

# THE GHASTLY BLUNDERS OF THE WAR.

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A Guide to the Report of the  
Royal Commission on the South African War,  
1899-1900.

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“If anybody has to be hung, it is the Secretary of State  
for War.”—Evidence of Lord Lansdowne.

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# CHIEF WITNESSES EXAMINED.

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## 1. Personnel of the War Office.

### SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR.

1. The Marquess of Lansdowne, K.G.  
(Until November, 1900.)
2. Right Hon. St. John Brodrick, M.P.

### PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE.

1. George Wyndham, Esq., M.P.  
(Until November, 1900.)
2. Right Hon. Lord Raglan.  
(Until August, 1902.)
3. The Earl of Hardwicke.

### FINANCIAL SECRETARY.

1. Right Hon. J. Powell-Williams, M.P.  
(Until January, 1901.)
2. Lord Stanley, M.P.

### PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE.

1. Sir Ralph H. Knox, K.C.B.  
(Until January, 1901.)
2. Colonel Sir Edward W. Ward, K.C.B.  
(From April, 1901.)

### ASSISTANT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE.

Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson, K.C.B.

### COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

1. Field-Marshal the Right Hon. Viscount Wolseley, K.P.  
(Until December, 1900.)
2. Field-Marshal the Right Hon. Earl Roberts, K.G.

### ADJUTANT-GENERAL.

1. General Sir H. E. Wood, V.C.  
(Until September, 1901.)
2. Lieutenant-General Sir T. Kelly-Kenny, K.C.B.

### QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL.

1. Lieutenant-General Sir G. S. White, V.C.  
(Until September, 1899.)
2. Lieutenant-General Sir C. M. Clarke, Bart., G.C.B.

### INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF FORTIFICATIONS.

General Sir R. Harrison, K.C.B., R.E.

### DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF ORDNANCE.

General Sir H. Brackenbury, G.C.B., R.E.

### DIRECTOR-GENERAL ARMY MEDICAL SERVICE.

1. Surgeon-General J. Jameson, M.D., C.B.  
(Until May, 1901.)
2. Surgeon-General A. F. Preston, M.B.  
(temporarily).  
(Until November, 1901.)
3. Surgeon-General W. Taylor, M.D., K.C.B.

### DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF MOBILISATION AND MILITARY INTELLIGENCE.

1. Major-General Sir J. C. Ardagh, C.B., R.E.  
(Until April, 1901.)
2. Lieutenant-General Sir W. G. Nicholson, K.C.B., R.E.

### INSPECTOR-GENERAL-OF-REMOUNTS.

Major-General W. R. Truman.

## 2. South African Officers.

General Lord Kitchener of Khartoum.  
General Sir Redvers Buller.  
Lieutenant-General Lord Methuen.  
Lieutenant-General Sir C. Warren.  
Lieutenant-General Sir J. D. French.  
Lieutenant-General Sir Ian Hamilton.  
Lieutenant-General Sir W. F. Butler.  
Lieutenant-General Sir A. Hunter.  
Major-General Sir J. Hildyard.  
Major-General Sir H. E. Colville.  
Major-General Sir W. Gatacre.  
Major-General Baden-Powell.  
Major-General Kekewich.  
Major-General Paget.  
Major-General Plumer.

## 3. Admiral Commanding on Cape Station.

Vice-Admiral Sir R. Harris.

## 4. Civil Surgeons.

Sir F. Treves.  
Professor Ogston, Professor of Surgery at Aberdeen University.

## 5. Defence Committee of the Cabinet in 1899.

Lord Salisbury.	} Not Examined.
Duke of Devonshire.	
Right Hon. A. J. Balfour.	
Right Hon. G. J. Goschen.	
Lord Lansdowne.	

## MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION.

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LORD ESHER.

LORD STRATHCONA.

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# THE GHASTLY BLUNDERS OF THE WAR.

A Guide to the Report of the Royal Commission on the South African War, 1899-1900.

## THE NEGLECTED WARNINGS. HOW THE CABINET DID NOT PREPARE.

"I do not believe in the perfection of the British Constitution as an instrument of war. It is evident that there is something in your machinery that is wrong."—Lord Salisbury, speech in the House of Lords, Jan. 30th, 1900.

From the date of the unhappy Jameson Raid, in the opinion of the best military judges, war in South Africa became inevitable. The question from the day when Jameson surrendered to the Boers was not whether a conflict could be averted, but how long it could be postponed. And from that moment the British War Office began to collect what information it could obtain about the Boers and the Boer forces.

The department of the War Office charged with the duty of obtaining this all-important information was the Intelligence Division. It was at that date (in 1896) weak and understaffed, and it still remains weak and understaffed, in spite of the lessons of this war. Whereas in Germany the General Staff is granted £250,000 and allotted 239 officers, the British Intelligence Department received on the eve of the war only £18,000, and was assigned twenty-three officers, though the Boers were spending £286,000 a year on obtaining intelligence. The funds granted to the British department were so small that it was greatly hampered in the prosecution of inquiries and in the collection of information. Its South African section consisted of only two officers and one clerk. It was unable, with the amount which the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the War Office authorities gave it, to survey the probable field of war and to prepare the maps which the army would require. When it asked for £18,000 it got £100.

Nevertheless, such was the zeal and energy of the officers despatched by it to South Africa that it succeeded in collecting a mass of information which, if properly used, should have gone far to avert the mistakes actually perpetrated, whether by the politicians or the generals. From 1896 onwards it pointed out repeatedly the danger of war and the strength of the Boers. From facts then collected a memorandum was drawn up by its head, Sir J. Ardagh, in October, 1896, which showed

"That the South African Republic was expending that year £2,350,000 on military preparations, including the provision of artillery, rifles, ammunition, and fortifications. That this large expenditure can have no other explanation than an anticipation of war, or an intention of aggression against this country and its supremacy in South Africa; and that it is beyond all doubt that the Boers are still more disposed and better prepared for a rupture with England than ever before, and in no way inclined to redress the grievances of the Uitlanders."

The force of the Boers was estimated in this memorandum at 48,000, including rebels.

In April, 1897, a second memorandum emphasised the fact that the Boers were still preparing for war, and would attack when the favourable moment came. A third memorandum pointed out, in September, 1898, that the state of affairs in South Africa was that of an armed neutrality, information of extreme gravity, since at that moment England was in the throes of the Fashoda crisis. It was shown that at least a month or six weeks must inte-

vene before reinforcements could reach South Africa from England or India ; that the position in any case must be one of extreme difficulty, and that the difficulty would be enhanced by the fact "that any mistake or lack of firmness would seriously affect subsequent operations." Not the least alarming feature in the situation was that the Admiralty declared itself unable to guarantee the transport of reinforcements to South Africa, in the event of the outbreak of war with a naval Power, and insisted that the garrison of South Africa must be kept at war strength in time of peace. Thus, on the eve of a war with France, as the military authorities supposed, the British force in South Africa was in a state in which it could not have resisted Boer attacks, and there would have been no possibility of promptly strengthening it.

The Intelligence Department showed that both Boer republics, in the event of war, would be ranged together against England, and that to meet their 48,000 men she had only 3,802 men in Cape Colony, and 4,757 men in Natal. These troops were without transport, so that they would be tied to the railways ; and they had but three batteries of field guns, though the Boers were known even then to be in possession of a powerful artillery. There was no carefully worked out plan for the defence of the colonies, and the supplies collected were insufficient. The plans of the Boers were stated to include an attempt upon Kimberley, the seizure of Northern Natal, and raids with 2,000 or 3,000 men in other directions.

Further memoranda followed in the earlier months of 1899, all dwelling on the same dangers. Finally, in June, 1899, the revised edition of a handbook for confidential use was issued. This gave the numbers of the Boers (without rebels) as 50,123, against, as was afterwards ascertained at the close of the war, an actual total of 89,375 men (including rebels and renegades). The difference between the estimate and the actual total is thought to have been due in part to deliberate understatement of their strength by the Boers in their official returns ; and in part to the fact that boys under sixteen were not counted by the Intelligence Department, but bore arms in the war. The Boer field army was put at 47,630 men, of whom only 34,000 would be available for

action against the British outside the territory of the Republics.

It is believed that this estimate was not far wrong. The rifles in possession of the two Boer States were given with fair accuracy ; the ammunition in their possession was also ascertained ; the strength of the Boer artillery was placed at 107 guns, 16 of which were stated to be big Creusot weapons, possibly capable of use as guns of position. Actually, this was an over-estimate, as the big guns were only four ; but otherwise the statement was correct on the whole, and every kind of gun that the Boers did actually possess in June, 1899, was indicated. Their plan of campaign was stated to be a movement against Ladysmith.

Such was the warning given by the Intelligence Department. It showed that from 34,000 to 50,000 men might at any moment be flung upon the British forces in South Africa, and its whole tenor was the all-importance of preparation. But some, at least, of these warnings were thrown away ; Lord Lansdowne doubts whether he ever saw the memorandum of 1896.

From other sources came similar warnings. Mr. Chamberlain, in April, 1897, drew Lord Lansdowne's attention to the armaments of the Boers ; stated that information in the possession of the Colonial Office showed that the Boers intended to attack Kimberley, destroy the bridges over the Orange River, and invade Natal ; pointed out the weakness of the British force in South Africa ; and reminded Lord Lansdowne that in the event of a Boer success at the outset the Government would be reproached by the loyal Colonists "for having neglected, though with ample time for preparation, to take adequate measures for their safety." He added that the "responsibility of deciding what military measures should be taken to safeguard the interests of the Empire in South Africa" rested with the War Office.

Lord Lansdowne replied, stating that some small reinforcements would be sent to South Africa. Other letters from Mr. Chamberlain and the Colonial Office in 1898 showed that the Boer armaments were proceeding steadily, and that in the event of complications between England and a foreign Power (which no doubt was France), "it is possible that the Transvaal Government would take advantage of the oppor-

tunity," and pressed for the equipment of the British force in South Africa with transport, so as to enable it to move without delay. Steps were taken to attain this object by the War Office.

As the hour of conflict drew nearer, warnings from other sources multiplied. Everyone in South Africa during the months of 1899, from June onwards, appears to have felt that war was at hand. Sir R. Harris, the naval officer commanding on the Cape Station, was told in July, while shooting near Delagoa Bay, by a Boer: "The Boers are certain to make war directly the grass comes in October. . . I travel from farmhouse to farmhouse, and they tell me war is coming." The merchants at the Cape allowed their stocks to run low; the Rand millionaires sold their racing studs. General Butler, who then commanded our forces in South Africa, held that war was imminent, though he put this down to the machinations of Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Rhodes. The state of tension was such that he forbade the preparation of armoured trains in Natal in June, and opposed any movement of British troops to Laings Nek, which was on British territory, as he held that such action would immediately precipitate a struggle. He stated that 40,000 men would be required to bring pressure on the Boers, though he deprecated such a course, and was convinced that war might be postponed.

Sir W. Butler, though a capable and gallant officer, was the wrong man in the wrong place. Holding the political views he did strongly, his bias towards the Boers influenced his action and led him to be chary of support to the British officers who, as the war drew nearer, were sent out to raise men in Rhodesia. He laughed at the idea of a diversion in this direction. General Baden-Powell reports that he "found very little help possible from the army," and had some small difficulties placed in his way in the purchase of horses from the Army Remount department at the Cape. General Butler, in his private conversation, appears to have said that the war would prove a very grave one; but he gave no warning, except in vague and general terms, to the authorities at home, and he made no strong representations as to the need for heavy reinforcements. This was the more serious in its results as General

Buller and the War Office trusted to his foresight to call attention to any danger. In consequence of friction which arose between General Butler and Sir A. Milner, owing to General Butler's political attitude, General Butler resigned in August; but when he returned to England no steps seem to have been taken by the War Office to take his opinion on military matters, or to consult him as to the strength of the force required for war with the Boers.

At this date the only man of weight in South Africa who held that war was improbable was Mr. Rhodes. Even when he left for Kimberley, just as the hostile forces were about to cross the frontier, he thought that the Boers would not fight. This was at a time when a great exodus of British subjects from the Transvaal was in progress, and when the Boer forces were actually mobilised. The Cape Ministry also persisted in the view that the Boers would never go to war; though this attitude is, perhaps, to be attributed to political motives.

In the face of these repeated warnings, what was the action of the British War Office and Lord Lansdowne? In the War Office no careful preparations were made with a view to the campaign, now seen by the soldiers to be imminent. Plans were not worked out, nor was a reasoned estimate of the force required to crush the Boers got ready. It will have been noticed that the Intelligence Department had failed, while giving as accurate estimates of the Boer strength as were obtainable, to call attention to the peculiarly formidable nature of the Boer as a combatant, or to remind the War Office that the army needed to beat him would be a mounted one. It was known to those who had South African experience that there is no country in which the infantryman is so helpless, and the bulk of the British army was composed of infantry. "Both Zulus and Boers," wrote Mr. Rider Haggard in 1883, "can get over the ground at thrice the pace possible to the unfortunate soldier, and both races despise him accordingly." Here was a danger which no one foresaw, and which no one took steps to meet.

Yet the soldiers all through that summer of 1899 showed great uneasiness as to the remissness of the Cabinet in preparing for war. The failure of the Bloemfontein Conference was known on June 5. Some weeks earlier the

Mobilisation Committee of the War Office had begun to discuss the mobilisation of a large force. On June 8 Lord Wolseley, as Commander-in-Chief, in a minute to Lord Lansdowne, showed that there were then only 10,000 men in South Africa, and that, in the event of war with the Transvaal, an army corps, a cavalry division, and five battalions would be needed in addition to this force. He suggested measures by which the troops in South Africa could be gradually strengthened, and he strongly urged the mobilisation in England on Salisbury Plain of one army corps and the cavalry division, under the General selected for command in the war. He also advised that mounted contingents should be furnished by the Australian Colonies, and two battalions of infantry by Canada. But as his proposal was put forward on the day after Lord Salisbury had made a statement anticipating a peaceful issue to the dispute with the Transvaal, Lord Lansdowne took no action.

The next step was the appointment of General Buller as Commander-in-Chief of the possible expeditionary force on June 14. He had an interview with Lord Lansdowne, in which the force required was put at about what Lord Wolseley had suggested. But though the General had thus been chosen, he was not in close communication with the Cabinet; he was never consulted by the Defence Committee, which ought to have made itself acquainted with his ideas and plans; and he could obtain no information from the War Office as to the probable attitude of the Free State, or the way in which it was to be treated. He himself was at Aldershot, and could not keep in touch with the War Office, so as to follow such preparations as were made. The situation was an extraordinary one. The Cabinet were not in touch with the General; the General was not in touch with the War Office; everything was vague and unbusiness-like. There was no interchange of views, and General Buller's attention was occupied with his Aldershot command.

On June 17 the Mobilisation Committee of the War Office met and considered the question of providing the troops in South Africa with transport. It was informed by Lord Lansdowne that "there is no present intention of reinforcing the troops in South Africa." It reported that three months would be needed for the pro-

vision of transport for the Army Corps. Since this cost money, nothing was done, and nothing could be done till the Chancellor of the Exchequer unbuttoned his pockets. In the words of Lord Wolseley:

"Looking back to the whole of the summer of 1899, I was constantly asking for the expenditure of public money on services which would be necessary in the event of war, and I may again say that war at that time appeared to me absolutely inevitable. . . . As a soldier, it seemed to me to be madness to go on as we were from week to week not making preparations for an eventuality which seemed a certainty. I could get no money for the purchase of clothing, equipment, transport, or any military stores, and without money, of course, I could do nothing in the way of preparing stores for the mobilisation of an army."

While Sir G. White states:

"We were met more than once by their saying that there had been no provision made in the Budget; there were certain things that . . . we ourselves definitely asked for that we were told we could not get. . . . I think it was the Chancellor of the Exchequer who put so heavy a check upon the Secretary of State for War that it became practically almost impossible for him to get what he wanted."

General Buller heard nothing more of South Africa from Lord Lansdowne till July 3, when he was summoned, and informed that the Government wished to send a division of infantry and a brigade of cavalry to South Africa, but without any definite object or purpose. Against this he protested, as these troops were to have formed part of his fighting force; he pressed, however, the strengthening of the garrisons in South Africa, the formation of magazines, and the mobilisation of the Field Force, at the same time urging the Government to make up its mind whether the Orange Free State was to be treated as a neutral or an enemy, since it seems to have been supposed that this State might have feigned neutrality, while aiding the Transvaal in every possible way, and this notwithstanding that the Treaty of 1897 compelled either of the Boer States to support the other

in war. Lord Wolseley was in favour of the despatch of 10,000 men at the earliest possible date, and on July 7 once more urged the Government to mobilise the Army Corps, and, at the same time, to grant £500,000 for the provision of supplies and other requirements. But his request fell upon deaf ears, and nothing was done.

