

Memories of Forty-Eight Years Service

The Zulu War

I WISH anyone who may chance to read these pages to remember that they are written so that my sons may have some idea of how I have spent my life ; and as, previous to the Great War of 1914-18, I had already passed many years on active service, it follows that the story must deal largely with happenings on campaigns.

Born in 1858, I was number 11 in a family of fifteen, six boys and nine girls. One of the boys had died in infancy ; my eldest brother (for some years in the 10th Hussars, and latterly of Tresco Abbey, Isles of Scilly) died at seventy-two, and my eldest sister, Mrs. Tyrwhitt-Drake of Shardeloes, at sixty-four; of my three brothers still alive, two served in the Navy, and are referred to later, and the third, the Rev. Prebendary Walter M. Smith-Dorrien, is Vicar of Crediton. He, as a young man, was a distinguished athlete, and amongst other successes won the three-mile for Oxford against Cambridge at Lillybridge. He was referred to in the Varsity Nonsense Book of the day as follows:

" There once was a young man of Magdalen Who could, run for three miles without dawdling; For three miles or one No person could run In front of this young man of Magdalen."

My father died in 1879, a few days before I landed in England on my return from the Zulu War, and my mother at eighty-five—a wonderful woman of strong personality, full of activity to within a few days of her death, an inveterate reader of every book of interest, with a facility for remembering what she read. Her power of letter-writing was inexhaustible, and this all her sons and daughters can vouch for, though how she always found time to write to all the absent ones, and never failed, I have been quite unable to discover.

I was not a nice boy, and was always in trouble, earmarked as mischievous and wild, and credited with all minor catastrophes which happened to the family.

I went to school at seven and a half—to Egypt House, Isle of Wight, where the Rev. Arthur Watson endeavoured to mould me, and later to Harrow. I enjoyed myself at both schools, but distinguished myself at neither. My contemporaries at Harrow best known to fame were W. H. Grenfell (Lord Desborough), Walter H. Long (Viscount L.), Lords Freddy and Ernest Hamilton, the Hon. John Fortescue, Punch Hardinge (Viscount H.) and his brother C. Hardinge (Lord H. of Penshurst) and the Hon. Robert Milnes (Marquess of Crewe). The last-named has reason to remember me, for I was his fag, and only noted for inefficiency.

My father, Colonel R. A. Smith-Dorrien, had served in the 16th Lancers and 3rd Light Dragoons, then for twenty-two years with his county Militia (the Herts) as Second in Command and Commanding Officer. Nice as he always was to me, I

rather doubt his having entertained hope of my ever becoming a useful member of society, and I had no idea what he intended to do with me until the autumn of 1875. He and my mother and some of my family and myself were on Lake Lucerne, and one day he asked me if I would like to go into the Army. Overjoyed, and having just failed to drown myself and two sisters below the Dance of Death Bridge at Lucerne a few days before, I dashed home to a crammer, went up for the Army examination in December, passed, and joined at Sandhurst on the 26th February 1876, as a 2nd Lieutenant. My name was down on H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge's list for the Rifle Brigade, but, there being no vacancy, General Sir Alfred Horsford, who was Military Secretary at the time, posted me to the 95th as a battalion which was very short of subalterns and likely to lead to early promotion. About eight months later a vacancy in the Rifle Brigade occurred, and I was offered it, but by then, being thoroughly happy in the 95th, with excellent prospects of rapid promotion, which could not have been possible in the Rifle Brigade, I respectfully declined.

I joined the 95th as a Lieutenant in January 1877. In those days one not only joined Sandhurst as a commissioned officer, but anyone passing out with a special mention was given a year's antedate, and this I got, thus being promoted to Lieutenant.

After obtaining my commission, I took an early opportunity of attending a levee, and had the honour of kissing the hand of the Great White Queen, the name by which Queen Victoria was known to the natives of South Africa.

Cork was a lively station, and the people hospitable and attractive, but I can think of only one story of sufficient interest to record. One day an individual, looking somewhat out-at-elbows, appeared in the Mess and turned out to be rather a remarkable person. He had been an officer in the regiment and was well known to most of those then present. It seemed he had been very popular, but that shortage of the wherewithal to enjoy life had forced him to exchange to another regiment. Gibraltar had become his new station, and the dangers of the bull-ring soon proved a great attraction to his Irish nature. When, therefore, the curse of shortage of cash still pursued him, he left the Army and became a matador, and a very popular one, for to this day the skill and bravery of the famous " Matador Ingles " O'Hara is talked of in the south of Spain. I remember O'Hara showing us with pride the matador pig-tail neatly plaited and curled up on the crown of his head. The next time I met him was two years later as gymnastic instructor on the Curragh. He was a man of fine physique, had enlisted in a Dragoon Regiment, and quickly been promoted Sergeant. After that I lost sight of him.

