

missioned officer to undertake such a duty. If such an officer were available, Mr Corwell, I should be strongly tempted to send him with you, to hoist the British flag, and then urge the Home Government to confirm my action and secure to you the right, subject to the king's royalties, to work these gold-deposits; but I am powerless—much as I wish to aid you.'

A look of disappointment clouded the young captain's features. 'Would your Excellency permit me to endeavour to find three or four seamen. There is a transport ready to sail for England, and I may be able to get some men from her.'

'I doubt it. Unless you revealed the object of your voyage—which would be exceedingly foolish of you—you could not induce them to make a voyage in such a small vessel as yours to islands inhabited mostly by ferocious savages. But this much I can and will do for you: I will direct Captain Hunter of the *Sirius*, the only king's ship I have here, to set his carpenters to work on your vessel as soon as ever you careen her. I will supply you, at my own private cost, with arms and ammunition and also a new suit of sails. Provisions I cannot give you; we want them badly enough ourselves, although we are not in such an evil plight as we were ten months ago. Yet, for all that, I may be able to get you a cask or two of beef.'

'That is most generous of you, sir. I will not, however, take the beef, your Excellency; but for the sails and the repairs to my poor little vessel I thank you most heartily and sincerely; and I pledge you my word of honour as well as

giving you my written bond that I will redeem my obligations to you.'

'Even if you should fail I shall be content; for I well know that it will be no fault of yours. But stay, Mr Corwell; I must have one condition.'

'Name it, sir.'

'You must also pledge me your honour that you will not reveal the secret of your discovery of gold to any one in this settlement. This I do not demand—I ask it as a favour.'

Then the Governor took him, guardedly enough, into his confidence. With a thousand convicts, most of them utter ruffians, guarded by a scanty force of Marines, the news of gold having been found would, he was sure, have a disastrous effect, and lead to open revolt. The few small merchant-ships which were in port were partly manned by convict seamen, and there was every likelihood of them being seized by gangs of desperate criminals, fired with the idea of reaching the golden island. Already a party of convicts had escaped with the mad idea of walking to China, which they believed was only separated from Australia by a large river which existed a few hundred miles to the northward of the settlement. Some of them died of thirst, others were slaughtered by the blacks, and the wounded and exhausted survivors were glad to make their way back again to their jailers.

Corwell listened intently, and gave his promise readily. Then he rose to go, and the Governor held out his hand.

'Good-evening, Mr Corwell. I must see you again before you sail.'

DE WET'S FIRST AND WORST REPULSE.

By FRANCIS R. O'NEILL, Cape Mounted Rifles.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART I.



T Wepener, Christian De Wet, the now world-famed Boer leader, crossed swords with the Colonial Division of our South African army. With seven thousand men and fifteen guns, and elated by two

recent victories, he threw himself against eighteen hundred British stretched over a thin line of entrenchments seven miles in length. But the resistance he met with was so skilful and so dogged that after nineteen days' hard and continuous fighting and one determined night assault, gallantly repulsed, he returned the way he came, discomfited and badly beaten. I will try and tell the story of that beating, or what I saw of it from the trench of the Headquarter Company in which I, with twenty-five fellow-troopers of the Cape Mounted Rifles, was stationed.

It was in April last year, and on a Sunday

morning, at our camp near Aliwal North, that we received the order for every available man to move in three hours' time—a short notice, but we have since grown well accustomed to that. We tracked without losing much time for two days by Rouxville and Bushman's Kop, on the road to Wepener. After some fifty miles of this we reached Bushman's Kop, and camped opposite the small hotel standing at the foot of the rocky hill which gives its name to the place. After only a couple of hours' stay here, to give us time for collecting fuel (cow-dung), lighting fires, and cooking and getting rid of breakfast, the order was given to saddle-up again, and away we went, tracking this time in earnest, for although it was some thirty miles to Wepener, we only halted again a few hundred yards from the town late that evening, a great part of the way having been covered at the trot.

Wepener is one of the prettiest of the usual

type of South African towns. It lies at the foot of high rocky kopjes rising some thousands of feet, which are the continuation of one of the spurs of the Drakenberge Mountains, and mark the boundary of the Free State and Basutoland. The houses, built of corrugated iron, stand between avenues of eucalyptus-trees; the church, as usual, being the only imposing building. The hotels were flying the Union-jack as we rode through, only to change to the Federal colours a few days later. Three miles beyond the town the road leads across the splendid suspension-bridge over the Calydon River; and as we rode over it we were greeted with the cheerful news that a short time before some thousands of Boers had crossed it with a convoy of wagons, and that it took two days to get the wagons across.

On the other side, the road led up the centre of a basin bounded by a circle of rocky ridges; and it was this basin, and of course the bridge, that we were destined to defend for nearly three weeks against some seven thousand Boers under Christian de Wet, who, fresh from his victory at Sanna's Post and at Reddersburg, was so confident of 'blowing us to pieces in twenty minutes' that he invited the inhabitants of Wepener to witness the spectacle. On the first day of the attack the people crowded the surrounding hills with this object.

After pitching our camp near a small *vlei*, or pond, about five hundred yards from the river and some hundred feet above it, we settled down for three days, knowing only that a disaster had occurred somewhere near Dewetsdorp, and that we might possibly be attacked. Our force consisted of three hundred and eighty Cape Mounted Rifles, the two regiments of Brabant's Horse (numbering about one thousand men), and about four hundred Kaffrarian Rifles—in all, eighteen hundred men. The actual number in the firing-line who could be put to defend the position was under fifteen hundred. The position itself was far too extended for such a small force, for to walk entirely round the circumference of the basin from trench to trench would have meant a walk of nearly seven miles; but the only safe walk was obviously to defend the whole basin.