Up to July 8 the only war preparations made were the shipment of two months' rations for the Cape garrison, the purchase of 1,340 mules in South Africa, the despatch of some hay and oats, and the sending of ten special service officers and Colonel Baden-Powell to that country. In his uneasiness as to the situation on July 17, Lord Wolseley put a question to General Buller as to whether he was "quite satisfied that our present position in the Cape Colony and Natal is quite safe," and received for answer the assurance that so long as General Butler, at the Cape, and General Symons, in Natal, saw no danger, he did not see that there was any necessity to send out troops in advance of the Army Corps.

Indecision all through these critical weeks reigned in the mind of Lord Lansdowne. Orders and counter-orders were issued as to such a detail as the date at which three batteries ordered to South Africa in June were to embark, and whether or not they were to take out their families with them. Now they were to sail in July without their families; now in August with them; in August their despatch was suspended altogether; and in the end there was such delay that one of these batteries only just arrived in time for the battle of Modder River.

On August 2 Lord Wolseley urged that 2,000 or 3,000 men should be added to the force in Natal, and two battalions were ordered out as a "demonstration." Sir A. Milner also pressed the military weakness upon the Government, but with no serious result. On August 5 the Mobilisation Committee drew the Government's attention once more to the fact that three months would be needed to provide the transport for an Army Corps. On August 12 Lord Lansdowne submitted to the Cabinet a lengthy document, in which he stated that the cost of making the necessary preparations for the despatch and equipment of the Army Corps would be £1,097,250, money which would have to be spent if there was war; while, if

there was no war, a large part of the cost would be recovered by the sale of mules and horses. If this expenditure were sanctioned, it would be possible to place the Army Corps in the north of Natal in three months; if not, the time required would be four months.

He added that "the long delay anticipated in this memorandum—if the expenditure were not sanctioned—would not involve any risk of a military reverse, although its political effects might be serious." There is nothing to show that the generals at home were of this opinion, and the tone of their minutes and written statements suggests that they were opposed to such a conclusion, though it is true that General Symons, in Natal, thought that a reinforcement of 2,000 men would put Natal in an efficient state of defence. The Cabinet accepted this statement, without even questioning the soldiers, and the decision was reached to do nothing. All preparations for mobilisation had been suspended on August 9.

The soldiers were more than ever uneasy. The Cabinet scattered; the War Minister, Lord Lansdowne, departed to his Irish seat of Derreen for the holidays; while the Mobilisation Committee was left to write useless minutes and entreaties for permission to order the stores and clothing required.

"The proceedings of the Army Board," says Sir H. Brackenbury, Director-General of Ordnance, "are full of instances of our asking to be allowed at that time to spend money in making preparations, and of our being told we could not do so. It was perfectly clear that it was the decision of the Government that they would not spend money in preparations for the despatch of an Army Corps at that time."

On August 18 Lord Wolseley begged the Government to "consider the advisability of sending to Natal, with the least possible delay," 10,000 men, one of the divisions of the Army Corps. He received a reply to this effect:

"Derreen, August 20, 1899.

"My dear Wolseley,—Your memorandum of the 17th has reached me. You have probably become aware, since you wrote it, that the outlook in South Africa has improved. We are not yet in a position to

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assume that matters will be satisfactorily settled; but Mr. Chamberlain wrote to me two days ago that, while he wished to avoid relaxing the pressure, he saw no occasion for reinforcements. . . . I am rather sorry that you did not put these views in writing before we all separated, and when the discussions were in progress which led to the sending of two more battalions to Natal. The position was more critical then than it is now."

No doubt Mr. Chamberlain accepted the assurance which had been given at the Cabinet meeting of the 12th, to the effect that delay in sending reinforcements would not involve any risk of a defeat.

Lord Lansdowne, like Sir R. Buller, opposed the plan of sending out a division of the Army Corps, and inclined rather to the utilisation of a small force which India was holding ready if more troops were needed. Thus matters stood at the end of August, when the Mobilisation Committee met again, and urged that there should be no further delay. It asked for permission to spend £17,000 on the preparation of vehicles for South Africa, which would require ten weeks. Lord Wolseley supported this demand with a pressing minute. But still nothing was done. On September 5, 8, and 20 these needs were again put before Lord Lansdowne, but it was not till the 22nd that the expenditure of £645,000, which was less than was needed, was sanctioned. The result was that the vehicles were not ready for sixteen units of the Army Corps, and that the troops could not be given woollen clothing at the outbreak of war.

General Buller had remained quiescent during these happenings. But he, too, began to feel fresh alarm as the weeks went on, and there was no sign of any preparation. Early in September he approached Lord Salisbury's private secretary, and through him submitted to the Premier a memorandum, dated September 5, in which he stated that :

"Before the diplomat proceeds to an ultimatum the military should be in a position to enforce it. This is not the case with regard to affairs in South Africa. So far as I am aware, the War Office has no idea of how matters are proceeding, and has not been consulted. . . . From a military

point of view a campaign in the Transvaal is one which demands careful organisation.

. . . If an ultimatum is sent before they—the forces—are mobile, the colonies will be liable to invasion by the Boers."

General Buller addressed another communication of the same date to Lord Wolseley, urging preparations and the reinforcement of the troops in Natal. And Lord Wolseley, in his turn, sent a minute to Lord Lansdowne stating that this document from General Buller was "the first intimation I have had that our negotiations with the Transvaal have reached an acute stage." In such complete ignorance was the Commander-in-Chief kept. He went on to ask that, as time had been deplorably wasted, and as the enemy had been given the initiative, all possible reinforcements should be hurried out, including the artillery, whose adventures have already been narrated; that a brigade of Guards should be sent to Natal, and that diplomacy should be employed to delay action by the Boers. Whether because of these representations, or because of the fact that the Transvaal Government had withdrawn its offer of a five years' franchise, the Government acted at last, and on September 8 10,000 men, partly from India, partly from other garrisons, were ordered to South Africa. But even now the Cabinet declined to mobilise the Army Corps, or even to sanction the necessary outlay for its equipment. It is only fair to state that Lord Wolseley told Lord Lansdowne, when he learnt of the despatch of the force of 10,000 men to Natal, that "he would stake his reputation that after the reinforcements have arrived we shall be safe as to everything south of the Biggarsberg" (in Natal). This statement was repeated to one of his colleagues at the time by the Secretary of State for War.

The next act was one that seemed to indicate fresh indecision. A contract for a thousand transport mules in South Africa was cancelled on September 14. About this time General Sir G. White was appointed to the command in Natal, whereupon he drew General Buller's attention to the importance of settling to what points the as yet unmobilised Army was to be despatched. Up to this date that had not been decided by General Buller, probably because he could not find out from Lord Lansdowne whether

the Orange Free State was to be treated as an enemy or a neutral.

On September 16 Lord Wolseley "strongly urged" the instant mobilisation of the Army Corps and its despatch to the scene of action. Sir A. Milner on the same date asked for speedy reinforcements in men and ships. But still the Cabinet delayed mobilisation. On September 29 the line of advance through the Free State was adopted by the Cabinet at General Buller's instance; on the 30th the General pressed Lord Lansdowne to give the necessary orders for mobilisation there and then; but once more there was delay, though the Boer forces had been mobilised on September 27, and on that very day the Boer ultimatum was ready—it was seen at Pretoria on the 27th or 28th—the intention being that on or about October 1 the Boer forces should move and sweep into British territory.

It does not appear from the evidence given before the Commission whether or not the Cabinet was aware of the existence of the ultimatum when it reached the amazing decision on the 29th to make purchases of stores, but refused to call out the men. "Five minutes," said Nelson, "spell the difference between victory and defeat." The Government had trifled with the issue for five weeks, and the consequences were speedily to be seen. On October 2 Mr. Kruger publicly announced that war was inevitable; and at length, on October 7, the British Government awoke. The Reserves were called out. On the 9th the Boer ultimatum was handed in at Pretoria, and on the 11th the enemy crossed the frontier.

Two incidents of the last few days before General Buller sailed are recounted in the minutes of the Commission. The first is the famous "unmounted men preferred," for which General Buller was responsible. On October 6 a telegram was drafted for him replying to the offers of troops which had come from the Colonies, in these terms:

"Units may be infantry, mounted infantry, or cavalry. In view of numbers already available, infantry most, cavalry least serviceable."

This message can have only one meaning, but according to General Buller it was intended to elicit mounted infantry, because he thought that all Colonials would be able to ride, and he meant to put them on horses in South Africa. He did not tell the Commission whence his horses and saddlery were coming; and his explanation is not in accordance with the recollection of Lord Lansdowne, who states that General Buller announced his intention of attaching these Colonials to infantry battalions. General Buller, he adds, was "rather reluctant to accept the services of Colonial troops;" and this view of General Buller's attitude is in accord with what happened in the first portion of the campaign.

The second incident was that when he sailed General Buller expected to open his campaign on December 23; to take one month in passing through the Orange Free State; and to reach Pretoria about mid-February. That was his anticipation stated informally to Lord Lansdowne on October 10. He sailed for the land of stern realities on October 14, some days in advance of the first part of his Army Corps.

Such is the case against the War Minister and the Cabinet. But it was not only the Cabinet that was at fault. Both parties must share in the blame. Throughout the summer of 1899 a section of the British Press and a part of the Liberal Party had protested against every sign of preparation and the despatch of each miserable company of infantry to South Africa. On June 30, 1899, speaking at the City Liberal Club, Sir H. Campbell Bannerman declared, "I can see nothing whatever in all that has occurred to justify either warlike action or military preparations." Speaking in the House of Lords on July 28, Lord Kimberley, as leader of the Opposition, stated, "I entirely associate myself with the declaration of Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, that nothing has occurred to justify war." These leaders acted as though they wished to anticipate what was to happen, and to furnish Lord Lansdowne with a crushing rejoinder when he was impeached for failure to safeguard the national interests.

## II.—THE UNREADY ARMY.

*"We have been struck with the inadequacy of our reserves of many kinds of stores."*

—Lord Lansdowne, February 12, 1900.

The calculation of the War Office, when the order to mobilise was given, was that there would be 23,000 British troops in South Africa before the arrival of the Army Corps, who would be capable of maintaining a defensive against the Boers. The arrival of the Army Corps would add to their force a total of about 45,000 men. The available field army after the Army Corps landed would be 6,350 cavalry, 42,700 infantry and mounted infantry, and 174 guns, against a Boer force of from 33,500 to 50,000, all mounted men. There was no very marked preponderance of numbers on the British side, though outside the War Office this was not known and did not cause uneasiness, because the Boers were not thought to be able to put into the field more than 20,000 men. Inside the War Office it seems to have been assumed that the discipline and superior quality of the British would much more than atone for any possible weakness in numbers.

The evidence given before the Commission by British generals shows how incorrect was this belief. In the first place, the training of the Army had not been such as to fit it for a war under modern conditions. In General Sir C. Warren's words :

"The officers and men were absolutely untrained for that kind (the Boer kind) of warfare ; they were unable to use their eyes ; they did not know how to use their rifles ; they did not know how to take cover. . . . The training was extremely defective."

There were many reasons for this. The training-grounds were too small ; manœuvres on a large scale were difficult to arrange because of interference with shooting tenants ; the officer was disheartened by finding that his men, instead of practising the arts of war, had to serve as a substitute for housemaids, and were away

"cleaning windows, carrying coal, and doing such things, which are all done in the

most extravagant way. We fall in 240 men in the afternoon to carry coal round the barracks, instead of putting it into a cart, with one man to lead the horse and another man to shovel it out." (Evidence of Sir E. Wood.)

It was impossible to work the men hard because hard work would have meant a decline in the number of recruits.

"Our desires with regard to the training of the men are strictly limited by what the recruiting-officer tells us is the character of training which would be agreeable to the population which we hope will come into the Army." (Sir E. Wood.)

"We dare not train the soldier to his fullest extent," says Sir T. Kelly-Kenny.

The soldiers themselves were not the pick of the nation. Their mental capacity was low, as they were drawn from the humblest class ; personally brave, they were not intelligent ; they entered, in many cases, from the force of circumstances, to find in the Army a refuge, because they could not obtain work outside it. In the field they displayed magnificent qualities, endurance, and contempt for dangers ; but in intellect they were no match for the Boers. Their shooting was indifferent because of the want of ranges ; where barracks were near ranges it improved. Their health was not good ; and the enormous losses from enteric were due, in the opinion of many witnesses, in great part to the defective physique of the men, who suffered far more than the stronger and healthier officers. The soldiers had been trained to volley-firing, which was found to be useless and dangerous. So little were individuality and resource developed that General Buller, when he took the field in Natal, did not dare to use his troops in the bush country east of Colenso. Yet that British troops might have to fight in bush country must have been known before the war.

The officers, in the opinion both of Lord

Roberts and Lord Kitchener, did not take their profession sufficiently seriously, and the training which they had received stunted their sense of responsibility and self-reliance. "I think there is too much red-tape and too much finding fault if little mistakes occur; moreover, our officers do not get the chance of command when they are younger men," said Lord Roberts. With their bravery and endurance there was no fault to find, nor were the regimental officers anything but good. The staff were not well prepared for their duties; they were unknown to the generals, flung together at the last moment, and many of the serious reverses of the war are attributed to their bad work. In Natal the staff, it is testified, "went to pieces;" Lord Roberts's convoy was lost through staff errors; and he deposes that he "was struck" by the inability of some staff officers to read a map correctly.

Slavery to regulations was enforced before the war and independence of judgment discouraged. Even a General was not allowed to spend £5 without reference to the War Office; and in the same way ordnance officers, who had to arrange contracts in war which ran into tens of thousands, were not in peace permitted to spend a shilling, so that they could acquire no business training.

Promotion went mainly by seniority, which, in one of the witnesses words, "meant murder." Incompetent men were not eliminated ruthlessly. Nor in the choice of commanders was care taken to select the best possible man. After the disasters of September, 1899, the Defence Committee of the Cabinet turned to Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener. Had it chosen Lord Roberts at the outset great loss of life might have been averted. In Lord Roberts's words, "indifferent strategy had quite as much, and perhaps more, to do with our mishaps in the early days of the war than inadequate numbers."

At the War Office the different departments did not keep proper touch with each other, but worked in "watertight compartments." There was a tendency to "wait for finality" before adopting any invention. The British artillery took the field with short-range guns because the authorities were waiting for the perfect field-guns, though had there been long-range guns our artillerymen could never have been practised in their use. A long range was

secured with great trouble at Okehampton, whereupon the War Office made an agreement with a village behind the range not to use it, and adhered to this agreement in spite of all protests. At every turn there was friction outside with the Treasury, which controlled all questions of finance, and inside between the civil and military officials of the War Office. In thorough keeping with the want of forethought which characterised our political arrangements, no one knew what the Army was wanted for, or how large it ought to be.

"I was twenty-five years in the War Office," deposed Sir R. Buller, "and every year we asked what really was the Army that the Commander-in-Chief was to maintain, and for what purposes that Army was required. We asked that question, and we never succeeded in getting it answered except once, and then it was answered wrong."

A minute drawn up in 1888, detailing the purposes for which the Army was needed, was treated as "confidential," and kept from Parliament, though there was nothing in it which might not have been disclosed with perfect safety. This minute laid down as the first requisite the organisation of the army for home defence, for which three Army Corps were to be provided (two of regulars and one of regulars and militia). For foreign service two Army Corps and a cavalry division were to be available. It altogether overlooked the Navy.

In the organisation of the Army, it is only fair to state, there were immense difficulties owing to the dependence upon voluntary enlistment, which prevented any accurate calculation of the force available in various contingencies, and the necessity of maintaining large Indian and Colonial garrisons. From 1896 onwards Lord Wolseley, the Commander-in-Chief, had not ceased to make urgent representations to Lord Lansdowne as to the necessity of strengthening the Army. "Is this a real military system, or is it a system of make-believe?" he asked on one occasion. "We live from hand to mouth," he said, "like the insolvent debtor who meets his daily liabilities by shifts invented on the spur of the moment." He asked for a military policy, and the means to carry it out.

One of the disquieting revelations is that on

the outbreak of a great war a sort of "general post" was to be effected by the garrisons of the coaling stations, though the Admiralty insisted that it would not be responsible "for the safe arrival of reinforcements by sea at our distant stations during the early periods of a war." The miserable state of the Volunteer Artillery, with their "Noah's Ark guns" of "contemptible" shell-fire and range was repeatedly pointed out by Lord Wolseley. The general answer to these appeals for a better Army was that they would involve great expenditure, and make demands which the recruiting resources of the country might not be adequate to meet.

