known in circles appreciative of his scientific work.

Concerned primarily with maintaining order in his sprawling demesne, the Military Governor  
20 General Maxwell, appointed on the 14th June a Commissioner of Police with seven officers to  
help him organise what came to be known as the Transvaal Constabulary. Lieutenant-Colonel  
21 F. Ivor Maxse of the Coldstream Guards was the very prototype of the British military officer  
(and did not fade away until the age of 96 in 1958). Well-born and married only a few months to  
a daughter of Viscount Leconfield, he already had a distinguished Army record and impressed  
Theiler on sight. Maxwell intended for them both a rôle that would engage his major problem –  
the health of man and beast. The Army Veterinary Corps was openly incapable of dealing with  
the enormous mortality of horses from disease, let alone wounds, and desperate measures were  
necessary. With an equal disdain of the Medical Corps and its failure to diminish similar loss





*The Staatsartillerie Headquarters in Pretoria where Theiler served as Paardenarts or Horse Doctor.*



*Officers of the Staatsartillerie with Theiler seated on right and his friend, Lieutenant Mike du Toit standing on extreme left.*



*Preparing for the Baden-Baden Conference in 1899 – Theiler in a newly-tailored dress suit (with ungloved hand).*

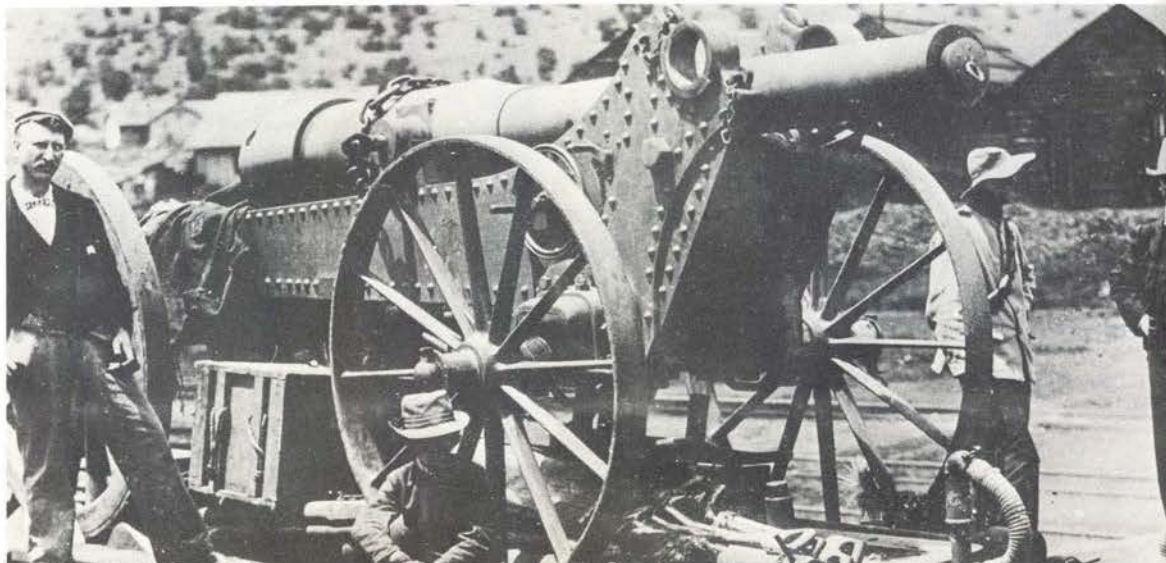


*Ladysmith, Natal overlooked by Bulwana Hill whence the Staatsartillerie continuously bombarded it with a Creusot big gun nicknamed 'Long Tom'*



*Shrapnel bursting on war correspondents Nevison (right), Melton Prior (centre) and a servant when riding outside Ladysmith.*

*A Long Tom of the type dragged to the summit of Bulwana Hill by forty eight oxen and hundreds of men.*





22 from typhoid, enteric and dysentery among soldiers and the resident population, Maxwell, with the consent of Lord Roberts, entered into a conspiracy with Sir Alfred Milner, still in Cape Town, for the services of Dr George Turner, the over-age Medical Officer of Health of the Cape Colonial Government. That took longer than the veterinary aspect but finally dovetailed into it.