Let me try here to describe the position. If we cross the bridge and follow the line of these bounding ridges on the left, we shall see them rising abruptly from the Calydon River and forming a strong natural defence as far as the point where a small stream enters it at right angles. Here the rampart of ridges falls away; and up the course of this stream for about three-quarters of a mile, to the dip where the road again passes on towards Ladybrand, was by far the weakest point of the position. The ridges here were only some eighty feet high—in places not fifty feet—easily accessible across the narrow valley, the rocks on the opposite side making splendid cover for the eight hundred riflemen

that for the first two days of the attack poured a murderous fire on our trenches at a range of from six hundred to eight hundred yards, so that to only show your head above a stone was to have half-a-dozen bullets singing over it.

The Cape Mounted Rifles were entrusted to defend this, the weakest and most vulnerable point in the whole position. On our extreme right a dip of about a mile in width, partially filled by a large *vlei*, formed the only real opening in the seven-mile circle. A line of wire-fence had been thrown across this; but the best defence was the cross-fire from the trenches of the Cape Mounted Rifles and those of the Kaffrarians on the opposite side. On the other side the ridges rose to a height of from five hundred to eight hundred feet, and on the side facing the enemy they were very steep, keeping an average altitude of some five hundred feet till they again met the Calydon River.

The ground within this great circular basin was smooth, open veldt, covered by the usual number of sun-baked ant-hills. At the entrance to the bridge above the river stood a large and elaborately constructed flour-mill built of great stone blocks. Near it were some half-dozen houses, a post-office, and a store. At the back of this small village was a very pleasing plantation composed partly of pine-trees; and in the middle of it stood two houses some five hundred yards apart—the prettiest houses I have seen in the Free State, with verandas and gardens full of flowers. These houses, which belonged, I believe, to a man of influence in the town and to a commandant at that time 'on commando,' afterwards became our hospital. A little higher up was a small chapel and graveyard; while higher up still, and more to the left, was the small *vlei* beside which the Cape Mounted Rifles had their camp. The whole village—houses, mill, and chapel—were, of course, within the position held by us. The mill especially was of great use, as it held flour enough to last a month for the whole force; besides this, we had our trek-oxen to fall back upon, and some sheep and oxen we had brought with us. So we were in no danger of famine.

The entrance to the bridge, the mill, and village were defended by the Royal Engineers—of whom about fifty had come with us under Major (now Colonel) Maxwell, an Imperial officer—and also by the fire from the Cape Mounted Rifles and Brabant's trenches on the ridges above. Two Maxims were placed here to repel any sudden attack across the bridge or the drift under it. From the camp of the Cape Mounted Rifles there was a walk of nearly a mile across the open veldt upwards to the farthest headquarter company's trench on the extreme right of the line, in which I was during the siege.

This will give a general idea of the position itself and the disposition of the force.

I will now begin to relate events as they hap-

pened. Our first three days here were quiet enough, and the night-duties were not very heavy: simply the usual pickets. On the third afternoon, however, there was a sudden order for a large number of men to fall in for fatigue. These were given picks and shovels, marched up to the ridges, and during the whole afternoon were made to dig trenches along the line of ridges at intervals of about two hundred yards. Even the officers, who are not generally seen at all at such functions, worked picks and shovels with the men; so it certainly looked as if fresh news had arrived. After evening 'stables' we were ordered to fall-in, and were warned that everybody would have to turn out at three o'clock next morning, march to the trenches, and stand to arms there till after sunrise. We were also told to keep our arms in readiness by us in the tents, to be ready to turn out at a moment's notice, and to make as little noise as possible in doing so.

This continued for two days: more trench-digging and standing to arms in them from three to six A.M., and then marching down again to camp, leaving of course the usual number of observation-posts during the day. It was one morning, after stumbling up to the trenches in the dark, and waiting till nearly sunrise, that from the hill opposite we saw our picket dashing in at least an hour before their time. They came across the valley in front of us; and as they rode past our trench the sergeant called out, 'You'll have all you want now: there's eight hundred of them advancing on the hill we've left.' So they were coming at last! Just before the sun rose I heard one of our men say, 'I wonder whether sunrise will be the signal for the attack; it would be very like them.' At that moment almost the sun began rising over the hills to our right, and at the same instant a dense white puff of smoke came from the left-hand corner of the flat-topped kopje—they had two black-powder guns, the rest cordite. There was perfect silence while you could count twelve slowly, then a dull boom; silence again for a few seconds, then a whirling, rushing sound, and something that you could almost see went screeching over our heads. We looked round just as the shell exploded with a crash, and a cloud of earth and flying pieces of rock showed where it had struck, some fifty yards behind us. Almost directly afterwards we heard the peculiar double report, the *crack-crack* of Mausers from the rocks opposite gradually increasing in frequency and rapidly until the noise was deafening, and a perfect hailstorm of bullets were flying over and about us, knocking pieces off the stones of our trench. The rocks opposite must have been alive with men, though we saw no one even at that little distance. Then came a loud report from the Kaffrarian lines on the hills to our right. Our guns were now answering theirs; but we had little time for observation then, for we were

sending volleys and independent fire back into them as hard as we could pelt.

At one time, shortly after this, the enemy seemed to concentrate their fire on our trench; and as it was absolutely impossible to return it, we were ordered to lie low and keep a lookout through our portholes for any advance. It was dangerous enough work to do this even, as the hail of bullets upon the trench would have meant death to any one showing himself out of cover. It was just like a fierce, driving hailstorm. Nothing showed me so clearly the power of the modern quick-firing rifle as this.

The big guns were now carrying on a duel, the shells passing almost directly over our heads. Three additional Boer guns were firing, and all ours—four in number—were in action. The enemy did not take long, however, in getting their guns to bear on us; and as they had eleven, as well as a pom-pom and several Maxims, they were able to bring a cross-fire on each of ours from three of theirs. The noise was deafening, as was only natural, for fifteen big guns, one pom-pom, five Maxims, and some five thousand rifles were all roaring and spitting out their contents as fast as possible. The enemy's shells were bursting chiefly beyond the ridges and falling on the flat space or basin behind us. The surface of this stretch of ground was literally cut to pieces by them; and it would have been almost impossible for any one to have walked the mile or so across it down to camp alive.

