

# From Aldershot to Pretoria eBook

## From Aldershot to Pretoria

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# Contents

<a href="#">From Aldershot to Pretoria eBook.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Table of Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Page 1.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Page 2.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Page 3.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Page 4.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Page 5.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Page 6.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Page 7.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Page 8.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Page 9.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Page 10.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Page 11.....</a>	<a href="#">26</a>
<a href="#">Page 12.....</a>	<a href="#">28</a>
<a href="#">Page 13.....</a>	<a href="#">30</a>
<a href="#">Page 14.....</a>	<a href="#">32</a>
<a href="#">Page 15.....</a>	<a href="#">34</a>
<a href="#">Page 16.....</a>	<a href="#">35</a>
<a href="#">Page 17.....</a>	<a href="#">37</a>
<a href="#">Page 18.....</a>	<a href="#">38</a>
<a href="#">Page 19.....</a>	<a href="#">40</a>
<a href="#">Page 20.....</a>	<a href="#">41</a>
<a href="#">Page 21.....</a>	<a href="#">42</a>
<a href="#">Page 22.....</a>	<a href="#">44</a>



Page 23..... 45  
Page 24..... 47  
Page 25..... 49  
Page 26..... 51  
Page 27..... 53  
Page 28..... 54  
Page 29..... 56  
Page 30..... 57  
Page 31..... 59  
Page 32..... 60  
Page 33..... 61  
Page 34..... 63  
Page 35..... 65  
Page 36..... 67  
Page 37..... 68  
Page 38..... 69  
Page 39..... 71  
Page 40..... 72  
Page 41..... 73  
Page 42..... 75  
Page 43..... 76  
Page 44..... 77  
Page 45..... 79  
Page 46..... 81  
Page 47..... 83  
Page 48..... 85



[Page 49..... 87](#)

[Page 50..... 89](#)

[Page 51..... 91](#)

[Page 52..... 93](#)

[Page 53..... 94](#)

[Page 54..... 96](#)

[Page 55..... 98](#)

[Page 56..... 100](#)

[Page 57..... 102](#)

[Page 58..... 104](#)

[Page 59..... 106](#)

[Page 60..... 108](#)

[Page 61..... 110](#)

[Page 62..... 112](#)

[Page 63..... 113](#)

[Page 64..... 114](#)

[Page 65..... 115](#)

[Page 66..... 117](#)

[Page 67..... 119](#)

[Page 68..... 121](#)

[Page 69..... 122](#)

[Page 70..... 124](#)

[Page 71..... 125](#)

[Page 72..... 127](#)

[Page 73..... 128](#)

[Page 74..... 130](#)



[Page 75..... 132](#)

[Page 76..... 133](#)

[Page 77..... 135](#)

[Page 78..... 136](#)

[Page 79..... 138](#)

[Page 80..... 140](#)

[Page 81..... 141](#)

[Page 82..... 143](#)

[Page 83..... 144](#)

[Page 84..... 146](#)

[Page 85..... 148](#)

[Page 86..... 149](#)

[Page 87..... 151](#)

[Page 88..... 152](#)

[Page 89..... 154](#)

[Page 90..... 156](#)

[Page 91..... 158](#)

[Page 92..... 159](#)

[Page 93..... 161](#)

[Page 94..... 162](#)

[Page 95..... 164](#)

[Page 96..... 166](#)

[Page 97..... 167](#)

[Page 98..... 168](#)

[Page 99..... 169](#)

[Page 100..... 171](#)



[Page 101.....172](#)  
[Page 102.....173](#)  
[Page 103.....175](#)



# Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
List of Illustrations		1
Preface		1
FROM ALDERSHOT TO PRETORIA		2
INTRODUCTION: THE EMPIRE AND ITS DEFENDERS		2
Chapter II		7
Chapter III		16
Chapter IV		23
Chapter V		26
Chapter VI		34
Chapter VII		44
Chapter VIII		47
THE PRAYER.		49
Chapter IX		55
Chapter X		58
Chapter XI		66
Chapter XII		74
Chapter XIII		78
Chapter XIV		81
Chapter XV		89
Chapter XVI		102



# Page 1

## List of Illustrations

His last letter *Frontispiece*

*Soldiers' homes at aldershot to face p. 17*

*Off to south Africa to face p. 34*

*Parade service on the tugela to face p. 53*

*Rev. E.P. Lowry to face p. 84*

*Rev. James Robertson to face p. 90*

*Bringing back the wounded to face p. 118*

*Morning service on the veldt to face p. 133*

*Soldiers' home on the field to face p. 138*

*Arundel to face p. 173*

*Ambulance work on the field to face p. 193*

*REV. A.V.C. HORDERN to face p. 195*

*ONE OF THE LADYSMITH HOSPITALS to face p. 199*

*REV. THOMAS MURRAY to face p. 203*

*AMBULANCE WAGGONS ON THEIR WAY TO THE FIELD to face p. 210*

## Preface

It would have been a grave omission had no attempt been made at the earliest possible time to place on record some account of the Christian steadfastness and heroism of the many godly men belonging to every arm of the service engaged in the war in South Africa, and of the strenuous work which they did for their comrades, resulting in many being won for God, comforted when stricken on the battle-field or in hospital, and even in death enabled to find the life that is eternal.

It would have been equally an omission had not some account been given of the heroic devotion of the chaplains and the lay agents who have accompanied the troops in the



campaign, sharing their hardships and ministering to them under all the trying conditions of their service.

When, therefore, I was approached by the secretaries of the Religious Tract Society, through Rev. R.W. Allen, with a view to preparing some such record, we both, Mr. Allen and myself, felt that the request must, if possible, be complied with. And we felt this the more, seeing that the whole British Force in South Africa has been placed under deep obligation to them, and to the great Society they represent, for the large and varied gifts of literature they have sent to our troops during the progress of the campaign.



## Page 2

It was originally intended that the book should have been written conjointly by Mr. Allen and myself; but pressure of other work has made this impossible. I am, however, indebted to Mr. Allen for the introductory chapter, and for the large stores of information in the way of correspondence from the Front which he has placed at my disposal.

I am also indebted to the Rev. Dr. Theodore Marshall for information as to the work of the Presbyterian chaplains. The Rev. E. Weaver, the Wesleyan chaplain at Aldershot, has also rendered important help.

The book has necessarily been written somewhat hurriedly, and by no means exhausts the history with which it deals. If, however, it has the result of deepening the sympathy of all true lovers of their country for our soldiers and sailors, and in increasing the interest they take in the good work done on their behalf, and if at the same time it brings cheer and encouragement to the men in the Army and Royal Navy who are trying to live manly, Christian lives, the author of the book and the great Society on whose behalf it has been written will be amply rewarded.

W.E. SELLERS.  
*August, 1900.*

## FROM ALDERSHOT TO PRETORIA

### Chapter I

## INTRODUCTION: THE EMPIRE AND ITS DEFENDERS

The war in South Africa has been fruitful of many results which will leave their mark upon the national life and character, and in which we may wholly rejoice. Amongst them none are more admirable than the awakening to the duty we owe to our soldiers and sailors, and the large-hearted generosity with which the whole empire is endeavouring to discharge it.

It is necessary to go back to the days of the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny to find any similar awakening. It was then that the British people began to learn the lesson of gratitude to the men they had so long neglected, whom they had herded in dark and miserable barracks, and regarded as more or less the outcasts of society.

The glorious courage, the patient, uncomplaining heroism, the tenacity not allowing defeat, which were displayed during the long and dreary months of the siege of Sebastopol, and the ultimate triumph of our arms, aroused the nation from its indifference, and kindled for its defenders a warm and tender sympathy.



Following swiftly on the Crimean War came the splendid deeds of the Indian Mutiny, when handfuls of brave men saved the empire by standing at bay like 'the last eleven at Maiwand,' or, hurrying hither and thither, scattered the forces which were arrayed against them. The sympathy which the Crimean War had produced was intensified by these events, and the duty of caring for those who thus dared to endure and to die was still more borne in upon the heart of the nation.

=Changed Estimate of our Soldiers and Sailors.=



## Page 3

It came to be discovered that though the British soldier and man-of-war's man were rough, and in some instances godless to the extent of being obscene, vicious, and debauched, they were, to use the phrase which Sir Alfred Milner has made historic, possessed of a 'great reserve of goodness'; that they were capable not only of good, but of God. As it were by fire the latent nobility of our nature was discovered, and the fine gold, and the image and superscription of God were revealed, in many instances to the men themselves, and in great measure to the nation at large.

There were many circumstances which aided in this awakening, both in the War and in the Mutiny. Among them may be reckoned the terrible hurricane which wrecked the transports in the harbour at Balaclava, when so many of the stores intended for the troops were destroyed; and the awful winter which followed, with its numberless deaths in action, and by hunger, cold, and disease. The horrors of Cawnpore, and the glorious tragedy of Lucknow, also compelled attention to the men who were involved in them, and to their comrades who survived.

=Their Deplorable Condition in the Past.=

Previous to these times nothing could well have been more deplorable than the condition of the soldier or the sailor. It was on all hands taken for granted that he was bad, and, wonderful to say, he was provided for accordingly. His treatment was a disgrace. The barrack-room, with its corners curtained off as married quarters, the lash, the hideous and degrading medical inspection—samples of the general treatment—all tended to destroy what remained of manly self-respect and virtue. Whilst the neighbourhood of the barracks and the naval ports, teeming with public-houses and brothels, still further aided the degradation. The creed of the nation, or rather, the opinion that was tacitly accepted, would be best expressed in the familiar saying that 'the bigger the blackguard, the better the soldier.'

=Their Devotion to Duty.=

Nevertheless, amidst all these evil conditions, not only did courage and loyalty to duty survive, but even, in many instances, a chivalrous tenderness and devotion. There were to be found many earnest Christian men, and the work of God went on, comrade winning comrade to Christ, so that it was rare indeed to find a regiment or a man-of-war which had not in it a living Church.

What, for instance, can well be more interesting or significant than the record which tells of the men on the Victory, Lord Nelson's flag-ship at Trafalgar, who had no need to be sworn at to be made to do their duty, who amidst much persecution sang their hymns and prayed, and lived their cleanly, holy lives; who attracted Lord Nelson's attention, and so won his respect that he gave them a mess to themselves, and ordered that they should not be interfered with in their devotions? Or than the record of the godly sergeants of the 3rd Grenadiers at Waterloo, who went into action praying that it might

be given to them to aid in the final overthrow of the tyrant who threatened the liberties of the world?



## Page 4

But returning to the Crimean War and the Mutiny, there were not wanting even then men and women in foremost places to voice the awakening which these created, and to give it right and wise direction.

=The Queen's Care of her Men.=

The care of the Queen for her soldiers and sailors in those early days, which she has continued with wonderful tact and tenderness throughout her long and glorious reign, was of untold advantage. Her sympathy showed the nation where its heart should go and where its hand should help.

The send-off from the courtyard of Buckingham Palace; the review of the battle-worn heroes in the Palace itself, when she decorated them with their well-earned honours; her constant visits to the hospitals, were incidents which the nation could not forget. In them, as in so many other ways, she awakened her people from their apathy, and by her example led them to a higher and more Christian patriotism.

=The Netley and Herbert Hospitals.=

There was also the noble man whose monument adorns the Quadrangle of the War Office, who was War Minister at the time. But perhaps foremost of all, save the Queen herself, was the 'Lady of the Lamp,' who, surrendering the comfort of a refined and beautiful home, went out to the hospitals at Scutari to minister to the wounded and the fever-stricken, and found in doing so a higher comfort, a comfort which is of the soul itself. These two—Florence Nightingale and Sydney Herbert—the one in guiding the Administration, the other inspiring the nation, did imperishable good.

The Herbert and the Netley Hospitals were the first embodiment of the nation's sympathy expressed in terms of official administration—palaces of healing, which have been rest-houses for multitudes of sick and wounded men pending their return to duty, their discharge on pension, or their passing to an early grave.

The Royal Patriotic Fund was the expression of the nation's desire to succour the widows and orphans of the breadwinners who had fallen in the war.

=The Awakened National Conscience.=

But these efforts, noble though they were, by no means met the full necessity. For solicitude on behalf of our soldiers and our sailors being once aroused, their daily life on board ship and in barracks soon compelled attention. Its homelessness and monotony, its utter lack of quiet and rest, its necessary isolation from all the comforts and amenities of social life, the consequent eagerness with which the men—wearied well-nigh to death, yet full of lusty vigorous life—went anywhere for change, society, and excitement—all these things broke like a revelation on the awakened conscience of the nation.



The terrible fact, to which reference has already been made, that hitherto almost the only sections of the civil community which had catered for them was the publican, the harlot, and the crimp, that they had indeed been left to the tender mercies of the wicked, still further deepened the impression.

## Page 5

At the same time it came to be gradually realized that the splendid manhood of the army and the navy was a vast mission force, which, if it could only be enlisted on the side of purity, temperance, and religion, might be of untold value to the empire and the home population.

It was plainly seen that if left, as it had hitherto been, to the homelessness of the barracks and the main-deck, and to the canteen and the public-house, it would certainly take the side of sin; and whilst defending the empire by its valour, would imperil it by its ill-living.

All these convictions were confirmed by the record of the noble lives of heroes, who were Christians as well as heroes, with which the history of the Crimean War and the Mutiny is enriched. If a few could thus be saved, it was asked, why not many? if some, why not all? For men of all ranks, of varied temperaments and gifts, were among the saved, some whose natural goodness made them easily susceptible of good, others 'lost' in very deed, sunk in the depths of a crude and brutal selfishness.

=Woman's Work in this Field.=

As might be expected, the first to take to heart these special aspects of the case, and to embody the great awakening in the deeds of a practical beneficence, were women. Miss Robinson and Miss Weston, Mrs. and Miss Daniel, Miss Wesley, and Miss Sandes will ever live among those who set themselves to fight the public-house and the brothel by opening at least one door, which, entering as to his own home, the soldier and the sailor would meet with purity instead of sin, and where the hand stretched out to welcome him would be not the harlot's but the Christ's.

=The Influence of Methodism.=

It was given to the Wesleyan Methodist Church to take the foremost place in this new departure. Nor could it well be otherwise when the history of that Church is borne in mind.

The soldiers and man-of-war's men of John Wesley's time came in large numbers under the spell of his wonderful ministry. Converted or not, they recognised in him a man; and his dauntless courage, his invincible good humour, and his practical sympathy, won for him from many of them a singular devotion, and from not a few a brave and noble comradeship. Some came to be among his most successful preachers, and in the army, and out of it, nobly aided him in his victorious but arduous conflict with the evils of the time. From Flanders to the Peninsula and Waterloo, and from Waterloo to the Crimea and the Mutiny, the bright succession continued. Hence, when the nation awoke to its duty to its defenders, Methodism abundantly partook of the impulse, and threw itself heartily into every enterprise which it inspired.

## Page 6

It was the first Church, as a Church, to commit itself to the policy of Soldiers' and Sailors' Homes. It passed a resolution at its annual Conference to the effect that these institutions were essential to any successful work for the good of the Army and Royal Navy; and it has continued, as the years have gone on, to increase the number of its Homes, until at the present time it has thirty under its direction, established in various parts of the empire, which it has provided at the cost of many thousands of pounds, and which are its gift for the common good. They are all held on such trusts as secure them for the free and unreserved use of all the soldiers and sailors of the Queen, without respect of religious denomination.

=The Work of the Anglican and other Churches.=

But Methodism is not alone, as a Church, in this patriotic and Christian enterprise. The Established Church has entered upon it with an ever-increasing earnestness, having come, mainly through the advocacy of the Chaplain-General, Rev. Dr. Edgehill, to grasp the situation, and to realize that for the men themselves and for the empire it is of paramount importance that this provision should be made.

The reflex result of the efforts to establish Soldiers' and Sailors' Homes has also been most beneficent. Speaking at the anniversary of one of these Homes, not many years ago, Lord Methuen said that they had led the way to the improvement which is now being effected in barracks, where the old squalor has given place to comfort, and the temperance refreshment room, the recreation room, and the library more than hold their own against the canteen, and the cheerful and sufficient married quarters have replaced the scandal of the curtained corner or the miserable one-roomed hut.

Nor must the prayer-room now attached to every barracks in India be forgotten, nor the Army Temperance Association, of which the Rev. Gelson Gregson was the pioneer, and the illustrious Field-Marshal, Lord Roberts, the founder. This association has now, thanks to the sympathy of H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge when Commander-in-Chief, and to the hearty and constant support of Lord Wolseley, his illustrious successor, been established throughout the whole British army.

It will thus be seen that the great awakening of now nearly fifty years ago has borne good fruit, and that in proportion as the nation has risen to a higher moral level, and consequently to a juster appreciation of its duties, the soldier and the sailor have continued to share in its results.

=Christian Work at Aldershot.=

The camp at Aldershot embodies in itself all these changes; and is, indeed, an epitome of the results of this awakening. Anything more desolate than its aspect when it was first established it would be impossible to imagine. Long 'lines' of huts, planted in a wilderness of gorse, heather, and sand, dimly lit, and miserably appointed; 'women that



were sinners' prowling about the outskirts, and gradually taking possession of much of the hastily-constructed town, with the usual accompaniment of low public-houses and music-halls—such, to a great extent, was Aldershot at the beginning.



## Page 7

[Illustration: 1. CHURCH OF ENGLAND SOLDIERS' HOME, ALDERSHOT.]

[Illustration: 2. GROSVENOR ROAD SOLDIERS' HOME, ALDERSHOT.]

Here then was a sphere for the work of the new awakening. And one by one all the agencies mentioned above took up their duty, and entered upon the enterprise. Mrs. and Miss Daniel founded the Soldiers' Institute. The Wesleyans, guided by the Revs. Dr. Rule, Charles Prest, I. Webster, and C.H. Kelly, built their first Home at the West End, where, like another 'West End,' so much of vice had congregated. Subsequently it was transferred to the site in Grosvenor Road, and another Home put up at the North Camp, on a site secured by Sir Hope Grant. Then came the Church of England, with its splendid premises in Aldershot and its church rooms in the North and South Camps.

Meanwhile the camp itself has been reconstructed, so that at last the empire can look without shame upon it; and the brave spirits who first caught the awakening, or saw that it should not die,—many of whom have joined the majority, but some of whom are still enriching their country by their lives,—can rejoice in the work they have been permitted to accomplish.

And the result? 'Ah, sir,' exclaimed a sergeant, as he entered one of the Aldershot Homes, 'you are at last giving us a chance. Hitherto you have provided for us as though we were all bad, and all wanted and meant to be; and bad we became. But now, sir, you are giving us a chance, and you will see what will be the result.'

And truly we do; for the life of the nation is enriched, not enfeebled, by the men who return to it from the Army and the Royal Navy. And all ranks of society are becoming convinced that religion is the prime factor in the service efficiency and in the national well-being. Thus God is, after all, seen to be the greatest need, and the one true enrichment of human life and character—the vital force by which alone the commonwealth can live.

The wonderful records which will be found in the succeeding chapters of this book, telling as they do of Christian life and service in the South African War, will still further show the fruits of this great awakening.

## Chapter II

### ALDERSHOT

A raw, cold morning in the late autumn! A weird-looking train, slowly drawing into the station out of the mist, with carriages altogether different in appearance from those we were accustomed to see! A battalion of brawny Scotchmen, travel-stained and sleepy. And then a somewhat lazy descent to the platform.



'Twenty-four hours in this train, sir, and never a bite or a sup. What do you think of that?'

But as the speaker could not quite keep the perpendicular, and found it absolutely impossible to stand to attention, it was evident that he had had more than one 'sup,' whether he had had a 'bite' or not. All along the line, sad to say, 'treating' had been plentiful, and this was the result.

## Page 8

=Mobilising at Aldershot.=

Multiply this scene a hundred times. Imagine the apparent confusion on every hand. Listen to the tramp, tramp of the men as they march from station to camp and from camp to station, and you will have some idea of the hurry and bustle in this camp on veldt during the period when the word 'mobilisation' was on everybody's lips.

Barrack rooms everywhere overcrowded, men sleeping by the side of the bed-cots as well as upon them; every available space utilised; even the H Block Soldiers' Home turned outside into a tent, that the rooms it occupied might be used as temporary barrack rooms again.

Discipline was necessarily somewhat relaxed! Drunkenness all too rife! The air was full of fare-wells, and the parting word in too many cases could only be spoken over the intoxicating cup. It was a rough-and-tumble time. Aldershot was full of men who in recent years had been unaccustomed to the discipline and exactitude of Her Majesty's Army, and the wonder is that things were not worse than they were.

Let us look into one of the barrack rooms. The men are just getting dinner, and are hardly prepared to receive company, and especially the company of ladies. They are sitting about anyhow, their tunics for the most part thrown aside, or at any rate flying open; but when they see ladies at the door, most of them rise at once.

'Yes, it is hard work, miss, parting with them,' says one K.O.S.B. reservist. 'I've left the missus at home and three babies, one of them only a week old. I thought she'd have cried her eyes out when I came away. I can't bear to think of it now.' And the big fellow brushed the tears away. 'It's not that I mind being called up, or going to the war. I don't mind that; but, you know, miss, it's different with us than with them young lads, and I can't help thinking of her.'

'Rough? yes, it is a bit rough,' says another as we pass along. 'I wish you could see the little cottage where I live when I'm at home, all kept as bright as a new pin. It's well *she* can't see me now, I'm thinking. She'd hardly know her husband. But there, it's rougher where we're going, I reckon, so it's no use worrying about this.' And, forgetting the presence of ladies, he started whistling a merry tune.

It was just 'a bit rough' in those days. But how could it be helped? Aldershot Camp had nearly doubled its normal population, and some thirty thousand troops were crowded in. And this population was continually changing. As soon as one batch of troops was despatched, another took its place, with consequences that, perhaps, were not always all that could be desired, but which were nevertheless unavoidable.

## Page 9

And so day by day we watched the camp gradually becoming khaki colour. At first it was khaki to-day and scarlet to-morrow, as one batch of khaki warriors left for the front and others, still clad in their ordinary uniform, took its place. But before very long Pimlico proved equal to the occasion, and khaki prevailed, and in South and North Camp one saw nothing but the sand-coloured soldiers. Then a strange, unwonted silence fell upon us; for they had gone, and we woke up to an empty camp and desolate streets, and realized that the greatest feat of the kind in the history of the world had been accomplished, and 150,000 troops had been despatched seven thousand miles across the sea.

=Christian Work at Aldershot.=

But we are anticipating. Let us first introduce you to a bit of Christian Aldershot during these mobilisation times. The mobilisation did not find us dozing; and the Churches and Soldiers' Homes, with their multiplicity of organizations, did their best to give to Mr. Thomas Atkins a home from home, and never with greater success.

There is no doubt that the *morale* of the British soldier is steadily advancing. 'They forget,' said a lad from Ladysmith the other day, 'that we are not what we used to be. It used to be that the army was composed of the scum of the nation; some folks forget that it isn't so now.' They do, or, rather, perhaps they *did* until the war commenced and made the soldier popular. But the fact is that, especially during the last twenty years, there has been a steady improvement, and we venture to assert that to-day, so far as his moral conduct is concerned, the average soldier is quite equal, if not superior, to the average civilian. This is due in large measure to the officers, who take a greater interest in the everyday life of their men than ever before; but it is due in even larger measure to the great interest the Churches have taken in the men, and especially in the multiplication of Soldiers' Homes.

At Aldershot there are, in addition to the military and civilian churches, which are all of them centres of vigorous Christian work, six Soldiers' Homes, *viz.*, three Wesleyan, two Church of England, and one Salvation Army, in addition to the Primitive Methodist Soldiers' Home, now used chiefly as a temperance hotel. At these Soldiers' Homes there are refreshment bars, reading rooms, games rooms, smoking rooms, bath rooms, and all other conveniences. They are for the soldier—a home from home. Here he is safe, and he knows it. They will take care of his money, and he can have it when he likes. They will supply him with stationery free of charge. They will write his letters for him, if he so desires, and receive them also. In fact, while he considers himself monarch of all he surveys as soon as he enters, he is conscious all the time that he must be on his good behaviour, and it is rarely, if ever, that he forgets himself.

A counter-attraction to the public-house, an entertainment provider of a delightful order, a club, a home, and a Bethel all rolled into one is the Soldiers' Home,—the greatest

boon that the Christian Church has ever given to the soldier, and one which he estimates at its full value.



## Page 10

During the mobilisation days these Homes were crowded to the utmost of their capacity, and chaplains and Scripture readers vied with each other in their earnest efforts to benefit the men. In those solemn times of waiting, with war before them, and possibly wounds or death, hundreds of soldiers decided for Christ, or, as they loved to put it, 'enlisted into the army of the King.'

=Barrack Room Life.=

Somehow or other the average Englishman never thinks of the soldier as a Christian, and soldier poets bring out almost every other phase of the soldier character except this. As a matter of fact the recruit when he comes to us is little more than a lad. He has been brought up in the village Sunday school, and been accustomed to attend the village church or chapel. He has all his early religious impressions full upon him. He is excitable, emotional, easily led. If he gets into a barrack room where the men are coarse, sensual, ungodly, he often runs into riot in a short time, though even then his early impressions do not altogether fade. But if we lay hold of him, bring him to our Homes, surround him with Christian influences, by God's help we make a man of him, and the raw recruit, the 'rook' as they call him, not only develops into a veteran ready to go anywhere and do anything for Queen and country, but into a Soldier of the Cross, ready to do and dare for his King.

=An Aldershot Sunday.=

Let me introduce you to an Aldershot Sunday. The camp is all astir at an early hour. Musters of men here and there on the regimental parade grounds, the stately march to church, the regimental band at the head. The short, bright, cheery service. The rattle and clatter of side-arms as the men stand or sit. The rapid exit after the Benediction has been pronounced and the National Anthem sung. The 'fall in' outside. The ringing word of command, and the march back to barracks, amid the admiring gaze of the civilians.

All this can be sketched in a few sentences; but we want to give our readers more than a mere introduction—a speaking acquaintance. We want them to get to know our friend Thomas Atkins before they see him out on the veldt, or amid the heat of battle. And to know him as we know him they must get a little closer than a mere church parade; they must watch us at our work for him, they must realize some of our difficulties, and be sharers in some of our joys.

Let us then get nearer to him, and in order to this, attempt to get into the heart of an Aldershot Sunday. And as the most conspicuous and handsome pile of buildings in Aldershot is the Grosvenor Road Wesleyan Church and Soldiers' Home, and it happens to be the one with which we are best acquainted, we will follow the workers in their Sunday's work.



=The Prison Service.=

And first of all let us visit the Military Prison. There are not so many prisoners as usual just now, and those who are there are terribly anxious to have their terms of imprisonment shortened, in order that they may get to the front—not that prisoners are ever wishful to drag out the full term of their imprisonment, but now that all is excitement and their regiments are on the eve of departure, they are feverishly anxious to go with them.

## Page 11

And yet it is easy to preach, for in prison most hearts are softened, and just now there are memories of bygone days that make one love the old hymns and listen with more than old interest to old truths. Of course there are not a few exceptions. For instance, you see that tall Guardsman! Guardsman, do you call him? Anything but that in his uncouth prison dress! But he *is* a Guardsman, and by-and-by will give a good account of himself in South Africa. See how his eyes are fixed on the preacher. How eagerly he listens to every word the preacher says! Surely there is a work of grace going on in his heart! And so next morning when the preacher and junior chaplain meet, one says to the other, 'I am quite sure Robinson was greatly affected yesterday. He could not take his eyes off me all the time. He seemed in great trouble. Speak to him about it, and try to lead him to Christ.'

Hence, when next the Rev. E. Weaver, our indefatigable junior chaplain, visited the prison, he said, 'Robinson, what sort of a service did you have on Sunday morning?'

'Pretty much as usual, thank you, sir.'

'How did you like the sermon?'

'Oh! all right. You know I've heard him before.'

'Yes, but wasn't there something that specially touched you. The preacher said you could not take your eyes off him all the time. He felt sure you were in trouble.'

'Well, sir, I was, that is the fact. I couldn't help looking at him, and I have been thinking about it ever since.'

'Well, now, you know me, Robinson. Cannot I help you? You have no need to be afraid to speak to me. What is your trouble?'

And Robinson looked gravely at the chaplain, and the chaplain at him. And then with an effort Robinson said, 'I've been wondering about it all the week. I cannot get it out of my head. Don't be offended, sir, however did that 'ere gent get inside that waistcoat?'

How are the mighty fallen! And the poor preacher who, with cassock vest, had stood before that congregation of prisoners, had after all only excited curiosity about his dress.

But it is not always so, and many a lad has been won to better ways through the ministry of the prison.

=Parade and other Services.=

Then follows the Parade Service, already described, and no more need be said except that the preacher must be dull and heartless indeed who is not inspired by those



hundreds of upturned faces, and the knowledge that the word he speaks may, through them, ere long reach the ends of the earth.

We will not linger either at the Hospital Service or the Sacred Song Service in the afternoon, or at the Soldiers' Tea, or even at the Voluntary Service at night, which, with its hundreds of soldier attendants, is a testimony to the spiritual value of the work.

=The 'Glory-Room' of the Soldiers' Home.=

Let us rather pass into the 'glory-room' of the Soldiers' Home at the close of the evening Service. There is never a Sunday night without conversions. And they call it the glory-room because



## Page 12

'Heaven comes down their souls to greet,  
And glory crowns the mercy-seat.'

Ex-Sergeant-Major Moss is in charge, and as frequent references will be made to him in the following narratives, we may as well sketch him now. A man of medium height, thick set, strength in every line of his face and figure, eyes that look kindly upon you and yet pierce you through and through. A strong man in every respect, and a kindly man withal. A man among men, and yet a man of almost womanly tenderness where sympathy is required. Again and again in the course of our story we shall come across traces of his strenuous work and far-reaching influence. And in every part of the British Empire there are soldier lads who look upon this ex-sergeant-major of the Army Service Corps as their spiritual father, and there is no name oftener on their lips in South Africa than his.

He is in charge to-night, and is telling his experience. He knows all about it, has done plenty of rough campaigning in his time, but he knows also that the religion of Jesus Christ is best for war or peace. Christ has been with him in all parts of the world, and Christ will be with *them*. They are going out. No one knows what is before them, but with Christ at their side all will be well.

And now a Reservist speaks. He cannot pass the doctors, and has to return home; but he tells the lads how he went through the Chitral campaign, and how hard he found it to be a Christian all alone. 'It is all right here in the glory-room,' says he; 'it is all right when the glory-room is not far away, and we can get to it. But when you are thousands of miles away, and there are no Christian brothers anywhere near, and you hear nothing but cursing, and are all the time amid the excitement of war, it is hard work then. Stick to it, my brothers. Be out and out for Christ.'