23 Colonel Maxse and his men quickly organised the Transvaal Police, purloining from the Army one of the numerous veterinarians from Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other parts of the Empire whose varied experiences fascinated Theiler in conversation at the Daspoort 'sick lines'. C. J. Sanderson M.R.C.V.S. had joined the New Zealand Mounted Rifles as a veterinary lieutenant and distinguished himself in South Africa by keeping his regiment mounted. He was appointed to the Transvaal Constabulary as Veterinary Officer with wider duties than merely maintaining its horses in good health.

In the last days of June 1900, there had been significant consultations between General Maxwell and Colonel Maxse. Their problem had been less the large number of Mange- and Glanders-ridden horses that wandered about and the huge mortality from known diseases (including the Horse Death) as the mounting losses from unknown causes. The Army had 'occupied' and inspected Theiler's Daspoort laboratory, principally concerned with manufacturing vaccines, immediately upon arrival. Theiler himself has made no secret of his pre-war activities and his longstanding experimentation with stock diseases. Now they sent for him with a view to his urgently grappling with the unknown fatal diseases which were costing the British Government hundreds of thousands of pounds and protracting hostilities indefinitely. Theiler confidently 25 confronted 'the English gentlemen' - Maxwell, Maxse, Fred Smith and others concerned with the 26 situation. The result was his provisional appointment as 'Bacteriologist' to the Transvaal Constabulary from the 1st July 1900 under instruction to investigate horse diseases with the assistance of Sanderson. All possible facilities were to be placed at his disposal in re-opening his laboratory for research work.

His joy was hardly diminished by the fact that the salary was less than the £800 gained by his two Republican appointments. It offered temporary present security and possible future prospect. Further, he was wanted, urgently needed and trusted to do the very work which had become his life's ambition and for which he had beggared himself to be equipped. He confided 27 one small impediment to Colonel Maxse - his confiscated cases in Cape Town containing the most modern microscopes, sophisticated glass apparatus and other aids to the advanced work he was expected to do. Maxse exerted influence and after three months, all the impounded cases were delivered except the most important - the box containing the microscopes. Its loss was a severe blow. Of the others, all the Zurich glassware was smashed but Cogit's from Paris was almost intact.

The children were enchanted with their toys and particularly the little hay-wain which they 28 used to collect cow-pats for fuel. (There was none in and around Pretoria and soldiers demolished paling fences, furniture, wooden shacks and anything available for their winter cooking fires.) All enjoyed the honey of Theiler père and Arnold and Emma waxed sentimental over the 29 Fricktalerkirsch and begged to be supplied with more. Owing to strict military censorship, they had not yet heard from Switzerland. Everything sent them was impounded at the Cape. Theiler himself could not write freely to his parents. He told them he had never worked so hard, that 30 all was well and that he was being fairly treated. His 'English' syndrome had so far developed that by November, he gave his address as 'Arnold Theiler Esquire, Veterinary Bacteriologist to the Transvaal Colonie, P.O. Box 585, Pretoria, Transvaal, via Southampton'.

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Life was suddenly glorious. He was a man again. Accompanied by Sanderson, he was persona grata at the Army 'sick lines' and could closely inspect the extraordinary variety of horses from all parts of the world. Later he would write about them for his military veterinary colleagues at Thun. He hobnobbed from a position of stature with the equally various Army veterinary surgeons, learning much. They were baffled by the on-coming Horse Sickness and unknown lethal fevers. Theiler, helped on all hands, immediately went into action and mounted investigatory experiments on a large scale with horses of every kind and origin. He was principally concerned with what he subsequently defined as Equine Malaria; but there were other mysterious diseases. Sanderson later recounted how Theiler's microscope revealed a bacillus similar to that of human typhoid and how he had had to obtain a specimen from the spleen of a man dead from enteric for comparison. Theiler found the same bacillus in it. They were exciting over-worked times and it was not until the 1st October 1900 that he got Charles Favre officially appointed as his Assistant Bacteriologist.