The Boers were now completely round us, occupying the Wepener side of the bridge and the ridges on that side of the Calydon River. Our two Maxims guarding the bridge were going like steam-hammers, showing that the Boers were making a determined attack there; but their heaviest fire was concentrated upon us, as they evidently considered this was the vulnerable spot, as, indeed, it plainly was. Our artillery were making splendid shooting, and several times we obliged the enemy to move their guns. The ranges to every possible point of attack had been carefully found beforehand. The Boer gunners were just as good, though; but by some chance—either because they did not see our trench as clearly as they saw those to our left—we came in for the least of the shell-fire, the nearest shell bursting some fifteen yards outside our trench. We could see, however, that others were less fortunate, as shell after shell seemed to pitch right on the walls of the sconces, and twice during the day they were knocked right on the men kneeling behind them. Our gunners were also having a very warm time of it. We could see them working the guns on the ridges to our left-rear, the men being obliged to take every possible cover by lying down behind the rocks whenever the flashes were seen from the enemy's guns—lookout men being stationed to give warning—and then to rush out and lay and fire the gun. This was the only way to

keep the gunners from being knocked out, as the enemy had got the range exactly, and were dropping shells only a few feet from the limbers of our guns.

They were now attacking us furiously; and we all, I think, felt a little anxious as to what would be the end of it. We had no reserves, simply one single line of trenches, and these far apart, between twenty-five and thirty men in each. These trenches were about three feet deep, earth and stones being piled up in front to form a wall another three feet in height, the ditch being about four feet broad and of semicircular shape. Still this murderous fire went on hour after hour; and as the sun, even at that time of the year, was fearfully hot, we began to long for the evening, which we hoped would bring quiet again. Though the big guns were still firing incessantly, we were reserving our ammunition now, and firing slowly, only giving the enemy volleys now and then. For the whole three weeks' siege which followed, everything had to be left exactly as it was when the firing first started. The men told off on any special duty had to remain for nineteen days on that duty. The tents—hastily struck by simply pulling up the poles—lay scattered untouched all over the veldt. During the nineteen days of fighting no man could stir from his position either in the trenches or from the *donga* near to the camp (where the non-combatants, cooks, &c. were placed for safety) except at night. This was the order, and a most necessary one. It was very difficult indeed to find any effective cover, as the bullets and shells were now coming from all points of the compass.

The men on horse-guard had what proved to be a terribly arduous duty. Some of the horses had been loosed to graze as usual in the basin, and now they had to be collected and tied up on picket-lines in a place as much as possible under cover. A great many stampeded when the firing began, and wandered out beyond the trenches. All these poor brutes were shot without exception. The place was covered with dead horses and oxen. Those that the horse-guard succeeded in driving in had to be kept in one spot the whole time on little or no grain. Many were killed by shrapnel deliberately aimed at them, as they were partly visible from at least one of the Boer guns. Stray horses were constantly wandering about during the fighting, most of them wounded, and these were hit over and over again before being finally killed. We watched the main troop being driven in when the attack started. It was marvellous that men and horses were not all destroyed. A shrapnel burst right over one of the horse-guard; it fell over him like a douche of split lead, the ground round him being cut to pieces by the hundreds of little bullets. It was a miraculous escape.

The day was wearing on, and yet there was no change, the guns and rifle-fire pounding on hour after hour. Not a man in our trench had as yet

been touched, which was marvellously good luck considering the number of bullets that had struck our trench; but we felt sure there must have been many casualties among our force. We were getting accustomed to the squib-like report of what we felt sure must be explosive bullets, as they went off like large crackers among the rocks in front of the trench; but I feel bound to say there is a doubt whether it was not the splash of the soft-nosed bullets used by the enemy—a bullet I believe to be also illegal—as the sudden impact of such a missile fired at short range would immediately burst the bullet, the heat evolved being sufficient to melt the lead inside the hardened coating, and give an appearance in the dark as if a number of small shells were bursting around us. Indeed, on the night attack some days later, the effect of these flashes of flame and sharp cracks made some of the men certain they were explosive bullets; but I still think it may have been simply the result of the impact. Besides these sounds, the air was full of the weirdest noises: the *whir-r* of the spent bullet from a long range; the chirp of those at high velocity when fired from the rocks directly opposite—one single shrill chirp exactly like the high-pitched note of a small bird. The 'ricos,' too, made the most extraordinary sounds; pieces of bullets that had struck some obstacle—forced, I suppose, by their irregular shapes to take trajectories of all forms—made noises like the wailing of a lot of distant cats. All these made the air seem alive with flying and screeching forms. Occasionally—but very occasionally—a puff of smoke would show where some antiquated Boer had been indiscreet enough to use black powder, and it was a pure joy to have something to aim at from our trenches; but hardly ever were two shots delivered from the same position. Although we felt disheartened at the want of objective, our regiment—comprised largely of old Colonials and men of from ten to twenty years' service—had many crack shots; and in conversations I have had since with men who at that time were firing at us from the rocks opposite, I have heard many tales of the deadly effect of our fire and of the respect the Boers then formed of the shooting-powers of the Cape Mounted Rifles. They say it was impossible for them to show any part of the body out of cover without being hit, and often they put up coats and hats on sticks above the trenches, which were instantly riddled with bullets. Had we known this at the time it would have been distinctly encouraging. I heard one story of a Boer who showed afterwards at Ficksburg, as a curiosity, a match-box he had put on the top of the sconce he was in, which was pierced by a bullet; but this at five hundred yards, the distance of the nearest Boer trench, could only have been a fluke!