And then another—an Engineer. 'I was going through the camp the other day, and I noticed that where they were building the new bridge they had put a lantern to warn people not to approach. It had only a candle inside, and gave but a poor light. On either side of me were the lamps of the Queen's Avenue, and only this tiny flicker in front. And I said to myself, "My lad, you are not one of those big lamps there in the Avenue; it's but a little light you can give, but little lights are useful as well as big ones, and may be you can warn, if you cannot illuminate.'" And then with enthusiasm they sang together,—

'Jesus bids me shine with a clear, pure light,  
Like a little candle burning in the night;  
In this world of darkness we must shine—  
You in your small corner, I in mine.'

Then follow other testimonies and prayer, and by-and-by first one and then another cries to God for mercy, and as the word of pardon is spoken from above, and one after another enters into the Light, heaven indeed comes down their



## Page 13

'souls to meet  
And glory crowns the mercy-seat.'

This is no fanciful picture. It is an every night occurrence. The old times of the evangelical revival are lived over again in that 'glory-room,' and hundreds are started upon a new and higher life.

But it is time to separate, and with a verse of the soldiers' parting hymn the comrades go their various ways, and the blessed Sabbath's services are over—over, all except one service more, the service in the barrack room, where each Christian man kneels down by his bed-cot and commends his comrades and himself to God. In the case of new converts this is the testing-time. They *must* kneel and pray. It is the outward and visible sign of their consecration to God. A hard task it is for most; not so hard to-day as it was a few years ago, but difficult still, and the grit of the man is shown by the way he faces this great ordeal. Persecution generally follows, but he who bears it bravely wins respect, while he who fails is treated henceforth as a coward. This testimony for Christ in the barrack room rarely fails to impress the most ungodly, though at the time the jeering comrades would be the last to acknowledge it.

At the risk of appearing to anticipate, let me tell a story.

=Jemmie's Prayer.=

In a nullah in far-away South Africa lay about a dozen wounded men. They had been lying there for hours, their lives slowly ebbing away. One of them was a Roman Catholic, who had been a ringleader of persecution in the barrack room at home. Not far from him lay 'little Jemmie,' wounded severely, whom many a time the Roman Catholic had persecuted in the days gone by. Hour after hour the Roman Catholic soldier lay bleeding there, until at last a strange dizzy sensation came over him which he fancied was death. He looked across to where, in the darkness, he thought he could distinguish 'little Jemmie.' With difficulty he crawled across to him, and bending over the wounded lad, he roused him.

'Jemmie, lad,' he said, 'I have watched you in the barrack room and seen you pray. Jemmie, lad, do you think you could say a prayer for me?'

And Jemmie roused himself with an effort, and, trying hard to get upon his knees, he began to pray. By-and-by the other wounded soldiers heard him, and all who could crawl gathered round, and there, in that far-away nullah, little Jemmie 'said a prayer' for them all. Surely a strange and almost ghastly prayer-meeting that! As they prayed, some one noticed the flicker of a light in the distance. They knew not who it was—Briton or Boer—who moved in the distant darkness. Jemmie, however, heeded it not, but prayed earnestly for deliverance. The light came nearer, and the wounded lads

began to call with all their remaining strength for help. And at last it came to them—the light of a British stretcher party—and they were carried to help and deliverance.



## Page 14

'And now,' said the Roman Catholic soldier, who, on his return from the war, told this story to the Rev. T.J. McClelland, 'I know that God will hear the prayer of a good man as well as the prayer of a priest, for he heard little Jemmie's prayer that night.'

And so the Aldershot barrack room prepares the way for the South African veldt, and the example apparently unnoticed bears fruit where least expected.

=The Hymns the Soldier Likes.=

Of all hymn-books Mr. Thomas Atkins likes his 'Sankey' best. He is but a big boy after all, and the hymns of boyhood are his favourites still. You should hear him sing,—

'I'm the child of a King,'

while the dear lad has hardly a copper to call his own! And how he never tires of singing!

But the Scotchmen are exceptions, of course, and when, following mobilisation times, the Cameronian Militia came to Aldershot, they could not put up with Mr. Sankey's collection. Rough, bearded crofters as many of them were,—men who had never been South before,—all these hymns sounded very foreign. 'We canna do wi' them ava,' they cried; 'gie us the Psalms o' Dauvit.' But they set an example to many of their fellows, and the remarkable spectacle was witnessed in more than one barrack room of these stalwart crofters engaged in family prayer.

But it is time we saw our soldiers depart. And first there is the inspection in the barrack square, and it is difficult to recognise in these khaki-clad warriors the men we had known in the barrack room or 'Home.' And then there is the farewell in the evening, and the 'glory-room' or other devotional room is full of those ordered South, and there is the hearty hand-shake and the whispered 'God bless you,' and then all join in the soldiers' good-night song—his watchword all the world over, hymn 494 in Sankey's collection,—

'God be with you till we meet again.'

His life is such a coming and going that he would be unhappy unless you closed every evening meeting with at least one verse, and on these occasions, when no one knows whether it will be in earth or heaven that he will meet his comrade next, it is, of course, impossible to close without it. And so night by night before each regiment takes its departure some one starts 494. By-and-by, as the train steams out of the station, it will be 'Auld Lang Syne,' but these are Christian men, and they are parting from Christian men, and so often with hands clasped and not without tears they sing,—

'God be with you till we meet again,  
Keep love's banner floating o'er you,



Smite death's threatening wave before you,  
God be with you till we meet again.'

They will not forget it, these soldier lads, and as they pass one another on their long marches across the veldt, unable to do more than shout a greeting to some old friend, it will be 494; and as with rapid tread they advance to charge some almost impregnable defence, they will shout to one another—these Christian soldiers—494, 'God be with you till we meet again!'

## Page 15

=Off to the Front.=

What stirring times those were! What singing in the barrack rooms at night! What excitement in the streets of the town, yes, and what drunkenness too, making it necessary now and then to confine a regiment to barracks the night before departure. And then the march to the station, often in the small hours of the morning, the rush at the last with some would-be deserter just caught in time, the enthusiasm of the men, the cheering of the crowd, the singing of 'Auld Lang Syne' and 'God Save the Queen.' And then away goes the train, heads out of every carriage, handkerchiefs waving, lusty voices cheering, shouting, singing. God bless you, our soldier lads!

But what mean these little knots of women and children gazing wistfully after the train? What mean these sobs, these tears, this heart-break? Ah! this is another side to the picture. They have said good-bye, and they know that *all* of these lads will not return, and that some of those left behind are left desolate for life. God help them, our British soldiers—aye, and God help those they have left behind them!

[Illustration: OFF TO SOUTH AFRICA.]

=Mr. Lowry Ordered South.=

Let us glance at just one scene more before we say good-bye to old Aldershot and follow our soldier lads on their journey South. It is the farewell of one of the best-loved of Aldershot chaplains—the Rev. E.P. Lowry, senior Wesleyan chaplain. For seven years he has ministered with rare success to our troops; his name is a household word among them, they love him as they love few, and he loves them one and all. And now he too is ordered South. He is fifty-six years old, and has done no campaigning heretofore. It is, therefore, no light task he has before him, and though he has many advantages and is known to so many, yet he is quite aware he must rough it with the rest, and is prepared to undergo all hardships with his men.

It is a raw, biting morning, and the piercing wind makes the khaki uniforms that flit here and there look altogether unseasonable. On the other side of the station is Rev. Father Ryan, the Roman Catholic chaplain, in khaki uniform and helmet, looking a soldier every inch of him,—a good man, too, and a gentleman, as we Aldershot folks know well. But on this platform what a crowd there is! Men and women, old and young, soldiers and civilians, have all come to say good-bye to one man, and he moves in and out among the people saying a kindly word here and giving a handshake there. There are not many for South Africa by this train. The men left hours ago, and only a few officers who had no need to travel with their men are going down. A young lad here, the son of a Christian man, is going out hoping to get an appointment in some South African volunteer regiment, and his comrades of the Fire Brigade are here to say 'good-bye.' But the rest of us are all crowding round our best-loved padre to say God-speed.



## Page 16

It is a scene that will live with us for many years. See, they are running along the platform as the train steams out. 494 they shout, and bravely and with smiling face he calls out in return 494, and off they go, he to the work of his life, and we to the more humdrum but perhaps not less necessary work of the hour.

### Chapter III

#### OLD ENGLAND ON THE SEA

A cheer from the distant crowds, an increased involuntary bustle on board ship, and then train load after train load of troops detrained alongside the ship that was to be their home for the next three weeks. Up and up the gangways they went in long continuous lines, hour after hour, a procession that seemed as though it would never stop. At last all are on board, and the bell rings for visitors to go ashore. The troops crowd the bulwarks of the ship, they climb the rigging, many of them like sailors. They seize every vantage point from which they can wave a long farewell to those they are leaving behind them, and then some one with a cornet strikes up 'Soldiers of the Queen' and 'Rule Britannia,' and fifteen hundred voices echoed by those on shore join in the patriotic songs. At last all is ready and the moorings are cast off. 'One song more, my lads'; it is 'Shall auld acquaintance be forgot?' and there with the good ship already moving from the dock they sing it, while handkerchiefs are vigorously waved and hearty cheers rend the air, and not a few tears are shed. And so amidst excitement and sorrow, laughter and tears, the good ship drops down the Southampton Water, past Netley Hospital—soon to receive many of them back—and Calshott Castle, past the Needles and out into the open Channel, and fifteen hundred fighting men are on their way to South Africa.

=A New Feat in Britain's History.=

Week after week this was the programme. It only varied in that the ship was different, and the men were of different regiments and different names. Until at last the title of this chapter had become an actual fact, and Old England, in a sense truer than ever before, was upon the sea. For it was not *young* England simply that was there. The fathers of our land—our greatest and our wisest generals, the most seasoned of our veterans, were there also. And there was hardly a family at home but had some representative, or at any rate some near or dear friend upon the sea.

Never had such a thing as this been *attempted* before in the history of the world. Other great expeditions had been fitted out and despatched, for instance, the great Armada which was beaten and dispersed by our Hearts of Oak and broken to pieces upon our Scottish rocks. But for nearly 150,000 men to be dispatched 7,000 miles by sea, and not a man be lost by shipwreck, is something over which old England may well be proud, and for which it should bow in hearty thanksgiving to God.



The men these ships were carrying were *new* men. Some of them certainly were of the old type—drinking, swearing, impure—though for three weeks, at any rate, every man of them was perforce a teetotaler, and did not suffer in consequence! But our army has been recruited in days past from our Sunday Schools with blessed consequences, and on board every ship there were men whose first concern was to find a spot where, with congenial souls, they could meet and pray.



## Page 17

All sorts of places were found. The Rev. E.P. Lowry, for instance, managed to get the use of the Lunatic Ward, and there the men met and prayed, caring nothing for the nickname of 'lunatic' freely bestowed throughout the voyage.

=Religious Work on a Troopship.=

The following letter from Colour-Sergeant J.H. Pearce, culled from the *Methodist Times*, gives us a specimen of the work done by the soldiers themselves upon these troopships, work that commenced as soon as the ship left dock, and continued to the end of the voyage. It is dated—

*'At sea, but in the hollow of His hand.*

'The first evening we got together all we could find, and decided to start at once, although still in harbour; so we looked out a little place under the poop, and decided after a chapter and prayer to come along again the next evening. But when I went along to see who would turn up, to my sorrow I found the devil had taken up position outside our trenches, and we were debarred from entering by a crowd playing "House." The next day I was rather sick but went up and found the devil still in possession. Brother Evans was too sick to go that evening; but Thursday, being better, he and I went from stem to stern, downstairs and up, searching for a place to meet for prayer and reading the Word. We were just giving up our search to go to our quarters and pray about it, when we alighted upon about eight of our dear brothers on one of the hatchways waiting. They had sent two of the number to look for Evans and me, so we got around a port-hole light, and read Romans v., had a few words, and a word of prayer. Evans read 604, "Soldiers' home above," and we went home to pray that the Lord would open a way.' We were to meet to-night at the same place to report progress. I was in the meantime to ask for the use of the orderly-room. The Lord had answered by opening the windows of heaven and the heart of the officer commanding the troops, and gave us exceedingly abundantly above what we asked or thought, for this morning the colonel met Mr. Cochrane, asked him if he were the Scripture reader, and told him he would give any place on board the vessel we liked to ask for. The orderly-room was granted us, and when we got there a number of R.A. clerks were at work. I spoke to the sergeant-major and told him we did not want to be objectionable, so would come when they had finished. He said, "Take no notice of us, go on." But there was too much commotion, so I went to see our orderly-room sergeant, who let us into the clerks' room, and there we had a real glory time. We know the Lord is with you at Aldershot, for we have realized His presence there. But He is here in wonderful power. We had a conversion last night on the hatchway. A man came along and listened, and in the dark we did not detect him till he spoke; so we have to report progress. We are to meet every night for prayer, reading and praise.



## Page 18

It would melt a heart of cast steel to have been in our little meeting to-night, as one after another of the dear fellows simply poured out his heart to the Lord in prayer and praise. You thought I liked a good innings, but why should not every blood-bought and blood-washed one be the same? Do I realize what Jesus has done for me? Then

“I must tell to sinners round  
What a dear Saviour I have found,”

and point to the redeeming Blood, and say, “Behold the way to God.” Glorious times yesterday, about seventy or eighty at parade service. I took John i. 29, “Behold the Lamb.” Afternoon Bible reading. Evening out-door meeting, about 400 or 500 men listening; then indoor meeting. A dear fellow of our regiment gloriously converted Saturday night. Took his place with us in the open-air ring last night.’

Such stories as these tell of intense devotion, of a consecration that is indeed ‘out and out.’ They show that every Christian soldier is a Christian missionary, and that a Christian army would be the most powerful missionary society in the world.

In many cases Christian officers were instrumental in bringing numbers of the men to Christ: among these may be mentioned Captain Thompson, of the 4th Field Battery R.A., who held services three times a week throughout the voyage, and whose loving and earnest addresses had a powerful influence upon his hearers.

Tons of literature of all descriptions were put upon the troopships at the port of embarkation. Mr. Punter, the Wesleyan Scripture reader, himself distributed six tons at Southampton. One society seemed to vie with another in thus ministering to the wants of the men. The Soldier’s Testament proved a boon to many, and as our lads return from the front, many of them show with pride their Testaments, safely brought back through many a fierce fight.

In the evenings, on many of the ships, large numbers met and sang hymns. A soldier never tires of singing, and his ‘Sankey’ is an unfailing friend. Many a lad had thus brought back to memory days of long ago, and gave himself to his mother’s God.

But, after all, the great Christian events of the voyage were the parade services. If there were chaplains on board, they naturally conducted the services. If not, the officers in some cases performed that duty, and we read in one soldier’s letter that on the Braemar Castle Prince Christian Victor conducted a service, perhaps a somewhat unusual occupation for a prince!

=Parade Services on a Troopship.=

But men in the ranks conducted parade services also. The commanding officer would send for some godly non-commissioned officer or private, and make him for the time being the 'padre' for the ship. Nor were these devoted Christians unduly exalted by the position in which they found themselves. It was no slight acknowledgment of worth that, all untrained, they found themselves for the time being Acting-Chaplains

## Page 19

to Her Majesty's forces. Godly Methodists like Sergt.-Major Foote or Sergeant Oates, for instance, were not the men to be spoiled by such a position. Sergeant Oates tells how the men pointed him out as the 'Wesleyan Parson,' but he tells also that being provost-sergeant he had an empty cell under his charge and that there he used to go to be alone with God. From such communings he came out a strong man—strong to resist temptation and to win men for Christ. And as for Sergt.-Major Foote, he was simply bubbling over with Christian enthusiasm—enthusiasm that did not lead him astray because it was united with a well-balanced judgment.

The best pictures we get of such parade services at sea are however from the pens of our chaplains. The Rev. E.P. Lowry gives us a vivid picture of a Sunday at sea, which we venture to transcribe from the *Methodist Times*:—

'This day has really in large measure been given up to the feelings and exercises of devotion. There has been no physical drill and regimental "doubling" round the deck to the accompaniment, first of the bagpipes, and then of the fifes and drums; no medical inspection of the men's feet; no lectures to officers on first-aid to the wounded; no rifle practice at the Boers in the shape of bottles and boxes thrown overboard to be fired at by scores of eager marksmen, and speedily sent to the bottom.' Early came an inspection of the ship's crew, stewards, and stokers, numbering about 180 in all, and including Africans and Lascars, of almost every imaginable hue, all dressed in their Sunday best. Then came the muster, at ten o'clock, of all our soldier lads, in red tunic and forage cap, for church parade. Nearly the whole 1,600 answered to their names, were divided into groups according to their various denominations, and marched to their various rendezvous for worship. The Presbyterians and Wesleyans numbered nearly 500, which would make a very full parade at Grosvenor Road Church. The place assigned to us was down below on what is called the first and second decks, where the men usually have their meals, and sleep in hammocks, or on the tables, forms and floor, as the case may be. All the tinware and other impedimenta had been carefully cleared away, and so the men at once filed in between the tables. A special form was provided for the two officers who attended, and another for Mr. Pearce, who acted as my precentor, and myself. The 200 ha'penny hymn-books sent in by the thoughtful kindness of the Rev. R.W. Allen rendered invaluable aid in the brightening of the service, for they made it possible for every man to join in the singing, which was touchingly hearty and tender. Only favourite hymns would be in place in an assembly so strangely mixed, so we began with "Jesu, Lover of my soul," followed by "What can wash away my sin?" "Just as I am," and "Oh, what a Saviour! that He died for me." Nearly half the men on board are Reservists, fresh from

## Page 20

home and home-ties, though now 4,000 miles at sea, and to them the singing of such hymns would inevitably be wakeful of all hallowed memories, and more helpful than any sermon.'Nevertheless, I ventured to speak to them solemnly, yet cheerily, of the mobilisation order that Joshua issued to the Hebrew host on the eve of battle, when he commanded them as the one supremely essential thing to sanctify themselves. The men were reminded that character tells, above all, on the field of battle, as Cromwell's troopers proved, and that since, of all work, war is the most appallingly responsible and perilous, every soldier is doubly called to be a saint. Such was "Stonewall" Jackson, America's most victorious general, and as in his case, so in theirs, grace would not rob them of grit, but increase their store. That grace they all might find in Christ.'We also all seemed to feel it a consoling thing to bow in prayer on that rolling lower deck for Queen and country, for comrades already at the seat of war, and for "the old folk at home," so, in our humble measure making ourselves one with that innumerable host who thus seek "to bind the whole round earth by golden chains about the feet of God." Not a man seemed unmoved, and the memory of that first full and official parade will be helpful to me for many days to come.

'The Roman Catholics were also mustered; but as there was no priest on board, associated worship was for them quite impossible, and they were accordingly at once dismissed.

'In the absence of an Anglican chaplain, Surgeon-Colonel McGill, the principal medical officer, read prayers with the men of the Royal Army Medical Corps. The captains of the various regimental companies did the same for their Church of England men; while in the main saloon the ship's captain conducted worship with as many of the naval and military officers as found it convenient to attend. At the harmonium presided Bandsman Harrison, of the Northhamptons, who for the last two years has helped ever so well at the Sunday afternoon services of sacred song in Aldershot.'After church there was an excellent gathering in the guardroom for prayer and Bible reading, when we refreshed our hearts with the thought of the glories of the ascended Saviour who is indeed "The Almighty"; and although in this singular meeting-place we have never before ventured to indulge in song, to-day we could not refrain from an exultant voicing of the Doxology.'At 6.30, just when loved ones at Aldershot were assembling for worship, our praying men met once more; this time on the upper deck, where there soon assembled a large and interested congregation, sitting on the bulwarks or lying about in every imaginable attitude on the deck. Close by there were half a dozen strong horses that had not felt their feet for over a fortnight; every now and then piercing bugle calls broke



## Page 21

in upon us, and the restless feet of many a man hurrying to and fro; but none of these things moved us, and the service was vigorously maintained for nearly an hour and a half. Mr. Pearce, the Army Scripture Reader, gave out the hymns; I read a chapter and gave an address as brightly tender and practical as I could make it; sundry soldiers also spoke and prayed; and a manifestly gracious impression was produced on all present. The men are eager to listen when sanctified common-sense is talked, and are just as ready good-naturedly to note anything that in the slightest degree is odd. One of our godliest helpers has a powerful voice, but sometimes inserts a sort of sentimental tremolo into his singing, which makes it distinctly suggestive of the bleating of a sheep. I was sitting in my cabin close by when this preliminary singing was started, and was not left many moments in doubt as to its unmistakable sheepishness, or lamb-likeness, for almost immediately I heard some of the young rascals sitting round put in a subdued accompaniment of "Baa-a-a." Yet none the less the song moved on to its triumphant close. And thus, amid tears and harmless mirth, we are sowing on board this ship the seeds of eternal life, humbly trusting that the Lord of the harvest will not suffer our labour to be wholly in vain.'

Or take this as a later picture from a private letter sent home by the Rev. Frank Edwards, Acting-Chaplain to the Welsh Wesleyan troops. Mr. Edwards went out at his own charge to render spiritual help to his countrymen.

'This morning we had a splendid parade service. It was held on the upper deck. The captain had a large awning put up specially for the service. A stand was then erected by the chief officer, and a few of the men draped it with flags, and I had a large box covered with the Union Jack to serve me as a pulpit. Then the men were marched up and formed into three sides of a square, of which the preacher and my choir formed the fourth side. The centre of the square was occupied by the officers.

'It was the most memorable service of my life. We opened with the hymn,—

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus,"

and the strains of that hymn from hundreds of manly voices was carried far out upon the waters. Then we had the Liturgy, and the responses came clear and strong in true military style. The singing of the grand old Te Deum was most impressive. We sang an Easter hymn with great feeling and earnestness, and before the sermon,

"Jesu, Lover of my soul."

Oh! how those men joined in the singing. It seemed to become a prayer on every lip, and the fitting expression of the thought of every heart. Its meaning was clearer than it had ever been before.

“While the nearer waters roll,  
While the tempest still is high.”

## Page 22

Then came the sermon, which was no sermon at all. True, I took a text, Isa. lxiii. 1, and I had a sermon in my mind. But when I looked round at those men, and thought how we were all standing on the very brink of eternity, and how few, perhaps, would ever see the dawn of another Easter morn, I knew it was not the place for an elaborate sermon. The time was precious and my words must be few and straight. I had a good time. It was impossible to miss it. Looking round upon those men as they came pressing closer and closer, with their hungry souls shining forth through their eyes, as they listened to the old, old story of the Saviour's everlasting love, and of His mighty conquest over sin and death, why, it seemed to me that if I did not preach to them the very *masts* would cry out and proclaim the glad tidings. I forgot self, and time, and place, and remembered nothing but my hearers and my message. And although I had been warned not to keep them long, as they would never listen, such was the sympathy between us, and so great the fascination of the old story of Christ's love and power to save, that they listened spellbound to the end. 'Then came the last hymn "Rock of Ages," and, oh! how it rolled out, clear and strong and triumphant, vibrating through the ship and echoing over the waters, a fitting close to a helpful and impressive service.'

In such manner ended a typical Sunday upon a troopship. And *only* a *typical* Sunday, for on scores of troopships Sundays of a similar character were spent. Such sacred hours must have proved splendid preparation for the approaching campaign. And many a lad who had never thought upon the great things of eternity before came face to face with them then.

And so with marvellous celerity the English army was transferred to South Africa, and all eyes and hearts followed it. The pride of the castle and of the cottage was there; the heir to vast estates, and the support of his widowed mother's old age; the scape-grace of the family, and the one on whom all its hopes centred.

=The Chaplains of the British Army.=

And with them went the best that the Church could send. A noble band of chaplains has our British army. Men like the venerable Dr. Edgehill, the Chaplain-General—the soldier's preacher, *par excellence*. Men like the Rev. A.W.B. Watson, who nearly killed himself by his acts of self-sacrifice on behalf of the men in the Soudan campaign.

Distinguished clergymen, Presbyterian and Wesleyan ministers, Army Scripture readers, agents of the Soldiers' Christian Association—all wanted to go; and the difficulty was not to find the men, but to choose among so many.

And so men of war and men of peace, soldiers of the Queen and soldiers of the King of kings, found themselves together on the shores of South Africa, sharing each other's dangers, privations and fatigues, all of them loyal to their Queen, and each of them doing his work to the best of his ability.



## Page 23

And the prayers of Christian England were with them night and day. What wonder that through the army went a wave of Christian influence such as had never been felt before.

And then from the Colonies they came. Australia and Canada sent their choicest and their best. From the dusky sons of the British Empire in India came representatives also. South Africa itself had its own goodly tribute to offer. And with them all came Christian workers—chaplains from Australia and Canada; missionaries by the score in South Africa, ready to do everything in their power for the soldiers of the Queen.

And so it came to pass that the whole British Empire was represented on the South African veldt. And the prayers, not only of Christian Britain, but of the whole Empire, ascended to Heaven as the prayer of one man for our soldier lads across the sea. Never has the sentiment of Tennyson's beautiful poem been so translated into fact before, for in very deed the whole round world was every way

'Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.'

The months that witnessed the welding of the British Empire into one great family witnessed also one great effort for her soldiers, and one glorious chain of prayer for their conversion. What wonder that hundreds, if not thousands, turned to God!

[Illustration: PARADE SERVICE ON THE TUGELA.]

## Chapter IV

### TO THE FRONT

The two most important ports of disembarkation were Capetown and Durban. East London and Port Elizabeth necessarily came in for their share of the troops, but that share was only small.

It was therefore at Capetown and Durban that Christian workers specially prepared to receive our soldiers and do all that was possible for their comfort ere they departed for the front. These towns had already thousands of refugees from the Transvaal upon their hands. Many of them were absolutely destitute. They had left the Transvaal at almost a moment's notice, and large numbers had only the clothes they were wearing. But the generosity of the colonists knew no bounds, and gladly they gave of their abundance and often of their poverty to help their poor distressed brethren. Daily relief was granted where needed, and all things possible were done for their comfort.

=South African Generosity.=

And now the coming of the army gave fresh opportunity for the display of generosity. Not only were the soldiers received with hearty cheers, but lavish gifts were showered



upon them. Flowers, fruits, tobacco, dainties of all kinds were handed to them as they departed to the front, and in many cases sent up after them.

A gentleman from 'up country' wrote to Capetown to ask when any troops would be going through a certain railway station, and he would undertake to supply with fruit all troops passing for the next two months.



## Page 24

At Christmas a number of ladies at one of the stations up the line had all sorts of good things for the men who had to travel on Christmas Day. Another gentleman accidentally heard that a certain train was going to stop at the railway station nearest his house, and hastily collected twenty-four dozen new-laid eggs for the men to have for breakfast! Such Christian kindness as this appeals powerfully to Mr. Thomas Atkins, as it does to most men, and he deserved all that South Africa could give him.

=The Soldiers' Christian Association in South Africa.=

At Capetown the Soldiers' Christian Association was specially active. This enterprising and successful Association was inaugurated seven years ago as the direct result of a series of recommendations submitted to the National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations. It has its branches in most military centres and is exceedingly popular with the men. In connection with this war the S.C.A., as it is familiarly called, has taken an entirely new departure. It has taken a leaf, and a very valuable leaf, out of the book of the American Young Men's Christian Association. That enterprising Association did a great deal of tent work during the late war with Spain, and such work proving of the greatest value, the S.C.A. has followed the same course during the war in South Africa. At first there was considerable difficulty in getting permission from headquarters; but at last it came, and on Saturday, Nov. 11, 1899, Messrs. Hinde and Fleming sailed. A further band of seven workers accompanied Mr. A.H. Wheeler, the General Secretary of the Association a fortnight later, and on their arrival they found that a general order had been issued to the following effect—'Permission has been given to the Soldiers' Christian Association to send out tents and writing-material for the troops. Facilities are to be accorded to the Association to put up tents at fixed stations, as far as military requirements will permit.'

How well the work of the Association has been done has been told in the organ of the S.C.A.—*News from the Front*.

'Eight tents, fully equipped and capable of seating two hundred and fifty men, made of green rot-proof canvas, and ten smaller ones made of the same material for sleeping purposes, besides four iron buildings to take the place of tents in the colder districts, have been sent out from the mother country. The tents have been stationed at Wynberg (No. 1 General Hospital), Orange River, Enslin Camp, Sterkstroom, Dordrecht, Kimberley (after the siege), Bloemfontein, Ladysmith (after the siege), Dewdrop Camp, Arcadia, Frere Camp, and other places. It was Lord Roberts' special wish that two of the iron buildings should be erected at Bloemfontein and one each at Kimberley and Ladysmith.'[1]

Lord Roberts himself opened the first S.C.A. tent pitched in Bloemfontein, and the late Earl of Airlie, whose death none more than his gallant lads of the 12th Lancers mourn, opened the tent at Enslin. These tents became the Soldiers' Homes, and are free to

men of all denominations. In them stationery, ink, and pens are all free; and there are books to read and games to play.

## Page 25

Occasionally they have been put to other uses, such as hospital depots, shelters for refugees, and temporary hospitals. Generals and their staffs have been quartered in them for the night, and, in fact, they have accompanied the British soldier to the front as his 'home from home' wherever he has gone.

But to return to the work of the S.C.A. at Capetown. When this work began it was found that there was no post-office at the south arm or jetty where the troops disembarked, and thousands of the troops were proceeding to the front without the opportunity of posting the letters they had written, or sending home the money they had received during the voyage. With his usual carelessness, 'Tommy' was leaving his letters with any one he saw on the jetty, and even confiding his money to be sent home by any chance passer-by.

The S.C.A. got permission to undertake this work and soon had an amateur post-office in full working order. In this way thousands of letters reached anxious friends at home which might otherwise have been delayed for weeks. And more than this, thousands of pounds in money were received by the workers and safely transmitted home, one regiment alone, the King's Own Scottish Borderers, committing to the care of the S.C.A. workers no less than L800. Large quantities of writing-material and religious literature were also distributed amongst the troops before they proceeded on their long and tedious journey up country.

[Footnote 1: *Our Soldiers.*]

=Work Among the Refugees.=

It will be remembered that when the war broke out the missionaries were, with very few exceptions, compelled to leave the Transvaal. The General Superintendent of Wesleyan Missions in the Transvaal District, the Rev. Geo. Weavind, had been so long resident in the country as to be able to take up his rights as a burgher. He therefore stayed to look after his few remaining people, and four other Wesleyan missionaries remained by special permission with him. For the rest, the missionaries were scattered: some to Capetown, some to Durban, some to obtain appointments as acting-chaplains, or officiating clergymen; but all of them to work in some way or other for the Master, to whose service they had given their lives.