Much remained irksome. The silence from abroad was total. No scientific journals reached him, no letters, no news. Dietschi sometimes sent him newspapers from Cape Town to keep him au fait with the war. He worried about his family and particularly Marie who had had twins, one of whom had died. Maxwell had let him send an official cable to his father at the end of July - 'Theiler telegraphs all lymph to be sent via Southampton Cape Town' and he was allowed to add 'mir gut' (I'm all right). He also wrote, very guardedly, not knowing whether his letters would pass the censor Lord Stanley and his staff, or go on their way at all. Other letters he entrusted to Drs de Montmollin and Koenig and later Braunschweiler who were returning to Switzerland. He wrote that his future was bright, 'perhaps brighter than it has ever been' and that he was surprised at the Boers' continued resistance. (When his long letters describing the retreats were published in Switzerland, there was uproar but Theiler stuck to his guns, claiming that the Boers were not brave and that only 10% of their fighting men, obstinate and hopeful of intervention, remained in the field.) He worked with single-minded devotion in his laboratory; but the nights, closed to all movement by the 12-hour curfew, were long. He occupied them with preparing précis of his years of investigation of Horse Sickness, Equine Malaria and Nagana (which Bruce had stimulated), thinking that the publication of articles in foreign scientific journals would interest his new friends and add to his stature.

He was not alone in his work. The disaster of the British cavalry, specially important in the guerilla scene, had become every investigator's concern. Even before it happened, Edington had sent his deputy W. Robertson (on leave in England in August 1899) to Professor John M'Fadyean, principal of the R.C.V.S., with a blood-specimen from a case of Horse Sickness for his own experimentation which he began in October. Flattered, M'Fadyean paid high tribute to Edington 'to whom we owe all our present knowledge' and pontificated on the results of his experiments in the *Journal of Comparative Pathology and Therapeutics* (which he edited) without casting much light on the disease. He also spoke to it at a meeting of the Pathological Society in London in May under the chairmanship of Lord Lister. Robertson returned to the Cape in February 1900 when Edington, organising an Army Ambulance, was prevented from continuing his work by enormous demands from the military for Lung Sickness vaccine and Mallein for Glanders, as well as the complete unavailability of horses for experiment. War conditions reduced his health and in August 1900, he left for England on six months leave, putting Robertson in charge of the Institute. As far as the outside world knew, he remained the reigning authority on Horse Sickness, a belief substantiated by the publication in the *Journal of Comparative Pathology* in September and December 1900 of his 'South African Horse Sickness - Its Pathology and Methods of Protective Inoculation', subsequently issued as an abstract. It described numerous experiments in great detail. He claimed now, not to immunise horses but to give them



some degree of protection by infecting them with a recoverable dose of the disease. Theiler had been following the same line for years but lacked the encomium of publication in a scientific journal.

41 Watkins-Pitchford too, debilitated and drained by the siege and the demands of the subsequent guerilla operations, was compelled to take six months sick leave in August 1900. On the voyage to England, he wrote a long account of his own work on Horse Sickness which was published serially in the *Natal Agricultural Journal* and, upon his return in January 1901, resumed the attack. It remained one of the most tantalising of the scientific conundra of Africa.

42 The conspiracy to get George Turner to the Transvaal to deal with human diseases at length succeeded in the face of hot opposition from the Cape Government. He was lent for three months only from the 1st August 1900, hearing with dismay from the German Consul as he left Cape Town that his old adversary Rinderpest had reappeared in South West Africa. Few knew better than Turner what that could mean. He arranged with Milner that J. W. Phillips, his lay-assistant at the Kimberley Serum Station and, when it closed, his bacteriological assistant in Cape Town, be recalled from Egypt (where he had been sent to produce Rinderpest serum) and posted to the Leprosy Hospital in Pretoria on standby. Phillips arrived in January 1901.

43 Turner, now 52 but more vigorous than men half his age, was provisionally appointed Transvaal Medical Officer of Health on the 9th August 1900 – to the undisguised hostility of the Royal Army Medical Corps (and later Lord Kitchener) which considered his activity redundant and a reflection on their competence. The appalling conditions in Pretoria only briefly occupied him before Lord Roberts sent him to the Eastern Transvaal to ascertain whether troops could be stationed there in the prevalence of deadly malaria. The susceptibility of British soldiers to tropical diseases was protracting the war even further and during 1901, the Army was compelled to appoint a Commission to investigate dysentery and enteric in Army camps. Lieutenant-45 Colonel David Bruce served on it, the British Parliament receiving its report in 1902. (Many 46 years later, Emma maintained that during this service, Bruce had helped to prosper Theiler's cause. Certainly their friendship flourished.)