Years passed in this tragic interchange of minutes, but the general result was always the same; the Army remained inadequate and ill-equipped for war. Some small additions were made—a few batteries, a few battalions; but as a general principle all that was done was done in the most unbusiness-like manner. We have seen in the last chapter to what an extent the Commander-in-Chief was disregarded. On the eve of the Boer War he was left without information that matters were approaching a critical stage, in the autumn of 1899. And so it was in the years which went before. In Lord Wolseley's own words he was the "fifth wheel in the coach," and a bitter position it must have been for an officer whose ability no one has ever doubted, and whose patriotism is vindicated by the long series of warnings which he addressed to Lord Lansdowne and the Defence Committee of the Cabinet in 1899; the daily entreaties, the remonstrances, the demands so often made, so invariably rejected, to mobilise.

He felt that a civilian, and not a soldier, was in virtual command of the Army, and between them a great gulf was fixed. The one sought the interests of his party, the other sought the interests of the nation, and the nation was left in ignorance of the struggle proceeding between them.

"What I complain of is that the English people are never taken into the confidence of the Government as far as the condition of the Army is concerned. They are only told part of the truth."—Lord Wolseley.

The most serious defect of the military preparations has yet to be noticed; it lay in the deficiency of equipment and reserve stores.

It had always been assumed by the Treasury that when a war was once in progress the manufacturing resources of the country would be sufficient to supply any wants of the Army. Entrenched behind this optimistic illusion the Treasury had steadily refused to make grants for stores. When the mobilisation approached, according to the now famous report of Sir H. Brackenbury, it was found that the supply of helmets, woollen clothing, khaki greatcoats, woollen drawers, and boots was insufficient. There were large reserves of red and blue clothing, colours unsuited to modern war. There was a fair quantity of khaki cotton clothing, but the clothing suitable for South Africa was wanting. Yet war had been seen coming for months or years. Not the soldiers were at fault—they had made representations—but the civilians and the Treasury.

The orders for these indispensable requisites had to be given at the last moment, at a greatly enhanced cost. Cloth for uniforms had to be taken off the looms, and even so there was such delay that three divisions took the field clad in cotton. The state of affairs was worse when it came to ammunition and arms. The rifles in reserve were found to be wrongly sighted, so that they shot 18-in. wrong in 500 yards, and this defect was only discovered when they were issued to the Yeomanry. Of field artillery there was only one battery in reserve in December, 1900. Of horse artillery there was only one experimental battery in reserve. Of 5in. howitzers there was only one gun in reserve, and two had to be taken from fortresses to replace casualties. Gun ammunition ran short in the same way, though

"the whole powers of the Ordnance factories and the trade have been turned on to further supplies, and all naval orders for ammunition have had to be held in abeyance since the beginning of October. We have borrowed from the Navy and from the Government of India." (General Sir H. Brackenbury's Report of December 15, 1899.)

To meet General Buller's demands for ammunition the outer bodies of shrapnel had to be obtained from Germany.

Of artillery harness there were only 500 sets, and by December 800 had had to be sent to

South Africa. The machine-guns were 326 short of the authorised number. The reserve of swords was 80, whereas 500 were needed; of tents, 5,100, whereas 17,900 were by December sent to South Africa; there were no mule shoes, and they had to be bought by the thousand abroad. Of rifle ammunition there were 172,000,000 rounds in store, but at the critical moment it was found that 66,000,000 could not be trusted, as the lead squirted out of the expanding bullet, leaving the nickel shell of the bullet in the rifle. 3,000,000 rounds a week were needed for South Africa, and the output of the country was only 2,500,000, so that England was rapidly denuded. The supply of serviceable ammunition was at one point reduced to "two or three boxes," and if war with a European Power had broken out, England would have had to fight with ammunition which had the two defects of being dangerous to the soldier who fired it and contrary to the rules of the Hague Convention.

The hospital equipment before mobilisation was sufficient for three hospitals; twenty-one were sent out to South Africa by September, 1900, and even then they were insufficient. Purchases had to be made in every direction outside England; tents, felling axes, saddlery, and vehicles had to be obtained abroad; and sometimes foreign manufacturers refused to supply this country. Krupp, for example, would not sell to the War Office cannon and material; and it was not till late in the war that the British Government was able to buy from Germany the eighteen batteries of quick-firing guns, which showed, in Lord Roberts's words, "how far the German experts were in advance of ourselves in the adoption of the quick-firing field-gun."

These deficiencies in stores had existed in 1895, when England was on the verge of war with France, and in 1898 in the Fashoda crisis. What is more, though the fact is not stated in the evidence taken by the Royal Commission, it is well known that the Navy was in little better plight, and perhaps is still. What the results of this policy must have been had England been involved in hostilities by sea as well as land is stated by Lord Lansdowne himself, who was the person responsible for the deficiencies. He predicted a "disastrous breakdown"; if "other

complications had intervened," he adds, "a catastrophe would have been inevitable."

Such was the result "of attempting to maintain the largest Empire the world has ever seen with armaments and reserves that would be insufficient for a third-class military Power," to quote Sir H. Brackenbury's words. Lord Wolseley adds the significant warning:

"If we go on in the future doing that (failing to maintain our reserves), you will find, if another serious war overtakes us this day five years or this day ten years, we shall have the same thing over and over again."

He dwells upon the great difficulty of extracting in time of peace from any Government

"the money that is necessary for the support of the Army. . . . I would emphasise the national risk and the danger to our country that is entailed upon us by the insufficiency of our home establishments of regular troops . . . and the great paucity, the great lack of our reserves of stores."

Sir H. Brackenbury's report was presented on December 15, 1899, the day of the battle of Colenso. There was no kind of store for the use of the Army in which it did not reveal the gravest deficiencies. Yet these deficiencies had existed for years, and had never before been disclosed in "a reasoned, comprehensive demand," according to Lord Lansdowne. The explanation of this is perhaps to be found in the fact that, even in that time of extreme danger, when it might have been supposed that the consequences of trusting to luck had been sufficiently demonstrated, it was not altogether easy to overcome the resistance of the Treasury. To remedy the shortcomings, a sum of £11,621,870 was required. A committee was appointed, under the presidency of Sir F. Mowatt, to investigate, and it recommended that outlay. The Treasury granted £10,500,000, to be spread over three years. In certain respects the Treasury dissented from the verdict of the experts, and endeavoured to obtain a reduction in the amount required, but its resistance was finally overcome. Still, the fact that there was such resistance at such a moment renders it most improbable that similar demands would

have been favourably entertained had there been no war and no week of disasters.

Such was the state of our material when the war began, and its effect upon the mobilisation and the campaign was unquestionably serious. The Admiralty, which was charged with the work of transporting the troops, had, in the same way, not been permitted to purchase in time horse fittings for the conveyance at sea of the cavalry and artillery. The result was that the cavalry and artillery sailed last; that the horses had no time to get into condition before they were put to the terrible work of war; and that, in order to postpone for a few weeks or months the spending of £13,800, a loss of millions of money and thousands of lives was incurred. For, had the cavalry horses been in good condition, as they might have been if only this simple measure had been taken in time, the war might have ended in March, 1900, at Poplar Grove, with the capture of the two Boer Presidents and the bulk of their army. Of the many blunders of 1899 this was not the least grave and criminal.

The actual mobilisation of the men was effected without any trouble or difficulty, while their transference to the scene of war was accomplished with celerity and admirable method by the naval authorities. But in the Army, as it was mobilised, as it was placed in the field, there were necessarily many defects, for which the above disclosures will have prepared the reader. The soldier's equipment was bad. His ammunition pouches were so designed as to shed ammunition broadcast; the entrenching spade, which a proportion of the force carried, was a wretched little implement, and was so objectionable that the men threw it overboard on the way out or deliberately lost it; the magazine of the rifle was a single-loader and could not be charged with a clip; the valise was an anachronism; the dark great-coats showed up, and drew the enemy's fire; the helmets were heavy, and awkward to shoot with; many of the waggons had not been fitted with brakes owing to the refusal to grant funds in time.

No proper arrangements were made for supplying the wastage of horses, which was certain to occur in such a war. The mounted infantry was a scratch force, and the men could not ride, and fell off their horses. The guns were

deficient in range, and were easily outdistanced by the Boers. Moreover, they were insufficient in number. There was no heavy position artillery with the field force. In most cases the brigades and divisions were strange to their commanders and unaccustomed to work together. In Mr. Brodrick's words at a later date:

"The brigade has been made up by taking a regiment from Malta, and then from Edinburgh; a third from Dublin, and a fourth from Shorncliffe. These four have been dumped down together in South Africa . . . the colonels not knowing each other, and perhaps none of them knowing their brigadier. That is an organisation which cannot be called an organisation at all."

Yet it was an organisation which Mr. Brodrick had often defended in the House of Commons. It says much for the moral qualities of the British Army that the breakdown which resulted was not more complete when this organisation was pitted against the Boers.

The supply of the force mobilised with food was a very serious matter, but fortunately, by some supreme stroke of luck, the War Office lighted upon two admirable officers who were sent out—one, Colonel Richardson, to Cape Colony, and the other Colonel Ward, to Natal—in advance of the troops. There was no preparation and no organisation. In Colonel Richardson's words:

"They (the War Office) simply lumped the supply men out. . . . The War Office threw out some 300 non-commissioned officers and men, and said: 'There they are—there is a number of men; do your best with them.'"

Little need be said on this subject; it was one of the few undoubted successes of the war. The supply officers boldly took very grave responsibilities, and faced disagreeable charges which were afterwards brought against them for paying extravagant prices. Yet those prices were the result of the want of system and forethought, and if they had not been paid the troops must have starved. Every impediment was placed in Colonel Richardson's way

by the Cape Government. It refused to permit the commandeering of supplies and transport at a fair price, while the local authorities who controlled the docks and quays would not give the Army shipping priority. In the words of Sir E. Chichester, the naval officer superintending the transport of troops and supplies, "you might think we were in a foreign port instead of here in a British Colony." Colonel Richardson's task was facilitated by the fact that he was able to seize large quantities of flour on their way to the Free State. But with all his efforts the supplies in hand were far short of the two months' rations which had been promised General Buller by the authorities at home, when that officer arrived.

The secret of the success of the Army Service

Corps may be found in the words "we were given a free hand." It collected an immense transport train, so that the Army was able to move very shortly after it had landed, and it fed the troops admirably throughout the war.

Thus the gallant Army set sail for South Africa—the greatest force which England had ever put into the field. But before it reached its destination the blow had already fallen, battle was already joined, and the Boers had made such use of their opportunities that the position was gravely compromised. It was not to swift and certain victory that this Army set forth, but to two months of indecisive encounter and defeat, while the fate of the Empire hung in the balance, staked by the parties which govern this nation upon a throw of the dice.

### III.—FIRST-FRUITS OF DELAY. THE BOERS STRIKE.

*"It was only the action of the Boers in scattering all their forces . . . which saved us."*

—Major-Gen. Sir J. Ardagh, Director of Military Intelligence.

Meantime, while the British Government and nation were making up their minds what to do, the situation in South Africa grew worse and worse, and deep anxiety possessed all loyalists. In Cape Colony was a handful of troops, two and a half battalions, quite insufficient to hold Kimberley and the important bridge over the Orange River near Belmont, on the Kimberley railway, had the Boers made a determined attack in this quarter. It was decided not to destroy the other two railway bridges over the Orange, because Sir A. Milner was anxious that no provocation of any kind should be offered to the Orange Free State, with which the Cape Government was negotiating, in the hope of preventing the Free State from invading the Cape territories.

The attitude of the Cape Government was such that it was impossible to call out volunteers. Colonel Rimington, who was raising an irregular corps, "was rather afraid of what the Cape Government might think about it." Colonel Baden-Powell was not permitted to recruit at Mafeking, inside the Cape frontier, but had to remain just outside it. At Kimberley Colonel Kekewich had to organise the Town Guard by stealth, and had himself to "sneak" into the place. When guarding the all-important bridge over the Orange, by which Lord Methuen and Lord Roberts afterwards advanced, he was obliged to pretend to paint it in order to invent an excuse for keeping armed men about it. He found that the Cape Police had been rendered untrustworthy by a systematic infusion of the Dutch element. It was in the face of such obstacles that the first preparations were made, almost within sight of the enemy. There was practically no protection whatever for the immense line of frontier, and the whole Colony was open to attack. Even when the Boers threw down the gauntlet and declared war it was impossible to proclaim martial law in the Colony.

At Capetown the defence of the person of the High Commissioner, and of the town and docks, had to be committed to the Navy in the dearth of troops. Admiral Harris was ready. 500 bluejackets were waiting, prepared night and day to land, while the ships were so moored as to be able to sweep with their guns the approaches to Capetown. The stock of coal in the naval yard caused some anxiety; the fleet depended mainly on the Natal mines, and when this supply was cut off the reserves ran dangerously low. But even so the naval authorities were able on occasion to issue coal to the transports.

In Natal, Sir G. White landed early in October. The Indian troops were arriving, or had already arrived, and there were about 13,000 men in the Colony. But here, also, the position was very critical. Sir G. White's Intelligence Department placed the strength of the Boers preparing to invade the country at 27,000, or far more than anyone had expected to take the field for an attack. The general view in the British War Office and the Intelligence Department before the war had been that raids of only 2,000 or 3,000 Boers were to be anticipated, and here were nine times that number threatening the frontier.

The British forces in Natal were not only weak; they were scattered, instead of being concentrated. A small force was at Dundee under Sir P. Symons, to protect the coalfield of Natal and for political reasons. Sir G. White objected strongly to this disposition, but he was pressed both by the Natal Government and by Symons to adhere to it. They represented to him that if the troops were withdrawn from Dundee without striking a blow, the Zulus might rise, while the political effect in the Colony would be bad. Symons, too, was confident that he could beat the Boers; and, somewhat reluctantly, Sir G. White allowed him to have his way. He had been for months on the spot.

while Sir G. White had been sent out in a hurry, without full instructions, or without knowing what General Buller wished him to do. It is shown by the evidence given before the Commission that there is no truth in the allegation that Sir G. White's dispositions were dictated by the Home Government; on the contrary, he was told by the Government that he must not yield to political demands, but must act as military reasons dictated.

The policy of drift pursued at home, the utter absence of plans, instructions, and preparations, gradually led to the concentration of a great quantity of supplies at Ladysmith, and so brought about the famous "entanglement." The supply officers in Natal had but one concern, to provide enough food for the troops on the spot, and all their energy was required to accumulate two months' stores at Ladysmith. The place was badly chosen for a stand. It had to its south a deep river and a most difficult terrain; it lay in a hollow, commanded on every side by high ground. It was in a Dutch district, filled with Boer sympathisers, whose rancour against the British was so great that it was impossible for our officers to survey the country round. Any officer found examining the country was threatened with violence or prosecuted for trespass before magistrates of Dutch sympathies. There were no fortifications, no heavy guns in the place.

General Sir G. White eventually found himself compelled to make his stand in this town, though he well knew its disadvantages. The stores, once deposited there, could not be removed; while the abandonment of Ladysmith would have given the Boers possession of a large accumulation of railway material, and of the junction of the railway lines to the Transvaal and to Harrismith. There was no good position to the south of Ladysmith; or, if there was, it was not known to Sir G. White. It had been suggested that he should hold the Biggarsberg (where the water was not good) or the line of the Tugela, but the line of the Tugela was not defensible against an attack coming from the north.

There are no indications that any reasoned plan existed in October, 1899, for the defence of Natal against a Boer army of 27,000 men. Sir G. White was dumped down in the country with nothing but the schemes of his predecessors,

and these, according to one of the foolish War Office regulations, dealt only with the distribution and utilisation of the British force that was actually on the spot when they were drawn up—that is to say, with the distribution of some 5,000 men. They were quite inapplicable and useless in 1899 at the outbreak of war.

Such being the situation, it was indeed fortunate for England that the Boers on their part had made fatal miscalculations. They expected to be ready to move on October 1, but when the commandoes reached the frontier it was found that the Boer War Office had not provided adequate supplies and transport. Eight days were lost in procuring these necessaries, and then Joubert announced to his Government that he was ready. The Boers were not ignorant of the first principle of war—that diplomacy and preparation must march hand in hand; and their ultimatum was held back till Joubert gave the word. Those days of delay gave time for the Indian troops to arrive, and saved the British Empire.

Even on October 9, when the attack was ready, the Boers had not distributed their force satisfactorily. Instead of bringing the whole of their strength to bear either on Natal or Cape Colony, they had divided it and scattered it in all directions. One large army was attracted to Mafeking by the bait of the stores collected there and Baden-Powell's prodigious clatter; another was drawn to Kimberley by Mr. Rhodes's presence, as by a magnet; other forces were scattered elsewhere along the interminable frontier. A good strategist would have used all his force in one direction, and would have poured 50,000 men upon Natal. Had Botha or De Wet and not Joubert been in command, that would have been their course of action. In that event, complete disaster to British interests must have resulted, and nothing could have saved Natal. There are distinct indications in the evidence that the Boers had received promises of support from some European Power if they reached the sea.

