

against our oppressors, and, perishing in the struggle, with our fall to make an end of our earthly difficulties. We leave to Your Excellency's own judgment, and to that of every right-minded Englishman, which of these two is the most desirable. Let it no longer be supposed that we seek to mislead, or that we ourselves are being misled. Experience has given, more or less, all of us dearly bought lessons, and, whatever may be our political differences concerning our civil administration, Your Excellency will find that there is very little divergence of opinion amongst us regarding this one point. When, at the cost of much blood and money, we have been subdued, the fire will then only be damped and pent up, to break out with all the greater fury in the day of vengeance. It is in Your Excellency's power to prevent these evils, and, if Your Excellency is really of a mind to avoid further bloodshed, then Your Excellency will easily find reasons enough to stay your projected military expedition, and to go to work by other means, which will have a more humane and a more happy issue.

“It has caused among us an intense feeling of regret to learn how, ever since the commencement of our emigration, we have been represented to the world as rough people, who, tired of civilised laws and church discipline, sought to live in licentiousness, every one after his own inclination. We have more than once put to shame our accusers. Although we are inexperienced peasants, who in their native land were never allowed to take any part in the public affairs of their own country, we have, nevertheless, succeeded in

placing our form of government on such a footing that, from day to day, we are beginning more and more to gain public confidence. Religion itself and religious observances find due recognition among us. Cultivation of the soil and agricultural progress are daily on the increase. We have already built quite a respectable edifice for the purpose of public religious worship, and the education of our youth has been placed on a good footing.

“The martial Zulus surrounding us have been checked in their incessant warlike enterprises, so that they even, from fear of us, have recourse to arms only stealthily and infrequently. Two missionaries are already at work among them, under our protection; and we have the best prospects that the civilisation of that people will be capable of being promoted more speedily than that of the Kaffirs bordering on the Colony. All this has already been accomplished, now that we are only just beginning to emerge from our great difficulties.

“Your Excellency can, therefore, well understand how it would grieve us to see destroyed the foundation of all our hopes and expectations. Serviceable agents are already at work to rouse the Kaffir tribes against us, to their or to our misfortune; to impress on the natives that we are their oppressors, the English their protectors; and that, should they side with the English, our cattle will become their booty. Possibly Your Excellency has not given permission for this action. Still, what we state is taking place. Will it be possible for the civilised world ever to blame us when we, under such circumstances and under such inhuman persecu-

tions, do and dare our utmost to preserve our lives? And if we have to yield to superior numbers and seek security further inland, where we are more concentrated and can do battle with our adversary to more advantage, can we then be reviled if we make good the losses sustained by us in the Colony and since our emigration from there—if we, in return for our lands, houses, and other property, which we have been compelled to leave a prey to destruction, seek compensation from our old debtors the Kaffirs, and even further? We pray that the Almighty may prevent this, and that it may please Him to vouchsafe us a happier lot.

“Finally, we must, both in our own name and at the special request of our fellow-emigrants, emphatically protest against the occupation and seizure of any portion of this country—as threatened in Your Excellency’s proclamation of 2nd December above mentioned. We must declare that, in our opinion, we, from this instant, are not responsible for the evil consequences of such a step; and that we are free from blame before God, before our own conscience, and before the world.

“We have the honour, with all possible respect, to name ourselves—Sir, Your Excellency’s obedient servants,

JOACHIM PRINSLOO, *President*;

Besides all the Members of  
the Raad,

J. J. BURGER, *Secretary*.”

Although General Pretorius and the Volksraad, confident of the justice of their cause, were determined

not to submit without a struggle, the country was ill-prepared for war with a powerful European nation. <sup>Unpreparedness  
for War.</sup> The Emigrants had not yet had time to recover from the effects of the long continued hostilities against the Zulus. They had not completely rallied from the stunning disasters in the early part of the great contest against the armies of Dingaan. There was hardly a family among them which had not lost some relative, and a great many of those who had escaped massacre had been reduced to poverty. Provisions were not plentiful; for the country was only just recovering from the famine and distress which had followed the Zulu massacres, and during the war agriculture had, unavoidably, been neglected.

The State's treasury was empty. There was scarcity, not only of ammunition (the supply of which was now again completely cut off by England), but also of horses; for the horse-sickness had broken out, at the time of the last commando against Dingaan and subsequently. All this was well known in Cape Town as well as in Major Smith's camp on the Umgazi, and the column which was now massed on the southern frontier for the invasion of Natal made its preparations accordingly. When the Rev. Mr. Jenkins and the other missionaries of the Gospel of Peace instigated Faku—a Chief who, as they were well aware, had previously acknowledged himself to be a vassal of the Republic—to place himself under British protection, and at the same time to claim territory much further to the north than where he and his nation had ever had any dominion or authority, they, the honest Christian delegates,

executed a master stroke in diplomacy, a *coup* which proved that Sir George Napier had made no mistake when he chose his messenger. The ministry in England had to be considered. They had previously refused their sanction to the annexation of Natal. They had now to be convinced that the military occupation of the country was absolutely necessary in the interests of the natives. Those interests were, in Downing Street, believed to be synonymous with those of the Chiefs, and the Africander Emigrants were supposed to be the tyrants and oppressors of the original inhabitants. As has already been pointed out on pp. 168—171, the advent of the Republic in the north and the downfall of the dominion of the Chiefs, in reality meant new life and salvation to the survivors of massacred thousands upon thousands—to the remnants of the numerous nations which were threatened with total extermination by Dingaan's and Umsiligaas' armies. The true friends and protectors of the natives were, not the British Government and the Aborigines Protection Society, who championed the cause of the Chiefs, but the Emigrants, who broke the power and subdued the armies of those Chiefs.

The true  
Friends and  
Protectors of  
the Aborigines.

Reference has been made to the arrival in Port Natal of an American trading ship. To the greedy Cape Town shop-keepers it was a terrible calamity that there should be any other harbour than their own in South Africa. And now, in the early part of 1842, there came to Table Bay the news of the departure from Holland (bound for Natal) of a small

sailing ship called the *Brazilië*, which had been sent The *Brazilië*. out from Amsterdam by Messrs. Ohrig and Klijn with a cargo of cloth fabrics and general merchandise, as well as some Bibles and hymn-books and some copies of a pamphlet, entitled, "The Emigrants at Port Natal," in which publication much sympathy was expressed for the cause of the Republic in Africa, and at the same time, the commercial interests of the house of Ohrig, Klijn & Co., and of other Dutch houses, were Alarm of the Cape Town Merchants. not forgotten. This was altogether too terrible a manifestation of foreign interference in the affairs of South Africa, and quite as great a shock to the irritable nerves of the Table Mountain Imperialists of those days as was the German Kaiser's cablegram the other morning to their descendants and the gallant Rhodesians. The British force, which had been massed on the Umgazi, was, therefore, ordered to invade Natal and seize the harbour. Captain Smith began *his* Jameson Raid on 1st April, 1842.

Meanwhile, on 24th March, the *Brazilië* had reached Durban. The Captain, Reus, and the supercargo, Smellenkamp, Smellenkamp. proceeded to Pietermaritzburg, where they were received with a perfect ovation of welcome. They were escorted into the town. An address was presented to them. They were feasted and fêted for a week. In compliment to them, the flag of Holland was displayed everywhere. The Emigrants did not look upon them as merely the representatives of a private trading firm, but also as the harbingers of that bond of union between the infant Republic and the outer world, the lasting bond of commerce and

maritime trade, for which Pieter Retief had fought and died.

Now for the first time receiving full and authentic accounts of the sympathy and enthusiasm which existed in Holland for the cause of the Republic in South Africa, the Emigrants also welcomed Smellenkamp and Reus as citizens of that country which, in the days of the Batavian Commonwealth, had still been regarded as the Fatherland by many Afrianders. The greater part of a generation had passed away since those days. The tie of allegiance, as well as most of the bonds of attachment which formerly bound Africa to Holland, had long since been severed. In the stress of adversity and of battle, in the long-continued and arduous struggle against barbarism and against British diplomacy, the different European elements of the new nationality in Natal had been consolidated into a homogeneous mass of pioneerdom and of frontier life—a community in which almost every vestige of the original Netherland stock had been completely obscured, and even obliterated, by African associations and the influences of the now distinctive Afriander type. The new nationality was already clearly and sharply defined, and as distinct from the old as the South African landscape from that of the Low Countries. The rugged mountain ravine, the rocky boulders, the long dry grass, the waterless plain with the bounding *springbok* and *wildebeest*, the thorny acacias, the wild geraniums and heaths, the scarlet flowers on the Kaffir-thorn trees, with the sunlight and the lizards, and the dust, and the flies—these form a picture very different from the dunes and the windmills,

The Old  
Fatherland.