The first day of the attack at last drew to a

close, and as the sun went down we were all thankful to have quiet again for a bit. Little did we think then it was the first of nineteen evenings we were destined to spend in those trenches. Then the reports of the day's fighting began to drop in from men who came up from camp under cover of the dark, and we learned how heavy our losses had been. Major Springer, our best officer, was killed, and dozens of officers, non-coms., and men were down. I believe by far the greatest proportion of casualties was on this first day's fighting. At dusk very strong pickets were thrown out from every trench, about one hundred yards to the left and right front, to keep in touch with those from the other trenches. We thought then that it was not at all unlikely a night attack might be made.

I may say now that these pickets formed by far the most nervous and trying work we have had in the campaign. You knew, when taken out by the corporal in charge one hundred yards to the front, directly overlooking the narrow valley separating us from the riflemen opposite, that the whole safety of the line of defence depended upon your seeing any advance on the part of the enemy and giving the alarm in time. I am thankful to be able to say truthfully that I do not feel nervous or excited under such conditions, and therefore am not inclined to use exaggerated or extravagant language to describe it; but it really was desperately dangerous work when the moon was not up, or on a cloudy night when it was simply impossible to distinguish anything more than thirty yards ahead. Then you had to depend upon hearing alone. Wherever you happened to be placed, there you remained, behind a rock or ant-hill—just cover enough for your head—lying flat down upon the ground, peering into the darkness beyond; and unless you were absolutely sure of an attack, you must not betray your whereabouts by a challenge or by firing. If you were sure, then challenge once; and failing an immediate and satisfactory reply, let drive. You then had to bolt one hundred yards across the open and against the sky-line before an advancing enemy and under a point-blank fire, as in all probability the first time you could possibly discover any advance would be when the enemy had reached the edge of the decline into the valley only fifty yards in front of you. There would, under these conditions, be one chance in a hundred of your reaching the trenches alive. All possible precautions were therefore taken to conceal the positions of the sentries. You were posted under cover of the dark by the corporal, both crawling cautiously out in a doubled-up position, treading very carefully to avoid knocking against stones and making a noise that would have been heard at once by the watchers opposite. On the first night our officers were so afraid of the changing of sentries betraying the whereabouts of the latter

that they were only relieved once. I shall never forget that first night, flattened behind a small ant-heap, lying on our rifles when the moon rose, to prevent the reflection showing them up. We were lying there in thin khaki for six hours without moving, straining every nerve the whole time to catch the slightest sound or a glimpse of crawling figures in front; for any advancing Boers would steal from rock to rock with hardly a sound. After the first three hours a heavy thunderstorm came on, with drenching rain, and still we lay there motionless for another three hours on streaming ground, soaked through and through; yet not for an instant could you relax the keen, intent watch, stiffened, in the same position, taking advantage of every flash of lightning which lit up the rocks in front. It was a never-to-be-forgotten time! Altogether I was on eight of these pickets during the siege.

The next day, with the very earliest light, came the *ping-pong* of the Mausers—or, as we called it, the *flip-flop*, which I think more nearly represents the sound. This first firing was at the pickets who were retiring; and you may imagine they came tumbling into the trenches like rabbits. The whole of the second day passed like the first: the guns began at sunrise and continued all day; but the rifle-fire was not nearly so heavy, and soon developed into 'sniping' only. All day we lay doubled up in the trenches, and after a time took to smoking and playing cards to pass the time. To get some shade from the broiling sun we made shelters of our blankets by fixing them to the stones on the earthwork in front; but we always had two men on the lookout, and kept up 'sniping' whenever there was anything to be seen that might be the head of a Boer among the rocks. We had to give up the blankets afterwards, for they drew the fire down on us, as they could be seen from some kopjes overlooking the position.

I think I may now say a few words upon what I know of the feelings of men and of my own sensations under fire. Every recruit very naturally desires to prove himself up to English traditions when in a dangerous position, and is therefore desperately anxious to prove to himself that he can behave as others do. I was consequently very thankful to find myself fairly tranquil in spirit under it. There is a feeling which a boy experiences when waiting at a dentist's to have some teeth out—a curious excitement and shrinking in the pit of the stomach. This, I imagine, all feel at first; but on no account must you let this excited feeling have the slightest effect upon your actions. A man who, when it is necessary, has not the slightest hesitation in exposing himself, and can behave exactly as he would behave in his garden at home, when the bullets are cutting up the ground round his feet and chirping past his head perhaps only a few inches away, is in the finest nerve-condition

possible; but what a fearful lot of experience it generally takes to arrive at that condition! Time after time I have tried, and am not satisfied yet; for, after all, the great thing is to satisfy yourself, as only then can you feel content and call yourself a soldier. What other people think does not matter; though it is necessary, for example, to keep up an outward appearance of perfect self-control. I can, however, honestly say that the struggle, so far as I was concerned, was entirely an internal one, and even when dissatisfied with myself nothing unsatisfactory was noticeable. This nerve-condition, together with the art of using your rifle—being, in fact, a marksman—makes the soldier. I think one of the great lessons of the war is that every cool-headed, plucky man who can shoot is a formidable soldier: surely a very welcome discovery to us, with our large force of volunteers. One of

the most useful acquirements a soldier can possess is a power of judging when to take care of himself and take cover, and only when it is really necessary to expose himself. He should not go about with the idea that the honour of a regiment forbids his lying behind rocks and crawling under cover to attack a position, but calls upon him to rush, bolt upright, into an entirely impassable hail of lead. He might just as well commit suicide at once as adopt such tactics against modern weapons. Some writer has said that the greatest heroism is to rush headlong into a danger, and the greatest prudence to avoid it; but the greatest wisdom is to know exactly when to be heroic and when to be prudent. The soldier should be wise. The throwing of men against an enemy under cover and in possession of the modern quick-firing rifle is murder. There is no other name for it.

THE LOVE AFFAIRS OF JULIUS STANDEN.

By GILBERT STANHOPE,

Author of *Bobby's Protégée*, *Spray of Jessamine*, *His Darkest Hour*, *The Colonel's Little Girl*, *On the Honeymoon*, &c.

CHAPTER VII.