The first events of the war on the Natal side answered the expectations of neither nation. At Dundee, General Symons dealt a sharp blow to the enemy, but his little force lost heavily in dealing it, and he himself fell on the field of glory. The Boers had hoped to carry everything before them, and this check caused some

hesitation on their part, and enabled Sir G. White to get up further reinforcements and stores to Ladysmith. The next event was the victory of Elandslaagte and the swift retreat of the Dundee force to Ladysmith. The Boer generals were highly culpable for permitting it to get away.

These early battles indicated the difficulty of warfare with the Boers, who by their immense mobility escaped when defeated without serious loss; but they were far more creditable to British arms than many of the subsequent actions. Our troops were boldly handled, they attacked with confidence, and the impression they produced was such that, in the opinions of Generals French and Ian Hamilton, the addition of four or five thousand men to Sir G. White's force would have turned the whole tide of war and stemmed the Boer invasion.

In the generalship on our side many mistakes are noted by competent witnesses. The failure to destroy the Natal railway as the British retreated was one such; in the opinion of a witness, Mr. Amery, who had seen the Boer army, the destruction of the line would have prevented the enemy from invading, since their transport was in a very rudimentary condition. Another mistake, in Lord Roberts's belief, was that the British did not concentrate their force to meet the enemy, but fought in weak detachments. Yet here it is only fair to add that Sir G. White found it most difficult and dangerous to go far from Ladysmith. His men moved twelve miles while the Boers moved thirty or forty miles, and were in perpetual risk of being cut off. General French thought that a great chance was missed on two occasions in not pursuing vigorously after Elandslaagte, and in not attacking the enemy with resolution on October 27, when the Boers, in weak force, ventured too near to Ladysmith. He believed that an attack at that juncture would have succeeded, and would have rendered a siege of Ladysmith impossible.

On October 25 Sir G. White had telegraphed to the naval authorities at Capetown for heavy artillery, with the result, as is well known, that naval guns were sent him just in time for the defence of Ladysmith. The Boers had brought their heavy guns from Pretoria into the field, and as they quite outranged the British field guns they produced a bad moral impression on

the British troops. What has not hitherto been known was that immediately on the outbreak of war Admiral Harris had sent to the general commanding at Capetown a list of the guns available in the naval stores, suggesting that these should be drawn upon. Until the Army asked for these guns, by regulation, the Navy could take no action and make no preparations. But the Navy was told, "Very many thanks, but no assistance is required." Hence nothing had been done; yet on the receipt of Sir G. White's appeal the guns were got ready and sent up to the front with a naval brigade.

On October 30 the enemy were closing round Ladysmith in great force, and that day was fought the battle of "Mournful Monday," which marked the ebb of the tide of British good fortune in Natal. Its incidents are well known. Sir G. White's main force was roughly handled by the enemy, and, though it may not have been defeated, was repelled by the Boers. It has been stated that it returned to Ladysmith in confusion and disorder, but this is disputed by such witnesses as Sir G. White, General Hunter, and General French. The 5th Lancers, however, did "break away" from the rest of the troops while attempting to outflank the enemy, and "wandered about in rather an aimless way." But there was nothing whatever in the nature of a stampede or rout, nor were the troops demoralised.

The facts as to Nicholson's Nek are given in the evidence, and as they have never been published without reticence they are of deep interest, the more so as this was the first of the many regrettable incidents of the war. On the night before the battle Sir G. White sent out a small force to the Nek, seven miles away, in order to secure a pass leading into open ground, and so to facilitate the pursuit of the Boers, if they were beaten in the battle. He was informed that there were strong positions on the way to this pass, which could be held by the column if it failed to reach the defile. The enemy, however, appear to have obtained information as to the British plan, and arranged to meet it. The mules with the guns of the force were stampeded, and the detachment surrounded and attacked, the attack beginning about 7 a.m. The start of the force had been delayed by difficulty in obtaining ammunition.

All the morning the fight continued. About

twelve, after two messages had been sent back to Ladysmith to inform the British staff of the position, a heliographic order was received directing the detachment to retire on Ladysmith. This was out of the question. About an hour later the white flag was raised by Captain Duncan, who, with a few men, was in a small, ruined enclosure. A terrible fire had been directed upon this enclosure, and all the men in it, except two or three, were killed or wounded. In acting thus Captain Duncan had the support of Captain Fyffe, who was severely wounded. The surrender was only meant to apply to his own little detachment. But when the white flag went up the Boers crowded round, under the evident belief that the fighting was over. Major Humphery, who was near at hand, sent back a message to Colonel Carleton, who was in command, stating that the white flag had been raised and asking for orders meantime directing his men to cease fire. He had only ammunition for another ten minutes' shooting.

Colonel Carleton states that he was approached by an officer with a white flag, who told him that the flag had been raised by some of the British. As the men in front had already ceased firing, and the Boers were mixed up with them, he ordered the "Cease fire!" and surrendered. Captain Duncan was blamed by the court of inquiry, but by Lord Roberts was held not to have been guilty of misconduct. Various witnesses stated that the force was surrounded, that its ammunition was running low, and that the defence could not have been protracted for much more than half an hour; though Colonel Carleton on the field of battle expressed his belief that "we could have held the place for forty-eight hours if the white flag had not been put up without authority." And the Staff Officer with the force declared that the losses were not very heavy, thereby apparently suggesting that the surrender was discreditable.

After the battle and the loss of 997 officers and men taken prisoners, it was clear that Ladysmith would have to stand a siege. A retreat at this juncture would have been almost impossible, nor was there any point to which to fall back. On November 1 General Buller, who had reached South Africa, telegraphed to Sir G. White:

"Can you not entrench and await events, if not at Ladysmith, then behind Tugela at Colenso?"

In view of General Buller's subsequent action this telegram is of great importance. General White replied that he intended to hold on to Ladysmith, and General Buller sanctioned this line of conduct:

"I agree that you do best to remain at Ladysmith, though Colenso and line of the Tugela look tempting."

General White was pressed to send his cavalry out of Ladysmith, but did not do so, as he states that he needed mounted men to enable him to reinforce rapidly threatened points of the great perimeter which he had to hold. But he detached the Dublin Fusiliers to Colenso, whence they were speedily compelled to retire. There was extreme alarm in Natal, which was now exposed to attack by the Boer forces, and in great haste the naval authorities sent the "Terrible" round to Durban to assist in the defence of the place, and to embark, if necessary, the archives and Government of the Colony.

At home the news of Nicholson's Nek produced consternation, but did not even now awaken Lord Lansdowne and the Defence Committee to the full gravity of the position. At Lord Wolseley's instance, three fresh battalions and a battery were mobilised and ordered out immediately; but an appeal of his to Lord Lansdowne on November 1, to be allowed to mobilise a fresh brigade of cavalry, twelve battalions of infantry, and five batteries of artillery, and to call out twelve further battalions of Militia (in addition to thirty-eight which had been embodied at the date of the mobilisation of the Army Corps), was not sanctioned, though Lord Wolseley thought such measures necessary in view of the "present state of affairs in South Africa" and of "our military weakness at home," and held it desirable to "strengthen our military position at home in the face of the world."

On November 2 he pressed for the mobilisation of an additional Army Corps, and a cavalry brigade, increasing his demands as the danger of the situation became apparent to his trained judgment. He already foresaw what was about

to happen. His proposals were such as were suited to the emergency, and had action been taken upon them even now the mishaps might have been repaired before they became disasters. On November 4 he wrote:

"I think we should now look ahead and prepare for all probable . . . eventualities. Amongst the probable eventualities there comes first the mobilisation of the Third Army Corps."

But these proposals were too comprehensive and bold for Lord Lansdowne. Lord Wolseley was only permitted to mobilise one division of infantry (there are three divisions in an Army Corps), whereas he had asked for two whole Army Corps. Even this division (the 5th) was not to be sent out till General Buller asked for it. On being asked, General Buller at first declined it, and then, some days later, accepted it. When its mobilisation began, four weeks after the declaration of war, it was found that there was neither clothing nor saddlery for its mounted infantry.

Undaunted, Lord Wolseley returned to the charge on November 12, and advised that the 6th division should be forthwith mobilised as a reserve, now that the 5th would be under orders for South Africa. He concluded his minute with an appeal for the Second Army Corps.

"We want the Second Army Corps mobilised, and I strongly urge that this be done, for less will not meet the military needs of our present situation. As we can now easily mobilise this Army Corps, to refrain from doing so would be, with our eyes open, to run a preventible risk. I need not dwell on the dangerous unwisdom of such a course.

"Moreover, the moral effect of mobilising the whole Army Corps, instead of one division merely, will be considerable. We shall probably have to do so in the end, and it is far better in every way to do so now.

"I urge, therefore, very strongly that the mobilisation of the Second Army Corps be ordered without delay."

He might as well have appealed to a stone

wall. No notice appears to have been taken of these representations, or of the alarming telegrams which were now arriving from General Buller in South Africa, to the effect that he regarded the situation as one of "extreme gravity," and could not open his campaign till January, though there could not at this point have been any question of political objections to the course which Lord Wolseley recommended. This torpor at a critical moment was far less excusable than even the initial error of refusing to mobilise the First Army Corps in time.

Lord Wolseley might have saved himself the trouble of pointing out the risk which General Buller would run if he advanced into the Free State with insufficient force—and that advance would have to be made with insufficient force, since it was already known that at least one division would be needed to extricate Sir G. White from the entanglement in Natal.

"Without the troops he must thus detach," wrote Lord Wolseley in a minute of November 12, "I doubt if Sir R. Buller will be strong enough to advance from Cape-town.

"It is a self-evident principle in war to run no risk that can possibly be avoided. We should not risk an advance with a force that may prove insufficient."

As Lord Lansdowne had already risked Sir G. White's army in Natal on a throw of the dice, so now he was ready to risk General Buller's army in the Free State, though the whole nation was urging that troops should be poured into South Africa and that war should be waged with all the country's strength. As the inaction before September 29 had paved the way for Nicholson's Nek and Magersfontein and Colenso, so the inaction of November 4 to 12 paved the way for Spion Kop and the bloody sacrifice of the week of battles on the Tugela.

The scene shifts to Cape Colony, where the remissness of the politician was producing its natural effect. On landing at Cape Town, General Buller had to face the fact that his whole plan of campaign had collapsed. A very few hours showed him that the plan of advancing through the Free State was impracticable under existing conditions. It was known to Lord Roberts, though not apparently to General Buller, that the country through which he would

have had to move was one of extreme difficulty, so that his chances of success in his enterprise with a field force of 40,000 men would have been exceedingly doubtful in any case.

But now it was clear that troops must be sent to Natal if the supreme calamity of the enemy reaching the sea and receiving assistance from the unnamed European Power was to be averted. Yet, having reached this decision—to reinforce Natal—he did not decide to use his whole force in crushing the enemy in Natal. He determined to send to that colony three brigades; with another brigade to attempt an advance to Kimberley—where Mr. Rhodes was calling anxiously for relief—and to place weak forces under Generals French (who had been summoned from Ladysmith before it was invested) and General Gatacre on the defensive in Cape Colony.

Thus he would be weak at every point, and he followed the example of the Boers by disseminating his force. Yet the blame for the

situation in which he found himself does not rest with him.

“Had the two Colonies,” he writes, “been garrisoned according to a systematic scheme of defence, as I recommended in July, 1899, no such operations would have been necessary. I need hardly add that if the enemy had chosen to press their advantages and to advance boldly both in Cape Colony and Natal . . . it would have been extremely difficult for me to have prevented them, from sheer lack of troops.”

On November 22 he embarked for Natal, where the Boers were pressing south, and where the situation was one of the extremest danger. He had been blamed for this action, but it is preposterous to suggest that a wise general could have thought of perambulating the Free State with his Army Corps while the enemy were pressing the siege of Ladysmith and threatening the capital of Natal.

#### IV.—THE SAFETY OF LADYSMITH. THE SIEGE CORRESPONDENCE.

*"No one can say—no one can predict, what the consequences will be of the war which has set South Africa in flames during the last few weeks. . . . Do we again stand before a fresh partition of the world, such as occurred a hundred years ago?"*

—Count Buelow, December, 1899.

The eyes of the whole world were now turned upon Ladysmith, where, with a force of some 10,000 effectives, Sir G. White was surrounded by a Boer army of from 20,000 to 30,000 men, and steadily bombarded by long-range guns. In South Africa the evidence of witnesses before the Commission shows that the fall of Ladysmith was to be the accepted sign of the general rising and the end of the Empire. Outside South Africa, as the quotation at the head of this chapter indicates, others were waiting and asking whether the great catastrophe of the loss of the United States was to be repeated by England in the case of her South African dominion.

Before his departure from Cape Town for Natal General Buller had concluded that for South African war "unmounted men" were not always to be preferred. On November 11 he telegraphed home to the War Office, which was even at this moment haggling with Colonel Thorneycroft as to whether his irregulars were to be paid 5s. a day or at the British rate "at present my great want is mounted forces, of which I am raising as many as possible." It has always been a cause of surprise that so few mounted men relatively were included in the Army Corps, for though the proportion of mounted troops was rather above the normal British allowance, it was below that of foreign armies for European warfare, and wholly inadequate for a war against a mounted enemy. Sir R. Buller has explained that he hoped to organise a force of 10,000 British refugees from the Transvaal when he reached South Africa, and that these men mounted would be all that were required. He says that he did not mention this idea to Lord Lansdowne, because he anticipated difficulties being raised as to the rate of pay, and that he calculated upon having enough saddlery. But it must be remarked

that he took out no special service officers for this force; that he prepared no instructions or plan by which it was to be raised, and that there is no sign of such a project in documents before November 11, when it came late. Here is another instance of the normal British want of preparation and forethought, since the organisation of the irregular forces would have been greatly simplified had a careful scheme been available in early October. Four years later there is still no scheme.

On reaching Natal General Buller found that the Boers, after their raid southward through Natal, were just withdrawing north, and that the British forces were strung out along the Natal railway as far as Estcourt. The British Army concentrated, and opened up signalling communication with Sir G. White, who heliographed on November 30 that he had seventy days' provisions, and could defend Ladysmith for that time, that the enemy learnt all his plans, and that the directions in which he could give most assistance to a relieving force would be towards Onderbroek (near Colenso) or Springfield (in the Potgieter's Drift direction). He added that he was completely invested, and was reserving himself for "one or two big efforts to co-operate with relief force. It will be the greatest possible help to Ladysmith if relief force maintains closest possible touch with enemy." General Buller signalled that he would speedily remove to the relief, and would communicate with General White "in several cipher messages before I advance."

On December 7 General Buller informed Sir G. White that he would advance by Potgieter's Drift (Springfield), starting on December 12, and that he would take five days to Ladysmith. General White asked whether the crossing of the drift would be forced on December 15, and added that, if so, he would move

out and attack the enemy that same day. He went on: "As time is all-important factor in co-operation, you will, I am sure, inform me of any change." He received a time-table of the proposed movement, but was instructed not to attack till he knew where General Buller was.

On the 13th General Buller telegraphed that he had been forced to change his plans, and was coming through Colenso. Sir G. White was informed on the 13th that the actual date of attack would probably be the 17th. Then there was silence. A gap of three days follows in the heliograms, and in the interval Colenso was fought and lost.

So far these points appear: Sir G. White was eager to co-operate, and begged for precise information as to time in order to be able to co-operate with effect. On the other hand General Buller was vague in his information, and did not send the "several cipher messages" which he promised as the prelude of his attack.

None the less a force was organised in Ladysmith, and all preparation made to assist General Buller on the 17th. On the 15th the sound of firing was heard, but there was nothing to show that it was more than the preliminary bombardment of the Colenso position, which had begun on the 13th. The Ladysmith force did not move; no signals called it up. Yet that day Colenso was lost.

On the eve of the battle of Colenso General Buller received from Cape Colony the most disconcerting intelligence. From General Gatacre he heard of the repulse at Stormberg; from Lord Methuen of the defeat at Magersfontein. The position was thus one of extreme gravity, and a certain note of irritation against General White, whose "entanglement" had, as he conceived, been the cause of these reverses, and whom he appears to have secretly blamed for want of energy and enterprise, henceforth shows itself in all his communications. On December 13 he decided that he could not risk a long flank march across the enemy's front to Potgieter's Drift, and determined "to try to force the direct road to Ladysmith." He also wrote to Lord Lansdowne this cheerful message, which must have awakened the Secretary of State for War from his normal condition of nonchalance:

"It will be better to lose Ladysmith altogether than to throw open Natal to the enemy."

This idea of "losing Ladysmith altogether" recurs at various points in the correspondence which we shall presently have to examine. It meant, be it observed, not only losing Ladysmith, but handing over to the enemy 10,000 British troops, forty guns, and the ex-Commander-in-Chief in India. It meant the catastrophe for which the world was looking. General Buller added that he felt it to be his first duty not to extricate these 10,000 British troops, but "to keep Southern Natal clear of the enemy." Yet the relief of Ladysmith would have been far the most effectual way of effecting that object.