Two Pictures.

the broad canals and green meadows, the *trekschuit* and the tulip beds, the beech trees and the mists, of Holland. As widely distinct and different as are these two pictures, were the national characteristics of the Africander and the Hollander, even in the days of the Natal Republic. And yet, among the older Emigrants of those days, there were many who kept a warm corner in their hearts for the country and the people of their former Governor, General Janssens. To them Holland still stood for liberty, for free institutions, for enlightened administration. The officials and the authorities representing the great name of England in South Africa, had, ever since the battle of Blauwberg Beach, taken pains to prove to all—young as well as old—that Great Britain was the foreign oppressor, the despotic and autocratic ruler, the enemy of popular government and of the Africander nationality. They had succeeded; and now, even with the British troops threatening invasion on their very frontier, the honest burghers of Pietermaritzburg took delight in showing how they hated these officials and the grasping Power at their back, by welcoming and doing honour to the Hollanders, Smellenkamp and Reus. This suited the plans of the plotters in Cape Town and London. It was "magnificent," but it was not diplomacy. It was like the little rabbit defying the fangs and coils of the huge boa constrictor.\*

Magnificent, but  
not Diplomatic.

Smellenkamp himself was an enthusiast for the

\* Although the British troops were at the southern frontier, full details of the plot were not then known at Maritzburg, where an attack from the seaward side, rather than an invasion overland, was expected (see pp. 210—212).



Smellenkamp's  
Treaty of  
Commerce.

cause of the Emigrants, and the Volksraad was foolish enough to imagine that it was possible to obtain help from Holland. The terms of a treaty of amity and commerce were drawn up, agreed to, and signed by the supercargo as "accepted in the name of H.M., the King of the Netherlands, by J. A. SMELLENKAMP." Then this wise Daniel, stepping boldly into the lion's den, travelled overland from Maritzburg to Graaff Reinet, whence he was proceeding to Cape Town, with the object of taking ship to Europe, in order to act as the delegate of the Republic to Holland, when, at Swellendam, he was arrested—*for travelling without a pass!*

His Arrest.

## CHAPTER XXV

### A BLOW FOR FREEDOM

#### THE SMITER SMITTEN

Captain Smith's March—British Diplomacy—The Volksraad—Taken by Surprise—Preparing for Defence—Captain Smith Encamped near the Berea—Pretorius forms his Laager near Congella—Burghers rally in Defence of the Republic—Pieter Joubert, Sen.—Strength of Captain Smith's Force—The Burgher Force—Reconnoitring—Captain Smith receives Stores and Ammunition by Sea—English Cattle and Horses Captured—A Night Attack—Disposition of Burgher Patrols—The Night March—The Aged Sentinels—The Fish in Uniform—Queen's Birthday—Salute of the Elephant-guns—Night Encounter near Congella—Rout of the British Force.

AFTER leaving Faku's kraal on the Umgazi, Captain Smith crossed the Umzimvubu by the main ford, high up the stream. It had rained heavily in the mountains, and the volume of water in the river was considerable. The current, also, was strong, and thus great difficulties were encountered in crossing; but many of the waggon-drivers with the column were experienced South African frontiersmen, traders and hunters, who knew the country. From the Umzimvubu drift the expedition travelled to Faku's deserted kraal on the Umzimhlava, and then along the coast region, crossing the difficult fords of the Umzimkulu and other coast rivers, all of which were in flood—owing to the heavy rains which had fallen in the inland districts and in the Drakensbergen.

Captain Smith's  
March.

On 3rd May, the northernmost of these streams, the Umlaas, was crossed. Here, as well as at the Illovo, Umkomanzi, and all the other rivers further to the south, the fords were found to be undefended by the Emigrants. The details of the plot and the plan of the attack had been so skilfully concealed and kept from the knowledge of the Farmer Government at Maritzburg, that not even a suspicion of an intended march overland, instead of an onslaught from the sea side, was entertained by the Volksraad and the authorities. It was not even known that British troops had been massed on the frontier for months past, in readiness for the invasion. Sir George Napier took good care to keep this a secret, after his interview with Jenkins.

British  
Diplomacy.

When the British Government is preparing for a raid in South Africa, it knows how to manage such matters. The intended seizure and annexation of the Diamond Fields in 1871 was not previously advertised to the world. Sir Theophilus Shepstone, when starting on his *friendly mission* to Pretoria in 1876, did not announce from the housetops that he had in his pocket Lord Carnarvon's fiat for the incorporation of the valuable territories of the Republic with the British Empire. Sir Henry Loch did not publish his interview with Mr. Lionel Phillips in 1894, and took care that, when he thought of collecting a British force at Mafeking, intelligence of such a concentration of troops should not leak out. Even those heroes of the music-hall stage, the Administrator of Matabeleland and the Thinker in Continents, the Napoleonic Privy

Councillor—the Colossal Unpunished One—managed to conceal from the world, for a period of several months, their preparations for enlarging the British Empire by acting the Elizabethan Englishman, playing the land-pirate, and bringing about the much-desired and much-talked-of union of South Africa, by attempting to shoot down the despised and maligned “*Boer*” in time of peace.

If in this age of newspapers, and special correspondents, and railways, and telegraphs, such scheming secret preparations are possible, how much easier were they in 1842? There were no newspapers, no telegraphs, no railways, not even a regular postal service, in Natal. The missionaries and traders were in the plot. No other white men came anywhere near Faku’s kraals. All the southern frontier district—indeed all the southern half of the Republic—was practically uninhabited.

Full intelligence as to what was passing in Pondoland did not reach Maritzburg. That many of the natives in Natal were getting restless, as natives generally are when their shrewdness leads them to foresee a conflict between the white races in South Africa, was known to the Volksraad, as also that some of the Kaffirs were being instigated to take sides against the Republic. This is plainly stated in Boshoff’s Despatch of 21st February. But it was believed that the instigators were acting without the consent and without the knowledge of the British Government. There were rumours of the missionary intrigues with The Volksraad. Faku, and it was known that the chief had left his new kraal and gone southward; but all the country

beyond the Umzimvubu and between that river and the Kei was a *terra incognita* to the Emigrants, who, moreover, had to keep all their available forces near to Port Natal, in order to be prepared for an attack from the sea side. The previous British occupation had been effected from this quarter, and the march overland presented so many difficulties and obstacles, that an invasion from the south was not thought likely, and no precautions whatever were taken to guard against it. Besides, the honest burgher Volksraad had itself such a respect for the rights of nations, and had such confidence in the justice of its cause, that many of its members in all sincerity deemed the British Government incapable of such an act of barefaced buccaneering as the seizure and invasion of the Republic's territory without a previous declaration of war. They had the Cape Governor's proclamation—in which it was expressly stated that they would still be regarded as British subjects—before them, and yet many of them refused to believe that that proclamation was more than a threat.

When, therefore, Captain Smith's column appeared north of the Umlaas and advanced towards Durban, the Emigrants were taken completely by surprise. Had the southern frontier and the Umzimvubu drifts been guarded by burgher patrols when first the threat of a British occupation was heard of, the march would not have been so easily accomplished. The English force had advanced in a long, straggling line of waggons. Had they been attacked on the march, only the waggon-drivers and the Cape Rifles would have been of much

Taken by  
Surprise.

use for defensive purposes; for they alone could shoot. The regular troops would probably have been of no more avail than they were at a later date at Bronkhorst Spruit. Even a check in the northward advance would have meant the destruction or surrender of the invaders; for their retreat could have been effectually cut off by the defending forces. On the other hand, had the burghers been defeated at any point in the south, they could easily have retired northward and resumed the struggle at another place. Each succeeding river, every range of hills, would have offered an almost impregnable line of defence for their mode of warfare. Then, in case of continued defeat, they could still have taken their stand near the sea at Durban, where the struggle was now imminent.

The enemy—having been allowed to cross all the southern, and even all the central, natural strategic positions of Natal without a blow having been struck in defence of the soil—was on the point of establishing communication with the Indian Ocean, and was already actively engaged in negotiations with the Uitlanders at the Bay, when Pretorius despatched express riders over the Drakensberg, by way of Van Reenen's Pass, to proceed to Winburg district and summon the burghers from there and from Mooi River (Potchefstroom) to the assistance of their countrymen in the conflict that was impending. At the same time, a commando was called out from Pietermaritzburg and Weenen districts. Preparing for Defence. Instructions for these measures of defence were issued by the Volksraad of Natal; but that assembly was more than a month too late in taking action.