AUSING but an instant to recover breath, Beatrice made her way to the spot where Julius was lying. A large piece of the cliff had fallen with him, and fragments were scattered all around. He lay on

his back beside a great heap of débris, beneath which one arm was partly buried.

Beatrice bent over him. His face was deathly white and his eyes closed; but she put her hand on his heart, and found, to her great relief, that it still beat faintly. She knew better than to attempt to move him without knowing where the injury lay. She lifted off the stones and earth that partly covered him, and knelt beside him, taking out her handkerchief and water-bottle and moistening his lips and forehead.

He stirred a little like a man in sleep. 'Beatrice!' he murmured.

She started. He had not seen her. How did he know she was there?

'I am here,' she said softly.

He opened his eyes and saw her bending over him.

'Your brandy?' asked Beatrice hastily, for he seemed sinking into unconsciousness again.

He turned his head a little to the left; and, divining his meaning, she felt in his pockets on that side and found a small flask. She lifted his head a little and put the flask to his lips.

'Beatrice!' he said again. She turned her eyes to his, and in the long gaze fixed upon her she read all the love and all the craving he had been battling with for all those weary weeks.

'Are you in pain?' she asked. 'Do you know where you are hurt?'

'It's my back. It's broken, I think, Beatrice. From here'—and with his uninjured hand he touched a spot—'below here I have no feeling; from there downwards I cannot move. No, I have no pain; and that's the worst sign. My head feels quite clear. I know I have not many hours to live.'

'Oh no! oh no!' cried Beatrice through her tears; 'help is coming. They will send men to move you from here, and a doctor'—

'It's no use,' he said faintly; 'it will be better to let me die here in peace. Will you raise my head a little? I want to see the sea—and the sunlight—and—and your face—for the last time!'

She whipped off the light coat she was wearing and put it under his head. In all her misery and despair it was sweet to be ministering to him. The tears she could not check were streaming down her cheeks.

Julius stretched out his hand; she put hers into it, and his fingers closed over it tightly. 'Don't cry for me,' he went on; 'you don't know what a worthless fellow I am. I did not mean to be unfaithful to Effie; but I never knew what love was till I saw you. You will not be angry with me now?'

Angry! when her whole soul was so filled with love for him that it had no room for any other thought; when even the knowledge that he was dying could not quite check the wild thrill of joy that passed through her when she learned that he loved her!

'Never mind, Jack,' said Alice; 'tis little enough, but yet it is enough. Jack, let us go away from here. I should not care to meet any of the people father knew in his prosperity.'

Corwell kissed his wife, and then they at once discussed the future. Half-an-hour later he had bought the *Ceres* from her captain (who was also the owner), paid him the price, and taken possession. Before the week was out he had bought all the trade-goods he could afford to pay for, shipped a crew of Malays and Manila men, and, with Alice by his side, watched Ternate sink astern as the *Ceres* began her long voyage to the South Seas.

After a three weeks' voyage along the northern and eastern shores of New Guinea, the *Ceres* came to an anchor in the harbour which Corwell had described to the Governor. The rest of his story up to the time of his arrival in Sydney Cove the reader knows.

Steadily northward under cloudless skies the high-pooped, bluff-bowed little vessel had sailed, favoured by leading winds nearly all the way, for four-and-twenty days, when on the morning of the twenty-fifth Corwell, who had been up aloft scanning the blue loom of a lofty island which lay right ahead, descended to the deck with a smiling face.

'That is not only the island itself, Alice; but with this breeze we have a clear run for the big village in the bay. I can see the spur on the southern side quite clearly.'

'I'm so glad, Jack dear. How you have worried and fumed for the past three days!'

'I feared we had got too far to the westward, my girl,' he said. Then telling the mate to keep away a couple of points, he went below to pore over the plan of the harbour, a copy of which had been taken by the Governor. As he studied it, his wife's fingers passed lovingly through and through his curly locks. He looked up, put his arm round her waist, and swung her to a seat on his knee.

'I think, Alice, I can tell the men now.'

'I am sure you can. The sooner you take them into your confidence the better.'

Corwell nodded. During the voyage he had

watched the mate and three white seamen keenly, and was thoroughly satisfied with them. The remainder of the crew—three Manila men and two Penang Malays—did their duty well enough; but both he and his wife knew from long experience that such people were not to be trusted when their avarice was aroused. He resolved, therefore, to rely entirely upon his white crew and the natives of the island to help him in obtaining the gold. Yet, as he could not possibly keep the operations a secret from the five men he distrusted, he decided, as a safeguard against their possible and dangerous ill-will, to promise them double wages from the day he found that gold was to be obtained in payable quantities. As for the mate and the three other white men, they should have one-fifth of all the gold won between them, he keeping the remaining four-fifths for himself and wife.

He put his head up the companion-way and called to the man he had appointed mate.

'Come below, Mallet, and bring Totten, Harris, and Sam with you.'

Wondering what was the matter, the four men came into the cabin. As soon as they were standing together at the head of the little table, the captain's wife went quietly on deck to see that none of the coloured crew came aft to listen.

'Now, men,' said Corwell, 'I have something important to tell you. I believe I can trust you.'

Then in as few words as possible he told them the object of the voyage, and his intentions towards them. At first they seemed somewhat incredulous; but when they were shown the gold their doubts vanished, and they one and all swore to be honest and true to him, and to obey him faithfully, whether afloat or ashore, in fair or evil fortune.

From his scanty store of liquor the captain took a bottle of rum, and they drank to their future success; then Corwell shook each man's hand, and sent him on deck.

Just before dusk the *Ceres* ran in and dropped her clumsy, wooden-stocked anchor in the crystal-clear water a few cables' length away from the village. As the natives recognised her a chorus of welcoming shouts and cries pealed from the shore from five hundred dusky-hued throats.

DE WET'S FIRST AND WORST REPULSE.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART II.