The plan for the battle of Colenso was of the most primitive description, as is well known—a frontal attack on the Boer position. According to General Buller the failure of the plan was due to two mistakes made by subordinates. Here we are upon controversial ground, and the statements of each side must be given. It may be remarked parenthetically that General Buller is a party to no less than five distinct controversies—with General Sir G. White, with General Sir C. Warren, with General Coke, with General Hart, and with Colonel Long.

According to General Buller, Colonel Long was the principal cause of the defeat. He advanced in the battle with two batteries of artillery "beyond the allotted position." General Buller states that he noted Colonel Long "had come into action and was firing so rapidly as to satisfy me at once that he was too close to the enemy." General Buller despatched an officer to ascertain whether the batteries were suffering from the enemy's fire, and, if so, to order them to withdraw, but received news from this messenger that the guns "were all right." Shortly after, the guns ceased fire. Guessing something was wrong, General Buller hurried to them, meeting on the way two officers who had been with Colonel Long, and who reported that the guns had been abandoned with enormous loss. General Buller sent a brigade forward under General Hildyard to their support, and made an effort to get the guns away, in which several valuable lives were lost, including that of Lord Roberts's only son.

After a brief consultation with General Clery, it was decided that ten of the guns must be abandoned, two only having been saved.

When this decision was reached, the whole Army was ordered to retreat. There was no attempt to wait till nightfall and then remove the batteries, though there was a donga near the guns in which cover was to be obtained. The reason for the retreat of the Army and the abandonment of these weapons, which were essential to the success of the British Army, and which, in Boer hands, afterwards caused by far the greater part of the loss on Spion Kop, was that General Buller was "much impressed by the exhaustion" of his men—"they were very ready to fight, but they went to sleep." He was afraid of a "rough and tumble" with the Boers on the banks of the Tugela in the darkness, in which he "fully believed" that his men would be worsted, though elsewhere the British troops made night attacks in order to close with their enemy. General Buller adds that General Clery and all the officers who were with him agreed that it was impossible "to have kept near enough to the guns . . . within range . . . in order to get the guns back." From the donga, he states, the guns were out of sight.

The statement of Colonel Long traverses General Buller's evidence at almost every point. In the first place Colonel Long insists that he took up substantially the position which he was ordered by General Buller to take; he was a little closer to the enemy than was intended, but in a position "better and less dangerous than I could have got further back . . . nearly in line with the 6th Brigade." The target of his fire had been pointed out to him by General Buller as "entrenched positions on three kopjes behind Fort Wylie." No information was given to him that—as was actually the case—Fort Wylie was held by the enemy. The distance of his guns from the kopjes at which he opened fire was 1,700 yards, and 1,250 from Fort Wylie. There were no Boers, as has been often said, on the bank of the river close to the artillery, and in this statement Colonel Long is supported by General Hildyard. It was the fire of Fort Wylie which put his guns out of action. The batteries at first got the Boer fire under, compelling the enemy to disclose their position. Colonel Long thought that the river could have

been crossed under the cover of this bombardment. But then his ammunition ran short, and till supplies could be brought up the gunners were withdrawn to the donga.

The ammunition, according to Colonel Long was sent back by General Buller himself while on its way to the batteries. Only 12 officers and men were killed, though there were many wounded, but there were enough men left to give four to each gun. He was in this position when the British Army retreated and left him. "I felt sure," he adds, "that at nightfall the guns would be got away. . . . The idea of abandoning the guns never entered my head, nor did it occur to any of the battery officers." Otherwise, the guns would have been disabled. "I consider," he states, in words of extreme gravity, "the guns were deserted of support." He contradicts explicitly an assertion of General Buller's dispatch describing the battle, that he (Colonel Long) had been ordered to "come into action *with the naval guns only*, as the position was not within effective range for his field-guns." "I am quite certain," he concludes, "that such was not the intention of the general officer commanding."

The second controversy has reference to General Hart, who commanded the 5th Brigade. General Buller states:

"As the guns were getting into position, I noticed that the 5th Brigade were advancing beyond the position that I had allotted to them, and sent at once to stop them. My messenger was delayed by bad ground, and the brigade continuing to advance, came under fire. Very shortly afterwards they received from me an order by a second messenger to withdraw at once out of range."

According to General Hart he was given by General Buller a sketch-map, on which was shown the objective—a ford at an angle in a loop of the river, trending towards the enemy. A Kaffir guide was sent him, to lead him to this point, and he was told that the Kaffir was to be thoroughly trusted. But when the point where the ford should have been was reached, there was no ford, whereupon the Kaffir declared that the crossing was at the head of the loop. Towards this point the brigade advanced under heavy fire, and was near it when a Staff

officer rode up to say that General Buller saw that the brigade could not force a crossing, and was to retire. There was no suggestion that the brigade had advanced beyond the proper point.

It has often been asked why General Buller did not attack Hlangwane, which dominates the Colenso position, and by capturing which he eventually captured that position. He himself states that bush fighting would have been necessary to reach it, and his troops were too raw for such fighting. General Barton, however, asserts in his evidence, "I have reason to believe that Buller thought Hlangwane was not held by the Boers, or I think he would have made other dispositions for its capture." General Barton, who commanded a brigade at Colenso, adds the interesting information that when he was ordered to retreat he had "rendered the guns secure against capture," though it was not possible to withdraw them at that moment. It would appear, then, that he was not one of those officers who held that their retirement was a "physical impossibility."

In a curious passage of his evidence General Buller contends that there was really no battle of Colenso.

"I made no attack. I stopped at the very earliest moment in the morning every general from moving, and no attack was made on Colenso at all on the 15th of December."

What happened was a "serious reverse"—that 1,000 men and ten guns were lost. But there was no attack, only a hasty retirement when the Boers showed their strength. "The moment I failed to get in on the run I was beat," General Buller telegraphed home to Lord Lansdowne. In other words, he expected the Boers to run at the mere menace of his advance, and, as they did not, abandoned his attempt to carry the position. Possibly he was wise in this, though the temper which fears risk is not the temper which succeeds in war. As it was planned, the general agreement among Continental critics is that the attack could never have succeeded.

In one of his telegrams, sent after the battle, General Buller states:

"I am frightened by the utter collapse of my infantry. . . . On my left I

lost nearly 300 missing, and on my right should have lost as many more, but I and the staff rode down into the dongas and forced the men to get up and go home. The men were carrying nothing but ammunition . . . they simply sat down, dazed with the heat."

The troops were suffering from the artificial thirst which is produced by campaigning in a hot country on tinned food, just after landing from ships—a thirst which was one of the causes of the loss of Spion Kop.

Other remarkable telegrams from General Buller followed this battle. A telegram to Lord Lansdowne said:

"I do not consider that I am strong enough to relieve Ladysmith. . . . I consider that I ought to let Ladysmith go, and to occupy good position for the defence of South Natal, and so let time help us. But I feel I ought to consult you on such a step. . . . I now feel that I cannot say that with my available force I can relieve Ladysmith, and I suggest that for me to occupy a defensive position, and fight it out in a country better suited to our tactics, is the best thing that I can do."

This telegram, taken in conjunction with those which follow, suggested to the authorities at home that the abandonment of Ladysmith was at least contemplated by General Buller, though he himself declares that this was not its real meaning. Lord Lansdowne replied:

"The abandonment of White's force, and its consequent surrender, is regarded by the Government as a national disaster of the greatest magnitude. We would urge you to devise another attempt to carry out its relief."

What must have been the feelings of the minister when he remembered that, through his fault, the reinforcements which Lord Wolseley would have hurried out were still days and weeks distant from the scene of action!

To Sir G. White General Buller sent the famous flashlight message, which read as follows:

"16 December.—I tried Colenso yesterday, but failed. The enemy is too strong

for my force except with siege operations, and these will take one full month to prepare. Can you last so long? [If not, how many days can you give me in which to take up defensive position? After which] I suggest you firing away as much ammunition as you can, and making best terms you can. I can remain here if you have alternative suggestion, but unaided I cannot break in. I find my infantry cannot fight more than ten miles from camp, and then only if water can be got, and it is scarce here."

Either that day or on the 17th General Buller signalled that the message had been incorrectly sent, and was to be altered as follows: The passage in brackets was to be struck out, and "How many days can you hold out?" substituted; while at the end was added: "Whatever happens, recollect to burn your cipher, decipher and code books, and all deciphered messages."

On the 17th he signalled another message, in which occurred the phrase, "I can never get to Onderbroek." Onderbroek was the next position to Colenso. Two different accounts of the motives which led him to send the flashlight message have been given by General Buller, the first on October 10, 1901, at a volunteer luncheon, in which he said:

"I knew that enteric fever was endemic, and was likely to become endemic in the Tugela valley at that time. I believed also that the Boers were engaged in putting dead horses into the water which the garrison was obliged to drink. I knew that the garrison would have trouble, and great trouble, with the sick. . . . I thought at the time I had officially in writing that the garrison could not be fed beyond the end of the year. I was wrong; but at the time I thought it and believed it. The end of the year was fifteen days off."

Then, he says, he read through his telegram to Sir G. White, and said to himself:

"It is a cruel thing to send a telegram like that to a fellow like that. He will sit still to the end. What about his sick? . . . . I was in command in Natal, and

it was my duty to give my subordinate some assistance, some lead, something that, in the event of his determining to surrender, he would be able to produce and say, 'Well, Sir Redvers Buller agreed.' Therefore I spatchcocked into the middle of the telegram a sentence in which I suggested that it would be necessary to surrender the garrison. . . . I put in the sentence in order that if he found he was obliged to surrender it would be some sort of cover for him."

This explanation is that General Buller wished to save the sick in the garrison from the privations of a long siege by an early surrender of the garrison, and that he intended to "cover" Sir G. White in surrendering and to "give him a lead" towards surrender. Before the Royal Commission General Buller gave another and absolutely different explanation of his message:

"I thought that the most effective lever I could employ to move him would be the warning that unless he could offer me active assistance he might probably have to surrender. . . . I wanted him to retire from Ladysmith. . . . The truth is, that I did not want to order him out as long as he said he could not come. But if he had given me the slightest chance—there were at that moment two or three, I think, perhaps risky operations that I would willingly have undertaken to help him out. But he gave me no chance of helping him out; he met everything with a non-possumus."

There was no sign of "covering" Sir G. White in these criticisms. Nor are they justified by the correspondence of the generals. General White had repeatedly expressed his full readiness to co-operate, had made preparations with that object, and had not moved on the 15th because he had not been informed by General Buller that the attack was to be made next day. To blame him for giving no assistance under such circumstances was at least ungenerous. Nor does it much better the story to find that General Buller expected to cross the Tugela on the 15th, and to fight a second pitched battle on the 17th, where White was to join hands with

him. General White had been ready, as we have seen, to co-operate in the crossing of the Tugela at Potgieter's Drift under the earlier plan, and under very similar conditions. He could have equally well assisted at Colenso by a diversion; and who shall say what the issue might have been had the Boers been assailed in front and rear by two determined armies? General Buller further added that if he had been in General White's place :

"I could have come out (of Ladysmith) any morning or evening that I wished to."

And this in face of a force which was far more mobile, which was mounted, which was victorious, which was superior in numbers, according to his own estimate, by two or three to one.

Sir G. White's account of his feelings on the receipt of this message is given in his evidence. He states that he thought the Boers must have obtained possession of the British cipher, as it was to him "incredible that such a telegram could have emanated from the general"; his final impression was that he was being "left in the lurch" by General Buller. As for making terms, "I said I would certainly not do it. I preferred to try to get some survivors through, and to give others the chance of going elsewhere than to Pretoria." His heliograms to his commanding officer were full of encouragement and hope, with a note of noble remonstrance :

"Abandonment of this garrison seems to me most disastrous alternative on public grounds. Enemy will be doubly strong on Tugela if Ladysmith falls. I can only suggest getting every available reinforcement in men and guns and attacking again in full force as early as possible. Meantime, I will do all I can to maintain an active defence, and will co-operate with you to the extent of my power if you will advance again."

This seems to suggest Sir G. White did not need to be stirred to move, and was ready to co-operate.

A plan which, according to his own words, seems to have hovered in General Buller's mind at this juncture was to jump at once into the train, depart to Kimberley, make a diversion, relieve Kimberley, and then come back to Natal.

This idea, however, he speedily abandoned, and looked about for reinforcements for Natal. The only available force was the 5th Division. He had originally intended the 5th Division for work in the midlands of Cape Colony, and it had been ordered thither before Colenso, while its commander, General Sir C. Warren, had been directed by Lord Wolseley to take Lord Methuen's place, a proposal against which General Buller successfully protested, and with good reason. In the same way he declined to allow General Gatacre to be superseded. For some cause, or other, he imagined that the Government wished to keep the 5th Division from him and from the Natal side, a wish of which no trace can be found in documents; but finding that he was wrong, he finally ordered General Sir C. Warren and the division round to Natal, just as they were on their way to attempt the relief of Kimberley.

The Battle of Colenso awoke the Government for a time from its torpor, and heavy reinforcements were ordered to South Africa. Lord Roberts was appointed to supreme command; the 6th Division was already mobilised and embarking; the 7th was now called out, and steps were at last taken to enlist all who could shoot and ride among the South African loyalists.

Turning from Natal to Cape Colony, the explanation of the mishaps which had befallen General Buller's division commanders is indicated in the evidence given before the Commission. Lord Methuen says :

"I gathered from Sir R. Buller that I had no reason for anticipating a determined resistance from the enemy in any very large numbers between Orange River and Kimberley. . . . My movements were to be made with as great celerity as possible, because Kimberley seemed to be in great straits, according to Mr. Rhodes."

General Buller told the Commission that he was given to understand by Mr. Rhodes that the Boer force besieging the town was only 2,000 strong. In his advance, Lord Methuen found that the mounted enemy in his front were able to alter their position with the utmost speed, and thereby to change a flank attack into a frontal assault. That is the explanation of his frontal attacks, and it is also in part the explanation of Colenso. The hopelessness of waging warfare

upon an army of mounted rifles with unmounted men was felt at every turn in the field by the British generals. So it was that at Magersfontein, Lord Methuen could not move round the enemy's flank owing to the danger of being cut off from his base.

General Gatacre states that he attacked at Stormberg, though his force was small, because he was repeatedly asked by his Commander-in-Chief whether "it would not be good business to make a night attack on Stormberg," and

because, under such circumstances, a hint seemed to him equivalent to a command. In the evidence taken by the Court of Inquiry which sat upon the troops captured in this unfortunate affair, it was stated that when the retreat was ordered, there was nothing to prevent our troops advancing up the hill where the Boers were in position. But the men were worn out, and the British guns shelled them by accident, thus causing the failure of the attack.

## V.—REORGANISATION IN THE FACE OF THE ENEMY.

*"I am satisfied that at the beginning 10,000 efficient infantry would have been equal to 20,000 or 30,000 of the infantry we commenced with, and 1,000 efficient cavalry would have been equal to 5,000 of those we had with us."*

*—Lieut.-Gen. Sir C. Warren.*

On the arrival of the 5th Division in Natal, a fresh attempt was made to relieve Ladysmith, moving this time by Potgieter's Drift. Sir G. White's force was now much worn and greatly reduced in numbers both by sickness and by the fierce fighting which had occurred on January 6, in the Boer assault on Ladysmith, and General White signalled to General Buller that he would prefer not to call upon his men to co-operate in a fresh attempt to force the crossing of the Tugela. The Ladysmith garrison was feeling the effect of insufficient rations. 230 officers had been lost through death, capture, wounds, or sickness, and in mid-January there were 2,400 men in hospital.

As it was vital to maintain the pressure upon the Boers, and to prevent their concentrating their efforts for another attack on Ladysmith, General Buller advanced once more in January, and fought the long series of actions which culminated in the reverse of Spion Kop. General Warren was in charge of these operations, under the supervision of General Buller, and there was great friction between them, as was disclosed when the Spion Kop despatches were given to the world in 1900. Much fresh light is shed upon these operations in the evidence submitted to the Commission. Thus, it is stated clearly by Sir C. Warren that the object was not, as has usually been supposed, to pass the cavalry and mounted infantry round the Boer right—that he regarded as a hopeless enterprise, as the cavalry were not then fit or strong enough for such an operation—but slowly to wear down the Boer strength by steady, persistent attacks and by heavy artillery fire. It was impossible to take the Boers by surprise, as their mounted men could move in three hours from Colenso at one end of their position to Acton Homes at the other.

In his attacks General Warren says that he received no support from demonstrations by

General Barton at Colenso or by General White at Ladysmith, which demonstrations only Buller could have ordered. He complains, too, that he was not given the use of long-range guns and of the balloon. From the first General Buller, according to his statements made afterwards, appears to have doubted General Warren's success, and to have contemplated the retirement which he afterwards ordered.