At Durban, similar work was done. The Transvaal Relief Committee (a sub-committee of the Durban Town Council Relief Committee), with the Rev. Geo. Lowe as chairman, did splendid work among the refugees, of whom at one time there were 21,000 in Durban alone. This relief work was splendidly organized and most effective.

The Sisters Evelyn and Miriam, who organized much of this work, were Wesley deaconesses employed in South Africa. Sister Evelyn Oats was resting in England after five years' most exhausting and successful work, but hurried back to South Africa on the



first news of the outbreak of war, and was soon hard at work among the refugees. Sister Miriam had been employed at Johannesburg, and remained there until nearly every one had gone, and she was left alone in the house. And then she also left and found her way to Durban, where her nursing skill was of the utmost value among the poor women, homeless and destitute, in the hour of their deepest need.



## Page 26

The rate of relief was one shilling per day for adults, and sixpence for each child under fourteen; and the utmost care was taken in the distribution of the money. Funds were most generously provided, but it was a great relief when an application for 1,500 stretcher-bearers came from the front, and thus the congestion among the men was rendered less severe. How eagerly the poor fellows accepted the offered employment, and the drill hall was in a few minutes crowded with those eager to go!

=Welcoming the Troops at Durban.=

At Durban also the heartiest of hearty welcomes was given to the incoming troops. In connection with the Transvaal Relief Committee there was a commissariat department for the purchase of bread and fruit, *etc.*, and a Welcome Committee to receive the soldiers as they came.

At first the idea was only to provide bread and fruit for the men on landing, but it was soon found, as at Capetown, that the men had letters to post and money to send home. It was also found that the men wanted some one to write letters for them, and this work also was undertaken, young ladies gladly giving of their time to this work; and thousands of friends by their assistance heard of the arrival of their dear ones at Durban.

Christmas cards were also freely given to the men, who wanted in this way to send Christmas greetings home; and, in fact, Tommy Atkins had hardly been so spoilt before—not even by some good ladies in England—as he was during these eventful weeks at Durban. The letters and messages sent home were in many cases of a most touching and tender character, and once more Tommy Atkins proved himself to be anything but an ‘Absent-minded Beggar.’

As at Capetown, money in large sums was entrusted to the workers to send home, and quite a large number of watches were handed over for the same purpose. In this work ministers and members of all Churches took part. The military authorities cleared as many difficulties as possible out of their way, and all who took part in it found it a labour of love.

There was no time to do much direct spiritual work at either Capetown or Durban. The troops were hurried to the front as fast as possible. But whenever it was possible to speak a word for Christ that word was spoken, and the kindly act was a sermon in itself.

Thus were our soldier lads welcomed by our children across the sea. And by their kindness to our men they have forged another link in the chain of love which binds the colonies to the homeland.



'Britannia's piccanini,' as Natal loves to call herself, has proved worthy of the old mother; and the old mother who is making such sacrifices for her children in South Africa will not forget that they are striving hard to show themselves worthy of her care.

## Chapter V

WITH LORD METHUEN

## Page 27

To Lord Methuen was given command of the Kimberley Relief Column. He had with him the Guards, the Highland Brigade, and several of the finest infantry regiments in Her Majesty's army. A great task was allotted to him, but he was considered equal to any responsibility. He has been freely criticised for his conduct of this part of the campaign. It has been stated that he was prodigal of the lives of his men by direct assaults when he might have accomplished his purpose by sweeping flank movements, as Lord Roberts did afterwards. But then Lord Roberts had cavalry, and Methuen was sadly deficient in that arm of the service; and how to make such turning movements without sufficient cavalry, no one yet has been able to tell. However, it is not for us to enter into any criticism or defence of a British General.

What concerns us most for the purpose of this book, and what we rejoice to know, is that Lord Methuen was a humble and sincere Christian, who did all that lay in his power to further the spiritual work among his men. What this means to a chaplain or Scripture reader at the front can hardly be told. This we do know, that the direct assistance of the commanding officer often makes all the difference between rich success and comparative failure.

=Christian Work at De Aar and Orange River.=

The rallying-point for the Kimberley Relief Column was, in the first place, De Aar, the junction where the line to Kimberley connects with the line to Bloemfontein. In course of time, De Aar became the great distributing centre of stores for the forces on the way to Kimberley and Colesberg. Here the Army Service Corps held sway, and enormous were the stores committed to their care.

But at first, as we have said, De Aar was the rallying place for our troops, as they moved up from Capetown, and here it was that they got their first sight of the Boers. As they placed their pickets and sentries round the camp for the night, a Boer woman was heard to say, 'The rooineks are so afraid that their men will run away, that they have had to put armed men round the camp to keep the others in.' That was her way of interpreting the duties of British sentries!

Here it was that Christian work among the troops began in real earnest, and Sergeant Oates obtained permission from the leaders of the Railway Mission to use the Carnarvon Hall for Soldiers' Services. The colonel heard of it and put the service in orders, so that without any pre-arrangement on the part of the promoters, Sergeant Oates obtained the attendance of all the Wesleyan soldiers in De Aar at the time.



## Page 28

By-and-by they moved up to the Orange River, 570 miles beyond Capetown. Here they found that the station-master was a nominal Wesleyan, and he most kindly gave them the use of his house for religious services. Still, they were without chaplains, and what, perhaps, was, in their opinion, quite as bad, without hymn-books! Sergeant Oates found the name of the Rev. E. Nuttall, of Capetown, on a piece of dirty old paper in the camp. He did not know anything about him, or even whether he was still in Capetown, but he felt moved to write to him for those precious hymn-books. So he read his letter to the lads, and they 'put a prayer under the seal' and sent it off. The station-master at Belmont, who was going 'down,' promised to do what he could for these singing soldiers, who were without their books, and so even in worse state than preachers without their sermons; and, strange to say, letter, station-master, and Rev. E.P. Lowry appeared at the Rev. E. Nuttall's house almost at the same time! With Mr. Lowry came Mr. A. Pearce, Army Scripture Reader, from North Camp, Aldershot. He remained at Orange River while Mr. Lowry moved on with the Guards, to which Brigade he was attached.

By this time the troops were ready for the advance, and the chaplains were with their men. Rev. Mr. Faulkner was the senior Church of England chaplain. The Rev. James Robertson and the Rev. W.S. Jaffrey represented the Presbyterians, and the Rev. E.P. Lowry was the senior Wesleyan chaplain.

=The Battle of Belmont.=

And then came the battle of Belmont! From Orange River the troops had been compelled to march, and had their first taste of the African sun in the greatness of his strength. The legs of the kilted men were blistered as though boiling water had been poured over them, and all but the old campaigners in every regiment suffered acutely. Belmont was reached after dark; the troops were without over-coats or blankets, and the night was biting cold. But they lay down anywhere, glad enough to stretch themselves upon the ground or seek the friendly shelter of a ditch. Here they lay unmurmuringly—members of the proudest aristocracy in the world, noblemen of ancient lineage, quite ready to sleep in a ditch or die, for that matter, for their country.

Before two o'clock in the morning, they were aroused, and marched out to attack the stronghold of the Boers. And nobly they performed their task. But let a Christian soldier—our old friend Sergeant Oates—describe the battle.

=A Sergeant's Account of the Battle.=

'On the 23rd November (Martinmas Day), we marched out early in the morning, and at daybreak found ourselves facing the Boers in a formidable position. All was so still during our march to this place. While marching along, a young goat had got parted from its mother and commenced bleating mournfully in front of us, and although I am not superstitious, it made me feel quite uncomfortable, as it did many more. What became

of it eventually I cannot say, but I think the poor little thing got roughly handled, if not killed.



## Page 29

'We were not long before we came within rifle range, and then the bullets began to fly about our ears as we advanced towards the Boer position. We pressed on; first one and then another kept dropping out, and shouts of "stretcher bearer" were heard very frequently. Nothing except death would have stopped our men that morning, so determined they seemed. On we went, and faster and thicker the bullets came, spending themselves in the sand at our feet. At last we reached the kopje, and rested at the foot a short while, and then up we went. Lieutenant Brine and myself reached the top in advance of the others. As soon as we popped our heads over the top, five of the Northamptons popped their heads over the other side, facing us with their rifles, at the present, and it was hard to convince them we were friends, so excited were they. We were not allowed to remain at peace long, for evidently some one had spied us. Ping, ping, came the Mauser bullets; swish, swish, the Martinis. We soon got to rather close quarters and were able to do some good shooting. I was still close to Mr. Brine, and we had been talking some few minutes, when some one spied him and he had two or three narrow escapes. He moved to what he thought was a safer place, and had about four shots, which all told. He gave me the range, and was just taking aim a fifth time when a Martini bullet pierced his throat, and he fell to rise no more. That was the first death I saw, and I felt somewhat sick. Soon, however, we charged, and up went the *white flag*; but it was the most difficult piece of work I ever saw, trying to stop our men in the middle of a charge. However, they were stopped in time, and instead of being killed, the remaining Boers were taken prisoners. The battle over, we returned to camp, and then came the sad duty of burying our fourteen dead comrades. There were not many dry eyes, but I venture to say there were many thankful hearts.'

=Mr. Lowry's Adventure on the Veldt.=

The Rev. E.P. Lowry had a very trying experience in connection with this battle. He had marched out with the colonel of the Grenadiers, intending to return to camp as soon as the railway line was reached; but it was impossible to find his way back in the darkness, and he therefore went on with the men. Presently the bullets were whistling all around him, and as soon as the heaviest fighting on the left was over, he busied himself among the wounded. Feeling however, that he could do nothing more, and that he had better be in camp to receive the wounded, he determined to make the best of his way back. But he was wrongly directed, and got lost on the veldt. Hour after hour he wandered about, but could find no trace of the camp, into which he had marched in the dark the previous night, and out of which he had marched in the dark that same morning. His thirst consumed him, he could walk no further, he was utterly exhausted. How many miles he had wandered he could not tell. The din of battle had died away, and all was one unbroken stillness. He sat down under the scanty shade of a thorn bush, and with a feeling of intense desolation upon him made the following entry in his pocket-book:—



## Page 30

'Am now without water, without bread, and almost without hope, save in Jesus Christ, my Saviour, in whom now, as ever, I trust for everlasting life.'

He knelt down and offered up what might well have been his last prayer, and then had a vivid impression made upon his mind that he should go in an entirely different direction from that in which he had been travelling. After wandering in utter weariness for some time in this direction, he saw in the dim distance a cart moving across the veldt. With all the strength he had left, he shouted. Presently the cart stopped, and he saw a man dismount. Slowly he came near, covering the poor, weary wanderer with his rifle. Who it was—Briton or Boer—Mr. Lowry did not know and hardly did he care. It was his one chance of life, and 'all that a man hath will he give for his life.' In his exhausted state, the heat and fury of the battle seemed as nothing to the intense loneliness and desolation of the veldt.

But a 'friend' drew near, for the man who so slowly came towards him was a Rimington Scout, and he and his comrade in the cart soon carried their chaplain to help and deliverance. They were in charge of some battle-field loot which they were taking temporarily to a Dutchman's house of which they had possession. Here there was a feather bed, and, what was better still, food and drink. That same night the scouts were ordered to Belmont, and back with them went the wandering chaplain, still weary and faint, to carry with him as long as he lived the memory of his awful experience upon the veldt.

They were burying the dead when Mr. Lowry returned to Belmont. The first to fall on that fearful day had been Corporal Honey. He had given his heart to God on the passage out, and great was the rejoicing of the comrades who had led him to Christ that he had been able to bear a good testimony until that fateful morning.

=At the Battle of Modder River.=

Then followed Graspan or Enslin, where the Naval Brigade suffered so seriously; and then the fight that Lord Methuen considered the most terrible in British history—the battle of the Modder River. For twelve hours the battle continued. They had had a long and wearying march and were looking forward to a good breakfast, but instead they had to go straight into the fight, and it was twelve hours before that breakfast came. Men who fought at Dargai and Omdurman tell us that these were mere child's play compared with the fight of the Modder River. Hour after hour the firing was maintained, until in many cases the ammunition was all expended. And yet there was no relief. The pitiless rain of bullets from the Boer fortifications continued, and it was impossible to carry ammunition to our lads through such a fire. Our men could in many cases neither advance nor retire, and men who had expended all their ammunition had just to lie still—some of them for six hours—while the bullets flew like hail just above them. To raise the head the merest trifle from the dust meant death. Many a godless lad prayed then,

who had never prayed before, and many a forgotten vow was registered afresh in the hour of danger.



## Page 31

Let Sergeant Oates again give us his experience:—

'It was a terrible battle. I had two very narrow escapes there. A tiny splinter took a small piece of skin off the end of my chin, and another larger one just caught my boot and glided off. It almost went through. Again I got away unharmed. That day was a long prayer-meeting to me. Wherever I went and whatever I did, these words were on my lips:—

""What a wonderful Saviour is Jesus, my Jesus.  
What a wonderful Saviour is Jesus, my Lord."

'Once and only once I grew weak, and almost wished myself wounded and out of it all, when this text came in my mind: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Oh! how ashamed I felt that I should be so weak and faithless!

'The third day was the fiercest, and to me it was a day of prayer. Ten long hours did the conflict last; the din was awful! The spiteful bizz of the Remington bullet, the swish of the Martini, and the shriek of the Mauser, coupled with the unearthly booming of the Hotchkiss quick-firer, and the boom, roar, and bursting of the shrapnel on both sides, all this intermingled with voices calling out orders, and shouting for stretchers, went on until the shades of evening fell over a day which, Lord Methuen says, has never had an equal. Yet above all this din, I was able to hear that voice which calms our fears saying: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." With such promises as these, what would one not go through.

'That night, after the enemy had retired, I had to lead my company across a ford in the Modder River. It was very dark, and I was not sure of the way; I had crossed the river by the same ford early in the afternoon, but it was in the thick of the battle, so I was too busy with something else to take any notice of the road. I was cut off from my company, and got rather anxious about it. Looking with the aid of a match, at my text-book I found these words: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass." I was not slow to follow this blessed advice, and within half an hour I was with my company again, wet through and tired out. Yet, with these uncomfortable things about me, I was able to thank God for His loving care, and now I can write "tried and proved" against that text.'

And yet, though the fight was so terrible, the number of casualties was singularly few, considering the character of the encounter. Lord Methuen, however, was slightly wounded, and Colonel Stopford, of the Coldstream Guards, was shot dead.

One of the Boer batteries was planted close to the native Wesleyan Church, which was riddled with shot and shell from British guns intent upon dominating the Boer position.

## Page 32

That night, so far as possible, the chaplains gathered their men round them on the field, and many a homely evensong was held.

Then followed a period of quiet. There, frowning in front of them, was the Boers' natural fortress of Magersfontein, rendered impregnable by a wonderful series of trenches, at the extent and perfection of which they could only guess. They knew that there must be at least one desperate attempt to take them, if not more. But three great battles in one week had exhausted officers and men, and it was absolutely necessary to rest.

=Fellowship and Work at the Modder.=

This was the opportunity for the Christian workers. On the march or in the battle all that they could do was to speak a word of cheer as often as possible. Christian soldiers could not meet for fellowship; all that they could do was occasionally to have a hearty hand-grip or shout '494,' as a comrade passed by. With the shout of '494' they went into the battle, and when they came out their little Christian company was sorely depleted. But now they had time to look round, to count up their losses, to greet their comrades of other regiments again, to receive fresh accessions to their ranks.

=The Soldiers' Home.=

Mr. Percy Huskisson, of the South African General Mission, quickly secured the use of the native day school, which was also the worship room for the Wesleyan natives, and fitted it up as a Soldiers' Home. He and his colleague, Mr. Darroll, were indefatigable in their efforts on behalf of the men, and night by night the newly transformed Home was crowded. Lord Methuen himself opened it, and personally thanked the workers for their splendid services on the field of battle. In the course of his address, he said: 'I have heard of newspaper correspondents risking their lives when they are well paid for it, but you fellows seem to have no idea of danger; the shadow of the Almighty seems over you, or you would have been, ere this, in your graves, with many more of our brave men.' But under the shadow of the Almighty, the workers were secure, and are secure to-day!

=Local Helpers in Good Work.=

One of the best helpers the chaplains had was Mr. Westerman, who held an important position on the railway line, and who was steward of the Wesleyan Church at Modder River. He had been a prisoner among the Boers for six weeks, and on many occasions they had threatened to shoot him as a spy. They had not, however, injured him or his property in any way. It was, therefore, a most unfortunate occurrence that this good man's house and furniture should have been wantonly damaged by British soldiers on their arrival at the place. Evidently they thought the house belonged to a Boer. An order was, of course, promptly issued stopping such wanton destruction for the future.



## Page 33

Another good Christian man at Modder River was Mr. Fraser, a Scotch Presbyterian, whose house had been most unfortunately wrecked by the bombardment. He and Mr. Westerman met week by week, during the period of the Boer invasion, for Christian worship. These two gentlemen rendered splendid service to our Christian soldiers, and to them both we are greatly indebted. Every chaplain, every scripture reader, every agent of every society, every Christian soldier was now busily at work. The battles had made a great impression on the men. The war had only just begun, and they knew there were other terrible fights in store. The sight of the dead and dying was something to which they had not yet become accustomed. The stern reality of war was upon them, and, as Mr. Lowry wrote, 'There are no scoffers left in Lord Methuen's camp.' Take one instance out of many.

= 'After Many Days.' =

Years ago, in Gibraltar, a sergeant came to a Christian soldier, and with words of scorn and blasphemy asserted his own independence of any power above him. Said he: 'My heart is my own. I am independent of everything and everybody, your God included.' The reply was a soldier's reply, straight and to the point: 'Jack, some day you will face death, and, who knows, I may see you, and if the stiffness does not leave your knees before then, my name is not what it is.'

Three years passed since then—three years of prayer on his account—and on the night of November 28, 1899, after the river had been passed, a hand was laid on that Christian's shoulder, and a voice said: 'Joe, I have done to-day what I have not done for thirteen years: I have offered up a prayer, and it has been answered. I have these last few hours seen all my life—seen it, as, I fancy, God sees it—and I have vowed, if He will forgive me, to change my ways.'

With Christian thoughtfulness his friend did not remind him of the incident at Gibraltar, but it was doubtless present to both minds just then. So does war melt the hardest hearts!

= Open-air Work. =

The letters from Christian soldiers at the front are full of stories of conversion. Again, we hear of private soldiers and non-commissioned officers at outposts conducting parades. After Magersfontein, the Christian influence deepened and the number of conversions increased. By-and-by, enteric began to claim its victims, and the Home had to be used as a fever hospital. Open-air work then became the order of the day. Some of the Christian soldiers met between six and seven in the evening, and marched to the camp of a regiment or battery, where they held what they call an 'out and out' open-air meeting. Sometimes they would get as many as a thousand listeners, and often the Word was so powerful that there and then men decided for Christ. The

Saturday Testimony Meetings were gatherings of great power, as our soldier-lads told to the others, who crowded round, what a great Saviour they had found.



## Page 34

=Prayer under Fire.=

Now and then the monotony of ordinary duty was broken by an engagement. Such an interlude is pictured for us in vivid language in the following extract from the pen of one of our Christian soldiers:—

'On January 22, my battery advanced to a position directly in front of the hill occupied by the Boers, and almost within rifle range of their trenches. We had no cover whatever, and they dropped shell after shell into us for nearly two hours; and after dark we retired without a man or horse wounded. One of our gunners was hit with a splinter on the belt, which bruised him slightly, but did not wound him or stop the performance of his duty. One of their shells hit one of our ammunition wagons, and smashed part of it to matchwood. If God's mercy was not plainly shown in this, I say men are as blind as bats, and less civilized. During the whole of the two hours after I had taken the range, I had to sit, kneel, or stand with my face to the foe, and watch the Boer guns fire, then await the terrible hissing noise, next see the dust fly mountains high just in front of me, finally press my helmet down to prevent the segments hitting me too hard should any fall on me, but not one touched me, though they pattered like large hailstones on a corrugated iron roof. We amused ourselves by picking them up between bursts. I prayed earnestly all through that battle....

'I sit and muse over the chatter of my little children many a time, and almost reach out for them, as though they were here. They are near to my heart, and in the precious keeping of my Saviour.'

With those last pathetic sentences we may well close this chapter. The picture they call before us is one we are not likely to forget. The soldier grimed with the heat and dirt of battle; shells flying round him on every hand; Death stalking unchecked but a few yards away; and then the vision of little children, their chatter striking upon the father's ear in that far-off land, hands even stretched out to receive them. Absent-minded! nay, thou soldier-poet, thou hast not got the measure of Thomas Atkins yet. 'They are near to my heart, and in the precious keeping of my Saviour.' Thank God for that!

'Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away;  
In Jesus' keeping we are safe and they.'

## Chapter VI

### MAGERSFONTEIN

At a dinner party in 1715, in the Duke of Ormond's residence at Richmond, the conversation happened to turn upon 'short prayers.' Among the distinguished guests was Dr. Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, who listened with special interest. 'I, too,' said



the Bishop, 'can tell you a short prayer I heard recently, which had been offered up by a common soldier just before the battle of Blenheim, a better one than any of you have yet quoted: "O God, if in this day of battle I forget Thee, do *Thou* not forget me." [2]



## Page 35

Years have gone by. On December 10, 1899, when so many of our brave men had to face death in South Africa, immediately before going into action at Modder River, the gallant officer commanding the 65th Howitzer Battery gathered his gunners around him, and offered up the very prayer of the poor Blenheim soldier: 'Almighty God, if this day we forget Thee, do Thou not forget us.'

[Footnote 2: This, as the reader will probably note, is but a variant of a still older story.]

=Prayer before Battle.=

So begins a tiny booklet issued by the South African General Mission. The picture it presents to us is one beautiful in the extreme. It reminds us of the Covenanters of long ago. We have heard a great deal of Boer prayer-meetings. Who is there to record for us the prayer-meetings held in the British camp? But this artillery officer and his short prayer will not be forgotten, and will remain as the most touching expression of a soldier's need and a soldier's hope.

And, surely, if such a prayer as this were needed at any time, it was before the battle of Magersfontein. All was so sudden, so unexpected! In a moment death was upon them! All unlooked-for that deadly hail of bullets! No time for confession of sin! No time even for a whispered prayer! A few brief moments, and the flower of the British army lay prone to rise no more!

It was the Highland Brigade that suffered most severely—the brigade of which every true Britisher is so justly proud. Who that has not seen these Highlanders march can have any idea of their perfect bearing and splendid condition? The faultless line, the measured rising and falling of the white gaiters, until you almost forget they are men who are marching there, and fancy it must be the rising and falling of the crank in some gigantic piece of machinery.

And the individual men. What splendid fellows they are! of what fine physique, of what firm character! It is an honour, surely, to command such men as these. And as General Wauchope marches at their head to his death, with stern, sad face and purpose fixed, what wonder that his heart is racked with pain, as he fears, not for himself, but for his men. A fine Christian was Andrew Wauchope. Quiet and reserved with regard to his religion, as most Scotchmen are, but, if we are to believe the reports that come to us on all hands, a man who lived near to God.

=A Scotch Chaplain.=

There was another notable man with the Highland Brigade that day; and, as there are few to tell the story of our chaplains, while there are many to tell the story of our soldiers, we make no apology for introducing to our readers in more than a few words

one of the finest of our chaplains—the Rev. James Robertson, of the Church of Scotland.



## Page 36

By the courtesy of Dr. Theodore Marshall, we cull from *St. Andrew* the following particulars: 'Mr. Robertson is a native of Grantown, and, after finishing his university course at Edinburgh, was licensed by the Presbytery of Abernethy. He is a soldier's son, and very early in his ministry determined to devote his life to soldiers. His first military appointment was the acting-chaplaincy at Dover. In 1885 he was transferred to Cairo, and accompanied the Cameron Highlanders on the march to Abri, thence on the return journey to Wady Halfa. All the way through, the men were loud in his praises. He spared himself no toil, cheerfully shared the men's privations and dangers, and became to them almost more than a friend. The *May Record* tells how Robertson was specially reported by his Church for bringing in Lieutenant Cameron, who had been mortally wounded in the previous December; how, in the absence of a second doctor, he had volunteered to go out with a stretcher party under heavy fire, and look after the wounded; and, as Lieutenant Cameron had got hit while apart from the others, he had to be brought in at all risks. For his services he was mentioned in despatches, and received the medal and Khedival star.'<sup>[3]</sup>

Shortly after the close of the Egyptian War, Mr. Robertson received his commission. He served for some time as junior chaplain in London, and then was removed to Dublin. From Dublin he went to Edinburgh, and remained there until he was ordered to South Africa, as a member of General Wauchope's staff and chaplain to the Highland Brigade. In South Africa he has greatly distinguished himself, and it goes for saying that 'Padre' Robertson, as he is affectionately called, is one of the most honoured and best-loved men in Her Majesty's army.

We will, however, allow the head of the military work in the Presbyterian Church (the Rev. Dr. Marshall) to tell himself of Mr. Robertson's work in South Africa. We quote from an article published by him in the *Home and Foreign Mission Record*:—

'Of the work of the Rev. J. Robertson in the field, it is unnecessary to write, as the newspaper correspondents have referred so often to his bravery and splendid services. One correspondent writes to me: "It is no exaggeration to say that the whole of Methuen's army, and especially the Highland Brigade, deem his bravery worthy of the V.C. Everywhere, in train or camp, officers' mess or soldiers' tent, Padre Robertson is proclaimed a hero." I was pleased to notice in the *Record* (the Church of England weekly), the other day, a letter from the Church of England chaplain who is with Lord Methuen. After describing the battle of Magersfontein, he refers to the Highland Brigade: "Being chiefly Highlanders, they were in Robertson's charge. He, good-hearted fellow, was risking his life in the trenches and under fire to find General Wauchope's body. Why he was not killed in his fearless efforts



## Page 37

I cannot say." In one of the latest telegrams I see reference to him at the battle of Koodoosberg, whither he had accompanied General Macdonald and the Highland Brigade. "One interesting feature of the fighting was the activity of Chaplain Robertson. He acted in turns as a galloper, as a water-carrier, and as a stretcher-bearer. Wherever a ready hand was wanted, the chaplain was always to the fore, and won golden opinions from officers and men alike." "You must not, however, suppose Mr. Robertson's exertions are altogether in the field or connected with matters which lie outside his duty as a minister of Christ. While employed by his general as a despatch rider and intermediary with the Boers, and in many other ways in which as "non-combatant" he could be useful to the army, and especially to his own Highlanders, he has given his chief thought and work to their spiritual concerns. We have all noticed his name in connection with the pathetic funeral of his much-loved chief, General Wauchope; but for days after each of the battles of Modder River and Magersfontein he was busy identifying and burying the dead. Being, as a Presbyterian minister, a *persona grata* to the Boers, he was allowed nearer to their lines than any one else, in the discharge of those sad duties, and conducted many funerals both of Boer and Briton. Speaking of his feelings in the field hospital and alongside the burying trench he says: "War seems devil's work. But all the same, war has its better side, and out of evil has come good. Hearts have been softened. We have frequent meetings of an evening. Hundreds attend. I've never been at heart so touched myself, nor so evangelical. I seem to hear repeated, 'Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.' I thank God the Gospel at Modder is proving in not a few cases the power of God unto salvation."

In another letter to a mutual friend, Mr. Robertson speaks of his services on the last Sunday of the year, and as showing how deep is the spiritual impression produced, he wished me to be informed that at the close of the short service he asked all who desired to partake of the Holy Communion to remain. To his joy some 250 officers and men came and took their places at the Lord's Table. To any one who knows how difficult it is to get soldiers to come to the Communion, that fact speaks volumes for the extent and depth of the religious movement among our men. They have had much to make them serious. The death of their beloved General Wauchope and of so many of their comrades must have greatly affected them. Mr. Robertson says, 'There is only one heart in the Highland Brigade, and it is *sad and sore*. But good is being brought out of evil.'

At the meeting of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, held this year, the Moderator said he wished to read the following letter from Scottish soldiers at the front, which had just been put into his hands:—



## Page 38

'WINBURG, *May 7th*, 1900.

'From the warrant officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the Highland Brigade, to the Moderator of the General Assembly, Church of Scotland.

'Sir,—We, the undersigned, as representatives of the regiments now forming the Highland Brigade at present serving in South Africa under General Hector Macdonald, do hereby desire to express our appreciation of the untiring energy and praise-worthy zeal of Major J. Robertson, our chaplain, not only in camp, but also on the field. He is invariably among the first to succour our wounded, and many a Scottish mother's heart will be gladdened by the knowledge that her lad's last moments were brightened by our chaplain's kind administrations. At Magersfontein, Paardeberg, and other engagements, he was always to be found in the firing line, with a cheerful word or a kindly nod of encouragement, and on many occasions has acted as A.D.C. to our generals. Sir, soldiers are proverbially bad speakers, but we venture to request that this short note may be read aloud on the occasion of the meeting of the General Assembly at Edinburgh during May, 1900.'

The letter bore twenty-five signatures, including that of the sergeant-major and sergeants and corporals in the Black Watch, the Highland Light Infantry, the Seaforths, and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

[Footnote 3: *St. Andrew.*]

=Mr. Lowry at Magersfontein.=

Such was the man whom General Wauchope chose for his companion on that fateful day. Rumour says that the General had a presentiment that he would be killed, and certainly he asked Mr. Robertson to keep near him, perhaps longing for Christian society at the last. What really happened, perhaps we shall never know with any degree of certainty. All seems to have been confusion. Perhaps the best and most connected account that has come to us is from the pen of the Rev. E.P. Lowry, who was present during the battle. We quote from the *Methodist Times*:—

[Illustration: REV. E.P. LOWRY.

(From a photograph by Neale, of Bloemfontein.)]

'Our second Sunday on the Modder River commenced so peacefully that we were actually able to carry out in detail the various arrangements for voluntary parade services in different parts of this wide camp. Just a little this side of the great railway bridge, that lies shattered by dynamite, is an excellent day-school building, which Messrs. Huskisson and Darroll, of the South African General Mission, succeeded in



requisitioning for the purposes of a Soldiers' Home, and excellent work is being done in it, though necessarily on a small scale. Here, at seven o'clock in the morning, my first service was held and was gracious in its influence as well as cheering, by reason of the numbers present, including not a few whose faces had grown familiar to me in the homeland long, long ago.