Captain Smith  
Encamped near  
the Berea.

On the 3rd of May, when Captain Smith's column was on the march some distance to the north of the main ford of the Umlaas river, two burghers rode up from Pietermaritzburg with a letter of protest from the Volksraad against the violation of the territory of the Republic by the British troops. The English officer refused to receive this letter, and continued his march northward. On 4th May, he reached the base of the Berea Hill, near Durban, and formed his camp. On that, as well as on the following day, the Volksraad again sent their written protest to the British Commander, who ignored it. Then the Volksraad messenger announced that the Government at Pietermaritzburg considered the Republic to be under the protection of Holland. Andries Pretorius, however, and the citizen-soldiers, who were now coming to join his standard at Congella, where he was forming his laager, were not so foolish as to expect any help from without. They did not allow themselves to be deluded into the belief that any reliance could be placed for defensive purposes on the agreement which the Volksraad had entered into with Smellenkamp. To shield their country from oppression and from wrong, they trusted to their rifles alone—to the firm determination of the handful of Republicans in Natal to resist annexation to the British Empire. From all those farms which were not at a very great distance from the laager, recruits were already arriving. Most of them had horses, but some came on foot. There were boys from the age of twelve and upwards among the first arrivals, and there were old men who, by the law of

Pretorius forms  
his Laager at  
Congella.

Burghers rally  
in Defence of  
the Republic.

the State, were exempt from military service, but who, nevertheless, desired to assist in the defence of the beloved Republic. Among these aged volunteers was the grey-haired Pieter Joubert. When a young man, he had fought for the Republic of Graaff Reinet against the British. Afterwards, he had taken part in the Kaffir wars in Cape Colony. At the time of the Great Emigration he had been one of the Voortrekker leaders. Then, when an old man, he had served in the campaigns against Dingaan's armies. Many of his relatives had fallen in battle. He himself was reduced to poverty through the losses which he had sustained during the trying times through which his adopted country had passed, but was held in great esteem by all who knew him. On presenting himself at the Congella laager, this veteran, bent and stooping though he was with the weight of more than seventy years of a frontiersman's life, but still resolutely grasping his heavy *roer*, requested that he might be allowed to serve with the foreposts of the commando. Pretorius felt constrained to refuse this request, although he at the same time attempted to mollify and moderate the effect of his refusal by asking the old man's advice on various points connected with the plan of campaign and with the disposition of the burgher force already in the field.

When, however, soon after that, the Commandant was riding out to one of the advanced patrols, he met the aged volunteer going forward in the same direction—on foot, with rifle resting on the bent and feeble



shoulder, muttering and mumbling, evidently very much disconcerted.

“Well, uncle! this is not the way to our laager. Whither art bound now?”

“Ah, Commandant, leave me alone. I have come here to fight. Your laager officer, Moolman, and I can’t agree. He wants to make a cattle-herd of me. I am not used to that kind of work. I wish to help in the defence of my country.”

Such was the old man’s answer. As persuasion was of no avail, Pretorius had to order him to return at once to the laager.

The encampment of the British force was on the north-western side of the Bay, on a small hill below the Berea, and about half a mile distant from what was then the township of Durban. Earthworks had already been thrown up in the form of a triangular-shaped fort, and the position was defended by two field-pieces and a howitzer gun. Including the armed volunteer riflemen, who had acted as waggon-drivers while the column was on the march, but who, being experienced frontiersmen, formed, perhaps, about the most efficient part of the force, the full fighting strength of Captain Smith’s command numbered 323 officers and men.

Strength of  
Captain Smith’s  
Force.

The Africander laager was at Congella, nearly opposite the central part of the horseshoe-shaped bend formed by the beach of the inner harbour. The commando which had been called out by Volksraad order numbered 200 men only; but, according to English accounts, based on statements contained in an intercepted letter (Theal), the actual number of burghers

Strength of  
Burgher Force.

in laager, at the date when hostilities commenced, was 264. Roughly constructed earthworks served for mounting the two old field-pieces which had already seen service in the Zulu War. A path led from the direction of the British camp towards the head of the Bay.

On the 9th of May, Captain Smith attempted to surprise and disperse the Emigrant force which was then collecting. He advanced along the path with a force of about a hundred men; but, when less than half the distance between his camp and the laager had been traversed, the column came upon some mounted videttes, and Pretorius' Adjutant, riding forward, handed the commanding officer a note informing him that the Africaner leader was awaiting instructions from the Volksraad, and would make no forward movement unless he was attacked by the English. Captain Smith was further informed that, should he persist in advancing, he would immediately find himself opposed by fighting forces from the laager. At the same time, numbers of mounted burghers appeared along the slopes of some sandhills on both sides of the road. A parley ensued, and the British officer, finding his further progress blocked by his vigilant opponents, at once fell back on his camp. Reconnoitring.

Pretorius now had to wait for further instructions from the Volksraad, which did not meet until the 17th, when it was resolved to demand the evacuation of Natal by the British troops. Captain Smith, refusing to comply with this demand, was meanwhile receiving further arms and ammunition, as well as stores of Captain Smith  
receives Stores  
and Ammunition  
by Sea.

provisions, by sea. These were brought by the vessels *Pilot* and *Mazeppa*, and were landed on the Point, where an eighteen-pounder gun was now mounted.

On the evening of 23rd May, some cattle and horses, which had been grazing at a distance from the Congella laager, were being brought in by one of the burgher patrols. On the same part of the veld, there were at the time some cattle and horses belonging to the English camp. These had strayed and become mixed up with those from the laager. A patrol of English soldiers coming on the scene, and probably imagining that their own cattle were being raided by the burghers, fired a few shots. The Africander patrol immediately fell back on one of their outposts, where the order to mount and advance was at once passed round. A rush was then made on an outlying English cattle kraal, and a large number of the cattle swept off towards the laager. This movement was so sudden, and apparently so unexpected in the British camp—although, from their patrol having fired on the Natal videttes, the English officers might well have inferred what would follow—that it was carried out without a single shot more being fired on either side. No guard had been placed over the cattle, the loss of which was, under the circumstances, a serious blow to Captain Smith, who at once determined to make a night attack on the laager. But Pretorius was on his guard once more. Instead of waiting for the assault at Congella, he had pushed forward a commando of one hundred and fifty men to take up a position considerably to the north, at a spot where

English Cattle  
and Horses  
Captured.

A Night  
Attack.

the path, from the direction of the British camp, led through some thickets of mangrove bush and over some sandhills. This night-patrol had thrown out scouts and skirmishers to the right and left, in order to prevent any secret forward movement from the English side. There were not enough men, however, to extend the line of scouts eastward (*i.e.*, to the right) as far as the sea; and so Pretorius, foreseeing the possibility of Captain Smith attempting a flanking movement by working his way down along the beach and attacking the laager from the eastern side, had stationed another detachment of twenty or thirty of his men as a night-patrol on that side, close to some bush and mangrove trees. He himself had command of this patrol. Further east still, on the beach, was a small guard of old burghers—five or six in all—among whom were Jacobus Davel, sen., and the aged Pieter Joubert, who was still incorrigible in his determination to help to fight the English. The laager itself was occupied by little more than a dozen men. Far out on the plain to the rear and to the left (west) of the encampment, individual burghers were placed as scouts to watch any possible movements of Kaffir spies, who had been observed in the neighbourhood.

Disposition of  
Burgher Patrols.

Such was the disposition of Pretorius' fighting force on the night of 23rd May (*see* Sketch-Map, p. 223). It was a full hour before midnight when Captain Smith started from his camp with one hundred and thirty-seven men (infantry, artillery, and Cape Mounted Rifles; —the first-named arm being represented by more than

one hundred men of the 27th Regiment of the line, and the Mounted Rifles by only two men and horses. There were eight or ten sappers, eighteen men of the artillery, and two field-pieces). The route taken was, first, to the north-east, towards the rear of the Camp; then eastward through sandhills and bush; and then, after this detour, southward to near the Point, where stood the buildings and stores belonging to the firms of Maynard of Cape Town, and Owen Smith of Port Elizabeth. From here a boat with a heavy eighteen-pounder gun was despatched to a point situated near the head of the bay or inner harbour, almost due east of Congella, and, therefore, very nearly at the exact spot where Pieter Joubert and his small guard of veteran burghers were already waiting and watching, as if by intuition.

The Night  
March.

After midnight, the troops resumed their march from near the Point, along the beach to the bend of the Bay, where their piece of heavy ordnance (the eighteen-pounder) was to meet them.