DURING the whole siege no man was allowed to leave the trenches during the day, from five in the morning till six at night, on any pretext whatever; so you may be sure we were very glad when evening came, and some of us could stretch our legs, and men were able to come up from camp

with provisions and water. To Mr Bowers, the lieutenant in charge of our trench, it is due that we had so very few casualties during the siege—two killed out of twenty-five. The total casualties of the Kaffrians, Brabant's, Engineers, &c. amounted to a little over twenty men; whereas the Cape Mounted Rifles alone had one hundred and fourteen casualties out of three hundred and

eighty men—a very high percentage, and very different from the number given in the newspapers, I believe. A glance at the position will at once make clear why the Division lost so much more heavily than others. We were defending the key to the position, and therefore received the very closest attention from the enemy. Every night we were made to dig out and strengthen the trench and make embrasures to fire through instead of firing over the top of the earthwork. I am sure this plan saved a good many lives. We had to keep a lookout even at this work, as whenever a pick made rather too much noise, or on a light night we happened to show up against the sky-line, some bright flashes would come from the opposite side of the valley, and we had to knock off till the enemy cooled down again. Once or twice we thought it was the beginning of an attack, and tumbled into the trench as quick as lightning, feeling for our rifles.

It was on the third or fourth night—I don't remember which—that the enemy made their determined attempt to carry the position by assault. Everything had gone on as usual, and some of us had strayed some little distance from the trench, looking for big stones to pile up against the base of our earthwork-wall to make it secure against shell-fire; but most of us had turned in, endeavouring to make ourselves comfortable, as far as it was possible when you had to lie doubled up with your knees in your chest, or stretched on your back with your feet up on the wall of the trench, for it was nowhere possible to lie down at full length. About nine o'clock we heard one or two reports that seemed very close; but as the Boers had been keeping up the 'sniping' very late that night, we thought little about it. It was a dark, cloudy night; and quite suddenly there came a burst of firing on our left—no 'sniping' this time, but rapid independent fire and occasional volleys right along the line. What on earth were they playing at? What could they see to fire at on a night like that from their trenches? The number and frequency of the flashes from the darkness in front showed that the enemy evidently had some decided object in view. Was the fire from the trenches opposite? We were utterly at sea, and did not know what to think. Then suddenly it came crashing out of the darkness in our faces. It was all plain now; the long row of bright flashes, the cracking and flashing of what we took for explosive bullets on the trench and rocks in front, and the chirping and singing of these over our heads soon cleared the matter up. The enemy were on the ridge not two hundred yards in front, and had crept right up on our side of the valley unseen by the pickets. We were up in a moment and firing away at the flashes. Nearly all the enemy's bullets, however, were passing over our heads, which was encouraging; but it would be a pretty desperate business if

they should succeed in pushing an entrance through our lines. On our right was the big gap, with nothing between us and the Kaffrarians on the hills opposite, nearly a mile away—a big open door to the centre of our position. If they had known that they had only this one thin line to pass—with no reserves, and a flat plain behind us nearly a mile wide; with nothing behind to check them, and no direct obstacle to prevent their coming through the gap—perhaps the result might have been different. The question was how to prevent them doing this, and outflanking us on the right of our trench. On us rested this responsibility, and the six men on the extreme right of our trench were sent creeping down among the rocks to the right to extend our line as far as possible. Suppose they pushed a force of men under cover of the dark along the bottom of the gap midway between us and the hills opposite, who could prevent them? Only the fact that it was too much like walking into a trap, and their ignorance of what there was inside, saved us.

The cry was, 'Where are the pickets?' It was rather late, for these pickets, which had been doubled, had till now been almost directly between the enemy's rifles and ours; but in the excitement of the moment no one had thought of them. At that instant the two men on the left came tumbling in. I never saw men move quicker in my life; the marvel is that they came in at all. A minute later one of those to the right came dashing in; and the officer shouted out to him, asking if the man who was with him was in too, and was answered, 'Yes.' It was too dark to see if the correct number of men was in the trench, and no more was thought about it that night.

We afterwards learned that these two men were lying behind a rock in the usual place, and heard a noise as if stones were being moved about, and low talking and whispering, but supposed it to be our men building up the trench behind them. When the firing started they instantly began to retire, running doubled up to avoid showing up against the sky-line; and the same instant four or five dark figures started up only about twenty yards away, ran round to their right, dropped down behind some rocks, and began blazing away. Clerk, the man in front, ran like a hare, and says he knew that the other man—one of the recruits who came out with me—was just behind him when he started, and he thought the man was close on his heels when he reached the trench. However, he was missing next morning, and we found him lying on his back some fifty yards in front of the trench, with his skull split open by a bullet, which had cracked it exactly as you might crack off the top of a coco-nut. Poor fellow! he was over thirty, and his wife was even then at Capetown with his children, where she had come. I

believe, to persuade him to return home. He had considerable estates in Ireland. There are many sad stories that could be told in connection with nearly all the men in this extraordinary corps.

Now that the pickets were in we could fire freely, and were blazing away madly to stop the slow approach of the bright flashes in front. We could distinguish now and then a dark figure pop up and down behind the rocks, and hear the orders to fire shouted out in English, followed by volleys as good and even better than our own. Above the incessant crackle of rifles we heard, too, a loud moaning—some wounded men calling for help in the darkness in front, and an answering call; but the piteous moaning continued for over an hour, so it was clear we had hit somebody. I got quite tired after a while of this blind blazing away into the darkness, and so waited quietly and marked down one spot where a regular flash had been coming for over twenty minutes. I aimed very carefully, waited till the next flash, and let rip. Whether the bullet was so close that my friend thought it advisable to change his position, or whether—as I always have felt sure—it found its mark, I can't say; but it was the last of the flashes from that spot, and I have always taken credit, rightly or wrongly, for this small contribution to the night's work.