## Page 39

Amid the stir and strain of actual war we sang of a “day of rest and gladness”; and turned our thoughts to the Saviour who knows each man “by name.” I then hurried back to the camp of the Guards’ Brigade for a similar service in the open air at eight o’clock; but here a common type of confusion occurred. I had arranged to hold it in front of the Scots Guards’ camp, but in one battalion it was announced that it would take place precisely where the Church of England service had just been held, and in another precisely where the Roman Catholic service had just been held. So before my service could begin, the shepherd had to seek his sheep and the sheep their shepherd. Finally, by several instalments, we got together, forming a circle, seated on the sand; and then we gave ourselves to prayer and praise, followed by a brief sacramental service of glad remembrance and renewed consecration. A camp mug and a camp plate placed on the bare sand for table betokened a ritual of more than primitive simplicity; but thus on the eve of battle did a band of godly soldiers give themselves afresh to God in Christ.

’A similar open-air service was fixed for the evening, but never came off. It may have been one of the sad necessities of war time, but was a fact, nevertheless, deeply to be deplored, that at four o’clock on Sunday afternoon our guns, which had been silent for a fortnight, again opened fire and shelled the Boers with lyddite. As I listened to the thunder and the thud of them I could not quite repress a wonder whether that was quite the best possible way of propitiating the God of battle. At eight o’clock, under cover of the darkness, we marched silently out of camp, confident and strong, and bivouacked till midnight just beyond the river. Nearly every other night since we came upon this ground had been brightened by starlight, but on this occasion rain had fallen during the day, and dense darkness covered us at night. So, with my mackintosh wrapped around me, I lay for hours among the troops on the damp ground awaiting the order to resume our midnight march. Soon after one o’clock we were again on the move; but our only light was the tell-tale searchlight from Kimberley, and many a vivid flash of lightning, which only served to make the darkness visible. It was not long, therefore, before the whole brigade hopelessly lost its way, and had to halt by the hour, while the persistent rain drenched almost every man, standing grimly silent, to the skin.

’Precisely at earliest dawn the splendid Highland Brigade appears to have stumbled into a horrible snare, and in such close formation as to render them absolutely helpless against their foes. Instantly their general fell, mortally wounded; for a moment the whole Brigade seemed in a double sense to have lost its head, and, in spite of the fierce and terribly effective fire of our artillery, there followed, not indeed an actual defeat, but none the less a grave disaster, involving further delay in the relief of Kimberley and the loss of over 700 brave men killed and wounded.



## Page 40

=War's Terrible Harvest.=

'The incoming of the wounded to the hospital camp was the most pitiful sight my life has thus far brought me; but I scarce know which to admire most—the patient endurance of the sufferers or the skilled devotion of the army doctors, whose outspoken hatred of war was still more intensified by the gruesome tasks assigned them.

'That night I slept on the floor of a captured Boer ambulance van, fitted up as a physic shop with shelves fitted with bottles mostly labelled poison. It was for me, even thus sheltered, a bitterly cold night, much more for the scores of wounded who lay all night upon the field of battle. Early next morning I buried two, the first-fruits of a large harvest, and later on learned that among the killed was the Marquis of Winchester, who a fortnight ago invited me to conduct the funeral of his friend, Colonel Stopford. To-day I visited the two graves side by side in the same war-wasted garden, and thought of the tearful Christmas awaiting thousands in the mountains.'

=Mr. Robertson at Magersfontein.=

Add to this pathetic statement the following letter from the Rev. James Robertson, read by Principal Story to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on May 25, 1900. The letter was dated Bloemfontein, April 12:—

'I have already buried over 400 men, killed in action or who died of wounds or disease; and our hospitals are full of enteric cases, day by day swelling the total. It goes without saying that—at Magersfontein especially, all alone, no one being allowed with me—it was terribly trying work collecting, identifying, and burying our dead, so many of whom were my own personal friends; but I experienced more than I ever did before how the hour of one's conscious weakness may become the hour of one's greatest strength. Of General Wauchope I won't write further than to say that I was beside him when he fell. I think he wished me to keep near him, but I got knocked down, and in the dark and wild confusion I was borne away, and did not see him again in life, though I spared no effort to find him, in the hope that he might be only wounded. As one of the correspondents wrote of him, he was a man of God, and a man among men—a fitting epithet. Not to mention other warm friends, in my own mess (General Wauchope's) there were seven of us on December 18; when next we sat down there were only two. We were a sad, a very sad, brigade, for though we tried to hide it, we took our losses to heart sorely; for "men of steel are men who feel." But out of evil came good. The depth of latent religious feeling that was evoked in officers and men was a revelation to me; and were it not that confessions, and acknowledgments, and vows were too sacred for repetition, I could tell a tale that would gladden your hearts—not that I put too much stress on what's said or done at such an impressionable solemnising time, but after-proof of sincerity has not been wanting.'

[4]

[Footnote 4: *Scotsman*, May 26, 1900.]



## Page 41

= 'Prepare to meet your God! '=

A few more words may serve to complete the picture.

When all at once the Highland Brigade stumbled upon the Boer trenches, and speedily all the officers of his company was struck down, Colour-Sergeant McMillan (we believe a member of the Salvation Army) found himself in charge, and, waving his arm, shouted to his men, 'Men of A Company, prepare to meet your God! Forward! Charge!' The next moment a bullet went through his brain, and he fell dead. But surely that was not the time to prepare for such a dread meeting. Thank God that *he* was ready. We have heard him singing for Jesus in the old camp at home, and now he is singing in heaven.

= A Christian Hero. =

Many hours passed ere the wounded could be relieved. They lay under the fierce rays of the African sun, suffering agonies from thirst, and no succour could reach them. At last there were those who ventured to their help. But the wounded were many, and the helpers were few. The water-bottles were soon exhausted, but there was one soldier who had a few drops left. He saw two lads lying side by side in the agonies of death. He went to the first and offered him the water still remaining in his bottle. The dying man was parched with thirst, and he looked at the water with a strange, sad longing, and then feebly shook his head. 'Nay,' he said, 'give it to the other lad. *I* have the water of life,' and he turned round to die. *That* was Christian heroism!

But we will not linger longer over this tragic and pathetic tale. Suffice it, all was done for the wounded that could possibly be done; and that Christian ministers committed reverently to the earth 'until the morning' those who fell so bravely and so suddenly at Magersfontein.

Mr. Robertson shall close the chapter for us, in words as eloquent and as pathetic as any we have read for many years, and with his sad *requiem* we will let the curtain drop on the tragedy of Magersfontein.

[Illustration: REV. JAMES ROBERTSON.

(By permission of the publishers of *St. Andrew*.)]

= The Scottish Dead at Magersfontein. = [5]

'Our dead, our dear Scottish dead! How the corpse-strewn fields of the Modder, Magersfontein, Koodoosberg, and Paardeberg sorrowfully pass before me! Let me picture the scene, sad, yet not without its solace to those whose near and dear ones lie buried there, otherwise I would not paint it or reproduce my comments thereon, even by request. 'Tis only a miniature, with a few details, that I attempt to draw. One field—nay, one corner of the field—is descriptive of the rest, so I lift but a little of the dark-fringed

curtain.'Reverently, tenderly, lovingly handle them, and carefully identify them, for their own brave sakes, and that of the bereaved ones far away. There, you will find the identity card in the side-pocket. No, it's



## Page 42

missing. Well, then, what's this? A letter; but the envelope's gone. Let me see the signature at the end. Ah, just as I thought, "Your loving mother!" God help her, poor body! Ah, boys, don't forget the dear mother in the old home. She never forgets you, but morning, noon, and night thinks and prays for her soldier-son. Mindfulness of her brings God's blessing; forgetfulness bitter remorse, when too late—after she's gone. There's something more in the breast-pocket. His parchment probably. No; something better still—a small copy of St. John's Gospel, with his name thereon. Let us hope that its presence there, when every extra ounce carried was a weighty consideration, is more than suggestive of thoughts of higher things. Pass on. No identity card on this body either, but another letter—a sweetheart's one. Oh, the poetry and pathos, the comedy and tragedy of love's young dream! Please see this burnt, sergeant; I don't wish others to read what was meant for his eye alone. Poor lassie! She'll feel it for a while; but Time is the great healer, and the young heart has wonderfully recuperative powers. There are only two kinds of love, men, that last till death and after—your mother's love and your God's—and both are yours, yearning for a return.'Oh, here's a sad group—seven, eight, nine, close together. Who's that in front? An officer. I thought as much. *Noblesse oblige*. Yes, I know him. Are we to bring him with the others? did you ask. Certainly. What more appropriate resting-place than with the men he so nobly led, and who so gallantly followed him—all alike faithful to the death, giving their life for Queen and country! Pass on. Here are three, one close after the other, as they moved from the cover of this small donga. I saw them fall, vieing with one another for a foremost place, for here "honour travelled in a strait so narrow that only one could go abreast." All three mere boys, but with the hearts of heroes. A book, did you say, in every one of their pockets? *Prayers for Soldiers*—well marked, too. My friend was right, dear mothers. There *is* some comfort in the sadness—a gleam of sunshine showing through the gloom.'Ah, how thick they lie! What a deadly hail of Mausers must have come from that rock-ribbed clump on the kopje. Three—and—twenty officers and men, promiscuously blent; and fully more on that little rise over there, as they showed in sight. God help their wives and mothers, and strengthen me for this sacred duty! Nay, men, don't turn away to hide the rising sob and tear. I'm past that. I've got a new ordination in blood and tears. It's nothing to be ashamed of—so far the opposite, it does you honour, for "men of finest steel are men who keenest feel." Look at this man with the field-dressing in his hand, shot while necessarily exposing himself, trying to do what he could for a wounded comrade. Noble, self-sacrificing fellow! Such deeds



## Page 43

illumine the dark page of war. Of a truth, some noble qualities grow under war's red rain. Methinks I hear the Master's voice, "Well done, good and faithful servant, inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these, ye did it unto Me." Yes! Get these two groups together; we'll make a trench midway. More Gospels and prayer-books, and friendly words for soldiers, and Christian mottoes! I thank God for that. The sight of them cheers me. Perhaps it should not, but it does. They knew, at least, of the Father's forgiving love, and in their better moments must have thought thereof, otherwise these books would not be there at such a time; and though it does not do to presume too much thereon, who can set a limit to God's mercy? Who can say what passed in those closing moments, while the life-blood was ebbing away? Often in the field I think of Scott's dying soldier—

"Between the saddle and the ground,  
He mercy sought and mercy found."

Oh, here's an officer I've been expecting to find. I knew he was missing, for I especially asked. He had a presentiment amounting to a preintimation of his coming end. In vain I argued with him. He calmly gave me his last messages. I've known several such. "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy." Thank God, when he said "the hour of my departure's come," he was able to add, "I hear the voice that calls me *home*" and "is the traveller sad," he asked, "when his face is turned *homeward*?" "Who's that you've got next? Oh, I know him well. We rejoiced together. Come here, all of you, and look on his face. I'm not to preach, boys—we have other work to do—but I wish you to lay his case to heart. Some of you know him. You know the stand he took at one of our meetings at the Modder River station, and what proof he afterwards gave of the sincerity of his profession. Look at his face. What a sweet, peaceful expression—what a contrast to his surroundings! Death swift and sudden, in the horrid din of battle stript of all its terrors. As earth's light faded he must have got a glimpse of the glory beyond, for it's reflected in his face. That's what Christ can do, and came to do, for a man.'Sergeant, get some of the handiest of the men to break up these empty ammunition-boxes and construct a rude cross for the trench. It's the most appropriate "memorial." It signifies self-sacrifice, and did they not, "obedient unto death," give their lives for others; it indicates the cheering hope in which we lay them to rest. By-and-by, we will erect something more permanent, and place a fence around, for 'tis holy ground, consecrated by tearful prayer and by the very fact that the remains of brave men mingle there. Scotland to-day is poorer in men, but richer in heroes?

"Saviour, in Thy gracious keeping,  
Leave we now our loved ones sleeping."



## Page 44

[Footnote 5: *St. Andrew*, June 7, 1900.]

### Chapter VII

#### THOMAS ATKINS ON THE VELDT

It will be a relief to turn from this sad record and give a sketch of Thomas Atkins upon the veldt as he appears to Christian workers. Nowhere else have we been able to see him apart from the fierce temptations which particularly assail him. Untrained, except in so far as military discipline is concerned, he is a child of nature, and nature not always of the best.

But the South African veldt has witnessed the remarkable spectacle of a sober army. No intoxicating drink was to be got, and the cup that cheers but not inebriates has been Tommy's only stimulant.

A further fact must be borne in mind. War has a sobering effect even among the most reckless. A man is face to face with eternal things, and though after a little while the influence of this to some extent passes off, and either an unhealthy excitement or an equally unhealthy callousness takes its place, it never wholly goes, and any serious battle suffices to bring the man to his senses again.

=The Soldier's Temptations.=

The consequence of these things has been that we have seen the soldier at his best in South Africa—and that best has often been of a very high order. It is no kindness to him to make light of his vices, and they have been sufficiently pronounced even there.

We are afraid, to begin with, that we must confess to an army of swearers. It seems natural to the soldier to swear. He intersperses his conversation with words and phrases altogether unmeaning and anything but elegant. It is his habit so to do, and even the Christian soldier who has belonged to this swearing set often finds it a great difficulty to break away from his old habits.

='Old Praise the Lord.'=

An amusing and pathetic instance of this comes to our mind. A soldier who worked at the forge was soundly converted to God, and as usual had to go through the ordinary course of persecution. It was astonishing how many pieces of iron fell upon his feet, and how often a rod was thrust into his back! At such occurrences prior to his conversion he would have sworn dreadfully, and he had to guard himself with the greatest care lest some ungodly word should escape his lips. And so when any extra cruelty in the shape of a red-hot piece of iron came too near, or a heavy weight was dropped upon his toes, he used to cry, 'Praise the Lord.' 'Old Praise the Lord' they



called him, and truly he often had sufficient reason for some such exclamation. He came to the Soldiers' Fellowship Meeting one night, and told how he had been tested to the limit. He had taken his money out of the Savings Bank, and locked it in his box; but the box had been broken open, and the money taken away. He stood and looked at it, hands clenched, teeth set. For a moment the fire of anger flashed in his eyes, and



## Page 45

words that belonged only to the long ago sprang to his lips. A year's savings had gone. The promised trip to the old home could not be taken. And a vision of the old mother waiting for her boy, and waiting in vain, brought a big lump in his throat which it was difficult to choke down. The lads stood and looked at him. What would he do? And then that strange fire died out of his eyes, and his hands relaxed their grasp, and with the light of love shining out from his face he said, 'Praise the Lord,' and came into the meeting to tell how God was flooding his soul with His love.

But the number of such as he in comparison with those who still pollute the air with their oaths is small indeed, and we have sorrowfully to admit that ours has been a swearing army upon the veldt.

Gambling, too, has been very rife, and if there was a penny to spin Tommy would spin it. This, of course, is not by any means true of all regiments, and as one of French's cavalry naively put it, 'You see, sir, we had not even time to gamble!'

There are some brutes even among our British soldiers, and sad stories reach us of men who have robbed the sick in hospital, and stripped the dead upon the battlefield. But swearing and gambling apart, and these horrible exceptions left out of the reckoning, what noble fellows our soldiers have proved themselves!

=The Patience of our Soldiers.=

Their patience has been wonderful. We have all heard of the *patient* ox, and away there on the veldt he has patiently toiled at his yoke until he has laid down and died. But the patience of the private soldier has exceeded the patience of the ox. He has undergone some of the severest marches in history. He has endured privations such as we can hardly imagine. He has lain wounded upon the veldt sometimes for three or, at any rate in one case, for four days. He has in his wounded state borne the terrible jolting of the ox-waggon day after day. If you talk to him about it, he will not complain of any one, but will make light of all his dreadful sufferings and merely remark that you cannot expect to be comfortable in time of war!

And how much he has endured! The difficulties of transport have made it impossible for him to receive more than half rations, and sometimes not more than a quarter rations for days together. On the march to Kimberley, for instance, General French's troops for four days had nothing to eat but what they could pick upon the hungry veldt. Stealing has been abolished in South Africa—it is all commandeering now!

'Where did you get that chicken, my lad?' asks the officer in angry tones.

'Commandeered it, sir,' says Tommy, and the officer is appeased.



And there was plenty of commandeering done during that dreadful march, or the men would have died of starvation. A strange spectacle he must have presented as he rode along. His kettle slung across his saddle, a bundle of sticks somewhere else, a packet of Quaker oats fastened to his belt, and a tin of golden syrup dangling from it. These he had provided for himself from the last dry canteen he had visited, and often even these could not be obtained.



## Page 46

What stories are told us of sticks and Quaker oats! They say that when the troops started with Sir Redvers Buller from Colenso each man had his bundle of sticks and a packet of Quaker oats fastened somewhere upon him. His canteen was as black as coal, but that did not matter. And if he had his sticks and his Quaker oats, and could manage to get a little 'water' that was not more than usually khaki-coloured, he was a happy man. So as he marched along he was always on the look-out for sticks and water. The two together furnished him with all things necessary: the sticks soon made the water boil, and the Quaker oats made—tea!

=The Men in Khaki.=

As regards dress he was a picture! He started khaki-clad, and no one could tell one regiment from another, but he was only allowed to take the suit he wore to the front, and before long, what with marching and sandstorms and fighting, that suit became unrecognisable as a suit. Bit by bit it went. Tailors of the most amateur description plied their needles and thread upon it in vain. It went! and Tommy's distress occasionally knew no bounds. We hear of one man who at last marched into Ladysmith with two coat sleeves but no coat; of another with not a bit of khaki about him, but garments of one sort and another 'commandeered' as he went along. One of the facts that impressed them most as they marched into Ladysmith was that the garrison were clean and neatly dressed in khaki, but that *they*—bearded, dirty, ragged—looked rather the rescued than the rescuers!

Mr. Lowry tells how when at last he determined to have his khaki suit washed, and retired to his tent to wait the arrival of his clothes from the amateur laundry on the banks of the Modder, it seemed as though they would never come, and he was fearful lest the order to advance should arrive before his one suit returned from the wash!

But through it all our men kept cheerful. One Christian man who had earned among his comrades the nickname of 'Smiler,' and who was wounded, signs himself, 'Still smiling, with a hole in my back.' And this was typical of all. During that dreadful march to overtake Cronje, the officers of the Guards had as their mess-table on one occasion a rectangular ditch about eighteen inches wide and as many deep. It was dug so as to enclose an oblong piece of ground about sixteen feet by eight, which, flattened as much as possible, served as table. At this earth table, with their feet in the muddy ditch, sat several representatives of England's nobility, but as our soldier lad said, 'Still smiling.' When the rain came down and deluged both officers and men, and sleep was impossible, tentless on the veldt and seated in the mud, the men hour after hour sang defiance to the storm.

How kind they were to one another! How brave to save a fallen comrade or officer! One of our chaplains relates that in the advance to Ladysmith an officer was struck down and could not be moved. When the regiment retired, and his men knew their officer would have to stay there during the night, four of them elected to remain, and

one of them lay at his head, another at his feet, and one on each side to shield him from the Boer bullets which were flying around.



## Page 47

But we must not be tempted into stories such as these. They abound, and if the Victoria Cross could be given wherever it was deserved, the sight of it upon the breast would be common indeed!

=Their Dread of the 'Pom-pom.'=

Of one thing, however, our men were afraid—the dreaded 'pom-pom' of the Boers. Some two hundred one-pound shells a minute these Vickers-Maxim guns are supposed to fire. But as a matter of fact we are told the number rarely reached a score. Still the dull pom-pom-pom of the gun, with the knowledge that shell after shell was coming, always made Tommy shake; and when he got to the camp fire at night, one man would say to another, 'I cannot get used to it. It frightens me nearly out of my life.'

=The Christian under Fire.=

We have asked many of our Christian soldiers how they felt when they went into fire. All sorts of answers have been given. Most have confessed to a nervous tremor at first. Said a lance-corporal of the 12th Lancers: 'The worst time I ever had was when we were relieving Kimberley. There were Boers in front of us and Boers on our flank. We rode through a perfect hail of bullets. At first I wondered if I should get through it, and then I became utterly oblivious of shells and bullets. I rode steadily on, and the only thing that concerned me as we rode right for the Boer position was to keep my horse out of the ruts.'

Perhaps this is the general experience. No thought of turning back, no particular fear, no great exultation, simply a keeping straight on. No wonder from before such a wall of determination the Boers fled for their lives.

The soldier's great complaint is that he has been kept ill-informed of the progress of events. He has simply been a pawn on the chess-board, or a cog in the great wheel. And he laments that often at the end of a long day's march or fighting he lies down to rest in his wet ragged clothes, not knowing where he is or whether he has accomplished little or much.

This is inevitable, of course, and the officers themselves were, in many cases, but little better informed. But one and all have implicit faith in their generals, and those who added to that faith implicit trust in God could after the most trying days lie down and rest in perfect peace. Even at his worst the British soldier is capable of better things, and out there upon the veldt he has many a time thought of God, and wondered what possibilities for good there were within him. Going to the front has made a *new* man of Tommy. It remains to be seen whether in the easier times of peace the *old* man will come back.

## **Chapter VIII**

**WITH LORD ROBERTS TO BLOEMFONTEIN**



## Page 48

The advent of that splendid Christian soldier, Field-Marshal Lord Roberts of Kandahar, put an entirely different face upon the war. He came with a heavy sorrow resting upon him. His son had been struck down at the front, earning, however, the Victoria Cross by a conspicuous act of bravery before he died. He himself had by long service earned the right to rest upon his laurels. He was an old man, but at the call of duty he cheerfully left home and friends, and, with heart sore at his great loss, went out to win for England the victory in South Africa. His first thought was to send for Lord Kitchener, and when these two men landed in South Africa England knew that all things possible would be accomplished.

And surely their task was great. England's prestige had suffered severely. Lord Methuen had fought at Belmont, Graspan, Modder River and Magersfontein, but the enemy's entrenchments were apparently as strong as ever and Kimberley as far off.

On the other side of the field of operations Sir Redvers Buller was confronted with insurmountable obstacles, and his forces seemed altogether inadequate for the task before him. Gallant little Mafeking was holding out, but with no hope of speedy relief. How Lord Roberts' advent changed all this in a few brief weeks the country knows right well.

=Lord Roberts Issues a Prayer for Use in the Army.=

Perhaps the most remarkable fact in the history of this or any war is that a few days after landing in South Africa Lord Roberts issued a prayer for the use of the troops. Many army orders have been issued which have stirred the blood and fired the heroism of the British soldier as he has gone forth to fight for his country or has returned triumphant from the field.

'When on the eve of Trafalgar the signal floated out from the mast-head of the *Victory*, "England expects every man to do his duty," it told of the exalted courage of the hero who was about to fight his last fight and win his last victory. It kindled a like courage in every man who read it, and it ever after became a living word, a voice that is heard everywhere, an inspiration to our race.

'But an army encouraged to pray, an army order in which the commander-in-chief hopes that "a prayer may be helpful to all her Majesty's soldiers now serving in South Africa"! And doubtless many of our comrades have so used the prayer that now they know all the blessings of pardon, purity, power and comfort which it teaches them to ask of God.'<sup>[6]</sup>

THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF'S LETTER.

'ARMY HEADQUARTERS, CAPE TOWN, *January 23rd.*



'DEAR SIR,—I am desired by Lord Roberts to ask you to be so kind as to distribute to all ranks under your command the "Short Prayer for the use of Soldiers in the Field," by the Primate of Ireland, copies of which I now forward.

'His Lordship earnestly hopes that it may be helpful to all of her Majesty's soldiers who are now serving in South Africa.



## Page 49

'Yours faithfully,

'NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN, Colonel, Private Secretary.

'To the Commanding Officer.'

### THE PRAYER.

'Almighty Father, I have often sinned against Thee. O wash me in the precious blood of the Lamb of God. Fill me with Thy Holy Spirit, that I may lead a new life. Spare me to see again those whom I love at home, or fit me for Thy presence in peace.' Strengthen us to quit ourselves like men in our right and just cause. Keep us faithful unto death, calm in danger, patient in suffering, merciful as well as brave, true to our Queen, our country, and our colours.' If it be Thy will, enable us to win victory for England, and above all grant us the better victory over temptation and sin, over life and death, that we may be more than conquerors through Him who loved us, and laid down His life for us, Jesus our Saviour, the Captain of the Army of God. Amen.'

We venture to speak of the issue of this beautiful prayer as the most notable fact in the history of the war. We do not remember that anything of the kind has ever been done before. It testifies to the personal trust of the British general in God, it takes for granted that ours was a righteous cause, and it recognises the fact that above the throne which we all reverence and respect there is another throne—the throne of God.

[Footnote 6: *Army and Navy Messenger*, April, 1900.]

=The Christian Influence of Lord Roberts.=

Lord Roberts had been for years the idol of the troops. It was touching to hear our Christian soldiers at Aldershot pray for 'dear Lord Roberts,' or familiarly speak of him as 'our Bobs.' All their fears went when they knew he was going to the front, and they were ready to follow him anywhere. Moreover, the Christian soldiers always remember that he was the founder of the 'Army Temperance Association,' which has become such a power for good all over the world.

He is a gentle, lovable man. The story is told that soon after the entry of the troops into Pretoria Lord Roberts was missing, and when at last he was discovered he was sitting in a humble room with two little children upon his knees. The officer who found him apologised for intruding, but said that important business required attention. Lord Roberts merely looked up smiling and said, 'Don't you see I am engaged?'

But Lord Roberts is not only a Christian man, he is a great soldier. This is what concerns the country most; only in his kindness and Christianity we have the assurance that he will never unnecessarily sacrifice life, and that he will enter upon no



enterprise upon which he cannot ask the blessing of God. To our chaplains and other Christian workers his sympathy and help have been invaluable.

It is outside the purpose of this book to follow the general in his movements, or to discuss the scheme which turned the victorious Cronje into a vanquished and captured foe. Suffice it to say that that great flanking movement—perhaps the greatest on record—has won the admiration of all military critics, and, brilliantly conceived, was as brilliantly carried out.



## Page 50

There was a stir at the Modder River for some little time before the actual advance took place. Lord Roberts had come and gone. Various little attacks on some part of the enemy's position—some real, some only feints—had taken place. Every one wondered, none knew what would be the next order of the day. For two months they had been waiting at the Modder River, and they were heartily tired of their inaction. Even the shells from Magersfontein, which had fallen every day but Christmas Day, had become a part of the daily monotony. It had been a glorious time for Christian workers, and that was all that could be said.

But even the Christians were longing for an advance. By-and-by came the summons to the cavalry, and off they went, not knowing whether it was for an ordinary reconnoissance or for something more serious, and little dreaming what they would be called upon to do. For them until Bloemfontein was reached all definite Christian work was at an end. All that the Christians could do was to get together for a short time among the rocks, when the long day's work was done, to talk and pray. And yet these cavalry men look back upon those few moments snatched from sleep as among the most precious in the whole war. They had been in the saddle for many hours at a stretch; on one occasion at any rate the saddles had not been taken off the horses for thirty-six hours.

=Religious Meetings while on the March.=

It seemed as though General French would never tire. He rode on far ahead of his men—stern, taciturn, resolved—as they rushed across the veldt to Kimberley, or hastened to the doom of Cronje. Our soldiers did their best to follow, and did so till their horses dropped dying or dead upon the veldt. It says much for their Christian enthusiasm that after such days as these, and knowing that only two or three hours' sleep was before them, they should step out of the lines and meet behind some rock to pray. They talked of the old home, of Aldershot, of Sergeant-Major Moss and his class. They pictured to themselves what we should all be doing at home, and then they knelt in prayer. Very touching were those prayers, very sweet that Christian intercourse. Its precious memory is cherished still. And then they would sing a verse—one of the soldiers' favourites—perhaps:—

'Some one will enter the pearly gate,  
By-and-by, by-and-by;  
Taste of the glories that there await—  
Shall you, shall I?'

Or may be that soldiers' favourite *par excellence* would be rung out—the 'Six further on,' of which they all speak:—

'Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;  
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!



Heir of salvation, purchase of God,  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.'

And then a verse of 494:—

'God be with you till we meet again.'

And then back to the lines for rest and sleep. 'Good-night, Jim.' 'Good-night, my boy.'  
'494.' 'Aye! and "Six further on.'" And so they part. A delightful picture! a sad one too!  
Who knows whether they will ever meet on earth again?



## Page 51

=The March to Paardeberg.=

Meanwhile, on Sunday, Feb. 17, 1900, the Guards had been suddenly ordered to follow the cavalry from Modder River. At the mess that evening the chaplains had been positively assured by the officers present that there would be no move until Wednesday at the earliest. Little they knew what was in the mind of the great general! But late at night the summons came, and within two hours the whole brigade of Guards, suddenly roused out of sleep and called in from outpost duty, were marching out into the darkness. Whither they did not know. They took with them neither blanket nor overcoat, but, as their chaplain says, 'only an ample store of pluck and smokeless powder.' They did not stop till they had covered about twenty miles, and before their destination was reached hardly a man of them fell out. They too were part of the great movement—a movement that would continue until they marched into Bloemfontein with Lord Roberts.

=The Chaplains on the March.=

The chaplains were not allowed to accompany them. They followed with the doctors and the baggage. Whether they were considered impedimenta or not they hardly knew. Certainly their work was over for a short time, to be renewed all too soon when the first batch of wounded came down from the ever-advancing front.

So the senior Church of England chaplain and the senior Wesleyan chaplain trudged off side by side, and marched steadily through the night until, about sunrise, they set foot for the first time since they had landed in South Africa on hostile soil. A few miles further on they passed a deserted Boer camp, and among the *debris* strewing the floor of a farm-house found two English Bibles.

About nine o'clock in the morning Jacobsdal was reached. In England it would be called a village, for it had only seven hundred inhabitants; but it was quite an important town in those parts.

Here a halt was called and a few hours' rest permitted. Mr. Lowry climbed into a captured Boer ambulance, and found lying on the floor of it a Dutch Reformed minister, the Rev. T.N. Fick, who had been General Cronje's chaplain, and who only the night before had joined in the general flight from Magersfontein. These two, both ministers of the Gospel, had been for two months on different sides of the famous kopje. One had been praying for the success of the Boer arms and the other for the success of the English! And yet here they lay side by side in amicable Christian converse. Strange are the ways of war!