From Cork we moved to Dublin, which was equally enjoyable what fun it was, racing, dancing, and hunting,

though not much of the latter until later. The Castle dances were a thing to dream of. The Duke of Marlborough was Viceroy, and the young American bride. Lady Randolph Churchill, was certainly the belle amongst many beautiful women.

From Dublin we went to Athlone in the spring of 1878—a different sort of life, but fun nevertheless, boating, shooting, and fishing up the Shannon and sailing on

Lough Ree with brother-officers, especially my great friend and cousin Charlie Jenkinson. He and I owned two boats, the one a heavy decked-in cutter which no one could sink or upset, and the other a light open boat with one enormous sprit-sail which the local fishermen called the "coffin," predicting it must be the death of someone. Imagine their "I told you so's" when one day they saw the boat, bottom up, float under the bridge at Athlone. But they were only partly right—no one was drowned. I had been sailing with Godley (now a Brigadier-General), when a heavy gust of wind came, and he leaned forward instead of back, and over we went in the middle of the river, half a mile wide. We struggled in our thick clothes to a post marking the channel, and having seen him carefully seated on the top like an old cormorant, I swam ashore to obtain another boat.

That summer (1878) we were on the verge of a war with Russia. "Dizzy" brought Indian troops to the Mediterranean, the reserves were called up, and we soldiers had a busy time, first collecting the men in England and then bringing them over to Ireland and training them. The 95th were 1,200 strong. I was Acting Adjutant in the absence of Sparkes (now Colonel Sparkes) away at some course, and thoroughly enjoyed drilling them. Our diplomats staved off that war, but troubles were brewing in South Africa with the Zulus.

An old 95th Commanding Officer and the full Colonel of the Regiment, General the Hon. F. A. Thesiger (becoming Lord Chelmsford in October this year, on the death of his father), was Commanding in Natal, and, seeing war could not be avoided and wanting to get officers from his old corps, he cabled to the War Office asking for three, Captain A. Tower, Lieutenants W. Here and H. L. Smith-Dorrien, to be sent on special service. This was wired on to the C.O. of the Battalion, and I as Adjutant asked for his orders. He merely said he would allow none of us to go. We had a few words about this, and it ended in my wiring to the Military Secretary at the War Office from myself, saying I was ready to start for the Cape at a moment's notice in any capacity in which H.R.H. the Field-Marshal C.-in-C. might think fit to employ me. It really was an unwarrantable piece of cheek, and inexcusable, but it paid, for that same afternoon orders were telegraphed to the C.O. from the War Office ordering me to proceed forthwith to Dartmouth and embark in the Edinburgh Castle.

So, three days later, I was on the sea with several other special service officers in a 2,000-ton boat, which was not out-of-the-way small in those days, en route for the Cape. We crossed the line with full ceremonies, Neptune coming on board with his staff of sea-dogs, doctor, barber, etc., and we were all initiated. Lieutenant W. F. D. Cochrane of the 82nd was the life and soul of the ship. Curiously enough, I was given his vacancy, on his time being up in the Egyptian Army, twenty years later, which enabled me to take part in Lord Kitchener's overthrow of the Mahdi.

When within two days' steam of Cape Town we were met by an appalling south-eastern gale, seas mountains high, ship battened down for six days, which time it took us to get into Cape Town. The smells below, especially oil-lamps and bilgewater, cannot be forgotten; but no one complained, for such was the standard in ships in those days.

On reaching Durban I was told off for duty with transport. This consisted of working stores up to the front at Rorke's Drift, from which place the expedition against Cetywayo, the Zulu King, was to start. It was a great experience for a boy. I found myself alone controlling the convoys, along a great stretch of road, supplying equipment, purchasing oxen, and generally keeping things going.

The skilful handling of the teams of sixteen oxen made a great impression on me. The driver who wielded the long whip was usually an Afrikaner; the oxen were named and, when a pull became very heavy, were urged forward by name and pistol-like cracks of the whip. Such names as "Dootchmann," "Germann," and "Englischmann" were bestowed on them, and when a wretched animal possessed the last it seemed to me there was more emphasis in shouting it out and more venom in the lash when applying it.

A less pleasant experience was having my young faith shaken in the uprightness of certain senior officers. I had heard of some questionable dealings in regard to military contracts in former wars, and believed such days were gone forever. I was soon to learn that we had not yet reached a plane of official integrity in such matters, but shall only relate an incident which came within my own personal experience.

"There was a certain contractor who was employed in matters connected with the Commissariat. In the course of the war I found myself in temporary charge of an important centre and one day received a telegram from the Base directing me to take a lease of a local farm belonging to this contractor at a profiteering price.

Now the occupant of the farm had just cleared all cattle off it, as it was saturated with lung-sickness. This disease was most deadly for cattle, and it was a recognised rule that no oxen should be allowed near a farm where it had appeared. I therefore wired back stating these facts, and at once got a reply directing me to carry out the transaction I again telegraphed, respectfully objecting to having anything to do with the deal.