The expedition had not proceeded very far, when it was discovered that a search-light was flashing on them from the sky; for the African moon, whose tell-tale rays had apparently been left out of their calculations altogether by the British officers, was illuminating the landscape far and wide. The heavy gun, also, was not forthcoming, for the simple reason that the boat could not cross the dry land, as the tide was out.

High in the firmament blazed the bright constellations of the Southern Hemisphere. These, with the moonlight, increased the dangers of the advance towards

the *Africander laager*. The very heavens, the stars in their course, and the waves of the ocean, fought for the Voortrekkers that night, and seemed to sympathise with the cause of the brave little Republic, which was being hounded to its death by the greedy shopkeepers and hungry land-sharks of Cape Town—backed up by the might and unscrupulous power of Great Britain. To the English column on the march, the shadows of the clumps of bush and jungle-like thickets along the line of advance loomed large and weird, ominous and threatening.

\* \* \* \* \*

While the troops were moving forward towards the spot where they should have taken over the heavy gun from the men in the boat—had the tide permitted—Pieter Joubert, Jacobus Davel, and their aged companions, who with them formed the small guard on the beach, stood listening and watching with as much vigilance and alertness as if they were all youths of twenty-five, instead of feeble and grey-headed old men of three score and ten. The cause for which they had fought and suffered nearly all their lives, and to which they had first sworn fealty in the previous century, was in danger. They would once more stand sentinel under the African stars and in the African moonlight. Soon their weary limbs would rest, and their bones repose in Africa's dear soil—the land of their fathers. Soon they would sleep their long sleep. Now, they would watch and stand guard for the cause. Once more they would help in trying to save the beloved Republic.

"Listen," said one; "do you hear how the fish are splashing in the water up there? They seem to have come quite close to the shore to-night."

The Aged  
Sentinels.

The aged sentinels were crouching low to the ground. They were listening intently. Now one inclined his head somewhat more to one side, and stooped so as to bring his ear nearer the ground. Then another shaded his eyes from the glare of the moonlight, and peered intently along the curved line of the beach bordering the inner harbour.

Half a minute, or thereabouts, elapsed.

The Fish in  
Uniform.

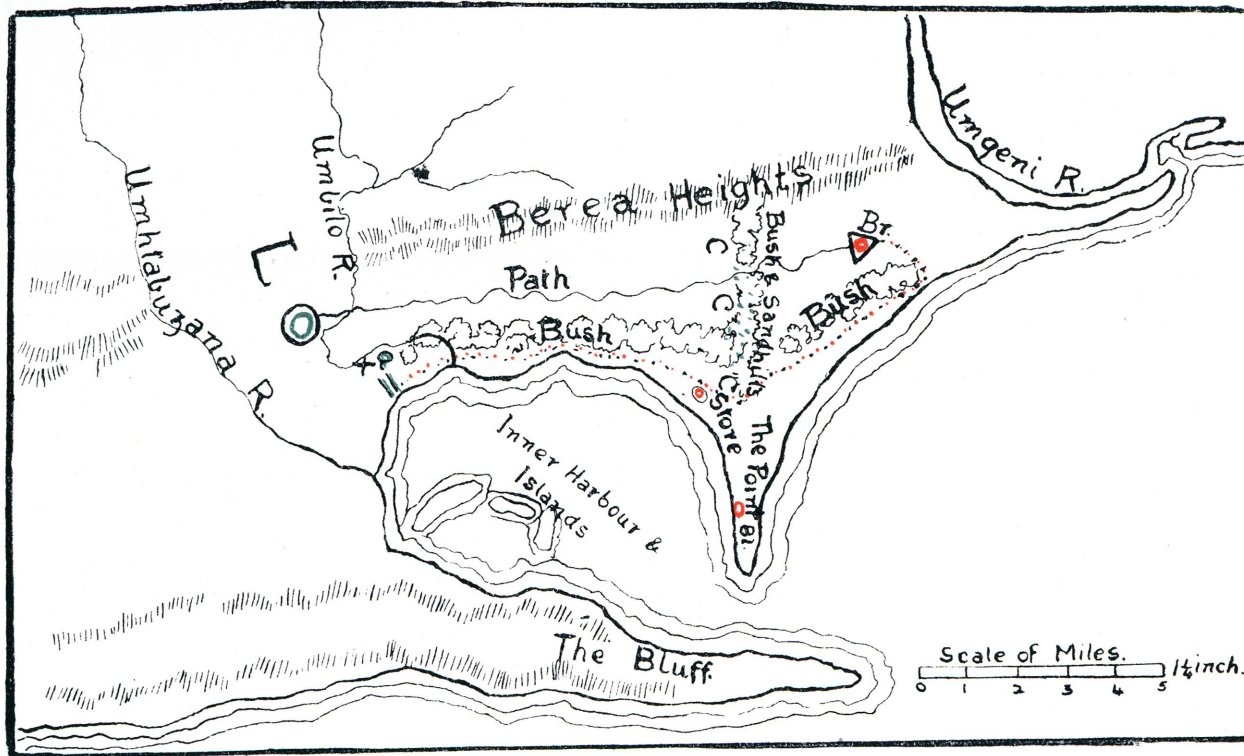
It was Pieter Joubert who spoke first. "Yes," he said; "they are fine fish those; they wear the red coats of Queen Victoria's line regiments. And they are marching against us with cannon."

Then there was a pause.

"*Wat seg jy? Is dit soo?*" spoke another.

"Let us go to Andries and tell him. He will be ready for them. We shall show them what a handful of men can do when they are defending their country!"

Quietly Pieter Joubert and his companions slipped away from the shore, and proceeded in a westerly direction, until they came to the shadow of the clump of mangrove thicket where Pretorius and the night-patrol of twenty or thirty rifles with him were stationed. The old men at once reported what they had observed on the beach, and then they took their stand in the small thin line, which now prepared to do battle for the cause for which



SKETCH MAP OF CONGELLA BATTLEFIELD.

- Africaner Positions.
- British Positions.

Br.—British Camp. L.—Africaner Laager. C. C. C.—Africaner Night Patrol. Bl.—Block House on Point. u.—Night Patrol under Andries Pretorius. — Guard of Old Men on Beach.

From the descriptions and sketches given to the Author—in 1881—by the late Servaas van Breda, M.L.C. of Natal, and formerly Heemraad of the Republic; Oud Commandant J. H. Visser (of Schoonspruit), Nicolaas Meyer, Senr. (of Utrecht), and others.



the martyrs of Slachtersnek and Weenen had died.\*

\* \* \* \* \*

When it was nearly one o'clock in the morning of 24th May, the British column had reached the point marked X on the accompanying sketch map. Before leaving their camp, the officers had been informed by their scouts that Pretorius had his night-patrols at C. C. C. They had not the least idea that there was another Africander patrol at *a*, right in front of them. They believed that they had completely out-flanked their opponents by the clever night march which they had just accomplished, and that the so-called "Dutch" laager, which they were now on the point of attacking from the rear or eastern side, was completely at their mercy.

The Queen's  
Birthday.

Brightly shines the Southern Cross overhead, and the African moonbeams glint on the gun-barrels, on the cannon, and on the cold steel which the Christian missionaries, in league with the merchants of Cape Town and of London, have sent forth to kill those true and brave sons of South Africa, whose only sin and sole crime was that they had refused to fall down and worship before the idol of Imperialism and dominion from across the seas.

Who are the presumptuous men who dare to resist the authority of England in South Africa? A handful of ignorant, of uneducated, farmers and peasants. The representatives of Britain's might

\* This is the narrative (as told by those who fought at Congella) of the way in which Pretorius received intelligence of Captain Smith's approach to surprise the laager.

march forward with measured and steady tread. The Queen's bayonets will establish the Queen's rule in Natal, whether the inhabitants wish it or not.

But—not yet, for a few months. From the dark shadow-line of the edge of that bush on the right, there is a sudden bright flood of fire; there comes a roar as of thunder; then a second flash, and another thundering report. The heirlooms of last century—the elephant guns of Pieter Joubert and of one or two other old Voortrekkers—speak first; and their words are not gentle whispers. Then follows a volley—flashes, accompanied by more loud reports, succeeding each other so quickly, all along the extended line of the small detachment of the burgher force, as to make the sounds produced by the different shots appear like one continuous volume of noise. There are gaps in the ranks of the troops. The right flank and the front lines have suffered most. For a moment, there is confusion and wavering; but before the smoke, which hangs dense on the night air between the contending forces, has quite rolled away, some of the soldiers have been wheeled to the right and deployed into line, ready to return the fire of the Farmers.