But though the chaplains were denied the privilege of proceeding to the front with the soldiers, two Christian workers at any rate—we have not heard of more—managed to secure that privilege. By the kindness of Lord Methuen, and as a token of his

appreciation of their efforts for the men, Mr. Percy Huskisson and Mr. Darroll, of the South African General Mission, were attached to the Bearer Company



## Page 52

of the Highland Brigade. 'On Monday, February 12th, they went out, not knowing whither they were going. Their luggage was limited to changes of socks and shirts and rugs, but at the last moment they managed to get permission to take a little box of food also. At about five o'clock on Monday afternoon they entrained in open trucks, which were shared alike by officers and men; at about eleven o'clock at night they got out at Enslin, and slept on the veldt surrounded by horses, oxen, and mules. At four in the morning the whole camp was astir, and by half-past seven the entire force was on the march.'<sup>[7]</sup>

Then followed the capture of the British convoy, consisting of some two hundred waggons, and meaning to our army the loss of about a million pounds of food. Every one was put on quarter rations, consisting of a biscuit and a half a day and half a tin of 'bully' beef. On such a food supply as this were our troops expected to perform their terrible march. Until they passed Jacobsdal they thought they were going to the relief of Kimberley, but all unknown to them General French's cavalry had already performed that feat, and the direction of their march was changed. It was theirs to follow in pursuit of Cronje instead. In one terrible twenty-four hours they marched thirty-eight miles, and on Sunday morning, February 18th, they reached Paardeberg. Thoroughly exhausted, the men flung themselves upon the ground to sleep, but after two or three hours the artillery fire roused them from their slumbers and the order came to advance. There was no time for breakfast, and from five o'clock in the morning until late at night they had to go without food.

The battle of Paardeberg is not likely to be forgotten by any of those who were engaged in it. The Boers commanded the left of the Highland Brigade, and as it advanced on level ground, and destitute of cover, it was exposed to a terrible fire.

Messrs. Huskisson and Darroll went into the firing line with the Highlanders. Men fell on all sides of them, and they had numberless chances of helping the wounded. Of course they had many hairbreadth escapes during this awful day, but they were abundantly rewarded by the privilege of straight talk and prayer with the wounded men, who were thankful indeed for such ministrations as they could offer.

[Footnote 7: *The Surrounding of Cronje.*]

=Relief of the Wounded at Paardeberg.=

We venture to quote a few paragraphs from a little booklet published by the South African General Mission, entitled *The Surrounding of Cronje*. It sets forth in vivid language the heroic work done by these two in the midst of the heat and fury of the battle, and Christian men in all churches will honour the brave men who fought so nobly for God in the interests of those who were fighting so nobly for their country.



## Page 53

'During the day, as Mr. Huskisson was helping a wounded man back to the hospital, he had a very narrow shave of being shot. The wounded man had his arm round Mr. Huskisson's neck for support, and as they were walking back to the rear a Mauser bullet shot off the tip of the man's finger, as it was resting on Mr. Huskisson's shoulder. Had there not been the weight of the man's arm to depress the body this would have resulted in a nasty wound in the shoulder. At another time the case of field glasses hanging by his side was hit by a bullet.' Our workers could often see that they were specially aimed at by the Boers, as the moment they raised their heads a small volley of bullets would fly all around them. Sometimes they had to lie down for long periods, on account of this. At one stage of the battle, one of our men was lying down behind a tree, and a sharpshooter was perched in another tree. If even the foot was moved an inch or two beyond the tree a bullet would come with a "ping," and a little puff of dust would show how keenly every movement was watched.

=Singing though Wounded.=

'While helping one wounded man, Mr. Huskisson heard his name called out, and looking round, saw the face of one of the men who had been converted in our Soldiers' Home at Wynberg, some years ago. Going up to the lad he said:—

"Are you wounded?"

"Yes," said the man, "but praise God it is not in my head."

'A bullet had gone right through the back of his neck, and though he was bleeding profusely he was humming a chorus to himself.

'Later on a Major came up and said to Mr. Huskisson—"Do you know that lad?"

'On hearing that he did, the Major said, "He is the most chirpy man that has been in the dressing-room to-day; he was brought in singing a hymn."

'When Mr. Huskisson turned away from him, he left him still humming one of our favourite choruses; and an unconverted man was heard to say later on, "A chap coming in like that to the dressing-room does more good than anything else, as he keeps the fellows' spirits up so.'" There were, of course, many terribly sad sights—enough to make our men feel as if war could hardly ever be justifiable. One poor Highlander was lying dying, and on our men asking him if he knew God, received no answer; but on repeating the question the dying man said that he did once, but he had evidently grown cold in his love to Christ. It was *such* a cheer to be able to point out, that though his feelings towards God had changed, *yet God's feelings and love toward him had not changed!*



Events like these differentiate this war from many other wars. They are an eloquent testimony to the force of Christianity. They disclose the power of a supreme affection towards Christ. They declare that the most toilsome duty can be transformed by love into the most blessed privilege. They show that there is no compulsion but the compulsion of love in the Christian workers' orders, so often sung,—

## Page 54

'Where duty calls, or danger,  
Be never wanting there.'

=The Chaplains at Work.=

And now came the chaplains' work! It is not in the firing line that war seems the most dreadful. It is when the wounded are gathered from the field, and the results of the battle are seen in all their ghastliness. And in this case the wounded could not be tended where they were. It was onward, ever onward, with our men. Only two hospitals, instead of at least ten—the number the doctors thought necessary—had been sent to the front, and the wounded must be got back to base hospitals as quickly as possible.

Back they came, a ghastly procession, in heavy, lumbering ox-waggons, with no cover from the sun or rain. Oh! the terrible jolting; oh! the screams of agony. 'Better kill us right out,' cried the men, 'than make us endure any more!'

It is not for us to say that all this was unnecessary. It is for others to judge. You cannot conduct war in picnic fashion. The country ought to know its horrors and get its fill of them. But we will not attempt the description. Already others have done that. Suffice it to say that the baggage camp, in which were the chaplains and some of the doctors, seemed an oasis in the desert to these agonized travellers.

The day for parade services had gone by, and all days were now the same; but there was other work the chaplains could do, and this they attempted to the best of their ability.

[Illustration: BRINGING BACK THE WOUNDED.]

The Rev. E.P. Lowry wrote:—

'Yesterday a long convoy arrived bearing over 700 sick and wounded men. They were brought, for the most part, over the rough roads in open waggons (captured from the Boers) from the fatal front, where days before they had been stricken more or less severely. They still had a long journey before them, and it so happened that they set out from here in the midst of a thunderstorm; but as I passed from one waggon to another I found them bearing their miseries as only brave men could. About 300 of them belonged to the unfortunate Highland Brigade. One of these had been shot through the wrist of his left hand at Magersfontein, and he was now returning shot through the wrist of his right hand. The next, said he, with gruesome playfulness, will be through the head. Corporal Evans, of the Gloucesters—one of two brothers whose name is much honoured at Aldershot—I found in the midst of this huge convoy stricken with dysentery. The Cornwalls seemed to have suffered almost as heavily in proportion as



the Highlanders, and it was to me no small privilege to be permitted to speak a word of Christian solace and good cheer to men from my own county.

=The Wounded Canadians.=



## Page 55

'But I was struck most of all by the number of noble-looking Canadians among this big batch of wounded soldiers, all of them proudly glorying in being permitted to serve and suffer in the name of so great a Queen and in defence of so glorious an Empire. Among them I found Colour-Sergeant Thompson, the son of one of our American Methodist ministers, Rev. James Thompson. Resting against the inner side of a waggon-wheel was a most gentlemanly Canadian, shot through the throat, and quite unable to swallow any solids. To him, as to several others, I was privileged to carry a large cup of life-renewing milk. Lying on another waggon was a middle-aged Canadian, shot through the mouth, and apparently unable at present to swallow anything without pain; but he begged me, if possible, to buy for him some cigarettes, that he might have the solace of a smoke. But there is nothing of any kind on sale within miles of this camp. Yet the cigarette, however, was not long sought in vain; and a word of Christian greeting was made none the less welcome by the gift. Lying by this man's side was a wounded French-Canadian, who could scarcely speak in English, but had come from far to defend the Empire which claimed him also as its loyal son; and yet another sufferer told me that he had come from Vancouver, a distance of 11,000 miles, to risk, or, if needs be, to lay down his life for her who is his Queen as well as ours. As in the name of the Motherland I thanked these men for thus rallying around our common flag in the hour of peril, and tenderly urged them to be as loyal to the Christ as to their Queen, the meaning look and hearty hand-grip spoke more eloquently to me than any words. In almost every case the responsive heart was there. Of these Canadians—the first contingent—our generals speak in terms of highest praise; but already some twenty have been killed and nearly seventy severely wounded. The Dominion mourns to-day her heroic dead as we mourn ours. They sleep side by side beneath these burning sands; but thus are forged the more than golden chains which bind the hearts of a widely-sundered race to the common throne around which we all are rallying.'[8]

The scene here depicted is one which must be imagined not once but many times during that terrible march from the Modder to Bloemfontein. It tells in simple but eloquent language how Christian kindness tried to assuage human woe.

[Footnote 8: *Methodist Times*.]

## Chapter IX

### KIMBERLEY DURING THE SIEGE AND AFTER

The siege of Kimberley began on Sunday, October 15, 1899, and continued until Thursday, February 15, 1900. It was somewhat unexpected, for although so near the border it was hardly expected that the Boers would invade British territory. In fact, so little did the military authorities at Cape Town anticipate a siege that it was with great difficulty the Kimberley inhabitants secured any military assistance. On September 21, however, a detachment of 500 men of the Loyal Lancashires, Royal Artillery, and Royal



Engineers, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Kekewich, put in an appearance. These were the only regular troops in the town, and but a handful in face of the Boers gathering on the frontier.



## Page 56

There were, of course, local volunteer regiments—the Kimberley Rifles, the Diamond Fields Artillery, and the Diamond Fields Horse—and there were also about 400 men of the Cape Mounted Police. But what were these to guard the treasures of the Diamond City and its population of 50,000 souls?

=The Defence of Kimberley.=

It was evident that Kimberley must set to work to defend itself, and that it did right nobly. A town guard was formed consisting of about 2,500 men, but they were men of all sorts and conditions. Never was there a happier or a more ill-assorted family! A director of De Beers side by side with a needy adventurer; a millionaire shoulder to shoulder with a beggar! There they were! all sorts and conditions of men, but all animated by one great purpose—to keep the flag flying.

By-and-by the lack of cavalry was severely felt, and Mr. Cecil Rhodes, resourceful as ever, brought up some 800 horses, and the Kimberley Light Horse—now a famous regiment—came into being. The command of it was given to Colonel Scott-Turner, and it was composed of the best riders and keenest shots that could be found. Plenty of these were fortunately available and they greatly distinguished themselves.

No one thought of surrender, and when the length of the siege drew into weeks and from weeks into months, and food ran short and water was cut off, they still kept cheerful. They knew they were practically safe from assault. Surrounding the town is a belt of level country some six miles wide, and they felt certain the Boers dare not cross this belt and face the fire that would be poured into them from the huge cinder heaps which had been transformed into forts.

By-and-by the number of shells dropped into the town increased rapidly. New and more powerful guns were brought to bear upon it, and no man's life was safe. They did their best to reply, and actually, under the direction of Mr. George Abrams (chief engineer of De Beers), they manufactured a 30-pounder gun called 'Long Cecil,' which proved effective at a range of 10,000 yards. Unfortunately, Mr. Abrams was himself killed by a shell not long after he had completed this great work.

From time to time sorties were carried out, and in the boldest of them all, when the Kimberley men got so near that they could look down their enemy's guns, Colonel Scott-Turner was killed.

=Perils of the Siege.=

But notwithstanding all they could do the enemy's attack grew fiercer. It is estimated that between three and four thousand shells fell in Kimberley during the siege, and the destruction wrought by these was very great. Most of the churches suffered seriously. Many women and children lost their lives. If there was any special function of any kind

in progress the Boers were almost sure to know about it and give it their marked attention.

Bugle calls, taken up and repeated through the town, warned the people of coming shells, and then they knew they had only fifteen seconds to reach some place of shelter. Bomb-proof shelters were improvised, caves were dug by the side of houses, and into these the inhabitants ran, with more speed than ceremony, when those bugle notes were heard.



## Page 57

It was, however, felt unsafe to allow the women and children to remain longer in the town, and by the kindness of the De Beers Company they were lowered into the mines, and there for a full week they lived. Among the rest the families of the Baptist and Wesleyan ministers were lowered there. It happened that these two reverend gentlemen met in the street shortly after the descent of their families, and on parting the Baptist said to the Methodist—all unconscious of the suggestiveness of his statement—'Good-bye, my friend; we shall soon meet again either above or below!'

It was no laughing matter, however, to the thousands of women and children living day and night in the mine tunnels some eight or twelve thousand feet below the surface. Theirs was a pitiable condition, and how much longer they could have held out had not help come it is difficult to say.

All this time the Kimberley searchlight was night by night searching the neighbourhood lest any Boers under cover of the darkness should approach the town; and for most of the time, by heliograph or searchlight, the authorities were in communication with Lord Methuen on the other side of those forbidding kopjes. And yet help came not, and the situation was becoming desperate.

=Various Forms of Christian Work during the Siege.=

In the first place refugee relief work was attempted and successfully carried out. Large numbers had fled for refuge to Kimberley when war was declared, and many of these were penniless. A fund of some L3,000 was raised, and a committee composed of all the ministers of the town carried out the work of relief. Throughout the siege all the ordinary services with one or two exceptions were maintained, and though the men for the most part were on duty, yet the congregations were remarkably good and the men were present whenever they could get away.

The Wesleyan Church has eight churches in Kimberley. As soon as the military camps were formed, the Rev. James Scott organized services for the troops. The Rev. W.H. Richards, the Presbyterian minister, gladly joined in the work, and united Presbyterian and Wesleyan services were held.

The hospital work was effectively done, and Miss Gordon (the matron) with her staff of nurses cheered and soothed the last moments of many a poor dying lad.

=The Relief of Kimberley.=

But the time of relief was drawing near. Lord Roberts had appeared upon the scene, and his great flank movement was being carried out. General French, at the head of his cavalry division, was making one of the most famous marches in history. The days of inaction were over. Cronje and his forces were saying a hasty good-bye to the hills at

Magersfontein, which had so long defied Lord Methuen and his troops, and were flying for their lives.



## Page 58

On Thursday, February 15, huge clouds of dust appeared upon the horizon, and the tidings spread throughout the town that the relief column was in sight. Every available eminence was speedily crowded with people eager to catch a glimpse of the coming troops. Bugle warnings and shells were things of the past. Here they come! They have travelled far and fast! Look at them! Worn and weary, they can hardly sit their horses. But they are here, and at their head is the most famous cavalry officer of the war—our Aldershot cavalry leader, General French. Ahead of his troops, fresh and vigorous, as though he had only just started, he proudly rides into the town. The people gather round and cheer; they almost worship the soldiers who have brought them relief, and then, secure for the first time for four long months, they turn to greet friends and relatives, and the glad intelligence spreads far and wide—Kimberley is relieved!

=Christian Work after the Relief.=

Very speedily a branch of the South African General Mission was established in Kimberley, and was soon in good working order.

The tent of the S.C.A. was opened in Newton Camp, Kimberley, on March 12. The Mayor of Kimberley was present, and Mr. A.H. Wheeler, the organizing secretary of the association, took charge of the proceedings. The soldiers' roll-call hymn was sung. In this tent large numbers afterwards gave themselves to Christ.

The Rev. Mr. McClelland, Presbyterian chaplain, also moved into Kimberley from Modder River, and for some time assisted in the work. He tells of the sad death of the Rev. Cathel Kerr, of the Free Church Highland Committee. He had been acting chaplain to the Scots Guards, and died in Kimberley hospital.

During the siege an eminent South African missionary passed away—the Rev. Jas. Thompson, M.A., ex-President of the South African Wesleyan Conference. He died with the sound of bursting shells in his ears, wondering what was in store for his church and people. He died as Christians die, and passed

'Where beyond these voices there is peace.'

The work of God spread from Kimberley on every hand. The S.C.A. workers spread out as far afield as Boshof, worshipping in the Dopper Church, and making it ring with Sankey's hymns, where all had been the quiet of the Psalms. We read of conversions here and there and everywhere. Thus in Kimberley also the word of God 'had free course and was glorified,' and the workers 'thanked God and took courage.'

## Chapter X

### WITH GATACRE'S COLUMN



We turn now to another part of the field of operations, and the place that demands our attention is Sterkstroom. Here, following the disaster to the Northumberland Fusiliers, there was a long halt. General Gatacre could not advance without reinforcements. Those reinforcements were not for a long time forthcoming, and all that he could do was to keep that part of Cape Colony clear of the enemy, and ultimately join hands with General French.



## Page 59

=Christian Workers at Sterkstroom.=

But these long pauses between actual engagements gave the opportunity for Christian work, and General Gatacre's camp at Sterkstroom was besieged by a large number of Christian workers. In addition to the recognised chaplains the Soldiers' Christian Association, represented by Messrs. Stewart and Denman, had their large green tent, and pursued their usual work with much success. The Salvation Army was also in evidence, and their captain and lieutenant rendered capital service, especially in the open air. Mr. and Mrs. Osborne Howe, well known in South Africa for their devoted work, had another tent, splendidly fitted up, and known as the 'Soldiers' Home.' Mr. Anderson, an Army Scripture Reader from Glasgow, was also very useful. The Anglican and Wesleyan chaplains both had tents, in which they carried on their work incessantly. Captain England started a branch of the A.T.A., and worked it till he died. And so, what with the workers living in camp and others paying flying visits to it, the call to repentance was loud and long, and no soldier at Sterkstroom was left without spiritual ministrations.

=Comforts for the Troops.=

And not only did the spiritual interests of the soldier receive attention—the workers bore in mind that he had a body as well as a soul. All Christian South Africa bore that in mind. From far and near came presents for the soldiers. Churches gave collections for that purpose; ladies' sewing circles sewed to buy them comforts; business firms sent donations of goods; comforts, aye, and even luxuries, poured into the camp, and while in other parts of the field our men were on half or quarter rations, in the camp at Sterkstroom there were fruit distributions night by night. Fresh butter and eggs came from the ladies of Lady Frere and other places. Stationery, almost *ad libitum*, was supplied. So that, notwithstanding rain and wind and many other *discomforts*, on the whole the troops at Sterkstroom managed to pass a cheerful time. Hardships were before them, death was both behind and before. Enteric fever was already dogging their steps, but still, compared with many of their comrades, they might indeed 'rest and be thankful.'

=The Soldiers' Home at Sterkstroom.=

Let us first of all glance at Mr. and Mrs. Osborne Howe in the midst of their work. It is the opening of their Soldiers' Home. The date is Thursday, February 15. About two thousand men are present at the opening ceremony, and the general and his staff are also there. The assemblage is thoroughly representative. There are the war correspondents of the different papers; the chaplains of the Division; the Rev. Thomas Perry, Baptist minister from King Williamstown; 'Captain' Anderson and 'Lieutenant' Warwick of the Salvation Army; the workers of the Soldiers' Christian Association, as well as of the Soldiers' Home; and last, but not least, the ladies of the nursing staff from the Hospital and Soldiers' Home. The band of the Northumberland Fusiliers is also present to delight the company with its music. All sorts of good things are provided by

the generous host and hostess to delight the most fastidious appetite—if there is such an appetite upon the veldt.



## Page 60

The general is in his happiest mood. He thanks the friends of King Williamstown and Mr. and Mrs. Osborne Howe for their noble gift to his men.

=The S.C.A. Tent Services.=

The Soldiers' Christian Association had their tent splendidly fitted up, as all their tents are. But it was most unfortunate. Twice was it blown down by fierce sandstorms, and on the second occasion the tent-pole was broken beyond repair. A tree was, however—not commandeered, but—bought. Handy men of the Royal Engineers speedily reduced its size and placed it in position, and there it stood braving its native winds.

In this tent splendid work was done. Night by night men were seeking Christ. The demand for Bibles was great. On one occasion the workers were employed for two hours giving out Bibles and Testaments to soldiers who came crowding round and begging for them. From the first night of its erection the tent was crowded. The workers had never in their long experience seen such a blessed work of grace. Men by the score were delighted to be spoken to about the salvation of their souls.

The pens, ink, and paper, provided free, were a great boon to the soldiers. From three to four hundred sheets of paper per day were given to the men, who, of course, had to make special application for it.

[Illustration: MORNING SERVICE ON THE VELDT.]

Mr. Denman reports: 'Many whole days we have done nothing but receive in our private tents men who were anxious and troubled about their souls' salvation; others came to us who had got cold and indifferent, because of the absence of the means of grace. These in very many instances, under God's blessing, were helped and restored to the enjoyment of the means of grace and the Christian privileges. One dear Christian man came in, threw his arms around my shoulders, and burst into tears, and said, "God bless you dear men for coming out here to care for us, and to help us on in the Christian life. He will reward you both for leaving home and dear ones. I am sure you have been such help to so many of us." [9]

Thus was the work of the S.C.A. appreciated, and eternity alone will reveal the good accomplished by its means.

[Footnote 9: *News from the Front*, April, 1900.]

=Christian Work under Mr. Burgess.=

The work of the Wesleyan Church at Sterkstroom was also actively carried forward. The chaplain at Sterkstroom was the Rev. W.C. Burgess. At one time he was assisted by no fewer than five Wesleyan soldier local preachers. These were Sergeant-Major C.B. Foote, of the Telegraph Battalion Royal Engineers, a much respected local



preacher from the Aldershot and Farnham Circuit; Sergeant-Major T. Jones, of the 16th Field Hospital R.A.M.C.; Corporal Knight, of the 8th Company Derbyshire Regiment; Trooper W.W. Booth, of Brabant's Horse; and Mr. Blevin, of King Williamstown, and late of Johannesburg, one of Mr. Howe's workers.



## Page 61

Parade services, of course, received careful attention, and were largely attended. But such services, however picturesque and interesting, are but a small part of the chaplain's duty. He makes them the centre of his work, for at no other time can he get so many of his men around him; and standing there at the drumhead, he gives God's message with all the power he can command.

But, after all, it is in quieter, homelier work that he succeeds the best. Mr. Burgess, for instance, tells us how he began his open-air work. He went over to the Royal Scots camp, and, as soon as the band had finished playing, stepped into the ring. It might have been a shell that had dropped into that ring by the speed with which all the soldiers cleared away from it! and the preacher, who had hoped he could hold the crowd which the band had gathered, was woefully disappointed. However, he commenced to sing,—

'Hold the fort,'

and he had not long to hold it by himself. Before he had finished the hymn other soldiers had gathered courage, and he had a crowd of two or three hundred round him, and at the close of the service there were many earnest requests to come again.

Thus night by night, in the tent and in the open air, Christ was preached. Perhaps, however, the most blessed of all the services were the meetings of Christian soldiers upon the veldt. Here and there among Mr. Burgess's letters one chances on such passages as this:—

'At 7.30 p.m. eight of us went a little distance from the tents into the veldt, and read the fifteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel together, and knelt down on the grass, and had a happy time in prayer. The lads got back to their tents in time for the first post, when the roll is called.'

Such records as these give us a glimpse of the Christian soldier's life at once beautiful and pathetic. Such intercourse must have been of the sweetest character; and, far away from home and friends, they drew very near to God.

For weeks from this time Mr. Burgess's letters are full of stories of conversion. Now a corporal that he chats with at the close of a hard day's work, now the trumpeter of the regiment, now several together at the close of an open-air service. Thus all workers rejoiced together in ever continued success, and the greatest joy of all—the joy of harvest—was theirs.

But the time of inactivity was over. For weeks reinforcements had been gathering, and the chaplains' work had covered a larger area. It was now time to strike their tents and march. But this unfortunate column was unfortunate still. With the memory of the



disaster to the Northumberland Fusiliers at Stormberg still in their minds they marched forward, only to meet with fresh disaster at Reddersburg.

=The Disaster at Reddersburg.=

Perhaps the best account of that disaster is given by the Rev. W.C. Burgess in a letter to the Rev. E.P. Lowry; and as it gives a vivid picture of a chaplain's work under exceedingly difficult circumstances, we venture to quote at some length from the *Methodist Times*:—



## Page 62

'On Thursday, March 29, four companies of the Royal Irish Rifles were under orders to go by march route to De Wet's Dorp, and to leave one company behind at Helvetia, which is midway between the two townships. We reached this place on the Friday, leaving Captain Murphy in charge, and the remaining three companies, under command of Captain McWhinnie, reached De Wet's Dorp on the Sunday morning at nine o'clock. We marched through the town and took up a position on the surrounding hills, when all at once we heard firing in the distance, and our mounted infantry were soon engaging the enemy's scouts. About sunset we were reinforced by about 150 of the Northumberland Fusiliers and Royal Irish Rifles Mounted Infantry. Our men bivouacked for the night along the ridges, and I slept with them. About three o'clock on Monday morning our officer commanding received the order to retire upon Reddersburg. At dawn we marched out in the pouring rain. We bivouacked that night on or near a Mr. Kelly's farm, about fifteen miles from De Wet's Dorp. At two o'clock the next morning—Tuesday, April 3, 1900—a man, of the name of Murray, of the Cape Mounted Rifles, brought despatches, informing us that the enemy were in considerable numbers in the direction of Thaba 'Nchu, on the Modder River, and were likely to threaten our advance.' Murray rode with despatches from Smithfield to De Wet's Dorp, and finding that our column had left, he decided to overtake us, after having rested his horse; but in the meantime some of the enemy's scouts had entered the town, had taken his horse, saddle and bridle, and were making a vigorous search for him, but in vain; and under cover of the darkness he walked out and reached us in the early morning. He came and woke me up, and I took him to the commanding officer. We marched out again in the grey of the morning, and at about ten o'clock a.m. we saw dense clouds of dust rising away in the distance to our extreme right, and shortly afterwards saw horsemen galloping towards us, whom we vainly hoped might be our own cavalry, sent to our relief by Lord Roberts at Bloemfontein; but in a few minutes all our hopes were shattered, when we heard firing and saw our men engaging the enemy and retiring upon the adjacent kopjes, which we at once took possession of, and arranged our hospital, planting the Red Cross flag immediately in front of our ambulance wagons and hospital tents.' The battle, now known as the battle of Muishond-fontein, commenced at 10.45 a.m. on Tuesday, April 3, 1900, and continued all day. At 3.40 p.m. the enemy's guns arrived on the scene of action, and began shelling us from three different positions. We were completely surrounded by a force of 3,200, under Commandant De Wet, who, according to his own testimony to us afterwards, had five guns, four of which were in action, as well as a Vickers-Maxim. Shortly after the fighting began bullets and shells were dropping,

## Page 63

and exploding in close proximity to our hospital. The Red Cross flag had four bullet-holes. Two of the mules, standing in harness and attached to one of our ambulance wagons, were killed. The operating tent, in which Dr. Smyth was attending to a wounded man, had two bullet-holes through it. One tent had four bullet-holes. Part of the seat of one of our ambulance baggage wagons had the red cross on its right side cut clean away by a shell. Pieces of shell struck the wheels of our ambulance wagon, and one of our Cape Medical Staff Corps was slightly wounded in the foot by a segment of a shell while close to the ambulance wagon. We had one mule whilst in harness cut in two by a shell and three mules wounded, so that they had to be shot. One mule was shot while tied to an ambulance wagon bearing the red cross; shrapnel and common shell were fired. It was considered absolutely necessary to cast up a parapet as a protection from the shot and shell fire, and we all threw off our coats, and with pick and shovel worked away until about midnight casting up earthworks.

[Illustration: SOLDIERS' HOME ON THE FIELD.]

'The firing ceased at dusk. The men slept in their positions in the ridges, and without either food or water. At eight p.m., hearing that Captain Kelly was slightly wounded in the head, we scaled the heights, and took him and some of his men a little water; but it was very little. Still he seemed grateful. He would not leave his men, but slept with them on the ridges. In stumbling over boulders amongst the bushes on the ridges, whom should I meet but the Earl of Rosslyn, who had escaped from the Boer lines, and had come into our camp in the afternoon. He had rather a rough time of it, for our men, not knowing who he was, and mistaking him for an enemy, fired upon him, but fortunately without effect. He very kindly told me that I might sleep in his buggy, which was near the ambulance party. However, I did not avail myself of his kind offer, but slept near the trenches. Captain Tennant, R.A., our Intelligence officer, came down from the fighting lines at night, and said to the five Dutch prisoners whom our mounted infantry had captured the day before, "You now see how your own men are firing upon our hospital, and if you are killed or hurt it will be by the shells of your own people, and not by ours." They saw at once the perilous position they were in, and asked for permission to dig a trench for themselves, which was granted. The natives also followed suit, and dug one for themselves.' We were not molested during the night, but the battle was resumed the next morning (Wednesday, the 4th), and was fiercer than ever, until at last it was evident that the position was taken, and we surrendered at nine o'clock a.m. The enemy immediately galloped in, tore down the Union Jack, which they burnt, disarmed our men, and marched them off as quickly as they could in a column five or six deep. They

## Page 64

sang a verse of a hymn and the Volkslied (their national anthem), and after listening to a short address from their commandant, they dispersed. Commandant De Wet was annoyed at our having dug trenches within the lines of our hospital, and said it was a breach of the Geneva Convention, and that we were taking an undue advantage of our privileges; but when we pointed out to him that it had been done to protect the wounded, some native women, and an old native man and child who came in for protection, and not as a protection to our troops who were in the firing lines, he was satisfied. The trenches were dug under a tolerably heavy fire. The enemy captured all our horses and saddlery, some of our kits and water-bottles, and one of our buck wagons marked with the Red Cross. Both the medical officers and I had our horses and kits taken from us, but the commandant assured each of us that they would be returned, but we have not seen them yet. In the evening these two officers with an orderly walked a distance of three or four miles to the Boer laager in the hope of recovering their kits, only to find that the laager had been removed and the enemy were nowhere to be seen. They took my servant, and would not hear of his remaining behind. We were released by Commandant De Wet, who told us to bury our dead and take the wounded where we liked.