A further means of terminating the war and curtailing its cost to the British taxpayer, germinated in the fertile mind of 'the hero of Mafeking', now attached to Roberts' staff. Lawlessness, pillaging and general disorder had begun to prevail over most of Southern Africa. The guerilla bands, Boer and military, batted on all they could find and the rural population, sinking into greater depths of distress and want, were compelled to join them in unlawful activities. The reality of the 'conquered republics', now annexed by Britain, was ugly with suffering and disorganisation but the resources of the British Army could not be squandered on civilian control. What was needed was a Police Force. Major-General Baden-Powell was entrusted with devising it and spent three weeks in Cape Town making his plans in consultation with Milner (who 47 showed the utmost reluctance in moving his headquarters to the Transvaal). The new force was to consist of 6,000 mounted men. Inevitably horses, not men, were the major problem. At the end of September, Baden-Powell reported himself and his plans to Roberts in Pretoria.

In such circumstances, Theiler became the cynosure of military and administrative attention. 48 There were then more than 2,000 horses in the Daspoort 'sick lines' in the care of Army veterinarians and a growing number of oxen and other animals impounded on suspicion of contagious disease which fell to Sanderson's duty as Veterinary Surgeon to the Transvaal Constabulary. 49 Overburdened, he frequently consulted Theiler who regretted distraction from his work as 'Bacteriologist' where he was simultaneously staging experiments on several animal diseases, particularly equine.

50 The Daspoort Laboratory, an oasis of science in the rough urgency of war, fascinated the many scientifically-trained officers in the British Army. Theiler, equally beguiled by unwonted



interest, beamingly welcomed veterinary surgeons, physicians, bacteriologists, and knowledgeable amateurs such as the handsome wastrel, Prince Francis of Teck, brother of Prince Alexander (who, active in the Matabele Rebellion, had risen high in military service and received the D.S.O. for his part in the current war). Prince Francis took a particular interest officially in the branding of Horses; but, 'full of brains', privately understood and appreciated what Theiler was doing. A quarter of a century later, Prince Alexander and his lady brought an even greater appreciation.

Major-General Sir John Maxwell himself came to inspect the laboratory and its works; also General Charles Tucker, commander of the 7th Division and now in occupation of the Staats-artillerie Barracks; and, forebodingly, the volatile little 'hero of Mafeking' intent on his Constabulary plans. In Theiler, Baden-Powell saw the solution of at least one of the problems with which his assignment bristled. Great changes were imminent. When Milner visited Pretoria on the 15th October, the belief in early peace still flourished. Lord Roberts would soon leave for England to become Commander-in-Chief of the British Army and the steely Lord Kitchener would conclude the campaign in South Africa. The restoration of civil life would become imperative. On the 22nd October 1900 by Proclamation No. 24, Lord Roberts established the South African Constabulary to preserve order and prevent crimes, under the orders of Sir Alfred Milner as High Commissioner and with Baden-Powell as Inspector-General. It was to come into operation by June 1901.

A huge task of organisation was involved in raising 6,000 men, horses, equipment and supplies. Baden-Powell threw himself into it. Even before the end of 1900, Kitchener demanded Constabulary services. By that time, its men (rascals and gentlemen enlisted from all over the world) had earned a reputation surpassing Brabant's Horse (known as the 'Brabanditti') and Maxwell was compelled to issue an official notice that his Government would not be responsible for or recognise debts contracted by them. Persons who contracted debts with them did so at their own risk. At their Headquarters at Zuurfontein, the railway station for the Modderfontein dynamite factory, they 'appropriated' indiscriminately – even a locomotive and trucks. Their Inspector-General was similarly disposed. First he took Sanderson from Maxse's Transvaal Constabulary; then he coveted Theiler.

Theiler was 'working very hard. I don't think I have ever worked so hard in my life. I am in the process of recording for publication my earlier investigations into Horse Death, Tsetse, Malaria, etc. I consider them my best work so far but the new investigations which I now have in process, indicate even more valuable results. The journey to Europe indeed did me good!' He was still much irked by Martial Law with its multitudinous passes and permits and restrictions on movement. Emma had her own difficulties, particularly with food and its high cost (they could no longer save). The proximity of military camps with their primitive (often absent) sanitation producing continuous pervading smells and swarms of flies, repulsive in themselves, was a hazard to the health of the children. She lacked many household essentials. Now she ran out of thread for sewing and mending and begged her in-laws to send some.

