

The Transvaal War

BY GEN. JOUBERT.

HE WRITES A LETTER TO FRIENDS IN BELGIUM

In Which He Tells a Thrilling Story of an Encounter With Buller—An Incident Which Gave Rise to a Strange Story.

It was after the battle of Tugela River—said General Joubert—when, fatigued and exhausted by the tension of the last few months, I went to the house of an English lady, the Duchess of B—, who had been a personal friend ever since her residence in the Transvaal. Feeling perfectly secure under the circumstances, I was accompanied by a single aide who volunteered to run all risks to secure for me the necessary quiet.

The two armies, according to the Scripture phrase, had "sat watching each other." Both had a taste of what was done when they were not watching each other, and with experience came caution.

The first night and day passed quietly, with news that they were still watching, when on the evening of the second day, about nine o'clock, the voices and tread of a dozen men were heard on the porch. Presently the door opened, the Duchess entered, and, to my astonishment, introduced Sir Redvers Buller, commander of the British forces. Both of us were astounded, started instinctively, stared but bowed courteously to each other. The Duchess had warned neither, but relied on the instincts of manhood for an acceptance of the situation. Here were two men, the recognized heads of two opposing forces, upon whom the presiding authorities relied for a successful ending of the campaign. The death of either meant half the victory for the other side. We were within pistol shot of each other—nay the distance of a sword thrust. We gazed fixedly one at the other, and each rightly knew he was facing a foe worthy of intense effort and of the keenest strategy.

After a few moments' pause, Buller stretched forth his hand and said: "Sir, we are placed in a strange situation; I cannot forget the courtesy due our hostess, but from the moment we part, though we have met as guests of the same respected lady, hostilities are declared." He turned and left the room. I heard him ascending the steps with his officers to the apartments assigned by the Duchess.

Here was a predicament. I was in the house alone with my aide. Here was a man bound to defend the honor of England, too much of a soldier to seize me under the circumstances or to fire without giving warning. I had a few moments' leisure. My own life I held not at a pin's fee. The army, I felt, would lose something were I taken, as I had carefully planned the campaign and had a full knowledge of the plans of the British and of Buller's own designs. I was as sure a shot as he, if not a quicker. A duel of swords or pistols would have troubled me but slightly. To steal away, although ten against two, was not, to my mind, at all inviting. I resolved to wait and be on the alert. All was silence in the house—darkness outside of my room. I could hear plainly the loud tick of the swinging pendulum by the staircase. I counted, I thought the moments that separated from eternity him or me, perhaps both. There was a creaking sound on the floor above. Glancing at the window I discerned, it seemed, a form just sinking into shadow from the path of light that streamed from the window. In an instant I extinguished the light and felt the world grow larger in the darkness. I had fixed in my mind three plans of action. One, to boldly attack the party; the second to mount to the upper floor to be above the enemy; the third to wait

outside of the house for a sign of attack. I gave them all up and decided to wait in the room.

The hours drew on—eleven sounded, twelve, and then one, which seemed to prolong its solitary sound for several minutes, and then all was still—a silence deeper than before.

At half-past two I heard a rustling in the hall-way, and then a knock at the door. The voice of the Duchess was heard. She was standing outside with her maid. "General," she said, "make your escape at once; if in one hour from now you are here General Buller sends message by me that he will consider that you have surrendered or take you by force."

"Madam," I replied, "If I had intended to escape by flight I should not be here now. No entreaties can move me from my resolve."

"General," she said, "I beg of you to reflect. I have done all in my power; your fate is now in your own hands," and then, in a tone of unfeigned terror, stamped her foot: "Pray, do go!"

She then withdrew, and I waited in anxious expectation of the outcome. I called quietly to my aide, but there was no answer. After nearly an hour had passed, during which many thoughts and plans rushed through my mind in succession, I opened the door cautiously.

Not an object was visible, nor a sound to be heard, save the tick of the swinging pendulum, which seemed to say, "Quick! quick!"

I walked out into the darkness of the vestibule, when the voice of Buller sounded from the staircase: "Ready, Joubert! I am going to fire!"

We pulled the triggers at the same instant. In the darkness the aim was true. The bullets struck in midair, one falling to the floor, the other glancing to the right of the room and smashing through a window.

Immediately several pistols flashed from the landing above, and I fired again.

A groan came from Buller. He was wounded in the foot, and of the seven or eight balls that whizzed close to me one entered my shoulder. I fell to the ground for an instant, then, rising, drew back into my room, barricading the door with an oaken table.