When the night attack on Spion Kop was determined there was further friction. General Buller appointed General Woodgate to command the assaulting party, though Warren had wished to select General Coke, because of Coke's greater knowledge of the art of entrenchment. On the summit being taken the British suffered most severely from the artillery fire of the Boers, and the heaviest losses are now believed to have been inflicted by the British guns which the enemy had captured at Colenso. As the morning advanced General Coke was sent up to assume command of the position, with orders from Sir C. Warren, who had been forbidden by General Buller to go up himself, to "hold the position at all costs; mind, no surrender."

In the actual fighting the troops are stated by all the witnesses to have showed great gallantry, though in one irregular regiment, the Imperial Light Infantry, which lost very heavily, a certain number of men did not go to the front. Yet that was not altogether to be wondered at in an untrained force, which that day received its terrible baptism of fire. The trenches made on the mountain were made according to the drill-book regulations, but those regulations proved lamentably defective. They provided for trenches 5ft. wide and 1½ft. deep, whereas it was found that trenches 2ft. wide and 2½ft. deep were needed for protection against the Boer fire. Towards the evening of the battle the "position was extremely critical," and General Coke was summoned by General

Warren to descend and consult with him, an order which was in part the cause of the loss of the hill. On descending in the darkness he failed to find General Warren's bivouac till 2 a.m., by which time Colonel Thorneycroft, who had been placed in command by General Buller, had on his own judgment abandoned the mountain.

As there were reports to the effect that the Boers were retreating, and as an officer who climbed the mountain after the British had retired found the Boer position also evacuated, General Warren saw General Buller and pressed him to re-occupy it; but he states that General Buller "could think of nothing but retirement from our positions so well gained." All chance of retrieving the mistake was thus lost. It is now known that the Boers suffered severely, and were on the point of retreat.

On learning of this repulse Sir G. White appears to have feared that General Buller would never succeed in relieving Ladysmith, and signalled that he put it to "you (General Buller) and the Government whether I ought not to abandon Ladysmith and try to join you," proposing that General Buller should co-operate and support him in his sortie. He went on, in words of deep interest:

"The fall of Ladysmith would have a terrible effect, especially in India. I am deeply impressed with the gravity of the situation, and trust you will repeat this to the highest authorities. . . . I would hold on to the last here if political considerations demand it, or if there is a prospect of sufficient reinforcement to relieve us."

The War Office at home favoured General White's making a desperate attempt to break out; but Lord Roberts's calm and trained judgment intervened. "It would be a desperate venture," he telegraphed, "and it would be a severe blow to our prestige should he abandon the position he has so long defended, and the sick and wounded." Therefore, the order was given—and in this order General Buller seemingly concurred—that he should not break out. Further, Lord Roberts informed Sir G. White, in words of the warmest praise and congratulation, that every effort would be made to take the pressure off Ladysmith. He hoped the

place would be relieved by the end of February, and this forecast he exactly fulfilled.

So much is necessary to understand the immense danger of the position into which the neglect of preparation at home, not only before the beginning of the war, but also in the first few weeks of war, had brought the Empire. Twice beaten off, General Buller did not relax his pressure on the enemy in front of Ladysmith, and attacked at Vaal Krantz without success. But, though he had been informed by Lord Roberts that "Ladysmith must be relieved," he retreated once more, and sent a message to Lord Roberts conceived in these terms:

"February 9, 1900.—It is right you should know that in my opinion the fate of Ladysmith is only a question of days, unless I am very considerably reinforced. . . . The enemy . . . do in six hours and seven miles what takes me three days and twenty-six miles. When I said that I should try and save Ladysmith . . . the 6th and 7th divisions were likely to come, and were expected to be at my disposal; but, two days after, you were appointed, and directed that all troops arriving after that date were to be kept at the Cape."

At the same time he offered to make way for anyone who could do better. It was, however, the fact that he had already declined reinforcements on the ground of difficulties of supply.

To understand the extent of Lord Roberts's embarrassment at this request we must remember that at this juncture he was making ready for his move into the Free State, and that appeals for troops were reaching him from all sources. Sir A. Milner, that loyal and cool administrator, was drawing his attention to the grave risk of a great Dutch rising in Cape Colony in a document which has never before seen the light:

"The danger of rebellion increases. . . . It has been freely stated over and over again . . . that the Colonial rebels would wait till the British troops were well to the front, and then attempt to cut them off by a general rising directed against the line of communications. . . . We shall from now to the end of the campaign be running a grave and wholly unnecessary risk, and one which

will increase in gravity with each forward step our Army takes beyond the Orange River."—(Memorandum of February 4, 1900.)

Reading these messages, the nation will understand the courage, the decision, the coolness of the leader who turned neither to right nor to left, but steadfastly pursued his plan, seeing clearly that at this hour success could be most swiftly attained by the destruction of the Boer forces in the Free State. It was too late to move strong reinforcements to General Buller. The best means of assisting that officer was to press vigorously the campaign in the Free State. But the crisis was one in which any miscalculation would have meant the loss of South Africa. Nor can Lord Roberts have been unaware that at this moment a large Russian force was concentrating on the Afghan frontier awaiting results, or that the British Navy was being denuded of ammunition to supply the Army.

The forward movement in Cape Colony was delayed by the necessity of reorganising the transport in the face of the enemy. On mobilisation, the transport had been scattered between the various units in equal proportion, with the result that there was no large transport corps available for extended movements. But to defeat the Boers it was vital to leave the railways with a large force, and food and ammunition could only be supplied to the men making this movement by concentrating the transport. The reorganisation was effected by Lord Kitchener, under Lord Roberts's direction, and is justly regarded as a miracle of energy. But, devised at the eleventh hour, the new organisation was necessarily a defective one; it was at best an improvisation for an emergency that might have been better met had greater forethought been displayed before the war, and had a proper scheme been worked out.

At the same time, maps had to be obtained. By a fortunate accident, a large consignment of Jeppe's maps of the Transvaal reached Cape Town at this date. They were intended for the Boers, but they were promptly seized by the British. Maps of the Free State were hurriedly put together from such material as existed, and so the Army was equipped for its march to Bloemfontein. Thus the defective prepara-

tions of the Intelligence Department, due to want of funds, were repaired at the last minute.

On the eve of his advance into the Free State, Lord Roberts instructed General Buller to remain on the defensive till it was seen whether the operations in the Free State produced a weakening in the Boer hold on Natal. He also called for a report from General Warren, as to whether he concurred with General Buller in the belief that General Buller's force was too weak to relieve Ladysmith. It appeared that General Warren agreed that there was little chance of relieving Ladysmith till the advance in the Free State produced some effect, but that he was for continued worrying of the Boers and for a movement against Colenso by Hlangwane, which General Buller now had in his mind. General Buller, alarmed at the order not to attack, telegraphed to Lord Roberts: "As you value the safety of Ladysmith, do not tell me to remain on the defensive. To do that means to leave the whole Boer force free to attack Ladysmith." The argument was sound; and Lord Roberts replied that he had no wish to urge a passive defence upon General Buller, who was now for the fourth time moving to the attack upon the Boers. Three days later, on February 18, Lord Roberts informed General Buller that Cronje was surrounded, that 3,000 Boers had been despatched to assist the beleaguered commandant from Ladysmith, and concluded: "If Ladysmith is ever to be relieved, now would seem to be the time."

So General Buller went forward, and on February 28, after a fortnight's severe fighting, at last effected his great object. Speaking of the Ladysmith Garrison, he says:

"I was shocked to see how attenuated the men were, and I perceived that they were very much weaker than I had been led to expect."

It was then he realised how grievous had been the strain upon Sir G. White and his men. But even now the mistakes did not cease. Owing, perhaps, to the absence of sanitary officers on the staff and of proper regulations on the subject of sanitation, a large part of the relieving force encamped on a typhoid-fever ground.

"I pointed out," says General Sir C. Warren, "that it was a place which was

supposed to be a typhoid-fever ground ; and our men in a fortnight were down with typhoid fever. . . . There are my reports upon the subject, and of the medical officers of my division, saying most strongly that we should not be encamped upon that particular spot of ground. . . . Very shortly afterwards the whole of my division was subject to typhoid fever."

"In my opinion," he adds, "if the sanitary regulations had been attended to properly, three-fourths or four-fifths of our losses from typhoid fever would have been avoided."

In the advance into the Free State, Lord Roberts encountered all manner of difficulties, due to bad method, defective organisation, or insufficient training. His staff did not work well ; orders miscarried. For example, a message to the convoy, which was captured by the Boers, never arrived, or this mishap would have been averted. The cavalry brigades had to be hurriedly formed and organised two days before starting for Kimberley. The cavalry proved to be ridiculously overweighted, and a large part of their equipment had to be jettisoned. It was found that the men were provided with hay-nets, though there was no such thing as hay to be obtained on the veldt in South Africa. In spite of representations to that effect, the authorities at home continued to send out troops equipped with this hay-net up to nearly the close of the war. Shoe-cases and breast-plates were also supplied, only to be thrown away, as they were found useless, and there were no waggons in which to carry them. The issue of tinned meat in 7lb. or 8lb. tins instead of 1lb. tins, which the War Office would not purchase before the war, owing to their greater cost, was disastrous for the infantry, as it laid a greater weight upon the man who had to carry the tin than he could bear, while for the cavalry it produced bad results, weighing down the saddle and causing sores. The horses were out of condition after the long voyage to a strange climate, and were not so fast as the Boer ponies or cobs.

The armament of the cavalry was unsatisfactory. The sword, according to General French, was the "very worst that could possibly be used." It was blunt, and the men were

apparently not allowed by the War Office to sharpen it, because the blade of the weapon wore away ; moreover, it was carried in a steel scabbard, which was admirably devised to take the edge off. The carbine was too short in range for use against the Boers. There was a dearth of men in the veterinary department, and of farriers, so that many of the horses were unshod. The mounted infantry were hurriedly improvised, and some of them could not keep their seats on rough ground. Army Service Corps and technical troops of all kinds were running short as the result of the hurried expansion of the Army.

No organisation had been devised to meet the demand for remounts which began with the rapid movements of the mounted division. And here the criticism comes from several witnesses that sufficient efforts were not made in the early period of the war to obtain horses from the country itself. Cape Colony was not utilised, though at a later date 30,000 horses were bought or commandeered there. There were many advantages in using the native horse. It was acclimatised and in condition ; it was surefooted on the slippery soil of the veldt ; it was generally in hard condition.

Another source of trouble was a shortage of pontoons. The reserves of pontoons, like the reserves of all other war material, had been allowed to sink to the very lowest point, and when the crisis came, it was found that new pontoons were not to be procured without great delay. Old and rotten pontoons had, therefore, to be sent out to South Africa, with the result that at Norvals Pont certain of them sank when used. The medical material for the force was insufficient, as also was the number of hospitals ; in the want of transport, the allowance of ambulances with the troops had to be reduced to a most inadequate figure.

No new light is shed upon the details of the movement to Bloemfontein, except that Lord Kitchener appears to have been actually in command at Paardeberg, representing Lord Roberts, though this had been officially denied.

When the Army reached Bloemfontein the great outbreak of typhoid occurred. Among the causes of that outbreak many witnesses place the absence of a sanitary department and the want of care in selecting camping grounds. General Warren, whose evidence as to the

epidemic on the Natal side has already been given, states that :

“Typhoid fever does not belong of necessity to an army in the field ; its presence is usually a sign of neglect of some kind. Wherever real sanitary precautions are taken typhoid . . . is at once reduced to a minimum. . . . The only safe expedient is to establish a rule that whenever a case of typhoid fever occurs the medical officer and the Royal Engineer officer will be liable to be tried by court-martial. . . . That will force the general staff to attend to the matter.”

There was unquestionably a very grave neglect of precautions in Lord Roberts's Army, owing to the want of good sanitary organisation. Lord Roberts deposes that he found a hospital encamped over one of the sources of water supply near the town.

Professor Ogston states that there was no bacteriologist with the troops at the front, so that the one test which showed whether a man was going to have typhoid could not be applied. The medical officers of the Army, he adds, had not been properly trained for their duties, owing to the cutting down of the military hospital system in England, and they lacked experience. In our Army in South Africa a horrifying carelessness was displayed regarding matters which are governed by strict regulation in foreign armies.

“The water supplies were not tested chemically or bacteriologically, and measures to secure their being cleaned and kept clean were not instituted. They sometimes did post sentries over them, but I suppose the sentries were not trained in sanitary matters, and probably did not know what to do. . . . The watercarts were not regularly disinfected.”

The hospital orderlies knew so little about their duties that :

“One could see some of the orderlies, from lack of knowledge, washing their kettles in filthy puddles and scraping them with the infected earth around. . . . Sanitation was practically entirely neglected. . . . Disin-

fection, one might almost say, was absolutely unknown. The men . . . had no training in keeping themselves disinfected ; in fact, it seemed to me that many of them looked upon it as a species of cowardice. . . . The hands were not disinfected, the utensils that the patients used for typhoid evacuations, and so forth, were not disinfected ; when they were emptied out into pits they were not disinfected, and the wards were not disinfected.”

Colonel Wilson deposed that of the orderlies “barely a quarter were really trained Army Medical Corps men,” because of the enormous demands which war made upon the personnel. But, after all, as is shown by important evidence, such demands were to be expected. The proportion which the medical departments in foreign armies bear to the total force is four or five per cent. In the British Army, before the war, it had been calculated that a mere two and a half per cent. would suffice.

As a natural result, not only were the sick ill-cared for owing to this inadequacy of the medical staff, but also the wounded suffered. The medical equipment left very much to be desired. Almost without exception the witnesses condemn the ambulances ; and Professor Ogston finds great fault with the manner in which the sick and wounded were conveyed by train.

“Hardships,” he says, “must occur in war, but it made one very sad to see a man getting his leg and his elbows knocked about in a springless truck when he was ill and suffering, and perhaps wounded. It was very terrible to behold.”

All kinds of lumber were dragged about with the field hospitals. According to Sir. F. Treves :

“The outfit of the field hospital is suitable for any climate in the world, from the Polar regions to the Equator. It is complete on paper, and that has to be dragged all over the country. . . . We could have thrown away quite a half of our outfit and not missed it.”

The whole system of the Medical Corps was wrong. Excellent and expensive officers were kept doing clerks' work, and preparing elaborate

returns, while the sick suffered and died. The medicines "were in bottles in the most cumbersome form. . . . We had to drag this useless chemist's shop all over the country, packed up in the most ludicrous and extravagant way." This appears, however, to have in part been due to the fact that reserve stores were being used up.

At home the medical stores were for years kept in damp cellars, such was the miserliness displayed before the war, and as no representations could prevail on the War Office or the Treasury to grant funds for proper storehouses, the perishable articles were finally removed to a ward of the Herbert Hospital, where they were stacked.

In the medical department, as in other departments of the Army, there had, from year to year, been representations as to the need of an increase in the numbers of the corps, which were regularly disregarded. The medical authorities of the Army were not consulted when stores of clothing were established for the troops, and it was not till the summer of 1899 that they represented the need for woollen clothing in the wet climate of the South African spring. Throughout the department, according to such witnesses as Mr. Fripp, Professor Ogston, and Sir F. Treves, there was a want of initiative and energy, because the man who showed initiative "had got himself disliked;" "there is a general shirking of taking any responsibility."

Even more vital in importance than the hospital question, in its direct influence upon the war from first to last, was the lack of forethought in providing remounts. The Remount Scandals are, unfortunately, familiar to the public, but a point which is emphasised in the evidence given before the Commission is that in India the organisation existed by which such incredible waste and mismanagement as occurred in South Africa could have been avoided. The Indian Remount Department had thought things out, yet it was never consulted. It had prepared an excellent manual—there was none in the British service; it had calculated the probable wastage of horses in war; it had collected information as to the horse supplies available in various countries from the most authentic sources; it had records of the supplies in North America—where the British Remount Department had

forgotten the fact that 8,000,000 horses were to be found; it had the names of the great contractors who could be trusted; it had printed instructions ready for officers purchasing. It is the most surprising fact in the whole war that no use should have been made by the British authorities of this mass of material and experience, which would have been of priceless service.

An official return shows that 518,794 horses were procured for the Army during the war, of which 347,007 were expended—or, in other words, perished. In no campaign in history has there been such a mortality.

In his evidence on this head Colonel Deane drew attention to the fact that

"up to May, 1900, the inspector (of remounts) had one officer and one small room—or two small rooms—to conduct his business in. . . . Lord Roberts telegraphed immediately on arrival in South Africa that he could do nothing in that country without a mobile Army; mobility depended upon horses, and, therefore, the Director. . . of the Remount Department was mainly responsible for the successful operations of the war."