Sights of the  
Elephant Guns.

As usual under such circumstances, the aim of the Regulars is far too high. Branches and leaves of trees are knocked down and scattered in profusion; but the small band of Africanders are unharmed, have already reloaded, and pour in another volley with such telling effect as to make more gaps in the British ranks. Now

Night Encounter  
near Congella.

the two field-guns have been wheeled round: but many of the oxen drawing the carriages are dropping; others are wounded, break loose from the yokes, and run about bellowing. The artillerists fire wildly. A plot of dry grass, which appears white in the moonlight, is torn up by the cannon balls. Pretorius and his riflemen are still unscathed; for the musketry fire of Captain Smith's skirmishing line is as harmless as the artillery practice.

The entire British column is now falling back.

With a force about four times as strong in numbers as that of the patrol under Pretorius, and with the further advantage of artillery on their side, the troops have been unable to advance even a step further towards the laager. The large number of casualties which have already occurred in the English ranks; the superior shooting of the Afrianders; their dexterity in loading and reloading; and, perhaps above all, the effective utilisation of every available inequality of the ground as cover by the burgher riflemen—all this tells so much in favour of Pretorius, that the disparity in numbers is more than counterbalanced.

Brightly shines the Southern Cross. The star of the Afriander is still in the ascendant.

Meanwhile, Gert Viljoen and Bart Pretorius, in command of the patrol of one hundred and fifty men stationed among the sandhills and bush at C.C.C.\* (more than four miles north of the laager, and on the path between it and the British Camp), hearing the noise

\* (See Sketch-Map, p. 223).

of the battle that was in progress, came down with some of their men to reinforce Pretorius; while others of the burghers, led by Gert Rudolph, moved forward, and commenced firing on the British camp, in order to feign an attack on the position and prevent strong supports being despatched from there to Congella. By the light of the stars, Viljoen and Bart Pretorius, with their detachment, made their way through the jungle and thickets, gradually approaching the spot where, as evidenced by the heavy platoon firing of musketry and by the occasional thunder of the British artillery, the combat was still proceeding. The narrow Kaffir footpaths, which traversed the bush, were so intricate and winding in their course, that a considerable section of the reinforcements lost their way in attempting to make a detour towards the beach and get to the rear of Captain Smith's column. These did not come up in time to cut off the retreat as they had intended. The others, joining the patrol under Andries Pretorius, at once came into action, and poured in such a heavy fire on the British that neither artillery nor infantry could maintain their ground any longer and fell back precipitately towards the shore.

It was half-past one in the morning. The greater part of Captain Smith's column, including the artillery, was in full retreat northward along the shore of the inner harbour, marching by a route somewhat more inland than that by which they had advanced to the attack. A line of skirmishers, forming a rear-guard, was attempting to keep back the

burgher patrol, which was pressing forward in pursuit, reinforced by all the men who had been left in charge of the laager—about a dozen—and by the first arrivals of Gert Viljoen and Bart Pretorius' detachment. A steady musketry fire was being kept up on both sides; but, so far, not one of the Afrianders had been hit. Suddenly more of the burgher reinforcements appeared on the left flank of the retreating British column, and opened fire. The retreat became a rout. The line of skirmishers was soon driven in on the main column. Then most of the oxen which were left to draw the gun-carriages were shot down. The combined Afriander force, rushing forward in extended line, and now fighting over the open sandy plain, reserved their fire till within twenty-five yards of the English rear-guard. Captain Smith attempted to hold them back by a bayonet charge, but failed. The main body of the British column had already passed the store near the Point, and were making their way towards the camp, from which the howitzer was firing shell. A good many of the soldiers however, in the rear, who had fought bravely, and attempted again and again to drive back the burgher force by bayonet charges, were completely cut off from the column. A shower of bullets swept down on them from the sandy plain. With a rush, the guns were captured by the Afrianders; the remnant of the British infantry, which still attempted to stand, was driven into the sea; some were drowned; others swam out to the small island in the harbour; and still others, after throwing away their

Rout of the  
British Force.

weapons, dashed through the waves and ran northward along the beach in the direction of the store of Maynard & Co., where they were rescued. The wreck of the main body of the defeated force reached the camp.

Thus ended the battle of Congella, the first contest of arms between European troops and the burgher forces of the Republic of Natal. The British troops had fought bravely, and had been in vastly superior numbers during all the first half hour of the fighting—in which time the issue of the engagement was practically decided. That the new nation's commando of citizen-soldiers was more than a match for regular troops was a revelation which the British officers—who had committed their usual mistake of under-estimating the prowess and courage of the enemy—were slow to admit. As to the Cape Town and Port Elizabeth public of narrow-minded office-seekers and ignorant shop-keepers, it was actuated as much then, as now, by malignant hatred of the Africander farmer; and so the convenient fiction, that the British troops were defeated because they were outnumbered, was invented. The legend is believed in to this day in some of the towns of the Cape Colony and in London.

The figures given in the foregoing narrative as to the numbers engaged on the side of the Africanders are from oral statements, made to the author, by surviving Voortrekker Farmers in Natal and in the Transvaal, in 1881.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE RAIDERS BESIEGED

The Morning after the Fight—Critical Position of British Force—Procrastinating Citizen Soldiers—Tender-hearted Samaritans—Captain Smith's Preparations for Defence—Dick King's Ride—Capture of Block-House on the Point—The much maligned "Boer" is a Generous Foe—Magnanimity Appreciated—In the Trenches—Captain Smith appeals to the Zulus for Help—Reinforcements for Pretorius—Richard King's Exploit—Lieutenant-Colonel Cloete to the Rescue—The Sortie—The Struggle for the Bastion.

THE pale light of the moon and of the southern stars gave place to the rose-and-purple flush of dawn over the waves of the Indian ocean. The tops of the mountains in the west became aglow with light. Occasionally a rifle-shot broke the stillness of the early morning. Now and then was heard the booming report of the howitzer in the British camp near the Berea, where the troops had retired. Here and there a horseman rode across the plain to and from the Africander laager, where the wounded were receiving such attention and succour as was available.

In their hour of victory the first care of the sturdy peasants of Natal was for the stricken foemen. Forty-seven killed and wounded were found on the battlefield. All belonged to the attacking force. The Farmers themselves had lost only one man—  
young Greyling—who was killed by a rifle-shot fired

The Morning  
after the Fight.  
Casualties

from the store near the Point, towards which he was riding immediately after the defeat of the troops (not knowing that the building had been barricaded and loopholed in the night by some of the Uitlander residents at the Bay, who were secretly acting in support of the English). The British wounded, after having been attended to at the laager by the German doctor, Schultz, and by the American medical missionary, the Rev. Dr. Adams, were all sent to Captain Smith's camp, so that they could at once be placed under the care of the army surgeons. The Africander officer who carried Pretorius' flag of truce at the same time informed the British commander that all his dead would be sent to the camp, in order that their comrades might bury them with military honours. That was done. The total British loss is given by Holden in his "History of Natal" as 34 killed, 63 wounded, and 6 missing. Captain Smith's own report is that, when the roll was called in the camp on the morning after the battle, there were left, to answer to their names, 88 out of the 138 who had started on the expedition.

The farmer-soldiers, as already stated, had but one man killed. This was the young burgher, Pieter Greyling,\* who was shot from the store near the Point. The building had been erected some time previously by Mr. Cato, the representative of Messrs. Owen Smith of Port Elizabeth.

The following statements, written down by the author at Newcastle, in Natal, and at Schoonspruit,

\* Theal gives his Christian name as Abraham.



near Potchefstroom, in May, 1881, were made by Nicolaas Meyer, sen. (of Utrecht, Transvaal), and J. H. Visser, sen., of Schoonspruit, both of whom, when young, served under Pretorius in the war in Natal:—

(1) “Die eerste man aan ons kant gesneuweld was Greyling—een jonge man. Cato syn *store* was daar, en met ons aanval het ons nie verwag dat Cato aan die kant van ons vyand sou wees; want hy en andere handelaars het trou gesweer aan die Republiek. Hy het sig self verontskuldig deur te seg dat hy wel trou gesweer het betreffende ons oorlog met Kaffers, dog nie wat aangaat oorlog met Engeland nie.”

(*Translation*)—“The first man who fell on our side was Greyling—a young man. Cato’s store was there (near the ‘Point’), and, at the time of our advance, we did not expect to find him on the side of our enemy; for he and other traders had sworn fealty to the Republic. He stated, as an excuse for his conduct, that he had taken the oath of allegiance only as regards our war with the Kaffirs, and not in relation to war with England.”