After five months of silence, they at last had four letters from home released from the Cape in October. Braunschweiler (who then went to the U.S.A. to settle in Ohio) had called and given the parents news – Kollmann also, busily engaged in raising money to succour Arnold's local Swiss. Long-delayed scientific journals were also delivered. They had much to write in reply.

Arnold ordered through his father hundreds of glass slides (he sometimes used 50 a day) and special glass vessels from Cogit in Paris. He still wanted the bee fungus to go on with his experiments – locusts continued coming in gigantic swarms. Hans, they wrote proudly, was going

to school at the imposing Loreto Convent. Now 6 years old, he had long shown inherited tendencies and, even as a toddler, had enthusiastically collected beetles and butterflies and lizards



on the kopjes when walking with his father. His early classes were principally to learn English before attending a Government school and he imparted his new knowledge vociferously to his younger sisters.

65 While Emma laboriously copied the three scientific monographs during the long hot summer nights, Arnold collected his campaign- and later notes and began the writing of a work on 'The Horse at War' for his Thun mentor Colonel Potterat, his officer-instructors and the students with whom he had completed his military-veterinary training in 1890. It was finished, copied and sent on the 26th January 1901 and was duly published in the *Schweiz Monatschrift für Offiziere aller Waffen* and subsequently issued as an illustrated abstract. Under the title of 'Aus Transvaal', it remains an illuminating account of a vital aspect of the first year of war.

66 He attached the highest importance to his 'best work'. On the 6th December 1900, he sent the three monographs to Zschokke at Zurich University intending that he should publish 'Die Tsetse Krankheit' in the *Schweizer Archiv für Tierheilkunde* and allocate 'Die Sudafrikaansche Pferdesterbe' elsewhere. Professor Kitt in München was to have 'Malaria in Horses' - 'Eine contagiöse Stomatitis der Pferde in Süd-Afrika' - for publication in his *Deutsche Monatschrift für Tierheilkunde*. Carried away by Theiler's novel work in tropical animal diseases, Zschokke had other designs on 'Malaria in Horses'; but owing to current war conditions, its author long remained unaware.

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Tending all his life to oscillate between high elation and depression, Theiler was now increasingly susceptible to the frustrating effect of restrictions. He could not get the apparatus and equipment he needed, he had lost communication with the leading bacteriologists who had stimulated him in Europe and whose published works were not reaching him, the military denied him the horses he wanted for his experiments, he needed a pass or permit for any variation from staying at home. Even Emma tended uncharacteristically to bend before the blast and share in the weltschmerz which often afflicted him. 'We are as shut up here as if the town were besieged', she wrote, 'the end of the war is further than ever . . . vegetables and fruit are seldom available . . . eggs 7s. a dozen . . . If one comes two days later to a shop which has received stocks, it is completely sold out. Terrific heat and no rain! Typhoid afflicts the English and also the civilians. We are having no rosy time and there is reason enough to be discouraged. Arnold is as disenchanted with Africa as never before.'

68 There were few distractions. In November 1900, Otto Henning came from Bloemfontein to stay a few days. He had been with 'the bravest of Boers, the soul of the resisters', General Christiaan Rudolph de Wet who kept the war going. Henning had fallen ill at Klerksdorp and, serving as a non-combatant medical orderly, had been glad to go to Bloemfontein and accept employment at the Military Veterinary Hospital and Remount Station at Abraham Fischer's farm run by Veterinary-Captain L. J. Blenkinsop and Lieutenant Sawyer. Henning did his work well, wrote beautiful copperplate reports and was well treated by the English in their desperate search for more horses; but he hankered after higher things and had come hopefully to Pretoria. His information was correct. There was a demand for veterinary expertise; but the eye of Baden-Powell was on Theiler. Henning returned disappointed to Bloemfontein and was subsequently appointed to the Free State branch of the Constabulary under Sanderson with whom he had difficulties.