The lights were up in the house, and another volley rained against my barricade. I returned the fire, making a hole through the door with a shot and placing the pistol an inch or two from the opening. A dash was then made for the door, and with axes and bars it was soon beaten in, when a shout of men came from the outside.

The house was surrounded by Boers. My aide had escaped in the silence of the interval and brought timely help.

When they saw that fifty men surrounded the ten, and that resistance was useless slaughter, Buller asked for a parley. I said to him: "General Buller, I was in your power—you gave me a chance for a fight; I shall not be less generous. You and your men may depart for your lines unmolested."

The General saw there was but one course, and left the house with his men, escorted by twenty Boers, who saw them safely beyond the patrol.

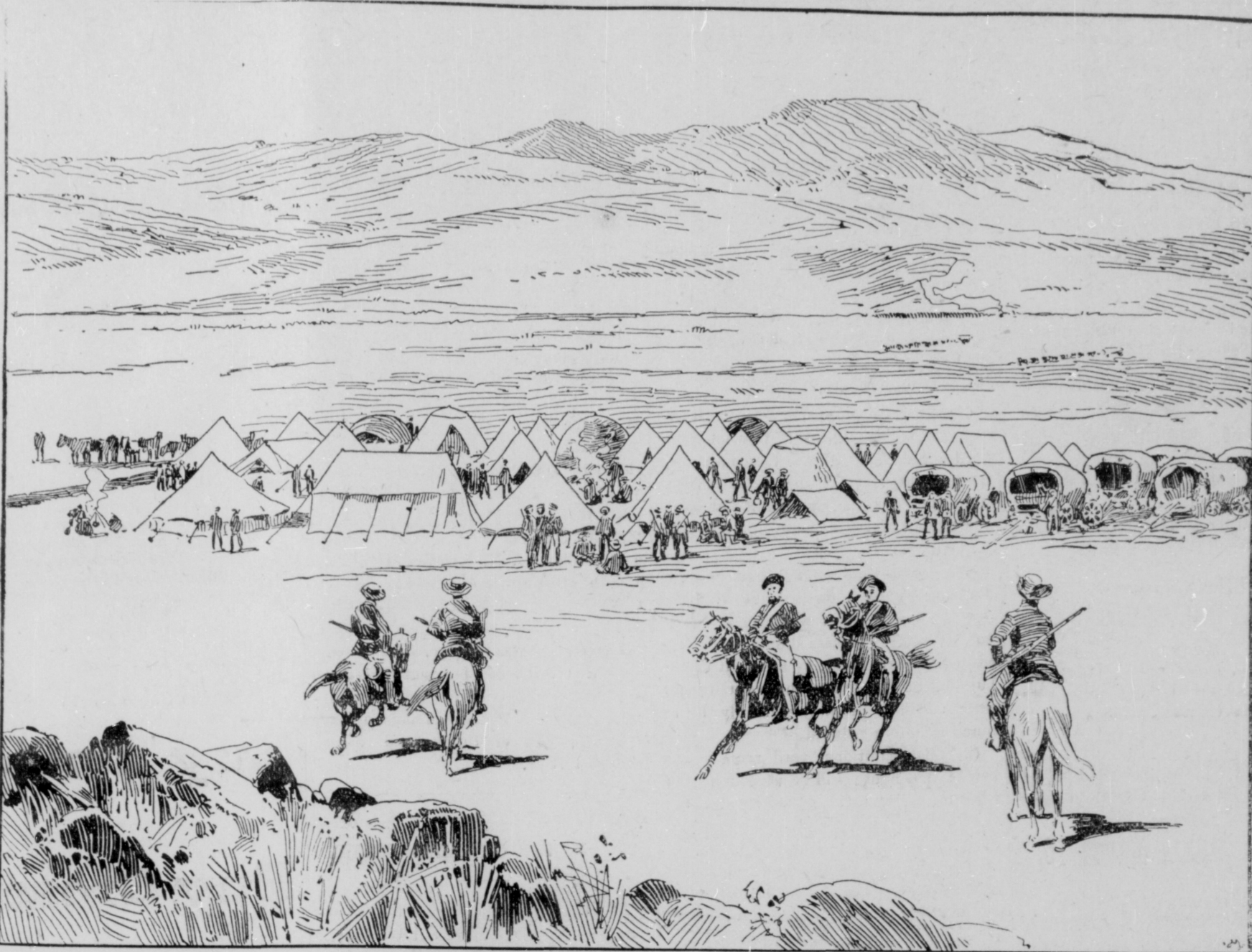
They had scarcely left the house when I fainted from weakness and loss of blood.