=Consolation to the Dying.=

'Our casualties were ten killed and thirty-five wounded. I went over the battle-field with the ambulance party seeking for the dead and wounded, and came across a man who was dying, and said to him, "Do you know Jesus?" He replied, "Yes, I'm trusting Jesus as my Saviour." I said, "That's right, brother. 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' 'Christ died the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God.' 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin.' Do you know me?" I asked. "Yes," he replied, "you are our chaplain," and turning his dying face to me, he said, "Pray for me." I knelt down by his side, surrounded by our stretcher-bearers, as well as by the Boers on horseback, who were witnesses of this pathetic scene, and commended him to God. He then said he was thirsty, and asked for a drink of water, which it was my privilege to give him from the water-bottle slung by my right side. We then laid him on the stretcher and carried him as gently as we possibly could to the field hospital, but in a few minutes his disembodied spirit had left its tenement of clay and gone to answer the roll call up yonder.' One cannot speak too highly of the unremitting care and attention bestowed upon our dear wounded fellows by the army surgeons. Our officers in the field behaved most gallantly, and were as cool as possible under the most galling fire. The "O.C.," Captain McWhinnie, could be seen against the sky line again and again,



## Page 65

walking about amongst his men, directing the defence, and giving orders as coolly as if he had been on parade. While telling his men to avail themselves of every bit of cover he seemed utterly regardless of his own personal safety. The other officers were directing their men in more distant parts of the field, and could not be so easily seen by us. Our ammunition was getting low, and we had no artillery, not even a machine gun, and had a long series of ridges to occupy, extending over an area of three miles, so that it was no wonder our position was untenable. On Thursday, at two p.m., we left the battlefield with our wounded for Reddersburg, where the people received us most kindly and placed the Government school-room at our disposal.'[10]

After burying the dead, and assisting the wounded to Bethany railway station, Mr. Burgess returned to headquarters at Springfontein and gave General Gatacre an account of the disaster. He was then attached to the Royal Berks, as his own regiment was in captivity, and advanced with them through the Orange River Colony.

[Footnote 10: *Methodist Times*, May 17, 1900.]

=‘I Must Go to the Muster Roll.’=

‘He notes as he passes along a pathetic little incident. Bugler Longhurst, who was mortally wounded in the fight on April 4, died soon after, and shortly before he passed away he sat up in bed and said to his orderly, “Hush! hush!! give me my uniform. I hear them mustering. There are the drums! I must go to the muster roll. Hush!”—and sinking back he died.

‘The advance for a long time was a continuous battle. Even the transport had a warm time of it. On one occasion a forty-pounder shell struck a transport wagon and exploded, cutting off the native driver’s leg as he sat upon the box. The poor fellow showed conspicuous courage. “Don’t mind me, lads,” he shouted, “drive on.” They carried him to the operating tent, and he was singing all the way. Shortly after his operation he died.’

=‘I’m not Afraid, only my Hand Shakes.’=

The Sterkstroom column were fighting at last, and bravely they bore themselves. It was not their fault if disaster dogged their steps. No braver men could be found than those under Gatacre’s command. And yet they, like the rest, had a great objection to the pom-poms. ‘I’m not afraid,’ said one lad, when that strange sound began and the shells came rattling around. ‘I’m not afraid, only my hand shakes.’

It reminds us of a story told of a certain officer who was going into action for the first time. His legs were shaking so that he could hardly sit his horse. He looked down at them, and with melancholy but decided voice said, ‘Ah! you are shaking, are you? You

would shake a great deal more if you knew where I was going to take you to-day; so pull yourselves together. Advance!



## Page 66

We are not told whether the legs so addressed at once stopped shaking, or whether they were taken still shaking into the battle. But this we do know, that the highest type of courage is not incompatible with nervousness, and that the courage that can conquer shaking nerves, and take them all unwilling where they do not want to go, is the courage that can conquer anything. The 'I' that is not afraid even when the 'hand' shakes, is the real man after all, and the man of exquisite nervous temperament may be an even greater hero than the man who does not know fear.

Sir Herbert Chermiside had succeeded General Gatacre, who was returning home, and the column was now joining hands with General French, and coming under the superior command of Sir Leslie Rundle. It was stern work every day, and the chaplains, like the rest, were continually under fire. Services could not be held, but night by night the chaplains went the round of the picquets and spoke cheering words to them in their loneliness, and, day by day, in the fight and out of it, they preached Christ from man to man, ministering to the wounded, closing the eyes of the dying and burying the dead, until at last they too reached Bloemfontein and cheered the grand old British flag.

## Chapter XI

### BLOEMFONTEIN

'Look, father, the sky is English,' said a little girl as they drove home to Bloemfontein in the glowing sunset.

'English, my dear,' said her father, 'what do you mean?'

'Why,' replied the little one, 'it is all red, white, and blue.'

And in truth, red, white, and blue was everywhere. The inhabitants of Bloemfontein must have exhausted the stock of every shop. They must have ransacked old stores, and patched together material never intended for bunting. Wherever you looked, there were the English colours. No wonder to the imagination of the little one even the sun was greeting the victorious English, and painting the western sky red, white, and blue.

We cannot, of course, suppose that all these people who greeted the victorious British army enthusiastically were really so enthusiastic as they appeared. But 'nothing succeeds like success,' and those who had cursed us yesterday, blessed us to-day.

=The Advantages of Bloemfontein.=

It is a matter for thankfulness that the town was spared the horrors of a bombardment. It was far too beautiful to destroy. Of late years, as money had poured into the treasury, much had been expended upon public buildings. The Parliament Hall, for instance, had been erected at a cost of L80,000. The Grey College was a building of which any city

might be proud. The Post Office was quite up to the average of some large provincial town in this country, and several other imposing buildings proved that the capital of the Orange Free State, though small, was 'no mean city.'

## Page 67

It was literally a town on the veldt. The veldt was around it everywhere. It showed up now and then in the town where it was least expected, as though to assert its independence and remind the dwellers in the city that their fathers were its children.

Wonderfully healthy is this little city. Situated high above sea level, with a climate so bracing and life-giving that the phthisis bacillus can hardly live in it, it seemed to our soldiers, after their long march across the veldt, a veritable City of Refuge. Alas! how soon it was to be turned into a charnel house!

=The March to Bloemfontein.=

It was to this oasis in the South African desert that Lord Roberts marched his troops after the surrender of Cronje. It had been a terrible march from the Modder River, and its severity was maintained to the end. The difficulty of transport was great, and sickness was beginning to tell upon the troops. The river water, rendered poisonous by the bodies of men and cattle from Cronje's camp, and the horrible filth of his laager, were responsible for what followed. The men for the most part kept up until the march was over. They had determined to reach Bloemfontein at all costs, and many of them in all probability lost their lives through that determination. They ought to have given up long before they did, but struggled on until, rendered weak by their prolonged exertions, they had no strength to fight the disease which had fastened upon them.

The last march of the Guards was one which the Brigade may well remember with pride, as one of the most famous in its annals. They actually marched over forty miles in twenty-two consecutive hours, over ground full of holes of all sorts and sizes, and with barbed wire cut and lying on the ground in all directions. They marched hour after hour in steady silence, broken only by the 'Glory! Hallelujah!' chorus of the Canadians, marched with soleless boots, or with no boots at all, but with putties wrapped round the bare feet. An hour and a half's rest, and then on again! On, ever on! They are so tired, they feel they can march no further, and yet on they go, steadily marching straight forward, a silent, dogged, determined army out there upon the veldt. Lord Roberts had promised the Guards that they should follow him into Bloemfontein, and they intended to be there to do it.

=The Work at Bloemfontein.=

Bloemfontein reached, Christian work began in real earnest. Every one became 'hard at it' at once. The Rev. E.P. Lowry opened a Soldiers' Home in the schoolroom of the Wesleyan Church, and day by day provided the cheapest tea in the town at three-pence per head, of which many hundreds of the men availed themselves. Here, too, he had meetings night by night. The Rev. James Robertson was also incessantly at work. The large tent of the Soldiers' Christian Association was erected in the camp of the Highland Brigade, and became as usual a centre of splendid Christian effort. Mr. Black tells us

that Lord Roberts gave permission for him to accompany him to Bloemfontein, and gave every possible encouragement to the work.



## Page 68

=Lord Roberts Visits the Tent.=

Mr. Glover writes:—

'The tent of which I now have charge—surrounded by thousands of men of the Highland Brigade, and pitched yesterday on a high plateau about one and a half miles from town—is, I believe, in answer to prayer, on the spot where God would have it be, especially if the numbers attending the first Gospel meeting may be any criterion.' In the early morning I had plenty of willing helpers. By about nine the tent was completed, by ten I had literature, games, *etc.*, unpacked and arranged, and before eleven—after inspection of Naval Brigade—Lord Roberts honoured me with a visit. This was more than we might have expected, and having shown a keen interest in inspection—Sankey's hymn-books included—he gave me a hearty handshake, saying he was pleased to see it, and it would be a great boon to the men. This visit was a very prompt one. Mr. Black just handed up a request after Naval inspection. Lord Roberts replied, "Certainly," and galloped over with his other officers before our workers could get across." There has been a very heavy demand on writing material by the many men, who have had scarcely any opportunity to write for two or three weeks. I hardly know what I shall do for paper, as I have only one packet left, and could not get a line through by wire yesterday; I hope, however, you received my wire to-day. There is room here for a dozen—or even twenty—tents now. We had over 40,000 men before yesterday, when the whole of the Seventh Division arrived.' Our first three meetings have been marked by a very hallowed influence. To-night the tent was packed to overflowing, and our joy at the close was beyond expression, when twenty dear fellows took a stand for Christ. The weather is very wet to-night, the men have no tents, and I gave them the opportunity to remain under the shelter of our tent. As I write (10.30 p.m.), I suppose there are 120 to 150 here.' [11]

Later on our old friend, Mr. Stewart, took charge of the tent, and Mr. Hinde assisted him. Mr. Percy Huskisson also spoke at some of the meetings, and they had glorious times. The Rev. R. Deane Oliver, a devoted Church of England chaplain from Aldershot, took the meeting on one occasion, and no fewer than eighteen stood up for prayer.

[Footnote 11: *News from the Front*, May, 1900.]

=Sunday Services in Bloemfontein.=

The Sabbath services held in the camps and town were full of blessing. In the Wesleyan Church khaki was everywhere, crowding not only every available seat, but the Communion and the pulpit stairs, and even the pulpit itself.

Mr. Lowry writes:—

## Page 69

'There must have been not less than 700 soldiers actually with us that morning. In the afternoon a delightful Bible-class and testimony meeting was held, at which about forty were present, and at its close, thanks to the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Franklin, a capital tea, though not a fruit tea of the Aldershot type, was provided for all. The evening service, conducted by Mr. Franklin, was well attended by the military, and as the clock struck nine, those that remained to the after-meeting bethought us of Sergt.-Major Moss and his men, and made ourselves one with them by singing at the self-same moment their unfailing song, "God be with you till we meet again."'[12]

The Rev. Stuart and Mrs. Franklin, to whom Mr. Lowry refers, were the resident Wesleyan minister and his wife. They rendered conspicuous service to our soldiers, and in fact thought no sacrifice too great to make on their behalf.

But not long was there a pause in the battle. The troops had to be moved further and further out. The chaplains went with them. The onward march to Pretoria commenced, and only an army of occupation was left behind in Bloemfontein.

[Footnote 12: *Methodist Times*, May 3, 1900.]

=Glimpses of Good Work from Soldiers' Letters.=

We, however, stay with them in Bloemfontein for a short time, that we may read a few of the Christian soldiers' letters received from that town, and get some further glimpses of the good work carried on there.

Corporal Lundy writes:—

'Through all the trying marches and battles in which I have been engaged I have found time to read a portion of God's Word. I have found my Heavenly Father a personal Friend in this campaign. We have been on short rations for about a month: just enough to keep one together.

'The prisoners we have in the fort are always singing psalms and hymns, but they do not seem to be quite right; there is something lacking.'

Corporal Simpson says:—

'I am still enjoying the best of health bodily, and so happy in soul that I could not express myself. Storm clouds gather and trials come, but still it's Jesus. When bullets are flying around my head and hunger is pricking me sorely, I can lift up my head with praise. 'When I saw the little English children at Bloemfontein running about so gay, many of them so like my own lambs, my heart seemed as if it would break.'

Another soldier writes:—



'I want to tell you of the great Christian work that is going on in this great camp. There are four or five very large tents, which are full every night, and hundreds are turned away. There are men there who would laugh at the Soldiers' Home in England and scorn to be seen in the company of Christians. Many such men have been brought to know Christ through this great and awful war. Mr. Lowry often speaks to us. He is a grand worker, and we love him. We have been under the Saviour's care and keeping all the time. We are very anxious to get back home, and shall welcome peace with one great shout of joy.'

Another gives us a further glimpse of Christian work:—



## Page 70

'Going along I saw three marquees, on one of which there was written "Soldiers' Home." I peeped in and saw Pearce, of the Gloucesters. I marched up to him and told him who I was. Four of them knew me, and we had a good old talk of the home land. They had just finished a good old Bible reading, and tea came in. I sat down for tea with them. At about 6 p.m. we were in the large marquee putting things ready, and about 6.30 it was full of soldiers, perhaps about 600. Then we had the dear old Sankey hymns.'

Another grows quite eloquent as he writes:—

'At home I hear there has been much rejoicing, and the reverses have given place to victories. But the victories have been bought by the sacrifice of human souls. The altar has been saturated with the blood of fathers and sons. The bitterness of sorrow has wrung human hearts in the dear old homeland. In the mansion, in the cottage, in city and in village, tidings of death have found a place. But Christ, the Prince of Peace, has given peace to many lads on the battlefield. Words which were apparently sown in the darkness have bloomed in the light. Life eternal has been accepted, and the life of sin has become the life of joy. Behind the veil the Master stands and sees the awful strife. The Divine plan is hidden from view, but our faith can see in the distant years the continent of Africa revealed as a continent of God's people.' Men have been, and still are, seeking for fame and glory. The things of heaven, the Christ who died, have been forgotten in the struggle for things of the world. Thank God for the many souls who have found Jesus out here. We feel a mighty power within, and we know it is in answer to the prayers of loved ones in the dear old land. A wall of prayer surrounds us and we are safe. I feel that I have let many golden opportunities slip. The harvest is passing and labourers are few.

'The hearts of our Christian lads have been kept true, and God has been glorified.'

So testify these Christian men to the power of our holy religion to save and keep. We thank God that they in their own way have 'kept the flag flying.'

=The Enteric Epidemic.=

But now began another battle—a battle fiercer and more disastrous to our men than any other in this Boer campaign. Enteric fever had been dogging the steps of our army all the way from Cronje's camp, and it overtook it in full force in Bloemfontein. Very soon the hospitals were full—crowded—overcrowded. A state of things obtained which, whether it be a scandal or not, will be a lasting source of regret to every Englishman, and a dark stain upon the war.

## Page 71

So rapidly did the men fall that accommodation could not possibly be found for them. They lay about anywhere. The space between the bed-cots was full of groaning, struggling, dying humanity. In inches of mud and slush they lay, breathing their lives out all unattended. The supply of doctors, nurses, and orderlies was altogether inadequate. Tents and medicines could not be got to the front, for the railway was required for food supplies, and the army must be fed. It is too early to pass judgment on the arrangements. We record a few facts, vouched for not only by the papers from which we quote, but by scores of men who have come from Bloemfontein, and with whom we have talked.

It is in the remembrance of all that Mr. Burdett-Coutts wrote an article in the *Times*, and afterwards delivered a speech in the House of Commons, in both of which he told of the terrible sufferings of our men, and severely criticised the hospital arrangements. The men returning from the front, while they one and all declare that everything was done by the hospital authorities which it was possible for those on the spot to do, yet mournfully admit that the terrible accounts are not exaggerated.

=Dr. Conan Doyle's Testimony.=

The *Daily Telegraph* published the number of deaths from disease at Bloemfontein during the months of April, May, and the first part of June. They reach the awful total of 949. Dr. Conan Doyle, in a recent letter published in the *British Medical Journal*, says:

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'I know of no instance of such an epidemic in modern warfare. I have not had access to any official figures, but I believe that in one month there were from 10,000 to 12,000 men down with this, the most debilitating of all diseases. I know that in one month 600 men were laid in the Bloemfontein cemetery. A single day in this one town saw 40 deaths.'

He speaks in the highest terms of the conduct of the sick soldiers.

'They are uniformly patient, docile, and cheerful, with an inextinguishable hope of "getting to Pretoria." There is a gallantry even about their delirium, for their delusion continually is that they have won the Victoria Cross. One patient whom I found the other day rummaging under his pillow informed me that he was looking for "his two Victoria Crosses." Very touching also is their care of each other. The bond which unites two soldier pals is one of the most sacred kind. One man shot in three places was being carried into Mr. Gibbs' ward. I lent an arm to his friend, shot through the leg, who limped behind him. "I want to be next Jim, 'cos I'm looking after him," said he. That he needed looking after himself never seemed to have occurred to him.'

=The Hospital Orderlies.=



Dr. Conan Doyle, however, reserves his highest praise for the hospital orderly. We venture to quote at length, because of all workers during this campaign none deserve higher praise, and none will receive less reward than the men who have so nobly, so uncomplainingly done the horrible work of nursing—'the sordid and obscene work,' as Dr. Doyle calls it—through this frightful epidemic.



## Page 72

'In some of the general hospitals, orderlies were on duty for thirty-six hours in forty-eight, and what their duties were—how sordid and obscene—let those who have been through such an epidemic tell.' He is not a picturesque figure, the orderly, as we know him. We have not the trim, well-nourished army man, but we have recruited from the St. John Ambulance men, who are drawn, in this particular instance, from the mill hands of a northern town. They were not very strong to start with, and the poor fellows are ghastly now. There is none of the dash and glory of war about the sallow, tired men in the dingy khaki suits—which, for the sake of the public health, we will hope may never see England again. And yet they are patriots, these men; for many of them have accepted a smaller wage in order to take on these arduous duties, and they are facing danger for twelve hours of the twenty-four, just as real and much more repulsive than the scout who rides up to the strange kopje, or the gunner, who stands to his gun with a pom-pom quacking at him from the hill.' Let our statistics speak for themselves; and we make no claim to be more long-suffering than our neighbours. We have three on the staff (Mr. Gibbs, Mr. Scharlieb, and myself). Four started, but one left us early in the proceedings. We have had six nurses, five dressers, one wardmaster, one washerman, and eighteen orderlies, or thirty-two in all, who actually came in contact with the sick. Out of the six nurses, one has died and three others have had enteric. Of the five dressers, two have had severe enteric. The wardmaster has spent a fortnight in bed with veldt sores. The washerman has enteric. Of the eighteen orderlies, one is dead, and eight others are down with enteric. So that out of a total of thirty-four we have had seventeen severe casualties—fifty per cent.—in nine weeks. Two are dead, and the rest incapacitated for the campaign, since a man whose heart has been cooked by a temperature over 103 degrees is not likely to do hard work for another three months. If the war lasts nine more weeks, it will be interesting to see how many are left of the original personnel. When the scouts and the Lancers and the other picturesque people ride in procession through London, have a thought for the sallow orderly, who has also given of his best for his country. He is not a fancy man—you do not find them in enteric wards—but for solid work and quiet courage you will not beat him in all that gallant army.'

Dr. Conan Doyle has told the story of the hospital orderly, but who shall tell the story of the doctor and the hospital nurse. In many cases they have laid down their lives for the men, and all have worked with a devotion that has seemed well-nigh super-human. But a medical staff sufficient for two army corps was altogether insufficient to supply the needs of an army of 200,000 and fight an epidemic of terrible severity. They did their best. Some person the country will blame, but to these who so nobly worked and endured the country will say, 'Well done!'



## Page 73

=Terrible Incidents during the Epidemic.=

Tales of horror crowd upon one; stories of men in delirium, wandering about the camp at night; stories of living men in the agonies of disease, with dead men lying on either side; stories of men themselves hardly able to crawl about, turning out of bed to nurse their comrades because there was no one else to do it.

'Why do you let 'em die?' asked a young soldier by way of a grim joke, pointing to two dead soldiers close to him, while he himself was suffering from enteric. 'Why don't you look after 'em better?'

'What can I do? I know nothing about nursing!' was the sad reply.

Just so! That was the difficulty—there was no one to prevent them dying. How many might have been saved if such had been the case!

It is too early to tell yet in detail the story of Christian work in connection with this epidemic. Many of the chaplains had left for the front before it broke out in its intensity, and we have as yet only fragmentary evidence as to the work done by those left upon the spot. We have not the slightest doubt that one and all did their work with the devotion we should expect from such men. We hear of Christian soldiers who bore splendid witness for Christ in the hospitals, and who were the means of leading their comrades to the Saviour in the midst of their sickness, and for such stories we thank God.

=Christian Work in the Fever Hospitals.=

We close this chapter with an extract from a letter from the Rev. Robert McClelland, Presbyterian Chaplain 1st battalion Cameron Highlanders, published in *St. Andrew*, and sent us by the courtesy of the Rev. Dr. Theodore Marshall. It is an eloquent testimony to the value of hospital work, and gives us a glimpse of what was done at Bloemfontein:

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'When we reached Bloemfontein we found a dozen large hospitals all as full as they could hold, and at the cemetery gate it was solemn and painful to see many funerals outside the gate waiting entrance to the house of the dead. I was told that an Episcopal clergyman was told off at the cemetery for the sad but necessary work of Christian interment. You will ask, why this great sickness and mortality? The water, on the whole, is bad (sometimes absolutely vile), and our masses of soldiers are not so careful about what they eat and drink as they should be in a trying climate, scorching sun by day and white frost by night. Dysentery and enteric fever are the worst. Here is the minister's noblest vocation, and we could take a dozen Father Damians for this grand work. When the fever runs high, or the strength gets wasted and the heart goes down, a pleasant smile, a kind word, a verse of Scripture, a brief prayer, goes a long way to



revive the drooping spirits. I record my solemn conviction that hospital work, rightly done, is by far and away the most needful and the most acceptable of the chaplain's work. But, of course, like the doctors at the base, we are



## Page 74

all wanting to the front to see the “pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war,” while the brave fellows battling with fever, sickness, and wounds in the hospital are fighting the stiffest fight of all. And yet there is work for us on the march and at the front, too. To make yourself a friend and brother, to seek out and comfort the exhausted and ailing, to speak a word in season to the weary, to preach “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God” as opportunity offers—this is a task worthy of the highest powers and greatest gifts. After being nearly four months on the field, I do not regret the great sacrifices made in going there.’

### Chapter XII

#### ON TO PRETORIA

The march from Bloemfontein to Pretoria was one never to be forgotten. It taxed the strength of the strongest. There was fighting most of the way, and many a soldier who started full of hope never reached the end. The first stage was from Bloemfontein to Kroonstadt.

Mr. W.K. Glover, of the S.C.A., arrived at Kroonstadt in company with Mr. D.A. Black, but there was taken ill and compelled to rest. The Rev. T.F. Falkner and the Rev. E.P. Lowry marched nearly the whole way to Kroonstadt with the troops, and the latter speaks of it as the most trying march of the whole campaign. Opportunities for Christian work, with the exception of the hearty handshake or the whispered prayer, were but few, though during the pauses at Brandfort and at Kroonstadt several successful services were held.

A new name now appears on the line of march—that of the Rev. W.G. Lane, chaplain to the second Canadian contingent. He accompanied the Canadian Forces as Chaplain-Captain, and had the spiritual charge of all Protestants except those of the Episcopal Church.

=The March to Pretoria.=

We have, however, our fullest account of Christian work on the line of march from the pen of the Rev. Frank Edwards, the acting Wesleyan chaplain attached to the South Wales Borderers. He came out late in the war at his own charges to preach to the Welsh soldiers in their own language, and only overtook Lord Roberts at Brandfort. He shows us in vivid outline the sort of work our chaplains did between Bloemfontein and Pretoria.



'And now for the regular routine of "life on the march." We rise at 4 a.m. in the dark and cold, breakfast hastily on biscuit and tea made of very doubtful water, stand shivering in the piercing cold of dawn while troops are paraded, then start on our way long before the sun rises to warm our frozen frames. We march an hour and rest ten minutes—the hour is very long, the ten minutes very short.

=South African Dust.=



## Page 75

'The marching would be tolerable were it not for the heat and dust, the latter lying in some places quite nine inches deep, rising in clouds. It fills your eyes, nostrils, mouth and throat, causing one's lips to crack and bringing on an intolerable thirst, which makes it impossible for the men to be very fastidious, or even prudent with regard to the quality or source of the water which they greedily drink. At night when we reach our camping-ground our first thought is of our great-coats, for we are bathed in perspiration, and as the sun goes down about 5.30, night immediately following without any twilight, the intense heat of the almost tropical day is changed in a few minutes into the bitter cold of what might almost be called, from its length and severity, an Arctic night.

'At the Zand River I saw my first fight. That morning, as the troops were drawn up in marching order, the ominous command was given, "Charge magazines," and every man knew that something was about to happen, and a murmur ran along the ranks. After an hour's march we came in sight of the Zand River, with its kopjes on the farther side. As our battalion came in view of the river we saw the enemy's guns flashing on the distant kopjes, and showers of shells fell on this side the river into the trees in our front. On our right some mounted infantry were lying behind a kopje, and nothing could be more magnificent than to see the volleying shells burst in a successive line along the ridge of their sheltering kopje. At the edge of the wood we were halted and ordered to lie down; as the artillery dashed by us to the front, where they were soon busily pounding the Boer position, "Advance!" our Colonel cried. Up we arose, marched through the trees down into the river-bed, and there we lay while the shells screamed over us.

'The first shell that came screaming—I can use no better term—towards us seemed to cause a cold feeling inside, and I felt as though my last hour had come; but that soon passed, and I became so accustomed to them that I found myself speculating as to where they would burst. While we lay in the river-bed, one monster burst with a roar like thunder upon the bank behind, shaking the ground like an earthquake.

'Our rest here was the calm before the storm, and as we awaited the word to advance into the fight that was raging overhead, I had an opportunity of studying the faces of the soldiers who were going, perhaps, to death. Some were pale with excitement, and their eyes flashed as they clutched their rifles and compressed their lips. Others laughed wildly, another was hungrily gnawing a hard biscuit, while many were smoking furiously. A few appeared quite indifferent, and might have been awaiting the order for a march. The officers were splendidly cool, and gave their orders as clearly and calmly as on parade.

=On the Firing Line.=



## Page 76

"Advance!" was again the cry, and up the banks we went and into the trees on the further side. Here we saw the effect of the shell fire and war upon the battle plain. Our batteries were busily engaged about two hundred yards away, and the death-dealing missiles of friend and foe flew mercilessly about. As we were likely to remain in the tree shelter for a while, I strolled out as far as the batteries, for I wished to have a better view of the Boer position; but here the shells were falling fast between the guns, and one poor gunner was cruelly mutilated by a bursting shell, his dead body presenting a ghastly sight.

'I went back, and met the General and some of his staff inspecting the Boer position with a huge telescope. I had a good look, and clearly saw our shells burst in the embrasure of a gun, which was hurriedly taken away.

'Just then the General wanted to send a message, but had no available messenger. Saluting, I asked that I might be sent. He gave me the message, and springing on a horse which a servant held near, I galloped away. It was a strange experience that entry into the fire-zone, but I forgot all fear in the fight, and delivered my message. I returned to the General, who thanked me for my promptness.

'Our line had meanwhile advanced, and it was grand to see the steadiness of our men. Though bullets spat viciously in the sand before, between, and behind them, not a man flinched, but went steadily on to the heights beyond. I asked the General to send me with another order, which he wished taken to a half battalion some distance ahead, but as he was about to do so, he saw the cross upon my collar, and asked me if I was not a chaplain. I replied in the affirmative, and he inquired where my red cross armband was. I told him I did not possess one, and was told that I must get one at once. The General then told me he was very sorry, but he could not use me again, as I was a non-combatant, and if he availed himself of my services, he would be infringing the Geneva Convention; while, on the other hand, if the Boers captured me, I should be shot.

'=I was Thinking of the Last Verses of the Twenty-third Psalm.=

'One incident which occurred during the day made a deep impression upon me. While in the river drift, on the point of moving into the thick of the fight and fire, I observed a soldier thoughtfully leaning upon his elbow, and was moved to ask him what his thoughts were at that moment. Lifting his eyes steadfastly to mine, he replied, "I was thinking, sir, of the last verses of the twenty-third Psalm"; and as he spoke I knew I was face to face with a man for whom death had no terrors, one who was looking for the crown of life. It was a word in season, and was very helpful.

'We encamped that night upon the heights lately occupied by the enemy. Friday was taken up with another tedious march upon Kroonstadt, and on Saturday we advanced in fighting formation upon that place, momentarily expecting to meet the Boers, whom our scouts reported entrenched in position some miles this side the town. However, we

found they had gone, and Kroonstadt was entered about mid-day, and we encamped outside.



## Page 77

'The next day being Sunday, my first thought was to make arrangement for services. I interviewed the General, and he allowed me to fix my own time—an hour later than the Church of England parade—in order that the men of the 14th Brigade might be able to come down. On Sunday morning I held my first parade service with my regiment. There was a splendid attendance—men of the Borderers, Cheshires, Lancs, Engineers, and many from the other Brigade.

=A Service on the Veldt.=

'At the close of the morning service, after a conversation among themselves, several stepped out and asked for an evening service. I had not intended holding one, as I thought they had been marching for weeks and were tired and weary, and had clothes to wash and mend, and this might be their only opportunity for weeks, perhaps; so I asked that all who wished for an evening service would put up their hands. Every man did so, and the Colonel was only too glad to arrange it for me. That evening, half an hour after the time for tea, we met again on the open veldt, in front of our lines, and we had a splendid muster—more than the morning. The hymns went splendidly. Two soldiers led in prayer—short and very earnest—then we sang and prayed. Two addresses by two more soldiers—straight and good and to the point—addresses which had a deep effect upon all. Another hymn, then I spoke to them about the “Standard of Jesus,” and we felt the power of the presence of God. Kneeling on the veldt, man after man broke down. Many openly confessed their sin, others rejoiced in true Methodist style. Even then they were not satisfied; a prayer-meeting was asked for and all stayed. It was truly a grand prayer-meeting. Prayers and hymns followed free and fast, and many at the close, as they pressed forward to shake hands with me and thank me for coming, said it was one of the happiest Sundays of their life. “More like a Sunday at home sir, than any we have had out here; we did not know what Sunday was before.” Many found peace with God that night and determined to lead a new life.

'That night I got permission to have hymns sung in the lines, and you should have heard the Welsh hymns as they rose and fell in the night air. Men crowded from all parts. Officers and men jostled in the crowding ring while the sweet melodies and beautiful harmonies thrilled every soul. It was a happy ending to a happy day. The Colonel has asked me to arrange for this hymn-singing every Sunday night, for he says it is very beautiful, and not only is it highly appreciated by the men, but it has a beneficial influence on them.

'On Tuesday I had permission to arrange a camp concert. We had a huge wood fire. A wagon drawn up served for a platform. The Colonel took the chair. The officers were in the ring and the men grouped around. It was a weird and romantic sight—all those laughing and appreciative faces in the flickering fire-light—and we had a very pleasant evening.