Theiler now had very little reliable knowledge of how events were developing. Jean Dietschi sometimes sent him newspapers and undertook small commissions such as supplying cigarettes



70 and tobacco to Theiler's orderly Botha, 'a faithful servant' whom he had found in the prisoner-of-war camp at Green Point. Roberts had left Cape Town for England on the 11th December 1900 (Dietschi took historic photographs of him at the Mount Nelson Hotel) and Kitchener was now in full command. Though appointed Governor of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony (to which the Free State had reverted), Milner remained at the Cape. When he assumed his new offices, Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson would come from Natal to administer the Cape and Sir Henry Macallum would govern Natal. In satisfactorily conquering Southern Africa, the British made no progress. They had no effective means of combatting the new era of 'brigandage'. They had no competent horses.

71 Sir Frederick Smith put it pellucidly - 'The earlier organised British columns consisting of a small number of mounted men, incomparable infantry and heavy guns pulled by oxen, together with miles of transport, patrolled the country from point to point laying waste the track on its route, blowing up farmhouses, capturing stock, destroying crops and doing no good so far as bringing the enemy to book was concerned. As the *Times History* admirably expresses it - "the British walked where they liked and the Boers rode where they pleased and under such conditions, the campaign might have continued for ten years." ' Mobility was essential and horses were the only means of providing it; but those imported died quickly from strange diseases (many of them now were 'screws' and rejects from an exhausted overseas market) and the local product was carefully safeguarded by the people, the few 'remounts' commandeered being totally inadequate to the need. In a fierce debate in the British Parliament early in 1901 on a supplementary estimate of £3,000,000 for transport, remounts, provisions and other supplies for the Army in South Africa, it was stated that about £6,000,000 had already been spent on horses. One member read a letter from an officer at the front - 'We want at least another 1,000,000 horses, not skin- or hair-trunks but horses. Up to date, the consumption of horse flesh (including those presently in use) has reached the enormous total of 250,000.'

72 Baden-Powell typically was clever - he bought 7,000 cobs for his Constabulary from Australia and gave the captains of the transports a £1 bonus for every horse landed in good condition. He tried to acclimatise them at a farm in Natal but he was not clever enough. The need for his force was so great that early in December 1900, Kitchener ordered its increase to 10,000. By 73 then, Theiler already knew that he would probably be seconded to Zuurfontein to deal with 74 disease in the Constabulary's imported cobs. Still in the grip of weltschmerz, he was not 75 enthusiastic. He had never wanted to be a veterinary surgeon but his career as scientist seemed stalemated. Milner, he had been told by his high-level military friends, had approved his present appointment which was no longer provisional. He hoped to remain 'Bacteriologist' but, it had been hinted, he might be drafted to other duties under other aegis. He could not write freely to say what they were.

76 Baden-Powell had calculated without Africa's eternal incubus of lethal epidemics. By January 1901, Theiler could write - 'Never before has the Horse Death arrived so early or demanded such terrible sacrifices. Lung Sickness also rages frightfully among cattle and typhoid had claimed many victims in Pretoria.' By the end of the month, faced by the ruination of his Constabulary plans, Baden-Powell had obtained permission to send for him. It came in the form of 77 a letter dated the 1st February from Sanderson P.V.O. for the Constabulary, offering him appointment as 'Bacteriologist' for two years at £700 a year with forage for two horses and rations for one European and one native servant. Theiler knew of its coming and had discussed 78 it with Emma. He was at the time profoundly disillusioned - 'Without excitement, life is altogether too monotonous. I should today be ready to go to the Sudan or China, so bored am I here 79 with this sitting still and this enforced idleness.' Emma thought little of the proposition. Ener- vated and depressed, she did not want to leave their home and live in cantonments on the High-



veld. They talked about it over the weekend and on Monday the 5th February, Theiler went to Zuurfontein and breakfasted with Baden-Powell.