In no department had the want of method such fatal results. There was no central controlling authority in South Africa with that weight and position which would have enabled him to prevent the mistakes which occurred. And the Inspector-General in England, General Truman, was not in close communication with his officers in South Africa.

Continually the despatch of remounts was suspended. At a critical moment in 1900 this was done, when the opportunity might have been utilised to accumulate a reserve. It is true that at that moment the war was supposed to be virtually ended, which may be a justification on this occasion, but there were other times when the supplies were cut down.

Nor was method used in the mounting of men. Colonel Haig deposed that untrained irregulars were given horses when trained regulars could not be supplied, which was obvious waste of resources. Sometimes horses were absolutely forgotten. Lord Lovat quotes an instance of 6,000 horses at Burghersdorp which might "all have been used for his Majesty's forces," but

which no one was allowed to touch. Column commanders, however, overrode red tape, and helped themselves, while the enemy on occasions appear to have done the same; the remnant pined and wasted for lack of food. This he quotes

“as an example of the way in which many things were not looked after, and through

lack of officers to supervise, and lack of system, thousands of pounds were thrown into the sea.”

With one accord the commanders, from Lord Roberts downwards, stated that the great need to finish the war was horses, so that the cost to the nation of this carelessness and defective organisation must have been incalculable.

## VI.—FURTHER EXAMPLES OF MUDDLE. VERDICT OF THE COMMISSION.

*"I used to say, 'You must muddle on as best you can.'"*

—Major-General Borrett, Inspector-General of Recruiting.

The preceding chapters have shown some of the results of the want of forethought and method in the British war organisation during the earlier period of the campaign. It now remains to notice shortly some instances of these same faults in the later history of the war, when the authorities at home ought to have learnt wisdom.

And first is the question of reinforcements. It was the duty of the War Office to calculate the wastage and to keep the Army in the field up to its strength. But there were periods when that duty was neglected. General Kelly-Kenny states :

"In March, 1901, Lord Kitchener made a demand (for troops), and it was not immediately met—in fact, their despatch was deprecated ; so that his requirements were not met until August. But in the minutes on the papers the military side of the War Office were prepared to send a considerable number."

It was the old trouble over again : the Secretary of State overriding the judgment of the soldiers, and such a soldier as Lord Roberts. Mr. Brodrick had succeeded Lord Lansdowne, but the result was always the same.

Secondly, there was the quality of the troops sent out. The War Office in the first instance had declined the help of Yeomanry and Volunteers when this was offered at the very beginning of the war. Subsequently it availed itself of both offers. But after the first contingent of Yeomanry had been enrolled the Yeomanry Committee was informed by the War Office, without giving any reason for that decision, that no further drafts would be required. A proposal to establish depots at which Yeomen should be trained, for the systematic maintenance of the strength of the force at the front, fell to the ground when this answer was given. Finally, in May, 1900, the Committee was dis-

solved. And now, in January, 1901, the War Office had to appeal for a new force of Yeomanry. The Committee was hurriedly reconstituted, and a large number of men were raised and sent out in an untrained condition. Lord Kitchener had asked that the men might be despatched to South Africa for their training, but it would seem that he was under the impression that they would be able to shoot and ride, while there is a large volume of evidence that they could actually do neither.

The difficulty of obtaining officers for them was great, and the officers sent out were in some cases utterly unfit to be trusted. One had had two years' imprisonment for illicit diamond buying ; another was a Maltese, who could play the piano but not ride a horse, and who is now taking money at the door of a Pretoria hotel. Others were habitual drunkards. But it was no easy matter at that time, when the demand for officers in every direction was imperious, to find good men. Of the second contingent of Yeomanry some had to be sent home, but the bulk of the force did extremely well after training. The third contingent of Yeomanry was raised in September, 1901, and with it there was little fault to be found.

Of the drafts for the regulars many were weak and ill-fitted for such a war. One of the Guards' drafts in 1902, 600 strong, was composed, in Colonel Crabbe's words, of "young soldiers of comparatively poor physique, and with but little discipline."

Great want of forethought was shown, too, in the raising of the South African levies. They were enrolled only for six months, with the result that their term of service expired just when they had learnt their business. Undesirable recruits who were rejected by one corps had no difficulty in entering another. At every turn, and by every officer who raised an irregular corps, the want of a manual of instruction, giving hints as to the best means of

raising such corps, was experienced. Yet nothing whatever has been done since the war to compile such a work, for the reason that it would cost money.

The untrained character of the reinforcements sent into the field caused Lord Roberts great anxiety. Two of the regrettable incidents, which undoubtedly led to the prolongation of the conflict, were due to raw troops being brought into contact with the enemy. The first was the capture of the 13th Yeomanry at Lindley; the second the capture of the Derbyshire Militia at Rhenoster River.

Not the shortage of men, but the shortage of officers was the most serious difficulty in the later months and years of the war. From January, 1900, to June, 1901, 3,000 officers in excess of the usual supply had to be obtained for the regular forces, while there were enormous demands for officers for the Militia and Yeomanry. In some regiments colonels had to do the work of subalterns; untrained officers in the emergency had to be taken; the Militia was depleted just when it was needed for the field or for home defence, and the Volunteers suffered in the same way. Had England been attacked by a European Power in 1900 or 1901 she would have been without any military force capable of taking the field, apart from her South African Army.

The shortage of officers in the auxiliary forces has not been remedied since the conclusion of the war, and was, at the close of 1902:

Militia, 671 officers below the proper strength.  
Volunteers, 2,020 " " " " "

Nor was any satisfactory proposal put before the Commission as to the means of filling this gap. As a further weakness it was noticed when the Militia battalions were sent out to South Africa that a very large proportion of their men were youths of eighteen or nineteen. They were unfit for severe campaigning, and were used on the line of communications, with some few exceptions.

In the matter of financial control and direction there was also complete want of system and organisation. The generals took the field without any trained financial adviser, and this resulted in great waste and robbery of the public purse, as it was difficult to check maladministration and acts of dishonesty. The Colonial

railways were not above taking advantage of this weakness. Thus the Natal Government railway charged 2½d. per ton for military stores per mile, and ½d. per soldier per mile for men conveyed in large numbers and in open trucks, though it had been stipulated that the men were to be given ordinary accommodation. When Sir G. F. Wilson reached Pretoria, as Lord Kitchener's financial adviser, the rate for stores was reduced to 1d. per mile, and for men to one-third of a penny. This meant an economy of £35,000 a month.

Another matter which was investigated was the wasteful expenditure at Capetown, where an ordnance officer, Colonel Clarke, had employed a broker to buy for the Government, and allowed him to charge what he liked. Swingletrees were purchased for the Army at 29s. 3d., when they cost in the open market only 15s. Tents were repaired at a cost of 27s. 6d. to 24s. 6d. each, when the same work had been done at Bloemfontein for 5s. on an average. Some £30,000 was wasted in this manner. In other cases purchases were made by officers without seeing samples or without knowing the cost of the article which they were buying. "No such thing as tendering existed in the early months of the war." In the Transvaal the Standard Bank obtained from the Treasury a very high rate for the supply of specie during the middle part of the war.

It is the conclusion of Sir G. F. Wilson

"that an expenditure of a few thousand pounds on a specially selected financial staff would have saved the public at the very least £1,000,000."

It would also have relieved the Commander-in-Chief of a load of anxiety. Sir G. F. Wilson bears tribute in one of his minutes to Lord Kitchener's

"extraordinary grasp of finance, to his extreme keenness for economy, and to his single-minded regard for the public good."

The Army system of working accounts was one of the most singular conceivable. Stores would be issued to an officer A, at some distant point B, and on their way to him might be seized by some other officer C, for use with a column. But A was still held responsible for the goods which he had never received, and had to give

a receipt for them. The supplies which had been intended for C, but which had not reached C nor been required by him owing to his helping himself to A's goods, were left over, and a kind of clearing-house was established, by which A's losses were made good out of the surplus from C. But this system opened the door to fraud of every kind, and was altogether unbusinesslike. It gave ridiculous accounts, and it was only resorted to because the whole system of Army finance broke down hopelessly in the field.

With the payment of the irregulars there was the greatest trouble, as the captains were required to keep elaborate accounts, and to pay their companies. An officer coming in from a long march with a column would have to worry over figures, with the result that either his military duties suffered or his endurance was too severely tried. The end was that the accounts were not kept at all, and fell into utter confusion. A system of paybooks, by which each man had a small book in which payments were entered, had been suggested, but was not adopted till the close of the war.

### VERDICT.

The verdict and the most important recommendations of the Royal Commission may be summed up as follows:

#### MILITARY MISTAKES AT HOME.

Lord Wolseley did not "exercise in any systematic fashion" his duty of preparing schemes of offensive and defensive operations. He did not always bring important War Office papers to the notice of Lord Lansdowne.

There was no plan of campaign, and no instructions as to the objective in view were given to the generals.

There was serious miscalculation as to the nature of the operations.

The military mistakes at home were thus summarised by Lord Roberts:

"(1) The selection of Ladysmith as the principal military station and advance depot in Natal and leaving it absolutely undefended. Sir George White was forced to hold on to it, for had he abandoned it an immense amount of supplies and ordnance stores, which there was not time to remove, would have fallen into the enemy's hands.

"(2) The plan by which General Buller's force was to advance in three columns through Cape Colony towards the Orange Free State.

"(3) Having no properly organised Transport Department, the absence of which prevented any movement being made away from the several lines of railway.

"(4) The failure to foresee the necessity of employing a large force of Mounted Infantry.

"(5) Under-estimating the possible strength of the enemy, the magnitude of the theatre of the war, and, consequently, the number of troops that would be required for the long lines of communication.

"(6) Neglect to supply the Army with a proportion of heavy artillery sufficiently mobile to accompany the troops in the field. Guns of this description have always formed part of the armament of an Indian Field Force, and even in a mountainous country like Afghanistan they did good service.

"(7) The want of suitable maps.

"(8) Whether the fortification of important points in the lines of communication was suggested by the War Office, I am not aware. It certainly would have been a wise precaution had measures been taken while there was still time to place certain localities, such as a position behind the Tugela in Natal, and De Aar and Naaupoort Junction in Cape Colony, in a state of defence."

#### APPORTIONMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN THE CABINET AND THE MILITARY AUTHORITIES.

The responsibility for the decision not to spend the £640,000 required for stores for the mobilisation of the Army Corps before September 22, 1899, rests with the Cabinet, but the Commission holds that:

"Taken as a whole, the evidence appears to support the Government on this point, namely, that the steps taken to reinforce the troops in South Africa for defensive purposes pending the arrival of the Field Force were in accordance with the advice and requirements of their military advisers."

## RESERVES OF ARMY STORES.

The deficiencies in stores shown to exist by Sir H. Brackenbury in December, 1899, were justly described as "full of peril to the Empire." "No sufficient safeguard is suggested, to prevent the recurrence of so serious a scandal." No system is adequate which does not provide such a safeguard.

## THE CABINET'S MISTAKE.

With another brigade in Natal the whole course of the war might have been changed. The Cabinet knew that a dash on Natal was contemplated by the Boers, and did not give due consideration to this possibility.

## HOME DEFENCE DURING THE WAR.

The defence of the Kingdom was dangerously weak on the military side, and the ideal of Mr. Stanhope's minute, that if two Army Corps were abroad one Army Corps should be mobilised at home, complete in every respect and fit to take the field, was not attained.

## QUALITY OF THE SOLDIER.

The British soldier is capable of becoming, under the discipline of war, a first-rate fighting machine. But if the terms offered to the recruit attract only the undeveloped intelligence, then such men cannot be made into the type of soldier required in modern war. As for the shooting in the war, 76,000,000 rounds were fired, a large expenditure in relation to the result in killed and wounded of the enemy.

## QUALITY OF OFFICERS.

There was some dread of taking responsibility, especially among the senior officers. Where there were definite orders the officers led with gallantry and devotion.

## THE SURRENDERS.

The act of surrender is *prima facie* discreditable; but there is no reason to suppose that the great majority of surrenders were due to any want of spirit in officers.

## STAFF.

Confusion was caused at first by the fact that there was much improvisation in staff arrangements.

## SUPPLY OF OFFICERS.

The supply of a large number of trained officers to meet the demands of an expanded Army must involve large expense, but "there is no point on which it is more certain that to decline to act upon this lesson of war must entail the recurrence in a similar emergency of the difficulties and dangers . . . which attended our position." Changes of uniforms are to be discouraged, as causing avoidable expense for the officer.

## ORGANISATION OF THE YEOMANRY AND COLONIAL FORCES.

A little more care and forethought on the part of the military authorities would have prevented the despatch of the second contingent of Yeomanry "in a state of disorganisation." There was a want of method in the treatment of the irregulars in South Africa; no scheme for the employment of Colonial forces was worked out, and no steps have since been taken to remedy this weakness. A telegram was sent to Australia, which did not clearly show that mounted infantry were required. The Yeomanry suffered because their strength was not maintained by drafts.

The over-sea Colonial forces were of great value, and did good service. Trained officers are required for them.

## IMPERIAL DEFENCE AND ORGANISATION.

"The true lesson of the war is that no military system will be satisfactory which does not contain powers of expansion outside the limit of the regular forces of the Crown, whatever that limit may be.

"If the war teaches anything it is this, that throughout the Empire, in the United Kingdom, its colonies and dependencies, there is a reserve of military strength which, for many reasons, we cannot and do not wish to convert into a vast standing Army, but to which we may be glad to turn again in our hour of need, as we did in 1899. In that year there was no preparation whatever for utilising these great resources. Nothing had been thought out either as to pay or organisation, as to conditions of service, or even as to arms. Even here in England it was to be 'an experiment.' The new force was not to be discouraged, but it

was allowed to equip itself, and it was denied anything beyond the barest complement of trained officers.

"We regret to say that we are not satisfied that enough is being done to place matters on a better footing in the event of another emergency."

#### ARTILLERY AND AMMUNITION.

In the supply of ammunition it was only just possible, using every exertion, to meet the demands of the Army. The field armament of the artillery was not inferior to that of other great nations, nor was there deficiency in the number of guns, though there was deficiency in the reserve. The British artillery was superior to the Boer.

#### CLOTHING.

As the reserves of clothing were inadequate, Sir H. Brackenbury demanded £320,000 for the provision of a reserve in February, 1899. The demand was put aside and not brought to Lord Lansdowne's notice. The whole of the body clothing in reserve on the eve of war was unsuitable for service in South Africa.

#### REMOUNT DEPARTMENT.

"From first to last there was not the symptom of an idea in anyone who was responsible for its organisation that in time of war there would be necessity for expansion."

#### MEDICAL PERSONNEL.

The whole of the medical personnel was exhausted in supplying the 1st Army Corps and its hospitals. The medical personnel of the subsequent reinforcements had to be improvised. The medical service had not been maintained in personnel or equipment at the high standard which is essential in so vital a matter.

#### ARMY SERVICE CORPS.

The Army Service Corps was quite inadequate in strength.

#### TRANSPORT.

The absence of preparation in transport was fraught with serious consequences, and the delay in obtaining it greatly increased the cost.

#### THE FOOD CONTRACTS.

The price paid for meat was high, but not unreasonable, under the circumstances.

#### FINANCIAL CONTROL.

On the financial side there was no adequate preparation for the war. The Army Pay Corps was too weak for its work.

#### TRANSPORT BY SEA.

If the same forethought which was shown in the transport by sea had been applied throughout the war preparations, there would have been little criticism to make with regard to the war.

#### THE INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT.

The Intelligence Department, Colonial Section, consisted of two officers and one clerk; the Map Section consisted of two officers. It was undermanned, but attained "a considerable measure of success," and its papers were remarkably accurate. To obtain information, it required larger discretion and resources. The outcry against the absence of good maps was not altogether well informed, as there were great difficulties in the way of surveys.

#### THE WAR OFFICE.

1. The fact that the *Commander-in-Chief* is now a member of the Cabinet Committee of Defence will prevent the recurrence of such a state of things as existed in 1899, and will enable the *Commander-in-Chief* to make the opinion of the War Office known to the Cabinet.

2. The want of *consultative power* in the War Office in the past was a defect which, it is premature to say, has been removed by the changes introduced recently.

3. There are two Boards at the War Office—the War Office Council and the Army Board—whose duties are not clearly defined. As nothing is more fatal than to overload with a mass of details a Board to which is to be entrusted decisions of the highest importance, it is recommended that the higher of these two Boards should be relieved from routine matters and left free for matters of first-class importance.

4. The constitution and duties of the War Office Council should be defined by an Order in Council.

5. The allegation that the Treasury does not give proper consideration to the demands of the military side of the War Office was not made good.

6. Decentralisation is desirable, but can only be adopted within certain limits. The system in Parliament of asking questions on small

points makes it almost impossible in some cases. The responsibility for checking abuse must rest with Parliament.