This exciting game had now been going on for some two hours, and the Boers were evidently hanging back, our fire being too heavy for them. Clearly they hesitated to advance over the fifty yards they would have to traverse without any cover before they could rush the trenches. Another hour wore away without a second's lull in the firing. They had, if anything, come a little nearer and more round to our right. A man came over from the trench to our left and asked if we could get out and outflank them, as Major Wearing, who was in command, was afraid of this movement of theirs round our right. This our officer refused to do, and I think quite rightly. It would have weakened our trench, and we had not enough men to turn their flank, as they were in greatly superior numbers. They were now showing signs of a final attempt; the firing increased, and the slow-creeping onward movement began again. At this time a man came crawling across to us. 'There were several men badly wounded in the next trench,' he said. 'Had we got a stretcher?' We directed him down to camp, and he went crawling away again into the darkness.

Our officer now shouted out, 'Fix bayonets! When they rush, stand up in the trench, empty your magazines into them, and then do your best with the bayonet!' We were now ready to spring up, and expected every second to see a crowd of charging figures that never came. The bayonet, as in so many instances in this war, had been too much for them. Afterwards they told the same

story; all along the line directly they heard the order 'Fix bayonets!' the advance stopped, and from that moment their fire began to slacken. In another hour the last shot had been fired, and all was quiet again after four hours' furious attack.

There was precious little sleep for us that night, and we were very glad of daylight, even though it brought the same old routine of the pounding away of heavy guns and 'sniping.' We had to congratulate ourselves on only one killed in our trench that night; but we learned the following evening of the heavy list of casualties on our left. R. was in the trench which on that night alone lost sixteen killed and wounded out of thirty-two men—half their number. He told me that the fire was so heavy that the bullets seemed to come through every chink between the stones, and they were subjected to a cross-fire as well. The other trenches also suffered heavily, but our line of defence was the only one attacked; the enemy had again thrown all their strength against this point. The other regiments could not help us; they were too far away, and also expected momentarily to be attacked.

So ended the Boers' big night-assault. It had been a near thing, and we had to congratulate ourselves on coming out of it as we did. The colonel had even sent orders, when the fighting was heaviest, for us to retire; but the reply was sent back that we could hold on, and it was well that we did. To have retired would have meant a very heavy loss of men, and almost certainly the loss of the whole position afterwards.

It would take too long to describe in detail the fighting day by day after this. It was very much the same each day. We could see through glasses the movements of bodies of the enemy, long columns moving in fours exactly like ours, the smoke from their laagers behind the hills, and their cattle grazing on the plains in the direction of Ladybrand. For two or three days we heard the sound of big guns in the direction of Dewetsdorp, and wondered whether it was the relief-column coming at last. We were in constant heliographic communication with Mafeteng in Basutoland, and got news from that source that Brabant was coming to relieve us from Aliwal North, Rundle from Dewetsdorp, and French from Ladybrand. All this we heard; but no relief came. Day after day passed on in the same way—the pounding of the guns from morning till night, and the continuous 'sniping' that prevented us moving from the trenches.

The horrible part of the business was in the hospital. One of our officers was dying in agony, with a piece of shell in his intestines; a man who had been shot through the brain lived for five days afterwards; two wounded men had been shot in their beds; and there were many other like cases. A constant fire was kept up on the hospital, and several sickening stories came up to us from camp

in the evenings. Our chaplain tried to hold a burial-service over the dead, whose graves were already beginning to fill the little churchyard; but the 'snipers' filled the church with bullets, and the service had to be broken up and a rush made for cover. The enemy persistently fired at our ambulance-wagons, with such effect that none could approach the trenches during daytime. If a man was wounded, he had to lie where he fell for the whole day until the stretchers could take him away at night. R. tells me he saw a man who had been hit in the neck and was bleeding badly: this was at seven o'clock in the morning; at six that night he was in the same position, and still alive.

It was on going down to camp one evening to fetch water that I had the narrowest shave I have had in the campaign. I went down rather too early in the twilight, and found the bullets kicking up the ground all about the scattered tents and kit. I went on towards the *vlei* just below, with the camp-kettle in my hand. The Boers must have caught sight of me, for suddenly about a dozen bullets struck the ground, none of them more than a few inches from my feet. It felt as if the bullets tried to get as near as possible without hitting me, and several went singing past my head. Here clearly was a case for wisdom, for to have stayed there would have been to commit suicide; they had got my range, and were missing me by inches only. I therefore cleared off at the double to two wagons covered with sailcloth, the bullets singing past me as I went. However, the Boers had seen this move too, and a dozen or more bullets came tearing through the canvas; so, as I was not going to be shot like a rabbit in a hole, I retreated in haste the way I had come, the *chirp*, *chirp* still continuing unpleasantly close to my head. I filled my kettle from a bucket in the officers' mess, which was well under cover, and came up to camp with it unnoticed by the 'snipers' in other directions.

It was shortly after this that we lost one of our best men. One evening he showed his head for a few minutes above the trench while distributing rations amongst us; but he fell back instantly, shot through the back of the neck, to die the same night in hospital. This was our sergeant-major—Walley—a good man and a splendid shot. I saw him once fire at a Boer who was walking across an open space on the opposite hill, thinking, I suppose, that at about seventeen hundred yards he was at a safe distance. The man dropped like a stone. We too did our share of the 'sniping,' and kept our friends on the other side of the valley from moving about too freely.

Every afternoon we could see a regular stream of Cape-carts coming out from Wepener. It was the usual pastime of the residents of the town—their parson included—to drive out, have an after-

noon's 'sniping,' and drive back in time for tea. This we learnt afterwards.