80 The dynamic little man wanted him to be a laboratory hand manufacturing vaccines and Mal-  
81 lein against the endemic Glanders. He was to transfer his laboratory to Zuurfontein and devote  
82 himself to preserving the health of the Constabulary horses, particularly in view of the raging  
Horse Sickness. Theiler inspected the premises and went back to Pretoria the following day.  
The decision did not lie with him. It lay with Maxwell who in the meantime, had asked his  
M.O.H. George Turner (for whose return the Cape Government constantly clamoured owing  
to the spreading of Bubonic Plague) to report on the proposal. Turner, with the concurrence of  
the Controller of the Treasury, Emrys Evans, considered it too costly and suggested that the  
Daspoort Laboratory be enlarged to permit research into human as well as animal diseases.  
This was a novel but not unexpected turn. Maxwell summoned Baden-Powell, Turner and  
Theiler to his office on the 6th February for a joint meeting. Baden-Powell spoke with great  
urgency; Turner, obstinate as a mule in his own field, stood his ground. Theiler, disinclined,  
nonetheless felt that his prospects might be enhanced when peace came if he served as Consta-  
bulary Veterinary Bacteriologist now. Maxwell reserved judgment. A man of distinguished  
ability, known for his work as a military governor in Egypt, he had a visionary approach un-  
usual in the Army.

83 Theiler, appalled at Baden-Powell's losses from Horse Sickness, immediately applied himself  
to writing an article in English on the Horse Death for his personnel and others. 'The study of  
this disease must again properly be taken in hand. It is urgently necessary to find something to  
combat it. This year, animals are dying in heaps. I do not remember a similarly early outbreak,'  
84 Baden-Powell fumed at the delay and told Sanderson to write Theiler again, offering the Con-  
stabulary appointment. Theiler took the letter to Maxwell's secretary, Major A. R. Hoskins  
85 (by now a friend - he gave the Theiler children a riding pony when the military retired in favour  
of civil administration) and successfully requested an immediate interview. Maxwell told him  
86 that the extension of the Daspoort Bacteriological Institute was under consideration by Milner  
and he had been recommended as its head. (The hand of Turner, well in with Milner, was clearly  
visible.) While he, Maxwell, had no objection to Theiler's joining the S.A.C., he recommended  
his staying at his post until Milner had made a decision. Theiler answered Sanderson on the  
15th February, deleting from his heavily-corrected draft in his own hand what Maxwell had  
told him. He declined the appointment, indicating that he could not leave his laboratory while  
conditions for investigating the Horse Death were so favourable and offering all possible  
coöperation.

\* \* \*

Milner whose 'Kindergarten' to undertake the civil administration of the Transvaal was now  
arriving, kept a sharp eye on the new Colony and the means of restoring a shattered country.  
Maxwell and Turner were in close communication with him. Turner had been instructed to  
report directly to him on the suitability of Zuurfontein for the transference of Theiler's Das-  
poort laboratory. Turner now conceded that the site (on a railway) was better and healthier but  
reaffirmed that whatever money was available should be spent on improving and extending  
87 Daspoort. Maxwell sent a copy of his report to Baden-Powell. Milner in Cape Town received  
the original at the same time as a letter which was to determine Theiler's career.

88 It came from Sir Marshall Clarke, Resident Commissioner in Rhodesia who enclosed a letter  
addressed to him by Stewart Stockman, the eminent professor of Bacteriology and Pathology  
at the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College in Edinburgh. Stockman proposed a Veterinary College



for Southern Africa. Clarke had discussed it with Captain Arthur Lawley, Administrator of Rhodesia, who considered that His Majesty's Government should establish such a School in Pretoria for the benefit of the whole sub-continent. Clarke added that Stockman seemed the ideal person to institute such a project but had in fact refused appointment to the British Ministry of Agriculture as he had volunteered for service in South Africa. In the event, he was  
89 posted to the Indian Civil Veterinary Department where he gained first-hand experience of Rinderpest and tropical cattle diseases. Milner made a note of the name. Ravaged and unsettled by Boer and British guerilla bands, South Africa was still in no state for such developments. In 'reconstruction', Stockman could have a place.

Baden-Powell, in equal standing with Turner in Milner's good graces, had lost the battle for Theiler. He seemed to accept it but was unable to refrain from writing to Maxwell on the  
90 15th February - 'We are losing at Zuurfontein £54 to £112 and more daily in horse flesh from horse-sickness, poison, glanders, etc so there are urgent reasons for a veterinary laboratory . . . If our improvised laboratory is of any use, it can doubtless be absorbed afterwards in the General  
91 Bacteriological Institute when that comes to be formed.' Maxwell sent the letter, written in B-P.'s own hand to Theiler, strongly advising him that if he considered appointment to 'the improvised laboratory', he should have the conditions 'made clear before you commit yourself to any engagement'. The South African Constabulary did not enjoy the best reputation (all its  
92 confidential records were officially destroyed by a directive of the 30th December 1907.)