#### MINORITY RECOMMENDATIONS.

BY LORD ESHER AND SIR J. JACKSON.

1. That the Army should be governed by a Board modelled upon the Admiralty.

2. That the Director of Military Intelligence should have no executive duties, and should frame plans for war.

3. That the Commander-in-Chief should be abolished and replaced by an Inspector-General of H.M.'s forces, who should certify annually as to the condition of armaments in writing.

BY SIR G. TAUBMAN-GOLDIE, SIR F. DARLEY,  
AND SIR J. EDGE.

That every physically fit boy of seventeen should serve for a term of six to ten months in a national cadet school, where he would receive military education. Volunteer Cadets and those serving in the Navy or Merchant Service to be exempt.

BY SIR J. JACKSON.

That a sum of money at the disposal of the War Office, to be spent without publicity, of say £10,000,000, would have reduced the cost of the war by £100,000,000.

#### CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.

##### THE REPORT CRITICISED.

The evidence of the generals before the Commission showed that recruits were drawn from the lower and less intelligent class; that with voluntary enlistment it was impossible to train the men satisfactorily, as severe training interfered with recruiting, and that some change would have to be made in the direction of compulsory service to obtain a thoroughly efficient Army. They complained of the uncertainty of voluntary recruiting, and of its great expensiveness. On the other hand, they acknowledged that there were great difficulties in the way of compulsory service. There was a volume of expert evidence to the effect that in physique and intelligence the British soldier is inferior to the Continental soldier. But on these heads the Commission did not pronounce judgment.

The evidence which has been given in the earlier chapters will show that the verdict of the Commission with regard to the responsibility of the Secretary of State for War was a lenient one, and that the military authorities did

certainly make repeated representations as to the danger in South Africa. No suggestion is made by the Commission as to the real causes of all the blunders and disasters, which is the absence of clearly-defined responsibility in the British military and political machine. Lord Wolseley had no power to spend money; Lord Roberts is in the same predicament. He says in his evidence:

“It is very little responsibility that I have over the spending departments.”

A recent instance was quoted, in which the Commander-in-Chief was overruled. The abolition of the Militia Reserve was accomplished against the wish of Lord Roberts and General Kelly-Kenny by Mr. Brodrick, with the result that the reserves of the Army have been weakened. It is with the civilian Secretary of State that all real responsibility rests, and he is not an expert. In Lord Lansdowne's words:

“Complete responsibility involves complete power, and complete power involves complete control over expenditure. . . . I do not think that you can divest the Secretary of State of responsibility. . . . If anyone has to be hung it is the Secretary of State.”

And the Secretary of State may be hampered by the Treasury and public opinion. It is Lord Lansdowne's opinion that if it had not been for the “panic of war” the alarming deficiencies disclosed by General Brackenbury's memorandum might not have been remedied, involving as they did an outlay of over ten millions.

Fourteen years ago Lord R. Churchill, in a once famous, but now forgotten, memorandum, pointed out the true weakness of our political machinery.

“The object,” he wrote, “aimed at is the maximum of efficiency consistent with the amount of expenditure which the taxpayer or his representatives will tolerate. Can any practical amount of efficiency be obtained without professional training and knowledge? Can it be obtained without direct personal responsibility? Can direct personal responsibility be reasonably expected without professional control? The

answer to these questions, I submit, is obviously in the negative. Professional reputation to a soldier or a sailor is everything next to life itself, and the loss of it equals professional ruin, entailing social and pecuniary loss of a heavy character. To the ordinary politician under our political system administrative miscarriage brings little or no evil consequences. His fate, if unfortunate or unskilful, is, in the vast majority of cases, to be transferred to some other office, to a foreign Embassy, to a Colonial Governorship, or, at the worst, to the House of Lords. Neither pecuniary nor social loss necessarily or ordinarily follow the unskilful and, possibly, the disastrous administration of our Ministers for the Army and Navy. More than this, the professional persons who advise respectively the Secretary of State for War and the First Lord of the Admiralty escape all risk of public censure, sheltered as they are by the fictitious responsibility of the civilian Minister."

The civilian Minister in turn is protected by the joint and collective responsibility of the Cabinet. And, therefore, Lord Randolph Churchill urged that the administration of the Army and Navy should be entrusted to military and naval officers—in a word, that the Ministers of the Army and Marine should be experts and professional men. This he pressed because

"the evidence before us discloses a state of things more seriously unsatisfactory and, possibly, more pregnant with danger than Parliament or the public imagine."

The report of the present Royal Commission fourteen years later has proved how wisely he spoke, how useless is mere tinkering with the machine. There is nothing to show that the administration of the present Admiralty is markedly better than that of the War Office before the war, or that, after a great naval war, we may not have to deplore too late a similar naval breakdown.

Closely connected with Lord R. Churchill's

proposals, and forming part of them, was the organisation of a General Staff, both for the Army and Navy, to prepare plans and to train generals. Lord Esher's thinking department, divorced entirely from executive duties, would be a very indifferent substitute for this. For the thinking that has to be done must bear relation to actual problems and actual forces; the General Staff must exist not in a vacuum, but in intimate relation to the Army of which it is the brain. There can be no living brain without a body; there can be no serviceable thinking department cut off from touch with the rest of the Army.

Against this proposal, Sir H. Campbell Bannerman protested at the time on the ground that there "is, in truth, no room for general military policy in this country," and that forethought would favour aggressiveness.

The proposal to substitute for the present War Office organisation a Board modelled on the Admiralty finds no favour in the evidence or in history. Lord Roberts and Lord Wolseley both strongly opposed it; it is the worst possible organisation for war; it means the negation of all responsibility; it has never stood the test of a serious war; and at the Admiralty it has been changed and altered times without number. No foreign nation has copied it, and the opinion of foreign experts upon war is absolutely unanimous against it.

The true measures of reform may then be summarised simply as follows (though these are NOT the recommendations of the Commission):

1. An expert Minister of War, instead of a politician, and that expert to have a free hand on his own lines, being given a certain sum of money.

2. The organisation of a General Staff, in close relation to the actual Army.

If a capable expert be chosen, the rest will follow, provided always that the nation is prepared to make the sacrifices which he asks. Economy will be reconciled with efficiency, and the events of 1899-1902 will have taught the needed lesson.

The capable expert the nation possesses in Lord Kitchener.

### Diary of the Principal Events connected with South Africa, from the date of the Bloemfontein Conference to the Occupation of Pretoria.

Date. 1899.	Event.	Date. 1899.	Event.
31 May	First Meeting of Bloemfontein Conference held.	8 July	Establishment of Corps of Mounted Infantry at Buluwayo under Colonel Plumer approved. Two Companies Army Service Corps embark for South Africa.
5 June	Final meeting of Bloemfontein Conference held.	11 July	Officers selected for Mounted Infantry Corps to be raised at Mafeking. Queensland offers the services of 250 Mounted Infantry with machine guns, in the event of hostilities.
12 June	Mayor of Kimberley asks that a battery of field guns at King William's Town may be sent up. Mr. Schreiner replies that "he cannot give countenance to fears of invasion, which are absolutely groundless."	12 July	Governor of Victoria reports offers of Volunteers for service in South Africa.
14 June	Sir A. Milner transmits a note from the Government of the South African Republic, submitting a proposal for "Arbitration."	19 July	Volunteer Corps organised at Buluwayo, and Government arms most of the Rhodesian Mining Camps.
17 June	Meeting of the Mobilisation Committee at the War Office.	20 July	Seven years' Franchise Law passed by the Volksraad of the South African Republic.
20 June	Shipments are made to complete the two months' reserve supplies of rations for Cape Colony and Natal.	25 July	Natal Ministers claim that, in the fulfilment of promise by High Commissioner on 25th May, that "Natal would be defended with the whole Force of the Empire" if it were invaded, steps should be taken for effectual defence of the whole Colony.
22 June	Sanction given to two officers to proceed to the Cape and purchase 1,340 animals.  Secretary of State for War declines to authorise parties being sent to Italy and Spain.	26 July	Five million rounds of small arm ammunition shipped to South Africa.
1 July	Ten special service officers sent to South Africa.	27 July	Secretary of State for War authorises despatch of officers to Naples, Spain, and America to arrange for purchase of mules.
5 July	Secretary of State for India inquires of Viceroy what British troops could temporarily be spared.  Supplies of hay and oats shipped to South Africa.	31 July	British Government invites President Kruger to appoint delegates for a joint inquiry into the effects of the franchise law.
7 July	Colonel Baden-Powell appointed to raise corps of mounted infantry in Rhodesia.		

Date.	Event.	Date.	Event.
1899.		1899.	
3 Aug.	Natal Ministry informed that reinforcements will be sent to Natal, and are asked as to assistance which will be given by Colonial troops. They, in reply, deprecate calling these out till war begins, as likely to precipitate hostilities.	8 Sept.	Regulations issued for mobilisation of a field force for service in South Africa.
9 Aug.	1st Battalion Liverpool Regiment embark for Natal.	9 Sept.	In reply to appeal for reinforcements, Governor of Natal is informed that 5,700 troops from India should reach Natal in five weeks' time, and two additional battalions, and two batteries of Artillery, from England, in six weeks' time.
15 Aug.	Her Majesty's Agent at Pretoria reports alarm and excitement among the people, and rumoured issue of warrants for the arrest of Uitlander leaders.	11 Sept.	Lieutenant-General Sir G. White appointed to command of troops in Natal.
16 Aug.	Lieutenant-General Forestier-Walker appointed to command at the Cape, vice Major-General Sir. W. Butler. Officers sent to purchase mules in Australia.	16 Sept.	South African Republic declines, on conditions offered, to send delegates to discuss reforms. Sir A. Milner asks for speedy reinforcements of troops and men-of-war.
22 Aug.	Reply of South African Republic to proposal to joint inquiry. Five years' franchise offered conditionally.		Sir G. White and 1,000 men embark for South Africa.
23 Aug.	1st Battalion Manchester Regiment embarks for Natal.	17 Sept.	42nd Battery Royal Field Artillery embark at Bombay for Natal.
24 Aug.	1st Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers embark for Cape Town.	18 Sept.	Embarkation of Indian troops begins.
28 Aug.	British reply to proposals of South African Republic, in their notes transmitted 22nd August.	19 Sept.	Four Companies Loyal North Lancashire, two guns and detachment Artillery, leave Cape Town for Orange River Bridge.
5 Sept.	Transvaal Government withdraw their former proposals for a five years' franchise.	23 Sept.	Purchase of 7,000 mules ordered. Orders issued to Supply Reserve Depot to prepare to ship 30 days' supplies for Army Corps of 50,000 troops, 12,000 horses, and 15,000 mules.
6 Sept.	Additional shipment of supplies to South Africa ordered.	26 Sept.	Force of all arms moved from Ladysmith to Glencoe Junction.
7 Sept.	Boer force 800 strong, with a Field Battery, reported to have occupied Volksrust.	27 Sept.	Free State Volksraad deprecates war, but declares alliance with South African Republic. President Kruger begs Steyn to call out his burghers. Transvaal Forces are called out.
8 Sept.	Cabinet Council held at Foreign Office. Reply sent to South African Republic note of 5th September. Viceroy of India instructed to send troops to South Africa.		

Date.	Event.	Date.	Event.
1899.		1899.	
28 Sept.	Natal Volunteer Corps are called out. New Zealand offers services of mounted infantry.	10 Oct.	Reply to ultimatum delivered to Government of the South African Republic by the British Agent.
29 Sept.	Netherlands Railway taken over by the South African Republic. Transvaal Volksraad grant full citizenship to all aliens assisting the State to maintain its independence.	13 Oct.	Armoured train proceeding to Mafeking with 2-pr. guns attacked and derailed at Kraipan.  Boer forces enter Natal.
30 Sept.	Orders given for purchase of 8,000 additional mules.	14 Oct.	General Buller and Staff of Army Corps embark at Southampton.
2 Oct.	Volksraad of the South African Republic is adjourned sine die, and President declares that war is inevitable.  General Joubert arrives at Sand-spruit (10 miles from Laing's Nek), and finds the Boers deficient of equipment.  Proposal of High Commissioner to raise 2,000 men in Cape Colony approved.	19 Oct.	Three Boer columns invade Natal.
3 Oct.	Orange Free State expels British subjects. Mail train for Cape Town stopped at Vereeniging. Colonial Governors informed of conditions under which contingents will be accepted. Purchase of 4,000 additional mules authorised.	20 Oct.	Battle of Talana Hill.
6 Oct.	20 Companies Army Service Corps, and other departmental units, embark for South Africa.	21 Oct.	Battle of Elands-laagte.
7 Oct.	1st Class Army Reserve called up.	24 Oct.	Battle of Rietfontein.
9 Oct.	Ultimatum delivered to British Agent at Pretoria.  Sir Redvers Buller appointed to command the troops in South Africa.	30 Oct.	Battle of Farquhar's Farm.  Disaster at Nicholson's Nek.
10 Oct.	Boer ultimatum received in London. Sir G. White, at the instance of the Governor of Natal, determines to hold Dundee.	31 Oct.	General Buller arrives at Cape Town.
		2 Nov.	Telegraphic communication with Ladysmith cut.
		11 Nov.	5th Infantry Division mobilised.
		23 Nov.	Battles of Willow Grange and Belmont.
		25 Nov.	Battle of Enslin.
		28 Nov.	Battle of Modder River.
		10 Dec.	General Gatacre meets with serious reverse at Stormberg.
		11 Dec.	Battle of Magersfontein.
		13 Dec.	Decision to mobilise 7th Division at Aldershot.
		15 Dec.	Battle of Colenso.
		18 Dec.	Lord Roberts appointed Commander-in-Chief, South Africa, with Lord Kitchener as Chief of Staff.
		1900:	
		6 Jan.	Assault on Ladysmith repulsed after 15 hours' fighting.
		10 Jan.	General Buller commences turning movement towards Springfield. Lord Roberts and Staff arrive at Cape Town.

Date. 1900.	Event.	Date. 1900.	Event.
24 Jan.	Spion Kop is occupied in the early morning, held all day, and evacuated after dark.	27 Feb.	Rensberg re-occupied by General Clements.
28 Jan.	Lord Roberts asks for despatch of 8th Division of a Cavalry Brigade.	28 Feb.	Relief of Ladysmith.
6 Feb.	Fighting at Vaalkrantz.	7 March	Action of Poplar Grove.
11 Feb.	Turning movement for relief of Kimberley begun.	10 March	Action of Driefontein.
14 Feb.	General Buller commences fourth attempt for relief of Ladysmith.	13 March	Occupation of Bloemfontein.
15 Feb.	General French with Cavalry Division reaches Kimberley.	4 April	Surrender of a force of Mounted Infantry and Infantry at Reddersburg.
18 Feb.	Unsuccessful attempt to storm Cronje's laager at Paardeberg.	3 May	Advance on Pretoria begun.
27 Feb.	Surrender of Cronje. Battle of Pieter's Hill.	12 May	Main Army enters Kroonstad.
		17 May	Relief of Mafeking.
		31 May	Irish Yeomanry surrender near Lindley.
			Occupation of Johannesburg.
		5 June	Occupation of Pretoria.

## FORCES ENGAGED ON EITHER SIDE IN THE WAR.

### BRITISH FORCE EMPLOYED.

MEN.	
Garrison in S. Africa . . . . .	9,940
Landed Aug. 1 to Oct. 11, 1899 . . . . .	12,546
Reinforcements to Aug. 1, 1900 . . . . .	242,646
"    "    April 30, 1901 . . . . .	82,529
"    "    Dec. 31, 1901 . . . . .	41,088
"    "    May 31, 1902 . . . . .	59,686
Grand total sent to South Africa, 448,876 officers and men.	

### BOER FORCE.

#### British Intelligence Department's Estimate Before the War.

Transvaal burghers liable to service . . . . .	29,279
Staats artillery . . . . .	544
Orange Free State burghers . . . . .	20,000
Staats artillery . . . . .	300
Total (excluding rebels) . . . . .	50,123

Available field army, 34,000 men, with 36 guns and 20 to 30 Maxims.

### British Intelligence Department's Estimate After the War.

Transvaal . . . . .	43,406
Orange Free State . . . . .	29,569
Rebels . . . . .	13,000
Foreigners . . . . .	3,400
Total . . . . .	89,375

### BRITISH LOSSES.

IN BATTLE.	OUT OF BATTLE.
Killed . . . . . 5,774	Died of disease 13,250
Wounded . . . . . 22,829	Accidentally killed 798
Prisoners . . . . . 9,553	Died in captivity . 102

Of the wounded 2,018 died of their wounds.

TOTAL LOSS BY DEATH, 22,555.

### Cost of the War to England.

£228,984,000 was provided by Parliamentary vote between 1899 and 1902.

A contribution of £30,000,000 is to be paid by the Transvaal.