## Page 78

'On Monday, as we were still encamped here, I organized a football match and acted as referee, which in a tropical sun is no sinecure, I can tell you. On Wednesday I rode into Kroonstadt and had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Lowry, Mr. Lane, the Canadian chaplain, and Mr. Carey, the resident Wesleyan minister, and we had a pleasant time.'

Thus progressed the work; thus one Christian worker after another distinguished himself, while all the time Lord Roberts was rapidly drawing nearer his goal. Now Brandfort was reached, now Kroonstadt, and at last the Diamond City, Johannesburg—no, not last, Pretoria lies beyond, and by-and-by the victorious forces entered the capital of the Transvaal, and the British flag—symbol of world-wide empire—floated over the Government Buildings.

And here we pause. The day is now not distant when the British flag will be respected throughout both those one-time Republics, and peace shall once more hold sway. When that time comes we predict a magnificent extension of the kingdom of Christ in South Africa; for we trust that, with old feuds forgotten and the Spirit of Christ taking possession of both British and Boer, all forms of Christianity will join hands to make Christ King throughout the Dark Continent.

## Chapter XIII

### HERE AND THERE IN CAPE COLONY

'Bother war!' writes a guardsman to the Rev. J.H. Hocken. 'Let me get out of this lot, and never no more.' It is not a very heroic sentiment certainly, but he wrote from the hospital at Orange River, and doubtless expressed not only his own sentiments, but the sentiments of a good many of his comrades. And certainly there seems to have been reason as well as sentiment in his statement. Listen to this, for instance:—

'At the engagement of Graspans we had some food about 4 p.m. All that night my battalion was on outpost duty. Next morning we marched about 3 a.m., caught up the division, and took part in the engagement at Graspans, followed up the enemy, captured a building with forty Boers in it and a large tent filled with medical comforts, and when we thought of having some rest and some grub, we were ordered on top of some hills for outpost duty that night, and we did not have our dinner until the next day, Sunday morning, at 9 a.m. That is quite true. Forty-one hours without anything but dirty water, and yet Miss Morphew says Guards are only for show. But I don't think she meant it. No wonder I am bad.'

=Work at the Orange River Hospital.=

Aye, no wonder, indeed! And week by week, month by month, the Orange River Hospital has been full ever since the beginning of the war. Here Army Scripture Reader



Pearce, from North Camp, Aldershot, has been in charge. For a long time he was single-handed in this great hospital camp. He performed the duty of acting chaplain to all denominations. General Wauchope before he died spoke of Mr. Pearce's



## Page 79

eagerness for work, and verily there was enough for him to do. At one time he was assisted by the Canadian chaplain, and latterly by the chaplain of the Australian contingent. But month by month he went his weary round of hospital visitation alone. He buried the dead, wrote letters home to the friends of the dying and the dead, and performed faithfully and well all the many tasks in a chaplain's routine. At one time there were at least a hundred Canadians down with enteric at Orange River. The Australian hospital was also crowded.

The monotony of work must have been terribly trying. It was not for him to know anything of the excitement of the battle. It was only his to witness the horrors of the carnage. His pulses did not thrill at sights of deeds of daring on the field. He only saw the train-loads of wounded all smeared with dust and blood, and heard the groans that told of agony. But when the day of reward shall come, the quiet, earnest work of such as he will not be forgotten, and the great Head of the Church will say, 'Well done.' No wonder after eight months of such work as this his nerves gave way, and he was obliged to return home.

At Orange River, too, the Soldiers' Christian Association did good work. Messrs. Glover, Fotheringham, and Ingram were the means of leading scores of men to Christ. Dr. Barrie, of the Canadian contingent, who was temporarily attached to the hospital, gave several addresses, which were much appreciated, and conducted a weekly Bible Class. Later Messrs. Charteris and Bird were in charge of the tent, and tell the same blessed story of nightly effort and nightly success.

=Experiences at Arundel and Colesberg.=

From De Aar, Naauwport, and Arundel we have before us several graphic letters from the Rev. M.F. Crewdson, late of Johannesburg. Mr. Crewdson is a Wesleyan minister, and for conspicuous service on the field was appointed acting chaplain. His hospital stories are full of point and pathos. He tells of one man with twenty-two shell wounds, and yet living and cheerful; of another with a hole as big as a hand in his leg, and another big hole in his arm, and yet refusing to grumble, and professing himself quite comfortable. Of this man an Australian said, 'He exasperates me; he never has any pain.' He pictures to us a corporal seeing to the comfort of his men and horses, and then, by way of a change, teaching his men the ditty—

'Life is too short to quarrel.'

[Illustration: ARUNDEL.]

From Colesberg we have a graphic letter from the Rev. E. Bottrill. He refers to the imprisonment by the Boers of the resident Wesleyan minister, the Rev. A.W. Cragg,



whose health suffered severely from his three months' confinement. He tells of earnest work in that town so difficult to capture, of splendid parade services, and of an extemporised Soldiers' Home in the Wesleyan Church. At Arundel there was a tent of the S.C.A. and another at Enslin, and at each of these good work was done.



## Page 80

Everywhere God was with His workers, and gave great success. The spirit of inquiry was present in all the meetings. Everywhere in this region, as indeed throughout the whole theatre of war, in camp and hospital, on the march and on the battlefield, our soldier lads were inquiring, 'What must I do to be saved?' and not far off was some one ready to reply, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

=An Ostrich Story.=

As a variation from our long record of work in camp and hospital, we close this chapter with an ostrich story, and venture to take it intact from *News from the Front* for April, 1900.

'In conjunction with the Rev. M.F. Crewdson, Mr. Ingram, of the S.C.A., went to Arundel to take charge of a tent which was to be erected there. The tent not having arrived he says:—

"We went across the country some seven or eight miles, a terrible tramp, to visit some graves. It was a lonely, hot, and trying walk, and as we were half way back, about 1 p.m., having been walking since 6.15 a.m., and having had no meal, we saw an ostrich making for us about a mile away. It was up to us in three minutes (a male bird), and had evidently seen us from its nest, where it was sitting, and thought we were going to interfere with it. It was an enormous bird, and was in a rage. It stopped some dozen paces from us, and whirled round, flapping its wings and looking truly awful. I gave Crewdson my pocket-knife, the only weapon we had, and as the wretched thing went circling round us, getting nearer and nearer, I suggested to Crewdson that if we came to close quarters, its neck would be our only chance (its body was higher than my head). He did not think it would come to close quarters, but seemed in a great state about our safety, and said, 'Keep together, old man.' 'All right,' I said; but the next moment Crewdson had turned to try and walk on. I felt to separate, or take our eyes off it, meant an attack, so walked backwards; but it no sooner saw that I was a pace or two nearer it than Crewdson than it came on me like a very whirlwind. I had been reading Psalm xci. in the rain that morning, and how grandly it was fulfilled! By a God-given instinct I dropped my haversack and your fieldglasses, and did not wait for it to reach me, in which case it would have pecked out my eyes and struck me with its claws, probably tearing my chest open, but sprang to meet it. Death seemed absolutely certain, and though my nerve was set, and, as it were, I mentally gave up my life, I met the bird with a thud. With both hands I caught its neck before it could lift a foot to strike; we both rolled over, and, with strength given me at the moment, I clung to its neck until I came up, 'top dog.' But then with full fury it began to kick, and had I received a full blow I should have probably died, but I hugged too closely to it, and then wriggled on to its back, so that it kicked into the



## Page 81

air away from me, and I only got a 'short arm' blow, and received bruises instead of wounds."Crewdson did not know whether I was alive or dead at first, but at my shouts brought my knife; and while I was gripping its throat with both hands so that it could not breathe at all, and rolling about to avoid kicks, Crewdson tried to cut its gullet. This he could not do at first, so I took the knife with my left hand, holding the neck with my right, and dug the blade under the uplifted wing. It took effect, and the wing seemed to lose force, but the blade of my knife was broken, leaving half in the bird. I threw Crewdson the knife, and he opened another blade, and managed to cut the gullet. The thing was nearly stifled, and, feeling the knife, it gave a last and awful struggle, and I really feared I should be beaten; however, I also put forth a last effort, and gradually the kicks and the struggles subsided. I loosened my grip and let the blood flow; and when I thought it was pretty far gone, I jumped off and joined Crewdson. Even then it made a wild attempt to rise, but could not. Covered with dirt and blood, we plucked a few feathers, thanked the Lord for life, and tramped to Arundel, and arrived truly tired out.

"The stationmaster told us that in 99 cases out of 100 the ostrich would have killed me. He says there is not a man in the country who would attempt to do what I did."

So there are in South Africa not only perils of Boors, of bullets, of shells, of snakes, and of scorpions, but perils of ostriches too! And from them one and all His workers may well pray, 'Good Lord, deliver us!'

## Chapter XIV

### WITH SIR REDVERS BULLER

Christian work among the troops in Natal went on apace for months prior to the advance upon Ladysmith. The Pietermaritzburg Y.M.C.A., for instance, provided two correspondence tents, which were of great service to the troops.

We have the report of No. 1 tent before us. From December to April this tent was pitched successively at Chieveley, Frere, Springfield, Spearman's, Zwart Kopjes, beyond Colenso, outside Ladysmith, Modder Spruit, and finally at Orange River Junction. Its work can be divided under four heads—Correspondence, Evangelistic, Literary, and Social.

Every day saw the tent full of letter writers, and they were lying on the ground in front of it also. As a rule not more than two sheets of paper and two envelopes were given to each applicant. But in this way no less than twelve thousand sheets and an equal number of envelopes were distributed during the period named. These workers also performed amateur post office duties. They sold L25 worth of stamps, and received

over nine thousand letters and three hundred papers and packages. Efforts were made to supply newspapers for the men, but the difficulties of transport proved in the end too great to be satisfactorily overcome, though whenever possible they were obtained.

## Page 82

Nearly every night evangelistic services were held, conducted by some member of the tent staff of workers, or by an Army Scripture Reader, or an S.C.A. man.

Various social functions were successfully carried out, and our soldiers rejoiced over the good things provided for them. They do not, as a rule, care for free teas at home. You may coax them to go to them, as some benevolent ladies do; but they can afford to pay for what they get, and they prefer that plan. The other only spoils them. But abroad things are different, and Tommy of the capacious appetite took all he could get. And so would you, my reader, had you been in his place.

The South African General Mission was also in evidence. Mr. Spencer Walton kept sending good things into the camp of all kinds, and kept up his ministry of 'comforts' even after Ladysmith was reached.

Our old friends of the Soldiers' Christian Association were, of course, to the fore. They knew just how to do the rough-and-tumble work required. Tommy could understand them, because they understood him. Throughout the campaign there was evidence of Mr. Wheeler's careful organizing. His agents seem to have been most capable and successful men, ready for every good word and work, and the work itself such as will stand the test of time.

=Bivouac in a S.C.A. Tent.=

Take this as a specimen of the readiness to take advantage of any and every opportunity. Mr. Fleming writes from Frere Camp:—

'We were preparing for a meeting last night, when we discovered something like Boers in the distance coming towards our camp, but they turned out to be S.A.L.H. They pitched before our tent to bivouac for the night. When they had dismounted the rain began to fall in torrents. A major came over to me, and asked me where the canteen was; of course, it was shut. I asked him what he wanted to buy, as perhaps I could help him. He wanted socks. I took him into my tent, and gave him a bath and a pair of socks—made him a drop of "sergt.-majors'." His gratitude was unbounded. He said, "Ah, this is true Christianity; you're a brick, old boy. Here's a sovereign subscription for your kindness." I refused it. "Well, I'll never forget you!" "All right," I said, "my name is on the socks"; then off I went to see about the others. Met the colonel. Offered him the freedom of our large marquee for his men to sleep in or shelter as they pleased. He was most grateful, so in the midst of a dreadful rainfall about two hundred of these fellows found shelter. All were hungry. We had five boxes of biscuits for our own use, and fifteen gallons of gingerbeer. Mr. Young, of the S.A.G.M., who was a great help to me, took a bucket of the gingerbeer and some biscuits to the men on duty on the lines.' It was impossible to have our meeting, but we had individual dealing with several. I never shall forget the sight of those men sleeping



## Page 83

in the marquee. Two of them were huddled up in a box like monkeys. One man was wringing out his socks; he had fallen into a gun pit up to the waist in water. I wanted to lend him a pair, but he evidently thought that the feeling of dry socks would be too great a contrast to his wet body, for he positively refused my nice warm ones. About 10 p.m. I found three men sleeping outside in the rain. I asked one of them to come and share my tent. "No, thank you, sir, we have only one blanket between us." "Come on, then, the three of you." Then the invitation was accepted, and didn't they smile as I served them with hot coffee! Mr. Hide's tent (he is at Durban) I lent to a major and a captain. The water ran like a river through our camp, so heavy was the rainfall. I kept lights in our marquee all night, and toddled out and in to see all was right. I was not out of my clothes all night, but my lot was a happy one compared with those dear lads—they have not been out of their clothes for months, and have never had a tent to cover them. This morning, as they left, the gratitude of both officers and men was so intense that I had to clear off the scene—could not stand it. It has rained in torrents to-day. Got wet through. Had splendid meeting to-night. Sure there was definite working of the Holy Spirit. The Rev. James Gray, who gave the address, has been a great help to us.[13]

Among the men of the Lancashire Fusiliers, who subsequently lost so heavily at Spion Kop, there were many conversions. And among the naval men there were many grand Christians, who were delighted to avail themselves of the privileges and opportunities which the tent supplied.

The chaplains were, of course, at the front with the men, or as near the front as they could get, sharing their fatigues and many of their dangers.

[Footnote 13: *News from the Front*, May, 1900.]

=A Bit of Christian Comradeship.=

Differences of denomination were for the most part forgotten, and the Rev. Mr. Gedge, the Church of England chaplain, and the Rev. T.H. Wainman, the Wesleyan, were the best of friends and comrades. Mr. Gedge soon became a power for good. His tent meetings were crowded, and his preaching told with great effect, many being brought to Christ. His open-air work was splendidly done. Here is a delightful bit of Christian comradeship, which we wish we could see oftener repeated in this country. The Rev. T.H. Wainman writes:—

'After watching the men who were formed for guard duties, *etc.*, for some time, I noticed Major Gedge, the Church of England army chaplain, and several Army and Navy League workers come along, evidently intent on holding a voluntary service. I joined them, and helped in the singing of half a dozen hymns, which by this time had brought

together a large number of the soldiers. Mr. Gedge asked me to give the address. I did so, and had a most happy time,



## Page 84

the men listening for twenty minutes or more with evident interest. I interspersed my address with illustrations from my travels and experience in this country, which seemed to hold them in attention to the finish. The General Confession was then recited and a few other prayers from the Liturgy, and one of the most hearty and successful voluntary services was concluded by the singing of the hymn "Glory to Thee, my God, this night." I went to my tent thankful for the good work being done by the various Christian organizations, and convinced that many went home with new aspirations after a better and nobler life.'[14]

[Footnote 14: *Methodist Times*, Feb. 8, 1900.]

=The Chaplains of the Church of England.=

Here, perhaps, we may refer for a moment to the services of the Church of England chaplains in general. The Church is singularly fortunate in the men it has sent to the front. The senior chaplain with the Guards, Colonel Faulkner, has set an example to all the others by his intense devotion. He has advanced all the way with Lord Roberts to Pretoria and beyond. He has returned invalided, but not until he has nobly done the work he was commissioned to do.

The chaplains sent out from Aldershot were men whom every one esteems and loves. The praise of the Rev. R. Deane Oliver is on every one's lips. Of the Rev. A.F.C. Hordern we shall have occasion to speak when we come to the siege of Ladysmith. The Rev. T. P. Moreton is an eloquent preacher and a Christian gentleman, interested in all good work. And what shall we say of the Rev. A.W.B. Watson? He is a hero, though, like all other heroes, he would be the last to believe it.

=Mr. Watson in the Soudan and in South Africa.=

Sitting at the tea table of a corporal of the Medical Staff Corps a short time ago, we began to talk of Mr. Watson. 'Ah!' said he, 'Mr. Watson is my hero. You know he went through the Soudan campaign. I had charge of the cholera tent. At one time I was left alone to manage it. Not another chaplain but Mr. Watson came near. Twice a day he came without fail. One day he came in, and found me lying on the floor in a state of complete prostration. He lifted me up and carried me to his tent. He then came back to the tent of which I had charge, and all day he attended to my poor cholera patients, washed them, and performed all my most loathsome duties. Love him! of course I love him. I would lay down my life for him.'

Mr. Watson has gone to South Africa at the risk of his life, but he would go. He had been through a severe operation, and was in a most critical condition. He begged permission to go, but of course the doctors could not pass him. He could not, however, bear to think of his men being there without him. And after trying one expedient after

another, he, who had been refused permission on the ground of ill-health, at last got out under the plea that the climate of South Africa might be beneficial! May God spare him for many years!



## Page 85

=The Rev. T.H. Wainman.=

But this is a long digression! The Wesleyan chaplain was the Rev. T.H. Wainman, a sturdy Yorkshireman, who had spent many years in South Africa as a Wesleyan missionary. He was not new to the duties of a chaplain, for years ago he was with Sir Charles Warren in Bechuanaland. He took to his new work as though he had only just laid it down, and bullets and shells seemed to have no terror for him.

At the parade service at Chieveley on the day of the advance to Spearman's Hill, Mr. Wainman took for his text, 'Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.' He might have known what was coming, for the last line of 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' had hardly been sung, and the Benediction pronounced, before rumours of the advance spread through the camp, and by two p.m. the advance had really commenced. At daylight next morning the battle began, and Mr. Wainman describes what he calls a 'cool piece of daring.'

= 'A Cool Piece of Daring.' =

'At the same time the firing of cannon to our right was fast and furious, the shells dropping and bursting right among our field artillery. I watched with breathless anxiety, expecting all our guns to be abandoned, and half the men killed, when to my astonishment the men rode their horses right among the bursting shells, and hooking them to their guns rode quietly away, taking gun after gun into safety. In some instances a horse fell, and this necessitated the men waiting in their terrible position until another horse could be brought, harnessed, and attached to the gun. Eventually all were brought out of range, but a more plucky piece of daring and heroism I have never witnessed, and never expect to witness in my life. The officers rode up and down directing their men as though heedless of danger, and the only casualty I heard of, excepting the horses, was a captain having his foot shattered.' [15]

He himself showed many a cool piece of daring before he got to Ladysmith, and when, after the fight at Spion Kop, some one had to go and bury the dead, he bravely volunteered, and performed this last ministry for his dead comrades under heavy fire. For his bravery on that occasion he was promoted to the rank of major. Those associated with him in this awful task were Major Gedge, the Church of England chaplain, and Fathers Collins and Matthews (Roman Catholics). This was the Father Matthews who was captured with his men at Nicholson's Nek, and afterwards released.

There was now but little opportunity for ordinary Christian work. The last struggle for the relief of Ladysmith had commenced, and was to be carried on in grim earnest to the end. The men were ready to follow their leaders anywhere, but could not understand the frequent retreats. This much every man knew, however, that when he marched out with his regiment in the morning it was very doubtful whether he would be alive at night. This thought sobered every one, and many a man prayed who had never prayed before.



## Page 86

[Footnote 15: *Methodist Times*.]

=General Lyttleton's Brigade Formed up for Prayer Before Going into Action.=

One of the most remarkable facts of the campaign is this. Before General Lyttleton's brigade marched out from its camping ground for its desperate task it was formed up in close column—formed up not for an inspection, but for prayer. We have never heard of anything else like it in the history of war. The Bishop of Natal was with the troops, and he suggested to General Lyttleton that the best preparation for the battle was prayer. He himself led in prayer for the other regiments, while at the request of the colonel the Army Scripture Reader attached to the Scottish Rifles offered prayer. With prayer rising for them and following them, they marched to the conflict. It was to many a Sacrament. It was their *Sacramentum*—their oath of allegiance to the King of kings.

Strange things happen in war. Perhaps this is one of the strangest. And yet if there were more prayer there would be less war. May be the voice of prayer rising from our British army to the throne of God—rising also from friends in the homeland far away, is another Sacrament—a sign and a seal of the blessings foretold when the Prince of Peace shall reign.

=The Struggle for Spion Kop.=

Potgieter's Drift, Spion Kop, Pieter's Hill—these are names that will live in the memory of every British soldier with Sir Redvers Buller. Of all fights Spion Kop was perhaps the most terrible, as it was the most disastrous. It was called Spion Kop, or Spying Mountain, because it was from this eminence the old Boer trekkers spied out the land in the days gone by. It was more than a hill—it was a mountain, and a mountain with a most precipitous ascent. To climb it meant hauling oneself up from one rock to another. It was a task that required all a strong man's strength. Yet up it went our men without a moment's hesitation. It was almost like climbing a house side. But one man helped another, the stronger pulling up the weaker, until they halted for a moment breathless at the top. 'Charge!' and away they went. The bayonets were covered with blood after that awful charge, and then, their work for the moment accomplished, they lay down, for the bullets were whistling around them. In the dense darkness they began to build sangars as best they could. All night long they worked, and never for a moment were they allowed to work in peace. When morning broke they saw that their entrenchments were far too small, and though they held out all day, their position was commanded by the Boers on higher ground, and so became untenable. Shells burst behind every rock. Bullets like hail rained upon them, and although they fought as all true Britishers can, they were at last withdrawn—withdrawn, perhaps, when victory was almost within their grasp.

It is not our purpose to describe the fight; that we leave to others. What we have said serves but as a reminder. The question that concerns us is, How did our men hold themselves through that awful day?



## Page 87

=Touching Incidents at Spion Kop.=

We read of one, a Wesleyan local preacher,—Mr. W.F. Low,—wounded by a bullet through his collar bone and shoulder blade; wounded again by a fragment of shell striking his leg, worn out by excitement and fatigue—so worn out that he actually slept, notwithstanding the pain of his wound, until awoke by sharp pain of his second wound. We read of this man crawling over to the wounded lying near him, passing water from his water-bottle to one and another, gathering the water-bottles of the dead men round about, and giving them to those yet living. And yet the cry of ‘Water,’ ‘Water!’ was heard on every side, and there were many to which he could not respond. He tells how many of the men were praying, how their cries of repentance seemed to him too often cries of cowardice; though who would not fear to enter the presence of God all unprepared and unforgiven? Well might many of them cry for mercy.

One man spent his last moments in writing a letter to his chum, who had led him to Christ but the day before. ‘Dear brother in Christ Jesus,’ he wrote, ‘I owe my very soul to you. If it had not been for you, I should not have been ready to die now. It seems hard only to give the last few hours of my life to His service, but I must say “Good-bye.” The angels are calling me home. I can see them and the glorious city. Good-bye, and may God bless you!’

Says the one who in rough-and-ready fashion had so recently led his chum to Christ, ‘It cheered me to know he was all right with the Master. Now I must look out for more work for Him.’

=The Tortures of the Wounded.=

Then started that sad procession to the rear—the procession of ox-waggons containing the poor mangled bodies of our wounded. Oh! the horrors of it! ‘How much longer will it be?’ ‘Will the road soon be smoother?’ cried the longsuffering lads. Who shall tell the tale of agony? Aye! who shall tell the heroism then displayed? Who shall describe how rough men became as gentle women, and how those racked with pain themselves yet tried to minister to the wants of others? Oh! war is devil’s work; but surely at no time do human love and human sympathy show themselves so often, or prove themselves so helpful, as amidst its horrors.

Of all hospitals that at Mooi River was the best. This is the testimony of one and all. ‘You went in there,’ said one lad, ‘a skeleton. You came out a giant.’ And at Mooi at last, many of these poor wounded soldier lads found themselves, and amidst comfort that seemed to them luxury and rest that was heaven itself they were many of them wooed back to life.



## Page 88

But what of the men still at the front? Effort after effort! Retreat followed by advance! Misunderstanding and mistake here and there. And then Pieter's Hill! Ask the soldier who has come back wounded from Pieter's Hill—and how many of them are there?—what he thought of it. He can give you but a confused picture of the fight. He has no idea of the plan in the general's mind. But ask him of his experiences. His wound was nothing; he will not dwell upon that. But the time spent upon the ground after the wound was received—twenty-four hours, forty-eight, three days, and in one case, at any rate, so the poor fellow told us, four days—before the stretcher party carried them to the rear. It could not be helped. There was no reaching the wounded. They were scattered far and near. They lay where they fell, starving for want of food, dying of thirst under a South African sun. Oh! the horror of it! But your soldier cannot describe it. It will be a nightmare to him for life. You speak to him on the subject 'How long did you lie there?' You want to inquire a little further; but he shakes his head, 'Don't ask me, 'twas too awful,' and he turns his head away.

= 'Men, Christ can Save Me even Now.' =

Seated in the Buckingham Palace Soldiers' Home the other day, some men from Pieter's Hill were chatting together. 'And what was your experience?' said the chaplain. 'Oh! I just realized how God could save, and God could keep. It was terribly hard, but all through those fearful battles I had always peace—always joy.'

And then he continued, 'I never think of Pieter's Hill but I think of Armstrong. You did not know Armstrong. He used to be in the orderly room every week—a bad lad was poor old Armstrong. But when we were in India he gave himself to Christ. He was never in the orderly room after that. One day his major met him. "Armstrong," said he, "what's the matter? we never see you in the orderly room now."

"No, sir," he said, "old Armstrong's gone. A new Armstrong's come." "What do you mean?" queried his officer. "Just this, sir; I've given my heart to God, and chucked the sin."

'So he lived until he went to the war, and so he died. He passed through Spion Kop unscathed, but on Pieter's Hill a bullet went through his head. As he fell he cried, "Men, Christ can save me even now! It's all right, I'm going home," and he died.'

The Guardsmen came thronging round while this man of the Royal Irish Rifles told about his chum They listened with tears in their eyes; they listened to tell the story again to others. And so the good news that Christ can save upon the battle-field is sent flying through the British army.

'Were you in that night attack at Ladysmith?' asked one turning to another. 'Yes, I was there.' 'Did you see Lieutenant Fergusson when he fell?' 'Yes, I was close to him. I went up to him and said, "Are you much hurt, sir? Can I take you in?" "No thank you,



my lad; I'm done for," replied the dying officer. "Take some fellow you can save." And so he, too, died like a hero.



## Page 89

The officer inside the besieged town and the private soldier outside attempting to save him—are one in this, that they know how to die; and England calls each 'hero'!

And so through blood and fire, over heaps of slain, General Sir Redvers Duller passed into Ladysmith—passed in just in time; passed in to see men with wan cheeks and sunken eyes—an army of skeletons; but passed in to find the old flag still flying.

[Illustration: AMBULANCE WORK ON THE FIELD.]

## Chapter XV

### LADYSMITH

The defence of Ladysmith by Sir George White and his heroic band of soldiers will rank as one of the finest feats in British history. It is not for us to tell the story of the siege. Historians of the war will do that. We need only remind our readers that from October 30, 1899, when the bombardment began, to February 28, 1900, when General Buller's advance guard marched into the town, our troops were closely besieged—besieged so closely that the Boers thought there was no possible chance of relief. 'Ladysmith will never be relieved,' said a Boer to one of our chaplains. 'No troops in the world will ever be able to get through Colenso to Ladysmith. It is absolutely impregnable.' But they did, and one hardly knows which to admire most the dogged persistence of General Buller and his men or the heroic defence, the patient, confident waiting of the beleaguered troops.

= 'Thank God, We have Kept the Flag Flying.' =

It is, however, with the Ladysmith garrison we are concerned at the present time. These men had but little of the excitement of battle to stir their nerves and inspire them for fresh efforts. They had to fight the sterner fight,—the fight with disease and famine. They watched their comrades sicken and die—not one at a time, but by scores and hundreds—but they held on and held out for Queen and country.

'While ever upon the topmost roof  
Our banner of England blew.'

'Thank God, we have kept the flag flying!' said Sir George White, when at last deliverance came. The words will become historic, and fathers will tell their sons for long centuries to come how in Ladysmith, as at Lucknow, English soldiers preferred rather to die than to surrender; and how, surrounded as they were, they, for old England's sake, kept the flag flying.



It remains for us to tell the story of Christian work in connection with the siege, and through all the darkness of those terrible four months such work runs as a golden thread of light.

=Christian Workers in Ladysmith.=

There were in Ladysmith when the siege began three Church of England chaplains and one acting chaplain, *viz.*: Rev. E.G.F. Macpherson (senior chaplain), at first attached to the Divisional troops; Rev. A.V.C. Hordern, attached to the Cavalry Brigade; Rev. J.G.W. Tuckey, attached to the 7th Brigade; and the Rev. D. McVarish (acting chaplain), attached to the 8th Brigade. In addition to these there were Archdeacon Barker, of the local civilian church, and the Rev. G. Pennington, a local clergyman attached as acting chaplain to the Colonial Volunteers.



## Page 90

[Illustration: REV. A.V.C. HORDERN.

(From a photograph by Knight, Newport, I.W.)]

The Presbyterians had one chaplain, *viz.*, the Rev. Thomas Murray, of the Free Church of Scotland, and one acting chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Thompson.

The Wesleyan Methodists had one acting chaplain, the Rev. Owen Spencer Watkins, who had but a short time before returned from the Soudan, where he had accompanied the troops to Omdurman. There were also in the town the Rev. S. Barrett Cawood, the local Wesleyan missionary, and the Rev. S.H. Hardy, of Johannesburg, who happened to be on a visit to the town, and who, though without official position, rendered yeoman service throughout the siege.

In addition to these chaplains there were two or three Army Scripture Readers.

=Every Man Hit except the Chaplain.=

Most of these chaplains had already received their baptism of fire. At Reitfontein Messrs. Macpherson and Hordern had found themselves in a particularly warm corner. Some fifteen men of the Gloucesters, with an officer, were in a donga which provided hardly any cover, and the two chaplains going out to the Field Hospital had perforce to share with their comrades the dangers of the terrible position. The Boers were firing at them with awful precision, and when the Liverpools—all unconscious that a handful of English were seeking cover in the donga—commenced to fire at the Boers, it made retreat for the dauntless fifteen impossible. They had unwillingly to remain where they were until the Boers were put out of action by the Liverpools. When at last the firing ceased, it was found that nearly every man of that unlucky fifteen was hit, with the exception of the chaplains, who came out unscathed.

This was an experience that perhaps would have been enough for most men, but chaplains, like private soldiers, have to get used to bullets flying around them. It is no use preaching religion to the men, if the chaplain is not able to show by his own coolness in the hour of danger that he is fit for something else than preaching, that he is ready to share the men's dangers and privations, and that he too can set an example of courage.