But Baden-Powell was not yet done. On the 19th February in a 'Clear the Line' telegram, Maxwell felt compelled to advise the incipient Transvaal civil administration in Cape Town -  
93 'Theiler has been informed by General Baden-Powell that unless he accepts appointment as Bacteriologist for the S.A.C., appointment will be filled. If the High Commissioner has not authorised a separate Bacteriological establishment at Zuurfontein, upon this pretext this appointment might prejudice this question.' Maxwell then wrote in his own huge hand a four-page confirmatory report to George Fiddes who had recently arrived from England to assume duty as Secretary to the Transvaal Administration. The basic issue of a Bacteriological Institute for human and animal diseases had become of the highest importance. The initial outbreak of  
94 Bubonic Plague at King William's Town had not been quelled and had reached Cape Town. The Cape Government, incensed by the neglected expiry of its M.O.H.'s three-month 'loan' to the Transvaal, had made repeated demands for his return. The Imperial authorities refused  
95 to surrender George Turner despite, they said, 'his duties bringing him into conflict with the R.A.M.C. who give him little or no support and disparage him whenever possible'. The availability of Turner and Theiler with their bacteriological expertise and a laboratory at hand, had become an essential feature in the general war situation. Milner accordingly formally offered  
96 Turner the Transvaal M.O.H. appointment at £1,500 a year which he accepted on the 28th February, his permanent transfer from the embittered Cape being confirmed in April.

97 'I understand from Dr Theiler', Maxwell wrote to Fiddes, 'that it is not his wish to associate himself with veterinary work. Though holding veterinary diplomas, he had devoted himself to the study of Bacteriology and is an acknowledged authority in South Africa. He is, I may say, the only expert in the Transvaal. There is no dividing line between Human and Veterinary bacteriology - it is one science. Any researches into specific diseases in both can be carried out at Daspoort with no further expense. In view of a possible outbreak of plague, it is absolutely necessary that the services of an expert bacteriologist should be at hand and work under the direction of the Medical Officer of Health. Is it wise to change now (to Zuurfontein) before H. E. the High Commissioner has had an opportunity of entering into the question? Dr Theiler is usefully employed where he is . . . Should it become necessary to make any plague investigations, the centre of the South African Constabulary Headquarters seems to be an undesirable place to



conduct them.' He went on to suggest that it were better to leave matters standing and to consider later an all-purpose Bacteriological Institute. 'If such an Institute were decided on, Dr Theiler's services should be secured. In the meanwhile, I recommend that Dr Theiler remain where he now is.'

98  
99 It was a triumph for the personal policy Theiler had pursued since the loss of his hand; but now he sat fuming futilely in his house – no letters, no newspapers, no books, no journals (he had expansively ordered German and French scientific periodicals presumably at his new Military Government's expense), no news of Zschokke's having received his manuscripts or what he had done with them. The Military Censor was probably slitting everything open and laboriously reading the foreign languages.

100 Pretoria was suddenly unusually tense. Though Theiler was persona grata with the highest military authorities (he was now issued with a special pass signed by Maxwell permitting him to move, mounted or otherwise, through guards and anywhere within the outpost lines), he dared not write his parents that Kitchener was meeting Commandant-General Louis Botha at Middelburg, now a large Army depôt, at Kitchener's own request and arranged personally by Mrs  
101 Botha. The war was costing Britain £2½ millions a month and more than two thirds of the Army  
102 was not in active combat but guarding communications and supplies. Botha could not hope to win it but the success of his unpredictable guerillas, depending entirely on their horses, could ensure favourable conditions of peace.

Milner at last left Cape Town to survey his new demesne and was inspecting the institution of civil government in Bloemfontein (where Sir Hamilton Goold-Adams was Lieutenant-Governor) when Botha and Kitchener met on the 28th February 1901. Then he came to Pretoria to hear the result of the conference. It had been cordial but abortive. The war went on. Civil administration was inaugurated in the Transvaal and Milner returned to the Cape where, in common with Natal, some vestiges of orderly existence remained in a land paralysed from end to end by the brutalities of conflict. On the 8th May, he sailed for England, becoming a peer on the way.