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**WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA.**

**Interesting Particulars of the Struggle Between Great Britain and the Boers.**

VICTOR OF COLESBERG.

SOME POINTS ABOUT GENERAL FRENCH AND HIS CAREER AS A SOLDIER.

(By Major Arthur Griffiths, in the London 'Daily Mail'.)

It is a curious fact, on which some emphasis has been recently laid, that the most successful of our leaders in South Africa so far have been principally cavalry officers. Colonel Baden-Powell is actually colonel of the 5th Dragoon Guards. General French, late of the 19th Hussars, went out with Buller with the express purpose of commanding the strong cavalry division, which as yet, has no corporate existence, its various items and component parts having been split up and distributed over the whole theatre of war.

Baden-Powell has no doubt owed his magnificent defence of Mafeking to his innate resolute spirit rather than to his cavalry training; but French, a cavalry officer 'pur et simple,' has excelled in troop leading, and has shown it especially in his management of the three arms combined. It was

HIS EXCELLENT DISPOSITIONS and obvious mastery of the operation that led Sir George White to leave French the undisputed control of the Elandslaagte fight, which was unquestionably a victory. Again, now, although the proportion of artillery and infantry under his orders in the Collesberg affair was relatively small, he handled all three arms with equal adroitness and knowledge.

In his case, as in Baden-Powell's, it is, of course, the intrinsic qualities of the man that have brought him success not the chance that he learn his work in the cavalry. It is yet undoubtedly true that that arm has produced many good men in these latter days. It has been noticed before now by shrewd observers that the standard of intelligence and efficiency is very high among cavalry officers. There is a marked improvement in the whole class; the days of the 'haw-haw' plunger are passed, and one and all are conspicuous in their efforts to benefit by the higher instruction, to seek out eagerly any avenue of distinction, to shirk no duty, however irksome and arduous; and the result is that they come

CONSTANTLY TO THE FRONT.

General French is an excellent specimen of the old school, which includes a number of first-class soldiers. It is only necessary to mention the names of Babington and Brabazon, of Brocklehurst, now unhappily shut up in Ladysmith; of Lord Dundonald, commanding Buller's cavalry on the Tugela; of Lord Airlie, at the head of the 12th Lancers on the Modder; of Colonel Broadwood, lately the dashing young leader of the Egyptian cavalry, now at the head of a fine corps of irregular cavalry at the Cape.

French has always been esteemed by those who pretend to have an insight into character, as one of the best of all. His soldierly aptitudes and his sound qualifications for the military service were noted almost from the first.

For a long time he was no more than a regimental adjutant, first with his own people, the 19th Hussars, and next with a yeomanry Corps. He was always held in high esteem by all he served under. It was greatly to his advantage that his lot was cast with one of the best cavalry regiments in the service. This was the 19th Hussars, long under the command of Colonel Barrow,

A SPLENDIDLY-TRAINED REGIMENT

—perfect in demeanor and appearance. It accompanied Lord Wolseley in the Nile expedition in 1884-5, and won

his unstinting approval, especially when employed in outpost duties and reconnaissances.

French was its major and second in command, and he went with it on that momentous expedition of Herbert Stewart's, which was thrown across the Bayuda Desert as a last forlorn hope to rescue Gordon in Khartoum. At the fierce conflict of Abu Klea, when Stewart was struck down with Burnaby and so many more gallant souls, French, with his regiment, was engaged, and, again, they were at Methemeh when Redvers Buller's opportune arrival was so happily instrumental in the extrication of the force.

A strong bond of union appears to have grown up between Buller and French, dating probably from those earlier days. It was increased by their close association at the autumn manoeuvres of 1898, when French commanded the cavalry brigade of the Southern (Buller's) Army Corps. It was THOUGHT BY SOME EXPERTS that the cavalry on that occasion did not greatly distinguish themselves, that it was too much wedded to old traditions of working in large bodies over long distances and at great speed, while the less showy, but more useless duties of reconnaissance were largely over-looked.

For this the system of training that had long prevailed was principally to blame. It is certain that French made the most of his command, in so far as his antagonist, General Talbot, was concerned, when he continually checked and out-manceuvred. A smart bit of fight was seen on the day of the fight at Yarmbury Castle, when French, with a body of his cavalry, surprised one or more batteries of Horse Artillery, dismounted and made the whole force prisoners.

When the staff of the South African Army Corps was being discussed it was finally decided to give the cavalry command to French. Many other names were brought forward and strongly supported; but the casting vote for French was given by Buller himself, who earnestly pleaded to have his own man.

The good opinion he had first formed had been confirmed at Aldershot, where French last year commanded the cavalry. Since then Buller has been loud in his praises of an officer whose services he so urgently needed that French, as we know, made his escape from Ladysmith by the skin of his teeth on the very eve of its investment. The story of his going south by the train, concealed

UNDER A SEAT OF THE RAILWAY CARRIAGE and running the gauntlet of a drooping fire, has already been heard.

Now, Buller is known to place great reliance upon French, whom he characterizes as one of the best generals he has got. It looks as if he had abundant reason for his truthfulness.

In appearance French is hardly an ideal cavalry officer. There is little of the 'beau sabreur' about him. He is short and thick, and of a rather ungainly figure. Although he can stick on a horse as well as anyone, rides with a strong seat, and is indefatigable in the saddle, he is not at all a pretty horseman. His mind is more set on essentials—on effective leadership with all it means—rather than on what soldiers call 'spit and polish,' the external appearance and not the true inwardness of things.