Mr. Watkins had received his baptism of fire in the Soudan, and, like the rest, did not fear the sharp ping, followed by the dull thud, of the Mauser, or the deeper swish of the Martini. No one got used to shells. They ever continued a terror, and when the whistle sounded, giving warning that the wisp of smoke had been seen coming from one of the Boer Long Toms, and intimating that in some twenty-eight seconds the dreaded shell

would burst above them, it was astonishing how fast and how far even the oldest and the stoutest could travel in search of cover.

=Personal Dangers Met by Chaplains on Duty in the Field.=

## Page 91

One or two short stories may put into clearer perspective the personal danger of our chaplains on the field. Messrs. Hordern and Tuckey were both with their men in the Lombard's Kop fight. Mr. Hordern was attached to the Field Hospital, which was sheltering from the shot and shell under the shadow of a huge hill. By-and-by came the order for the hospital to retire. It was about a mile and a quarter from Ladysmith, and there were no sheltering hills. The Red Cross was distinctly marked on the ambulance wagons, and the Indian dhooli-bearers must have been clearly seen; but as soon as the hospital emerged from the cover of the hill a Boer gun opened fire upon it, and very soon shell was falling upon all sides. With Mr. Hordern was the Rev. S.H. Hardy, and both of them were exposed to the full fire of the enemy. Mr. Hordern, thinking there might possibly be a safer place than the very centre of the cavalcade, spurred his horse forward, and the moment after a shell burst on the very spot where he had been.

On another occasion Mr. Owen Watkins was out with the Field Hospital, and he and the doctor dismounted in order, if possible, to bring in some wounded from under fire. They had just accomplished this self-imposed mission when a shot, coming a little too near, disturbed Mr. Watkins' horse, which bolted. In trying to find it he lost sight of the hospital, which had moved away, and found himself in desperate plight. Neither horse nor hospital to be seen, and a mile and a half of open country between him and safety. The Boers' bullets were falling around him, and there was nothing for it but to run, and amid a perfect hail of bullets he fled in the direction of Ladysmith. That run seemed the longest in his life, but unscathed he came through it, and found another hospital wagon full of wounded, returning to the town. Into it he got, and other horrors of war were at once before him. He had no time to think of his own near escape from death, for there was a dying lad upon his knee. Another was leaning his head on his shoulder, and his hands were busy passing water or brandy to the wounded or dying.

Through such experiences our chaplains go, and go gladly, for Him who is at once their Saviour and their King. Not much is heard of their work, not often are they mentioned in despatches; only one of them has ever received the Victoria Cross, but most of them are heroes, and deserve well of the country that gave them birth. It is sufficient for them that they receive the praise of God, and there can be no higher reward for them than the Master's 'Well done.'

=Services in Ladysmith.=



## Page 92

Parade services in Ladysmith were difficult to hold. They were, however, held as regularly as possible. The chaplain would mount his horse about 4.45 a.m., and ride off to some distant post. For a quarter of an hour he would pray with and talk to the men, and then ride to another service at some further post. And so in the early morning he would conduct three or four different parades. 'Often,' says Mr. Hordern, 'they used to hold them in the trenches, so as to be out of reach of the Boer guns. All the men had their rifles, ready to rush to their posts at a moment's notice. Every Sunday there was a celebration of the Holy Sacrament in the open air, and I shall never forget the sight—the officers and men kneeling together, just leaving their rifles as they came up to communicate, and going back to their posts immediately afterwards. The Boers pretended never to fight on Sundays, but they could never trust them. One day they dropped eight shells into one of his cavalry parade services which was assembling. Although the Boers pretended to keep Sunday and not fire, yet some Monday mornings a new gun would open on them that was not in its position on the Saturday. That was one way of keeping Sunday.[16]

[Illustration: ONE OF THE LADYSMITH HOSPITALS.]

The English church was open for worship all through the siege. It was the only church not used as a hospital; but its windows being small and its roof low, it would not have made an ideal hospital, and it did splendid duty as a church. The other churches—the Wesleyan, Presbyterian, and Dutch Reformed—were gladly surrendered for hospital purposes, for there was all too little hospital accommodation, and all too great a need.

For the most part the chaplains spent their Sunday mornings in visiting their men, going from regiment to regiment, and speaking a word for Christ wherever possible.

As the months passed, and the Boer attentions became more personal and incessant, the troops at the front had to leave their huts or tents and sleep in the open, and everywhere tents, if used at night, were folded up by day, and the troops were left absolutely without cover through the terrible heat, except such as they could find behind rock, or bush, or tree.

[Footnote 16: *Burnley Express*, May 5, 1900.]

=Disease in Ladysmith.=

And then came disease! Ladysmith had been singularly free from enteric before the war. The scourge of South Africa had passed it by. But it follows an army like an angel of destruction. For weeks its broad wings hovered above our troops, and then with fell swoop it descended.

Intombi Hospital Camp was formed right under the shadow of Mount Bulwane, and by an arrangement with the Boers one train per day to Ladysmith and back was allowed to



run. It began with 250 patients, and at one time had as many as 1,900. The formation of the camp meant to some extent a division of Christian work. Messrs. Macpherson, Thompson, Owen S. Watkins, Cawood, and Hardy, together with Father Ford, remained in the town and camp. Messrs. Hordern, Tuckey, Pennington, and Murray, together with Father O'Donnell, the Roman Catholic chaplain, went to Intombi. Later on, when the hospital became so crowded that it was impossible for the enfeebled staff of chaplains to cope with the work, Mr. Macpherson joined them.



## Page 93

It is impossible to speak too highly of the heroism of these Intombi chaplains. At first it is hard for most men to face shot and shell, but there is always a thrill of excitement with it, and there is a strange fascination in danger of this kind, which has a weird charm all its own. But to face death in a great hospital camp such as this! To be all day and half the night visiting the sick and dying where there are no comforts, very little food, and the medicine has run short; to see that hospital steadily grow,—men on the bed-cots, men lying between them; to watch men struggling in the agonies of the disease, with dying men close beside them; to have to step over one prostrate figure to get to the side of some dying man and whisper words of comfort and prayer, while shrieks of agony come from either side; to feel weary, becoming gradually weaker through want of food, to know that ere long one's own turn would come, and the inexorable disease would claim its victim; to go through the same daily round of loathsome duty, and find in it one's highest privilege; to endure, to suffer, to dare, to sympathise, to soothe, to help; evening by evening to listen to the last requests of dying men, and morning by morning to lay them in their hastily dug graves—all this requires heroism compared with which the heroism of battle pales into insignificance. We do not wonder that the Intombi chaplains were mentioned in despatches, and that the love of the soldier goes out to these devoted men.

As Mr. Watkins felt it his duty to remain in Ladysmith Town with his men, Mr. Murray had charge of the Wesleyans in Intombi, as well as of the Presbyterians. But, as a matter of fact, in face of such stern realities as disease and death, all names and sects were forgotten. The chaplains were all brethren, the men were all human beings for whom Christ died, and each did his best for all. Open-air parade services were tried for the convalescents, but it soon became impossible to hold them. The chaplains went round the marquees and prayed with and talked to the men. The Church of England chaplains had Holy Communion every Sunday morning, and for one month, until sickness prevented, there was daily Communion.

By-and-by the list of dangerous cases became so large that it was impossible to go round in one visit. Enfeebled by work and want, the chaplains struggled from bed to bed, until often they were too weak to finish their task. Their only relief was to get an occasional run into Ladysmith, and to that they looked forward as a haven of rest. What mattered if shells did fly about!—they had an occasional stray bullet at Intombi too—and shells, much as they were dreaded, were better than enteric.

It was during one of these occasional breaks that the four Church of England chaplains were having lunch at the Ladysmith Hotel, when a shell burst right in the hotel itself. They were covered with dust, but that was all. Not so easily, however, did they escape disease. One after the other at Intombi failed. Mr. Hordern was down with dysentery for between five and six weeks, Mr. Macpherson eight weeks, Mr. Tuckey had Natal fever for three weeks, and all of them were left very enfeebled.



## Page 94

[Illustration: REV. THOMAS MURRAY.

(By permission of Mr. M. Jacolette, of Dover.)]

=Mr. Murray's Description of the Fight with Enteric Fever.=

Mr. Murray, of the Scotch Free Church, bravely struggled on. At one time he was left single-handed. The admiration of the other chaplains for this man was great indeed. He seemed to lead a charmed life, and though he rapidly aged during the siege, he never gave up. He was overworked and half-starved, but he always had a cheery word for every one. He tells the story himself with characteristic modesty in *The Church of Scotland Home and Foreign Mission Record*. Let us listen to him:—

'Very soon enteric fever and dysentery appeared among the troops, and the daily morning train from Ladysmith brought ever fresh batches of patients. The hospital camp grew rapidly. The maximum number was nearly 1,900, but for many weeks the daily average was 1,700. Unhappily, of the four Church of England chaplains, two were at an early stage laid aside by sickness, and for more than *five weeks* the whole of the work fell to one Church of England chaplain and myself. We worked hand in hand. It was not a question of "religion," but wherever spiritual help was needed, there one of us was found. Our first work each day was the burial of the dead. Daily, for three long months, *all of us* might be seen heading the dismal procession of six, or ten, or fifteen, and on one occasion of nineteen dead, whom we were conducting to their last resting-place. That duty over, the remainder of the day was busily employed in ministering to the sick and dying in the numerous hospital marquees. On Sunday we did what we could to hold services in these marquees, but it was impossible on any one day to overtake all. There was, however, each Sunday afternoon an open-air service at which convalescent patients could be present.

=Work Among the Refugees.=

'Besides the work I have just described, I had another piece of work unexpectedly cut out for me, which was full of interest and rich in good fruits.

'Close by our hospital camps was a civilian camp, where dwelt in tents or in rude shanties several hundreds of refugees. There were well-to-do farmers and their families, driven from their homes in Upper Natal; railway people, station-masters, guards, clerks, *etc.*; miners from Glencoe and Dundee; and not a few people from Ladysmith itself. The greater number of these were Scotch, and it was natural that I should take spiritual charge of them, for they were out in the wilderness, sheep without a shepherd. Every Sunday morning at ten o'clock, and Sunday evening at seven o'clock, I held an open-air service for them, the convalescent from the military camps

attending likewise. It was a sight I shall never forget, to see these homeless ones sitting round me on the veldt, listening to the preaching



## Page 95

of the Gospel, making welcome, as perhaps some of them had never done before, the precious promises of divine consolation of which their souls stood so much in need. Many were devout and earnest Christian men and women, and the weekly fellowship, in song and supplication, with God and with one another, did much, I do not doubt, to enable them to endure the tribulations which were their appointed lot.'So, amid these many labours, the months flee past. You know the story of the several attempts to relieve us. Away over the hills, on December 15, we heard the fierce roll of the artillery, and our hopes beat high. But the ominous silence of the next few days prepared us for the mournful tidings that that attempt had failed. Then came January 6, and the determined assault by the Boers on Ladysmith. It began before dawn close by our camp, and all day long we watched the struggle, as it swayed this way and that, like the waves of the sea, till at last British valour gained the day. But much precious life was lost.'After that, on January 20, the hills once more re-echoed the roar of distant artillery. This was the attempt at Spion Kop and Potgieter's Drift. After days of uncertainty, we learned that our relief was not yet.'At last in the early weeks of February began the final and heroic effort of General Sir Redvers Buller's forces. Day and night the firing ceased not, and we rejoiced to mark that it came nearer and nearer. Suddenly the enemy's forces melted away, all in a night, as once before, long since, around Samaria.'On Wednesday evening, February 28, we descried a small body of horsemen coming through a gap in the hills, as it were a little stream trickling down the mountain side. We looked in amazement. The British guns were silent. It could be no foe. Suddenly a loud British cheer burst from the advancing troop, and we knew our relief was accomplished. It was Lord Dundonald's advanced patrol. Next day, March 1, General Buller and his staff rode in.

'I have only to add that, by the good hand of God upon me, I have been preserved all through from sickness and disease.'

Of all things the men dreaded enteric. 'My lad,' said Mr. Hordern to one of the men who had just come into hospital, 'have you got enteric fever?'

'No, sir,' was the reply; 'I am *only* wounded.'

They have come back now, hundreds of them, and as we interview them, one and all declare in their own terse language, 'We would rather have three or four hits than one enteric.'

=Testimonies to the Reality of Christian Work.=

But all this time Christian work in the town and camp had been going steadily forward. On Sunday as many services as possible were held, and night by night Christian soldiers gathered together for prayer. There was a spirit of inquiry about spiritual things. Death was very near, and in its immediate presence the men felt the importance

of decision for Christ. Letter after letter tells of conversions at the soldiers' simple services.



## Page 96

Staff-Quarter-Master-Sergeant Luchford, for instance, writes a letter which is a sample of scores of others:—'On Tuesday last I managed to get the brethren together for a fellowship meeting, and a very blessed and helpful time we had, as each told out of the fullness of his heart how great things the Lord had done for his soul. Last Sunday we also got together for an hour and pleaded with God for an outpouring of His Spirit upon the congregation assembled for the service. One young fellow of the R.A. was very deeply impressed, and I trust that the next news I hear is that he has surrendered to the conquering power of the Holy Spirit.'

=Stirring Events Related by Mr. Watkins.=

In the camp with his men Mr. Watkins was having stirring times. His was the excitement and dash, and when there was any fighting, he was sure to be near. He narrates some strange experiences in the Methodist papers. We venture to quote one or two paragraphs from the *Methodist Recorder*.

'On December 7, there was a brilliant attack by the British on Gun Hill, where three of the Boer guns were captured. This brilliant attack was made by Colonial volunteers, led by Sir Archibald Hunter, and was entirely successful. The next morning there was a further attempt by the cavalry to cut the telegraph wires and tear up the railway which brought the Boers' supplies. This, however, was not so successful. The Boers were ready for our men, and they suffered severely. Then came the chaplain's opportunity.'Hearing that there were wounded still lying on the field, I hastened off to see if I could be of any use, and had not gone far before I met a young medical officer, who had galloped in under a heavy fire. He told me that out in the open Captain Hardy (Medical Officer of the 18th Hussars) was lying in a hole with a severely wounded man, whom he could not get in because the firing was so hot. So, having with me a Red Cross flag, we turned our horses' heads and rode out to their assistance. For the first few seconds the bullets flew fast around us, but as soon as our flag was seen the firing ceased, we released our friends from their uncomfortable predicament, and sent back the wounded man in a dhooli.'We were then met by two armed burghers carrying a white flag, who told us of yet other wounded lying in their lines, and offered to guide us to them. Under their care we penetrated right behind the firing line of the enemy, who were holding the ridge now between us and the town, and firing heavily. Here we found two of our gallant fellows dead—shot through the head—and several wounded men, and it was not long before the dhoolis we had brought with us were full. The burghers had shown every kindness to the wounded; each man had been provided with food and drink, and nothing could exceed the courtesy shown towards ourselves by these men, who were in the very act of firing on our comrades.



## Page 97

A queer thing, war!'Having started the dhooli-bearers with their heavy loads on their way to town, Captain Hardy and myself continued our search along the ridge for wounded and dead, but were thankful to find there were no more. Once again we turned our faces to beleaguered Ladysmith, having collected, in all, two killed and fifteen wounded men, many of them badly hurt, poor fellows.'The two following days were unusually quiet, and on the Sunday I was enabled to hold four services, which were very well attended, and to us all seasons of rich blessing. But on Sunday night the Rifle Brigade made an attack upon Surprise Hill, capturing a gun that for weeks past had been worrying us considerably, and blowing it into fragments in the air. The attack was well planned, and would have resulted in very small loss to us, only in blowing up the gun the first fuse used proved defective, and another train had to be laid, thus causing a delay of over ten valuable minutes. The result was that the Boers had time to turn out in force from a neighbouring laager, and were waiting to receive our men as they came down the hill. Then ensued a scene of indescribable confusion; in the darkness it was impossible to distinguish friend from foe, and the shouts of our men were answered in English by the enemy, thus making the confusion a hundred times worse. One who was present told me that it was the most terrible experience of his life. They came down the hill between a lane of blazing rifles, sometimes the flash not being more than five yards from them. Few ever expected to get out alive, but the men behaved splendidly, charging with the bayonet again and again, and when at last the foot of the hill was reached asking their Colonel (Lieut.-Colonel Metcalfe) for permission to charge again.

=Within the Boer Lines.=

'Of course, as soon as it was light the doctors of the Bearer Company, with dhoolies, were out to seek amongst the rocks for the wounded and the slain, and it was not long before I was on my way to join them. But on reaching our outpost on Observation Hill I was told that the Boers were so infuriated at the loss of another gun that they had taken the doctors prisoners and were going to send them to Pretoria. But just at that moment a native came in with a note from the senior medical officer, asking that surgical necessaries be sent at once, for many of the wounded were seriously hurt. After much parley through the telephone with head-quarters, it was at last decided that the things be sent at once, and if I were willing that I should be the bearer, for the Boers were more likely to respect "the cloth" than anything else; also by previous visits I had become known to many of the burghers. So forthwith I started upon what many said was my way to Pretoria, and on reaching the enemy, truth to say, it looked very much like it. They were furiously angry, and I was made to join the little group of doctors, bearers and wounded, who, under a strong guard, were sitting and lying under the shade of a tree.

[Illustration: AMBULANCE WAGONS ON THEIR WAY TO THE FIELD.]



## Page 98

'But before very long we were at liberty again. A flag of truce had been sent out by General White, expostulating with the Boer general, and resulted in the general in question—General Erasmus—galloping up to tell us we were at liberty to continue our work, only we must be as quick about it as possible. Fifty-one wounded men we found, three of them officers, and nine killed, of whom one was an officer. At the foot of the hill that they had won we buried them, marking the place where they lay with stones heaped over the grave in the form of a cross. Then we wearily returned to camp, for by then the day was far spent, and we had had nothing to eat since dawn. That night I was again called to perform the sad ceremony of burial. Four men had died of their wounds during the day, and in darkness it had to be done, for the cemetery is within reach of the enemy's guns, and we feared to show a light, lest it should "draw fire." So I recited as much of the Burial Service as I could remember, and offered an extemporary prayer. It was a strange experience thus to bury our comrades by stealth; but, alas! during these latter days it has ceased to seem strange, because of its frequency.'

=Work in Ladysmith Town.=

Meanwhile in the town, and sometimes with the soldiers in the fight, Mr. Cawood and Mr. Hardy were rendering splendid service. Mr. Cawood kept in good health throughout, but when, on the relief of Ladysmith, the President of the South African Conference (Rev. W. Wynne) visited the town, he reported that Mr. Cawood looked ten years older. No wonder that such was the case, for he was in labours more abundant, and nothing was too mean or trivial for him to perform. Such was also the case with Mr. Hardy. He did not seem to know fear. Brave when the bullets fell thick, he was just as brave in the midst of the strain of hospital work. He was but a visitor in the town, and had no official connection with either troops or civilian church. But he turned his hand to anything, and when the hospitals were crowded and workers were few, he actually had himself appointed a hospital orderly, and performed the meanest and most loathsome duties of the hospital nurse. He kept in good health to the last, and then almost every disease seemed to come upon him at once. For long he lay in the agonies of enteric fever, and almost lost his life. But he counted that not too great a gift for his Master and his country. We honour them both—the old veteran and the young missionary. In fact, where all were brave and devoted, it is invidious to pick out one or two of these devoted men for special mention. Each in his own special sphere tried bravely to do his duty. Meanwhile the town was becoming full of enteric cases, for Intombi camp had no further accommodation, and only the most serious cases could be sent there. The churches were then, as already intimated, utilised as hospitals, and it was in them that the chaplains left in Ladysmith and with the soldiers performed their ministry of love. Most of these buildings at some time or other felt the force of the Boer shells, and the native minister's house by the side of the Wesleyan church was shattered. He, poor fellow, lost both wife and child during the siege, and himself was laid low by enteric fever.



## Page 99

=Terrible Scenes at Intombi Hospital.=

But let us return to Intombi. Slowly the average number of cases was increasing. Daily at 9.30 the mournful procession passed to the cemetery. That cemetery contained at last about seven hundred bodies. Every grave was marked and numbered. Mr. Hordern began this work, but when his health failed, Mr. Murray continued and completed it. So that there is a strict record left of every one lying there, and any one wishing to erect a tombstone can do so. Such service as this was thoughtful indeed, and friends at home will greatly appreciate it.

For three weeks at Intombi they were on quarter rations. Then, as Buller's guns were heard in the distance, they were allowed half rations; but on Ash Wednesday morning, the morning of relief, they were reduced to quarter rations again. What this meant who can tell? How could they resist disease? There are horrors over which we throw a veil. Sufficient that they were necessary horrors—that they could not be prevented. But only the doctors and the chaplains know what our men passed through in Intombi camp. But no one complained—that was the wonder of it. 'Oh! sir, when do you think Buller will get through?' was the nearest to complaint ever heard. They suffered and they died, but they murmured not.

=The Way He was Absent-minded was that He Forgot Himself!'=

Listen to what Mr. Hordern has to say about it:—

'Every morning they had the awful procession of dead carried down to the cemetery, each man sewn up in his own blanket, and reverently buried, each man having done his duty and laid down his life for his Queen and country. And the brave old Tommy Atkins was called "an absent-minded beggar," a fine title itself, though it referred to him in the wrong way. He was not absent-minded, for he had a warm corner in his heart for those at home. The way he was absent-minded, was that *he forgot himself*. I knew one man who had two or three letters from home, which he carried about in his pocket, and although he longed to read them again, he dare not do so because, he said, he should break down if he did. The boys never forgot their homes. There was one dead soldier, a poor lad of the Irish Fusiliers, who was shot through the body, and afterwards in searching his clothes they found a letter ready written and addressed to his mother. He hadn't a chance of posting it. *He was not an absent-minded beggar. He didn't forget to write to his mother.* When they pulled his letter from his pocket, it was impossible to post it, as it was covered with his blood. I re-addressed it and sent it off to the dead soldier's mother.'

There was another story which showed the forgetfulness of the soldier for himself. That happened in the relieving column. An officer was badly wounded. It was dusk, and our troops had to retire down the kopje under cover, though next day they took it. When they retired that night, the wounded officer could not be moved, and so four men



refused to leave him. They remained with him all night without food or water, in order to protect him from the bullets which were flying about—one lying at his head, one at his feet, and one on either side. Those were absent-minded beggars—*absent-minded for themselves!*



## Page 100

Mr. Hordern was talking to a starved wreck of a man one day, and he asked him what was the first thing he wanted when the relief came through. He expected to hear him say food of some sort. But no; this absent-minded beggar said, 'The first thing, sir, medical comforts for the sick.' He then asked him what was the next thing he should like. He thought he would say food *this* time; but no, his reply was, 'The English mail.' He then asked what would he like after that, and the soldier replied that he would then have his food.[17]

Of such stuff were British soldiers made in Ladysmith, and of such stuff are they, with all their faults, the wide world over!

[Footnote 17: Burnley *Express*, May 5, 1900.]

=Lads, We are Going to be Relieved To-day.'=

But the time of deliverance was drawing near. Hope deferred had made the heart sick. Time after time had Buller's guns seemed to be drawing nearer, and time after time had the sound grown faint in the distance. They were on quarter rations again, and that meant that Colonel Ward, careful man as he was, had feared a longer delay. One of the chaplains—he has told the writer the story himself, but prefers that his name be not mentioned—was lying on his back in his tent at Intombi, reading the morning service to those gathered round. He was weak from disease and starvation, and it was no easy task to stand or walk. As he read the Psalm for the day (Ash Wednesday, Psalm vi.), it seemed to him a very message from God. His eye caught the tenth verse, 'All mine enemies shall be confounded and sore vexed: they shall be turned back, and put to shame suddenly.' He read it again and again. Surely God was speaking to him through His Word. 'Turned back,' he said to himself; 'ashamed *suddenly*.' It seemed as though it was a personal illumination from God. He rose to his feet, and going into the tent which contained the worst cases, he said, 'Lads, I've come to tell you we are going to be relieved to-day or if not to-day, at any rate very soon—*suddenly*. Listen, lads; this is my message from God.' And he read them the passage. Every face brightened as he read, and his own was doubtless lit up with a light from another world.

That night, as he was lying down worn out with fatigue and excitement, he heard a British cheer, and everybody rushed out to inquire what it meant. There in the far distance a column of mounted troops, were slowly marching along. Who were they—British? 'No,' said one of the soldiers; 'they are marching too regularly for that.' 'Boers?' 'No,' said another; 'they are marching too regularly for Boers.' 'Who can they be?' 'I know,' said a third; 'they are Colonials.' He was right. 'But wait a minute,' said another; 'let us see if Caesar's Camp fires upon them.' But no, Caesar's Camp kept on pounding away at Mount Bulwane as it had done for months, only with more energy than usual. And then cheer upon cheer broke from these poor emaciated wrecks in Intombi. Hand clasped hand, and tears rained down all faces.



## Page 101

Back into the marquee into which he had been the morning rushed the chaplain. 'Lads, I told you this morning! "*Suddenly*," lads, "*suddenly*," they were to be turned back "*suddenly*." It is true; my message was from God. Buller is here!' And then the dying roused themselves and lived, and voices were uplifted in loud thanksgiving.

And so Lord Dundonald's Colonial troops marched into the town, to be greeted as surely men were never greeted before; to be hailed as saviours, as life-givers, as heroes. Watch them. They have only twenty-four hours' rations with them, and they have had a hard, rough time themselves, but they give it all away. How can they deny anything to these living skeletons standing around!

And what did it mean in Ladysmith? It meant this—at Intombi, at any rate. When Buller's guns sounded nearer, the poor fever-stricken patients brightened up, and roused themselves with a fresh effort for life. When the sound of his firing receded into the distance, they just lay back and died. His entry into Ladysmith was life from the dead.

'=It was Time He Came=.'

It was time that he came. Food was at famine prices. Eggs sold at 48s. per dozen, and one egg for 5s.; a 1/4-lb. tin of tobacco sold for 65s.; chicken went for 17s. 6d. each; dripping, 1/4-lb. at 9s. 6d., and so on. Chevril soup (horseflesh) became the greatest luxury, and was not at all bad; while trek-oxen steak might be looked at and smelled, but to eat it was almost impossible. One of the most pathetic, and at the same time most comical, sights to be witnessed during the siege, was surely that of one enthusiastic lover of the weed, who, unable to procure any of the genuine article for himself, followed closely in the wake of an officer in more fortunate circumstances, in order that at any rate he might get the smell and have the precious smoke circle round his head.

It was time, we say, for Buller to come. Relief came not a day too soon. But a short time longer could the beleaguered men hold out. But he came at last, and when next day he entered the town, bending low over his saddle, worn out with his great exertions, the sight that met his gaze was one never to be forgotten. These men whom he had known in the greatness of their strength at Aldershot were little more than skeletons, hardly able to show their appreciation of his splendid efforts, so weak were they.

'You should have seen the general *cry*,' said a group of men from Ladysmith at the Cambridge Hospital the other day. It was their way of putting the case. The apparently stolid, dogged, undemonstrative Englishman broke down completely, as he gazed upon the sights around him. And no wonder! He had come not a moment too soon. But he had come in time. 'Thank God,' said Sir George White, 'we have kept the flag flying!'

=A Story of Devotion.=



## Page 102

One story of devotion more, and our tale of Ladysmith is at an end. There was a certain much-loved chaplain shut up in Ladysmith, who greatly enjoyed a smoke. In Buller's relief column there were men who loved him well, and who knew his love for a pipe. When they left Colenso, eleven of them each carried under his khaki tunic a quarter-pound tin of tobacco for the chaplain. And then came all the horrors of that terrible struggle to reach the beleaguered town, culminating in the awful fight at Pieter's Hill. One after another, vainly trying to keep their cherished possession, parted with it bit by bit during those dreadful weeks; but one of them carried it all the time, and never so much as touched it. When at last he reached Ladysmith, he had to march right through to encamp several miles beyond the town. But next day he got a permit and tramped back to Ladysmith, found out his friend the chaplain, and handed over his treasure to him. All black and grimy was that sacred tin of tobacco, black with the smoke of battle, and dented by many a hard fight; but it was there—intact—an offering of devotion, a holy thing, a pledge of love. That chaplain has it still; he could not smoke it, it was far too precious for that. It has become one of his household gods, to be kept for ever as a token of a soldier's love.

And now we say good-bye to our gallant Ladysmith garrison. We shall meet many of them again on other fields. The siege proved that there was not a man of them without a religious corner somewhere. Hundreds of them turned to God with full purpose of heart; and to every one of them Old England owes a debt of gratitude. As we say good-bye, we are reminded of Tennyson's lines about the soldiers of Lucknow—lines just as true of the men of Ladysmith as of them:—

'Handful of men as we were, we were English in heart and in limb,  
Strong with the strength of the race, to command, to obey, to endure;  
Each of us fought as if hope for the garrison hung but on him;

\* \* \* \* \*

And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.'

## Chapter XVI

'IN JESU'S KEEPING'

At the annual 'Roll Call Meeting,' held in Wesley Hall, Aldershot, in January, 1900, we took as our 'Motto' for the next twelve months the words of Bishop Bickersteth's beautiful hymn—

'In Jesu's keeping we are safe, and they.'



All of us had friends in South Africa. Most of us had relatives there; and as we bowed in prayer together we thought of the famous prayer of long ago: 'The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another.'

All the way through we have realized that there was a God of love watching between us. All the way through we have been quite certain that 'in Jesu's keeping' they were safe.

Some of them we shall never see again on earth, but they are still 'in Jesu's keeping.' Some of them are still far away from us fighting for their country. But they, too, are 'in Jesu's keeping,' and for them we are not afraid. We said 'Good-bye' many months ago, but it meant 'God be with you,' and our farewell prayer has been answered. *Here or there* we expect to clasp hands with them again.



## Page 103

And the comfort that has been ours in Old England has been theirs in South Africa. They, too, have thought of loved ones far away. They, too, have realized—

‘In Jesu’s keeping we are safe, and they.’

‘The Soldier’s Psalm’ has been read and rejoiced in all through South Africa.

‘He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust. Thou shall not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.... He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation.’

Chanted in many a service, repeated in the darkness on outpost duty, remembered even amid the fury of the battle, this Soldiers’ Psalm has been to thousands a source of comfort and strength.

\* \* \* \* \*

With its blessed words ringing in our ears we close this book. The war is not yet over. Disease has not yet claimed all its victims. The fateful bullet has not delivered its final message of death. But our loved ones are ‘in Jesu’s keeping,’ and we are content to leave them there. With them and with us it may be ‘Peace, perfect peace.’

Butler & Tanner. The Selwood Printing Works, Frome, and London.