(2) “Greyling is geval toe ons kamp die nag deur Smith aangeval is. Cato syn *store* was verskans, en daar vuur die vyand toe een sarsie uit. Ons het nie geweet dat daar vyande was.”

(*Translation*)—“Greyling fell when our camp was attacked at night by Smith. Cato’s store had been barricaded, and it was from that building that the enemy fired a volley. We did not know that there were foemen there.”

These statements, written down word for word as

spoken in the *Africander* vernacular, clearly indicate the view which the Emigrants entertained as to the attitude of some of the traders in Natal. The first burgher who fell in the hostilities with England lost his life through Uitlander treachery.

The only other casualties in the battle of Congella on the side of the Republicans were four wounded. One of these, Johannes Greyling, afterwards died of his wounds. The full list, as given by the Natal Volksraad in their report of 19th June, 1842, is as follows:—Killed: Pieter Greyling; Johannes Greyling. Wounded: J. Prinsloo; P. Nel; T. Schutte.

On the 24th and 25th of May there was no further fighting.

Practically, although the prolongation of the armistice, which had been agreed upon for part of the first mentioned date, was not secured by any formal stipulation, such a cessation of hostilities was brought about. Burgher scouts were surrounding the British camp, which was now isolated and cut off, from its supplies in the block-house on the Point and from the loopholed building close by where the Uitlander allies were entrenched; but the investing lines were not so close and complete as to prevent communications and messages passing from Captain Smith to these outlying points.

Critical Position  
of British Force.

Immediately after the battle, *i.e.*, at dawn on the morning of 24th May, the position of the British force was critical in the extreme. The division which had attempted to surprise and crush Pretorius had itself been routed. There was a casualty list equal to nearly

a third of the entire force. The artillery was gone. The stores and supplies were more than three miles off, in the block-house on the Point, where there was only a Sergeant's guard of twenty-three men. There was nothing to prevent this position being taken by assault on the instant, instead of two days later; nothing to hinder the burghers from at once arresting all the Uitlanders who were assisting, or suspected of assisting, the enemy; nothing to stop Pretorius from instantly investing the British camp closely—Procrastinating Citizen Soldiers. instantly, instead of six days after. To the trained European strategist, playing the game of war according to the universally recognised rules: that, when hostilities have actually commenced, the boldest and most daring offensive tactics provide best for defence, and that to strike hard as well as to strike swiftly spells victory, whilst delay means defeat—to the military critic, and to the soldier by profession—it must seem as if the Emigrants threw away all their chances of continued success, at least in the earlier phases of the struggle, by these apparently unaccountable delays. But they were citizen-soldiers, defending their hearths and homes. Their leader was a simple burgher of the veld, and not a world-conqueror.

After that first night of strife, at break of day, when the battlefield from which the British force had been driven was in possession of the Africanders, they were moved to pity and compassion by the groans of the wounded, and by the sorrowful cries for water and for succour. Forgetting that victory was not yet secured for their side, and that it was abso-

Tender-hearted  
Samaritans.

lutely necessary to follow up their first success by striking further blows at once, their main concern was—to their credit and honour be it spoken—to ease the sufferings of the enemy's wounded. As in after years, at Bronkhorst Spruit, Laing's Nek, Ingogo, Majuba, and Doornkop, the Republican Africanders showed themselves to be kind Samaritans and good-hearted Christians.

Meanwhile, Captain Smith, who had expected to be instantly attacked in his camp, finding that no immediate danger threatened him, made such preparations as he could to maintain his position, and, if possible, retrieve the disaster which had befallen his expedition.

Captain Smith's  
Preparations for  
Defence.

While the armistice lasted, it was given out that the British officer was ready to consider terms of surrender. According to the statements of several of the Emigrants, Pretorius proposed that the English forces should have their cattle restored to them, and should be allowed to retire overland. The Volksraad, it is said, objected to this proposal, and insisted on absolute and unconditional surrender. It seems quite improbable, however, that Captain Smith meant to retire, much less to surrender; for on the night of the 24th May, he was getting provisions into his camp from some of the English residents of Durban, who had managed to pass through the Africander lines; at the same time he was in active communication with other Uitlanders, and arranging for the transmission of a message overland to the Governor of the Cape, asking him to send reinforcements. Mr. Richard King and Mr.

Cato, taking advantage of the darkness, swam two horses from the Point to the Bluff on the southern side of the Bay. It had been arranged that King should take the message. When starting, he was fired on by scouts from the Congella laager. But he rode boldly, and escaped, making his way to the southern frontier, and thence to Port Peddie. Intelligence was then sent from there to Cape Town concerning the critical position of the British force in Natal, and reinforcements were at once despatched by sea to relieve Captain Smith.

Dick King's Ride.

At nine o'clock in the evening of 25th May, a commando of one hundred burghers, under Gert Viljoen and Bart Pretorius, mustered outside the laager at Congella. Their object was to carry by assault the British position at the block-house on the Point and capture the stores. All that day active preparations for defence had been observed to be in progress at Captain Smith's camp. This fact, and Richard King's departure in the previous night, made it evident to the Farmers that the British commander meant to continue the struggle; and so they had determined to strike another blow.

At daybreak on the 26th of May, their attacking line surprised the Sergeant's guard of twenty-three men on the Point. A detour of some eight hours had been made to avoid the Kaffir scouts on the British side. A summons to surrender having been rejected, the assaulting column at once opened fire. Two soldiers were killed and two wounded. The others scattered and fled towards the block-house store.

Capture of Block-house on the Point.

Seizure of  
*Mazeppa* and  
*Pilot*.

The Sergeant and three men managed to escape to Captain Smith's camp. Seventeen, who had taken refuge in the store, surrendered. The eighteen-pounder gun and all the military stores fell into the hands of the burghers. The vessels *Pilot* and *Mazeppa*, which had been used for conveying stores and ammunition for the British expedition from Cape Town and Algoa Bay, and were then lying in harbour, were also taken possession of by order of the Volksraad. The captains of the vessels were ordered on shore, and all property belonging to British officers was seized. The burghers who executed these orders of the Volksraad were under the leadership of the Heemraad, Michiel van Breda, and his son Servaas.

And now another armistice was agreed to with Captain Smith. English accounts say that this truce was proposed by Pretorius. The Emigrants state that the British commander asked for it. It matters little which is the correct version. It is, however, quite certain that the Africanders gained nothing by this procrastination. A proposal from Pretorius, that the English force should embark in the *Pilot* and *Mazeppa* and leave Natal, was supposed to be under consideration by Smith, who took good care to lay in such a store of provisions as was available every night, when Mr. Cowie—one of the English residents who managed to make his way through the thin line of burgher pickets—supplied him. Cattle and sheep thus smuggled into the English camp were slaughtered, and the meat was salted. Grain and vegetables, also, were obtained in this way.

When, on the morning of the 31st of May, it became evident that Captain Smith had no intention of yielding, and the armistice terminated, the investing lines were drawn closely round the British camp. Siege trenches were constructed. The eighteen-pounder and the two captured field-pieces were served with ammunition which had been taken at the Point. A hot artillery fire was opened on the English from these guns, and from the two cannon which had seen service in the Zulu war.

But once more Pretorius and his officers were too chivalrous and humane to press their advantage to the utmost; for, when the siege had lasted twenty-four hours, they sent word to Captain Smith that he was at liberty to send all non-combatants—the women and children in his camp—on board the *Mazeppa*, where they would be in safety. This proposal was at once accepted by the British officer. It was an arrangement which relieved him from his chief anxiety and care, and enabled him to hold out until relief came. No parole seems to have been exacted from those on board the *Mazeppa*; and the crew of this Port Elizabeth vessel, soon after, showed their appreciation of Africander magnanimity, by running the ship and all on board out to sea in search of a British man-of-war.

Interesting details of the progress and some of the leading incidents of the siege of Captain Smith's camp by the Emigrants under Pretorius, are given in the personal narratives of some of the Voortrekkers.

The Much-  
Maligned  
"Boer"  
is a Generous  
Foe.

Magnanimity  
Appreciated.