His mental calibre is undoubtedly high; he is sound in judgement, clear-headed, patient, taking everything quietly, the rough with the smooth; but he is always on the spot, willing to wait and still more ready to act, when the opportunity comes, with tremendous effect.

**A DOCTOR ON THE BATTLE-FIELD.**

A lot of the North Lancashire men were frightfully wounded. I turned over a sergeant, black in the face, dead. One man had been brought to me who had been struck by a shell fragment—face mutilated, throat cut, and chest lacerated. O God! the sight was sickening; blood everywhere. Very few of our men being wounded, I went out near sunset to aid the Highlanders. They had been lying all day under that frightful sun, and their wounded were still there. No stretcher-bearers could advance, as they were all shot at. They shouted to me to crawl on the ground,

as, though most of the firing was over, there were still three or four Boers, with express rifles and explosive bullets who were under cover, and who kept picking off our men. Some men utterly collapsed, and all I could do was to put a pad to their wounds and my whiskey flask to their lips. I then crawled back to my horse and made my way to some ambulances two miles distant, not a time to get their aid. I was under fire all the time, bullets dancing round me. I felt a kind of solemn disregard, as I had been exposed to greater dangers before.—Letter from a surgeon at Modder River.

**FROM INDIA TO AFRICA.**

After several years service in India, Captain Hensley was ordered with his regiment to South Africa, where his regiment has been for nearly two years, and the famous Royal Dublin Fusiliers were, of course, at once sent to the front. At the battle of Glencoe, Captain Hensley and his regiment were in the thickest of the fighting. The Halifax hero was in the never to be forgotten retreat with Yule from Dundee to Ladysmith. From that camp he was ordered to Estcourt, and will be remembered as being in command of the armored train which did such execution among the Boers early in the campaign. Captain Hensley's private letter to his parents dated Estcourt, November the 21st, descriptive of the battle of Glencoe, and which was published in 'The Mail' of January 13th and the 'Herald' of the 15th, was one of the most thrilling and realistic pieces of descriptive writing which had appeared in print for many a day. No account of the war from the pen of the most experienced correspondent has attracted so much attention as his graphic story. Some of the most striking passages are herewith reproduced:

—Sir Michael Hicks-Beach will find it less difficult to finance a big war than a small one, since he will be forced to borrow on a large scale and increase the funded debt, says a financial expert. The military operations in South Africa will require not ten, but fifty millions sterling. It is clearly impracticable for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to provide for expenses by charging them against revenues for two or three years and carry a large floating debt. He is not likely to increase the difficulties of the Ministry by raising the rate of taxation, and thereby rendering the war unpopular when he has the easy resource of borrowing the money which he requires and leaving another generation to carry the financial burden of a war for the salvation of the Empire. If the nation be as sound as its wonderful achievements in colonization and maritime and industrial expansion during the current century would lead one to believe, it will be all the better for the trial through which we are now going. It is humiliating, no doubt, for Englishmen to have their weaknesses and shortcomings exposed by an enemy whose military resources were deemed contemptible and whom they expected to overwhelm in a holiday march upon Pretoria. But the fact that they do not nurse their grievances against those who blindly led them into the Boer trap, but on the contrary, assume their full share of responsibility for the spirit of over-confidence and the sense of superiority of which they have become the victims, shows that the vigor of the English people is unimpaired. The ability to confess errors and to resolve to correct them is the true test of manliness.

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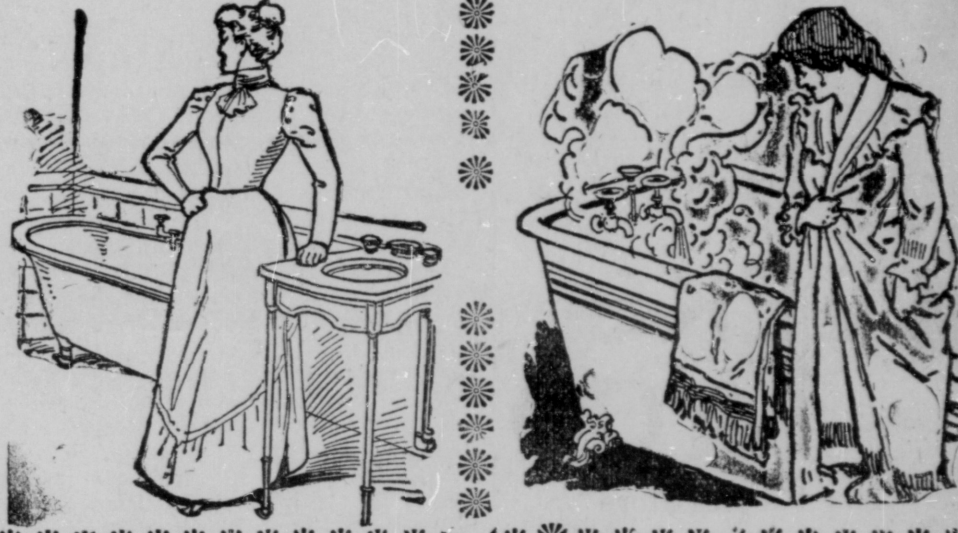
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