This was the incident which gave rise to the report of my death.

J. F. X. O'CONNOR.
NOTE—This narrative is taken from a letter of General Joubert to relatives in Belgium.

LORD ROBERTS WILL SETTLE IT.

It is said that the Afrikaner Bond will send delegates to Great Britain, Canada and Australia to urge the idea of settling the South African War on the basis of recognizing the independence of the Boer Republics. It is interesting to enquire upon what the members of the Bond can base their expectations of success in sending men upon any such mission to Great Britain and the colonies that have supported her in the present war. We are of the opinion that no people engaged in such a struggle as is now going forward would even think of making such a plea to any other power in the world but Great Britain or to any other race but the Anglo-Saxon. There can be no reason to doubt that the Boers think they can settle whenever they choose, and have fortified themselves all through with the belief that war with Great Britain is a game in which they might win territory and political advantage but can lose none, owing to the readiness with which peace can be had when sued for. This was their experience in the last war, and no doubt has been their guiding hope in this one. It would be a very strange thing, hard, indeed, to the relatives of the colonial volunteers who have fallen in this war, if a settle-



GEN. CHALK BURGHER'S LAAGER.

There were a lot of Boers in the laager, some fine looking old burghers in wide-brimmed hats and top boots. The Boers were in every possible costume, the majority without gaiters, and some young men dressed very smartly in riding breeches and khaki jackets just like ours, but besides wide-rimmed felt hats caught up on the left side with a badge.—[Boston Globe.]

ment were made leaving the race problem in South Africa in practically the same position in which this war found it. Unused as this country is to war and to the adjusting of hostile relations, we could but find it incomprehensible if the Boers, after declaring war, after invading Natal and Cape Colony, fighting with great desperation to crush their way to the seaboard through British Territory and only held back at an enormous cost in money and human life, should succeed, immediately on being frustrated in these aggressions, in securing peace on the basis of retaining their independence, so that they might during another twenty years gird themselves as they have done in the last twenty, for another trial at the big task of crowding all white races but their own into the sea. We are of the opinion that the Boer delegates who come to Canada will need to be gifted with very great persuasive powers if they are to succeed in winning approval here of their claim for the same status that their republics enjoyed before the war began. We shall probably prove slow to comprehend the arguments of men who were so impervious to reason when fair discussion of differences was attempted. Too many things have happened in the interval to ever permit the debate to be resumed where it was broken off by the invasion of Natal and Cape Colony by these slyly but tremendously armed Boers, who while they argued were stealthily preparing to strike. Canada has lost too many men and has had her life too deeply disturbed by this war to have the whole thing wiped out now and regarded as an angry and regrettable interruption of an argument on the voting question between the Volksraad and the British Colonial Office. This war is not an interruption to an argument; it is the conclusion of a struggle a century old.

LORD PAUNCEFOTE.

In the House of Lords, a few days ago Lord Newton advocated the retention of Lord Pauncefote as British Ambassador at Washington, and asked whether in view of the valuable services of Lord Pauncefote the advisability of prolonging his tenure of office would not be considered, adding:—"The task of maintaining our relations on their present happy footing is not likely to prove less difficult in the immediate future. In addition to the questions of great delicacy now pending, we have to look forward to the Presidential election, which is productive of political eccentricities unknown in less enterprising countries." The speaker also said he thought the present moment was not a happy one for a change. Lord Salisbury said

Lord Newton had done what the French called "breaking in an open door," for the measure which he recommended had been taken some days ago. The Premier added: "I entirely agree with any eulogy passed on Lord Pauncefote, and I have shown this in the course taken in extending his tenure of office. The only observation which I have to make is that the question implies that this extension is a reward for valuable services. I think it is rather the other way. It is to Lord Pauncefote that we have to express our thanks that he has been kind enough to undertake the work for another period. We have every cause to express to Lord Pauncefote our gratitude that at a critical time, and when his remarkable experience and singular aptitude for the peculiar duties of his office render

it desirable that he should continue in it, he has consented to do so." Lord Kimberley, the Liberal leader in the House of Lords, associated himself with the eulogy passed upon Lord Pauncefote. A good many in the pre-eminence of Great Britain is appreciated.

There is living at Horton Bluff, King's County, Nova Scotia, a colored veteran named William Hall, who enjoys the unique distinction of being a V. C. man, the only one probably in the whole Dominion. He obtained this coveted honor in India, 1857, during the mutiny, where, as captain, he fought a naval gun in a most heroic manner under circumstances of extreme peril.

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J. F. VANBUSKIRK.

Fredericton.