“Now, we had completely invested Captain Smith on all sides,” says one of the officers, dictating to the author at Schoonspruit on 29th and 30th May, 1881. “Soon his supply of provisions began to run short. The soldiers often shot crows and rooks which were flying across the camp. Horses also were slaughtered to obtain meat.” Describing the construction of some of the trenches, he says: “One morning I stood with Louw Erasmus on one of our batteries, and told him that I would undertake to dig a trench that night—closer to the enemy’s position than any of those we had already constructed. I pointed out the spot to him. ‘Can you do it?’ he asked. ‘Do you think you will succeed?’ That night, when it was dark enough, I crept forward with about twelve men to within one hundred or one hundred and twenty yards of the English advanced posts. Here we commenced to dig very carefully (we had all brought spades with us as well as our guns). When we had succeeded in making a small furrow, we were joined by about twenty-five more burghers. Our work progressed rapidly. All at once, however, they opened fire on us from their fort. One of our spades must have glittered in the moonlight and betrayed us. But our trench was already quite serviceable, and we were able to return the enemy’s fire from behind the breastwork of earth. Now we completed our work by digging deeper still.”

Then he tells of the death of one of the burgher force — a young Farmer named Marais (another



Voortrekker in his statement gives the name as Liebenberg). "There was a small fort in one of our trenches. It was constructed of sandbags, and was exactly similar to the other forts which we had made at various points along our line. Marais was stationed here; but he never would keep behind cover, or seek any shelter whatever, when he was firing at the enemy. We used to shout to him: 'Take care!' but he never would listen to us. 'Ik is nie een meid nie!' ('I am not a woman!') he would shout in reply. 'When I am fighting, I always stand in the open. I do not wish to be sheltered.' And then the bullets from the English camp would whistle through the air, and fly close past him. One day he was blazing away as usual, standing erect on the earthworks of our little fort. A great many balls were coming in his direction, and some seemed to come very close to him. 'Do stoop down!' we shouted to him. 'He will certainly be killed,' said one of the older burghers. At that very instant, some of us plainly saw one of the Hottentot riflemen on the British side taking aim. The report of the shot was heard almost at the same moment, and our brave young comrade fell backward into the trench, with a large bullet wound through his head."

On another occasion a young burgher named Klopper was walking from the beach in the direction of the trenches, when a shell from the camp went screaming past one of the Natal earthworks—and cut him in two.

*In the Trenches.*

The defence of the British camp was conducted

with bravery, skill, and determination. Wells had been dug to supply the garrison with water, of which there was no want. Provisions, however, ran very short; for the investing lines were now so close and complete that no more cattle could be brought in at night by English residents at the Bay. Besides, all the Uitlanders who had assisted Captain Smith were under arrest at Pietermaritzburg. To eke out the small quantity of provisions available, the soldiers were getting smaller rations every day, until, towards the end of the siege, camp-biscuits, sun-dried horseflesh, and water, made up the bill of fare. Deep trenches had been constructed all round the fort, and the earthworks formed an efficient protection against the rifle fire and the artillery of the burghers, who had five guns in all, but whose artillerists were raw, untrained young farmers. The howitzer on the English side was well handled. Undoubtedly the best part of Captain Smith's fighting force were the Hottentot riflemen of the Cape Corps and the European waggon-drivers who had come with the expedition. All these men could shoot well, and they formed the real back-bone of the defending force. It is a question whether the regular troops alone would have been able to hold out and prevent the encampment being rushed and taken by assault. But the troops also, and their officers, were brave men. It is to be regretted that their commander sullied his good name, and that of his Government, by asking aid of the Zulus.

“When Captain Smith,” says Theal, “was in almost

desperate circumstances, he managed to communicate with the Zulu chief, whom he vainly entreated to come to his aid." This was returning evil for good, with a vengeance. The English commander knew what a Zulu invasion of Natal at that time would have signified, for the memory of the massacres of women and children in the neighbourhood of Weenen was still fresh in all men's minds. Pretorius and the Farmers had been charitable and merciful to the British wounded, kind to the prisoners of war, magnanimous towards Captain Smith himself—in allowing him to send the women and children from his camp to the *Mazeppa*, where they were safe. The appeal to savages, to attack the Africanders, testified to a British officer's appreciation of all this kindness and courtesy and magnanimity. It was an act in every way worthy the traditions of the self-styled philanthropists and of their administration.

Early in June, Pretorius had been reinforced by some two hundred and fifty or three hundred burghers from Winburg and from the district between the Lower Caledon and the Orange River. They were under the leadership of Commandant Jan Mocke, and had come in response to the appeal from their countrymen in Natal. Hendrik Potgieter, however, had refused to send assistance from Potchefstroom. His contention was that the Volksraad of Natal had made a mistake in asking for the acknowledgment of the Republic's independence by England; that he and his burghers had formed a separate Government to the north of the Vaal river;

Captain Smith  
Appeals to the  
Zulus for Help.

Reinforcements  
for Pretorius.

that they had had no share or voice in the negotiations; and therefore would take no part in the hostilities against England.

Richard King's  
Exploit.

When Richard King, the young Englishman who rode with Captain Smith's message, started from the harbour of Natal on the night of 24th May, he had before him a journey of four hundred miles on horseback, through an inhospitable and, for the greater part, an uninhabited country. Detained on the way by sickness, by swollen rivers, and by all sorts of hardships and dangers, he still managed to reach his destination—Fort Peddie (not very far from Grahamstown)—in nine days. On board the schooner *Conch*, which was then just ready for sea in Algoa Bay, one hundred men of the 27th regiment were at once embarked, with stores and ammunition, for Natal. At Cape Town, the 25th regiment was on the point of proceeding to India, when intelligence of the disaster to the British force arrived. Among the members of some of the old Cape families who, at that time, held commissions in the British army, was Lieutenant-Colonel Abraham Josias Cloete, whose father was the owner of an estate and famous vineyard at Constantia. That officer received instructions to take command of the troops which should, in the ordinary course of events, have gone to India; embark on board the frigate *Southampton* in Simon's Bay; and undertake the subjugation of the Afrianders in Natal. He set sail on the 14th of June.

Lieutenant-  
Colonel Cloete  
to the Rescue.

Meanwhile, Andries Pretorius and his burghers were hotly pressing the siege of the British camp,

and were bringing their trenches nearer at every point. One of the trenches ran in a zigzag direction from a sandhill, where the Farmers had constructed a battery and mounted one of their cannon, to a point much nearer to the enemy. This point was a small hill, round which the trench had been carried. Breastworks of earth had been thrown up here, and the defences of the little fort had been further strengthened by sandbags piled up along its front face. Sentries were constantly posted at either end of the bastion, and a vigilant guard was kept on this advanced portion of the siege works.

In the night of the 17th of June, however, when it was very dark, Lieutenant Molesworth succeeded in leading a sortie party to within six or seven yards, then, pouring in a volley, his troops attempted to capture the trench by a bayonet charge.

There were, at the time, only ten burghers holding the position. Their names were Strydom, Hattingh, Casper van Zyl, J. H. Visser, Christiaan v. d. Merwe, Klaas Dekker, J. Vermaak, Joachim Koekemoer, Jan Landman, Stefanus Bothma. One or two others had rushed back along the trench towards the main battery, in order to summon help. Reinforcements soon appeared on the scene, and then the English were driven back towards their camp. But meanwhile a desperate struggle had been in progress in the bastion. Two of the burghers had been killed by the volley fired at close quarters by the soldiers, five of whom fell in the bayonet charge that followed. These were all shot as they were in the act of

Lieutenant  
Molesworth's  
Sortie.

Struggle for the  
Bastion.

jumping into the trench. Their rifles, with the bayonets attached, were seized by the defenders. Several of the troops who followed were thrust back by these bayonets. Others were struck down with the butt ends of the heavy elephant guns. It was a fierce contest; but it was soon over. When the burgher reinforcements from the large battery rushed along the trench into the little fort, it was found that, of the ten Africanders who had defended it, two—Strydom and Hattingh—had been killed; and four, viz., Klaas Dekker, Stefanus Bothma, Jan Landman, and J. Vermaak, wounded. On the British side there were six or eight, altogether, killed and wounded.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE LAST STAND IN DEFENCE OF THE HARBOUR

Relief for Captain Smith—Disposition of Emigrant Forces—Battle of Durban Bay—Retreat of Pretorius—Kaffir Marauders made Use of by the British Commander—Atrocities in the Service of the Crown.

By the 24th of June, when the siege had lasted a month, the position of the British force under Captain Smith was desperate. There was no more food, except a very scanty ration of biscuit-crumbs and dried horse-meat—barely enough to keep the soldiers from absolutely dying of hunger. The water, also, was turning brackish, and there were some cases of enteric fever in the camp. Relief was sorely needed by the besieged. That night the schooner *Conch* arrived opposite the mouth of the Umgeni river, and sent up some sky-rockets. The frigate reached the outer anchorage in the following night.