All we had yet experienced was, however, cheerful compared with the days and nights that followed the coming down of the rains. For three days and two nights it poured incessantly. Our trenches were filled with water about six inches deep, and in this we had to sit and sleep, if sleep a man could. There was absolutely no means of keeping dry. I was literally soaking wet for the whole of that time, and in the evenings had to go as usual and lie out flat on the streaming ground, and without an overcoat, the wearing of which was not allowed on picket, as offering too much of a mark and hampering rapid movement. If ever I were asked what was the worst and most horrible experience in war, I should say it was to be either in such a position as I have described above, or to start at nine at night—as we repeatedly had to do afterwards—and track till three the next morning, probably in heavy rain, then start again at five and patrol, skirmish, and gallop about the country after some half-dozen 'snipers' who only waited to shoot a scout or two—before galloping away. After this duty during the whole day, we often started again at 10 P.M. the same night and tracked the whole night, with perhaps only one meal of dry biscuit, bully-beef, and cold water during the whole of the time. The above was literally and exactly our routine; and after a full dose of it you were in a condition to sleep as you joggled along on your tired horse, too hungry, wet, tired, and dirty to care whether there were two thousand Boers or none at all within a hundred yards of you. What you want is food ('scoff'); if the Boers will give it to you, then go and ask them for it. Surely as a prisoner you will have far better times than these. This is the sort of condition the hardest and best men get into, and these are really the 'horrors of war' (if we think only of its hardships), not the fighting.

Once last winter we started at six one morning and took up a position at six at night, two biscuits being all we carried upon us, and all we had to eat that day. We then had to hold the position gained, and as we had been given to understand we were out on a few hours' patrol only, most of us had not even brought our coats. There were very sharp frosts every night then; and a mistake having been made as to the road we had taken, no supplies reached us that night. There was nothing to do but to light huge fires and shiver over them all night, as sleep was impossible, the cold being too severe. Next morning early we started, and were fighting all that day; and not until evening did we get into camp again, after having been thirty-six hours without a rest or a morsel of food, and working hard the whole time. All these things constitute the worst horrors of war, and they

come frequently and in various forms. In summer come the dust-storms, or rather hurricanes of dust, when you have to pack and saddle up in a whirlwind of fine sand, through which you can hardly see a yard. When you try to put your saddle on your horse it is pretty nearly blown away; and you eat and breathe dust till the storm ceases, your food being inches deep in dirt. However, you must just reconcile yourself to these things.

I shall never forget those days and nights of rain at Wepener. Once a Boer shouted out to ask whether we were enjoying ourselves, and if we felt dry; this was from the valley below. Lucky for him that the night was dark! We were all feeling by this time the effects of being cooped up so long, and when I tried at night to work at the trench I felt weak and shaky in the legs, as if I had been in bed for a fortnight. I think the awful smells around us added to these sensations. There were over a dozen dead horses and oxen that had been killed more than a fortnight before lying within about fifty yards of the trench, so the stench can be imagined; but this we had to endure, as we could neither remove them nor get away from them day or night. The food—boiled fresh meat, and very sticky and heavy bread, cooked in the *donga* in camp—was good in a way, and all very well for a time; but the same food morning and night for three weeks, with nothing but cold water to wash it down, became a trifle monotonous and injurious—at least, to judge from my own feelings, it had a bad effect. Worst of all, our tobacco had run out, and we were just ‘dying for a smoke.’ One of our sergeants took to cow-dung, and said it was not at all bad; but I could never get over the idea of the thing, and contented myself with dried tea-leaves. It was a thousand times better than nothing at all.

By this time the Boers had dragged two of their guns to the top of the Jammersburg, in Basutoland, and began to drop shells right down into the middle of the camp; but the range was too great for much damage to be done, and they soon shifted them again. This, we heard, was due to the action of the Basutos, who were watching the fight in thousands from their hills, and who let the Boers know that if they did not shift their guns from their territory they would take up arms against them. They were heart and soul with us, and cheered every success of Brabant's column as it advanced. We began now to hear his guns from the direction of Bushman's Kop, and daily expected to be relieved. We had almost given up thinking of relief, as we got so sick of watching for and expecting what never came; but the force arrived at last. The guns came nearer and nearer every day, though for three days the men had to fight every step of the way, as a large force of Boers had been sent out to stop them. At last there were

signs of the laagers being broken up; long lines of wagons, guns, and mounted men were streaming away across the plains towards Ladybrand. They had to cross one spot that was within range of our guns, and we made the most of it. We were all out of the trenches now, watching them dashing across the open space, dodging our shells. This was at six o'clock in the morning, and at midday Brabant rode in with a portion of Hart's Brigade from the south, and the following morning the Devonshire Yeomanry and Rundle's Brigade appeared from Dewetsdorp. Then at last we were allowed to get down to camp again to the delights of cooked meat and tobacco given to us by the Yeomanry, who could have made a guinea an ounce on the tobacco had they liked. Then to wash for the first time for three weeks. Ye gods, how we needed it! So ended our experiences at Wepener.

Congratulations were pouring in through the heliograph from Roberts, Kitchener, Carrington (a former colonel of our corps), and from many others; and our colonel, Dalgety, came round and made a little speech about the way we had stuck to the position. What with congratulations and decent food, our spirits soon began to rise again. We had great difficulty in recognising those of our horses that had escaped the bullets of the enemy. The poor beasts were living skeletons, and one mass of mange; I never saw such awful-looking brutes. Very few of them lived more than a few weeks afterwards.

Though the Boers had handled us very roughly, they too had lost heavily. We had knocked out two or three of their guns; and from talks I had with some of them afterwards at Senekal and elsewhere, where they had laid down their arms, I learnt that in the night-attack alone they lost considerably over a hundred men. One section of a commando a hundred strong lost thirty-eight killed. So they did not come off so easily after all, and Christian de Wet had at Wepener, at the hands of the Colonial Division, suffered his first and worst repulse.

SONNET.

It is late summer-time; and, in a dream
Of lustrous weather, August wanes, and droops.
A cloudless azure heaven, in silence, stoops
Over a world filled with the russet gleam
Of ripened corn-fields, and the paler gold
Of piled sheaves, that, far off, dreaming, lie
On upland slopes. The streams run drowsily
Within their narrowing beds, their story told,
Their old glad frolic of the spring days o'er.
The hum of insect life, the birds' gay tune,
And all the magic music of glad June
Are hushed; and, in the silence, evermore
A voiceless whisper falls upon the ear,
A breath, that tells the summer's end is near.

M. C. C.