On the morning of Sunday, the 26th, the disposition of the Africander forces was as follows:—

At the mouth of the Umgeni river, Commandant Louw Erasmus was stationed with about a hundred burghers.

At a point on the Coast, about midway between the Umgeni mouth and the Bay, was a patrol of

some twenty-five or thirty men under Commandant Gerrit Rudolph.

Another small patrol of twenty or twenty-five men was stationed at the head of the Bay or inner harbour.

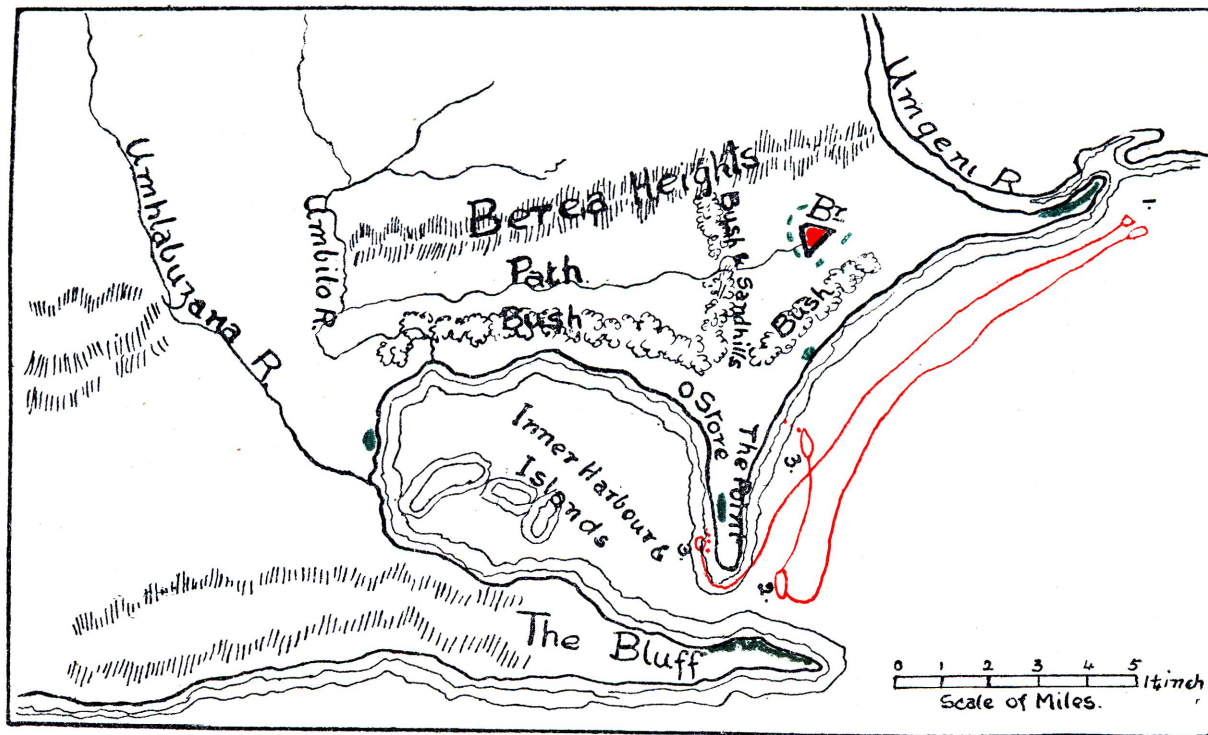
On the Point, there was a detachment of between thirty and forty burghers, with the Commandant-General himself at their head. Here was also a battery commanding the entrance to the inner harbour. The gun mounted on this was a four-pounder. But there was practically no ammunition for this or any of the other guns. The supply had become exhausted, and all the cannon balls now available were masses of lead, moulded round hard pieces of iron or chain links. These missiles had been manufactured by some of the Farmer amateur-artillerists, and were not of much use.

The trenches and siege works surrounding the British camp were held by only about twenty-five men, with whom was J. H. Visser—from whose statement all the foregoing figures are taken.

According to Theal, there were on the Bluff, or headland which forms the prolongation of the southern shore of the Bay, three hundred and fifty Farmers. Most of these were men who had come with Commandant Mocke from the western side of Drakensberg.

With his forces distributed as described, Pretorius now attempted to prevent Lieutenant-Colonel Cloete landing and effecting a junction with Captain Smith. The latter had still a force (including his





SKETCH MAP TO ILLUSTRATE DESCRIPTION OF THE BATTLE OF DURBAN BAY.

- Africander Positions at noon on June 26th, 1842 (just before the battle began).
- British Land and Sea Forces.

- 1.—Position of *Southampton* Frigate and Schooner *Couch* at noon.
- 2.—*Southampton* at about 2 p.m.
- 3.—*Southampton* and *Couch* at about 3 p.m. (boats landing from both).

From narratives and pencil drawings by J. H. Visser, the late Servaas van Breda M.L.C. (Natal) and others.

irregular troops) of over two hundred men who were not actually on the sick-list or wounded, although they were all much exhausted, and many of them more than half famished. The total relief forces on the *Southampton* and *Conch* were seven or eight hundred strong. Their base of operations, the ships, being movable and transportable, gave them the advantage of choosing their own point of attack, while the Emigrants, although inferior in numbers, had to spread out and divide their forces, so as to be prepared to defend a tract of coast-line nearly twenty miles in extent. We have already seen what the actual numbers were at different points along the coast line. It will be readily understood, therefore, that, were any one of these points to be attacked by the ships before reinforcements could come up, the disparity in numbers would be at once enormously increased to the further advantage of the British. This was precisely what happened in the engagement.

At early morning, the ships were both opposite the mouth of the Umgeni river. Here the burghers under Louw Erasmus had been scouting and patrolling for three days. Ever since the arrival of the *Conch* they had been on the alert, in order to be prepared to resist an attempted landing. At noon of the 26th, the burgher Commandant, who was no longer a young man, sought repose. The wind was then unfavourable to any attempt at landing. The patrol had taken the saddles off their horses, which had been allowed to graze. But it was no time for rest; for,

Battle of  
Durban Bay.

suddenly, the wind veered round, and a light breeze began to blow from the north-east. Both the frigate and the schooner at once made sail for the south, and shaped their course straight for the bar opposite the entrance to the Bay. Erasmus had instructions from Pretorius, in the event of a contingency such as had now arisen, to at once move southward and effect a junction with the detachment under Gerrit Rudolph—which was stationed midway between the Umgeni mouth and the Point.

This movement was attempted; but there was considerable, and what seemed unaccountable, delay in its execution. Afterwards, it was explained how the delay had occurred. The horses had strayed away from the camp, and could not be found at once. At about two o'clock in the afternoon the heavy guns of the frigate (a sixty-four), then lying in the outer anchorage, began to play on the Bluff as well as on the Point. Gradually she moved nearer to the bar; and, as broadside after broadside swept the slopes of the headland—that position becoming untenable—all the burghers who occupied it had to fall back and go the round of the entire course of the inner harbour, before they could attempt to reinforce those on the Point—where the attack was now made. At about three o'clock, the effect of Colonel Cloete's admirably executed tactics was that the Emigrants had four hundred and fifty of their men absolutely excluded from the field of operations.

The three hundred and fifty men who had held the position on the Bluff or headland were now making their

way along the beach towards the Point. The patrol of a hundred, under Louw Erasmus, had failed to reach the point of attack. The *Conch* had, meanwhile, crossed the bar. It had some boats in tow. In these there was a naval detachment of eighty-five men under Captain Hill. On the schooner there were a hundred and thirty-five men, under command of Colonel Cloete himself. Andries Pretorius—with about thirty-three men now reinforced by the patrol of twenty-five under Gert Viljoen, which had previously been stationed on the beach at the head of the inner harbour—still held the Point. In skirmishing line along the beach, the burghers kept up a steady fire on the boats, which were advancing to the attack. But, meanwhile, the frigate had moved nearer to the position occupied by Gerrit Rudolph. Before the reinforcements under Louw Erasmus could come up from the north, several boatloads of soldiers, decked by the guns of the *Southampton*, managed to land—the small number of burghers of Commandant Rudolph's patrol (twenty-five or thirty in all) being unable to stand their ground. Those on the Point were now compelled to retire, for their position was threatened in the rear as well as in front.

Thus ended the battle of Durban. Falling back on the Africander battery situated on one side of the British camp, the Commandants found that the advancing troops were so well protected by intervening sandhills, that it was not possible to check their march by artillery fire from that point.

The patrol of one hundred burghers, under Louw