The next communication was another wire saying that the lease had been signed, and I was to take over the farm. I dutifully replied that I had complied with the order but would allow no Government cattle to graze there I heard[^] no more about it, and the farm was never used-facts which speak for themselves.

Whilst negotiations were going on the contractor came up from the Base, and, presenting himself in my tent suggested blandly that he should keep me supplied with champagne. He seemed immensely surprised when I rushed at him and kicked him out of my tent. He returned straight to the Base, his arrival there being heralded by the wire saying the hire of the farm was a fait accompli.

I am bound to say that this incident gave my young mind a great shock. I have, thank goodness! had no such experience since

My charge extended from Greytown to Helpmakaar, about 100 miles, but the important part of it was the thorn country from Burrup's Store to Sandspruit, about 50 miles. This included the passage of the Mooi and Tugela Rivers and several dangerous "spruits." There were

certain rules which had to be observed when actually in the thorn country. (1) On no account should cattle be allowed to graze, for redwater (a fatal disease) would almost surely result. To avoid this, forage should be carried on the wagons, so that, on outspanning at a camp, bullocks could be tied to the poles and fed instead of being loosed to graze. (2) Should a wagon get stuck in a dry spruit, no matter how improbable rain might appear to be, it must be got out at all cost and not left there the night. Each wagon was drawn by sixteen oxen; convoys consisted of any number, but were usually of about twenty, and were mostly in charge of an officer senior to myself, and my difficulty was to get these orders carried out. One Cavalry Captain scorned my instructions and broke both of the above rules, and lost three quarters of his cattle from redwater and the wagon loaded with all the stores for the C.-in-C.'s mess, and then called on me to help him out.

This part of the country during November and December was liable to terrific thunderstorms, the worst I have seen anywhere, and a dry spruit would in an hour or so become a raging torrent 12 or even 20 feet deep, and this is how Lord Chelmsford's wagon was lost. At sundown the bullocks would not pull it out of a spruit, and instead of getting it out somehow by fresh teams or by off-loading, my friend left it for the night, and in the morning it had disappeared, having been swept down into the main river (the Tugela) several miles below. Curiously enough, I was the person to suffer, for the C.-in-C., becoming convinced that the officer referred to was unfit for transport work, posted him to an irregular mounted corps instead of myself, as I had been led to expect, leaving me with the Transport.

To give an instance of the terror of these thunderstorms : one day I, to avoid one, was standing inside Burrup's Canteen Store. Hail was descending as big as pigeons' eggs, the thunder was deafening, and the lightning blinding. On the road in front of the store stood a wagon with sixteen oxen, The trek-tow or rope, to which their yokes were attached, was a steel hawser. Suddenly there was a blinding flash, and when it cleared, lo and behold ! sixteen oxen stretched and lying like dead, and six of them were dead.

It was in the thorn country that I first met Hallam-Parr (afterwards General Sir H. Hallam-Parr) of the 13th (Somerset), then a Captain on the Staff of the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, Sir Henry Bulwer, one of the smartest and best beloved officers I have ever met, an enthusiastic Mounted Infantryman and for years Adjutant-General of the Egyptian Army. Alas! I attended his funeral from his own house in Somersetshire in April 1914.

By the 19th January 1879 the force, consisting of the two Battalions of the 24th, one Battery R.A., one Company each of R.E. and M.T., and eight locally raised units, was ready at Rorke's Drift astride the Blood River, and, moving forward next day some ten miles, it camped that night on the east of that remarkably shaped and ill-starred hill called Isandhlwana (literally, " a little hand "), erroneously called by some " Isandula." Some of the Transport with an escort did not arrive until the morning of the 22nd. I was in charge of the Transport depot at Rorke's Drift, and had been warned before starting that I should have to return there at once from Isandhlwana with a convoy of empty wagons to bring up more stores, so I left my camp kit in a tented wagon at Rorke's Drift.

At about midnight I was sent for by General Lord Chelmsford and told to take a dispatch back to Rorke's Drift for Colonel Durnford, R.E., who was expected there with reinforcements consisting of native levies. I rode back, 10 miles, arriving at Rorke's Drift just before dawn on the 22nd, and delivered my dispatch. It ought to have been a very jumpy ride, for I was entirely alone and the country was wild and new to me, and the road little better

than a track; but pride at being selected to carry an important dispatch and the valour of ignorance (for I only realised next day that the country was infested with hostile Zulus) carried me along without a thought of danger. Colonel Durnford was just moving off with his levies towards Sandspruit (away from Isandhlwana), but on reading the dispatch, which conveyed instructions to move up to reinforce the Isandhlwana camp (as Lord Chelmsford, with the main body of the force, leaving the camp standing, was moving out some miles to the east to attack the Zulu Army), he at once changed the direction of his march.

I had several arrangements to make for Transport at Rorke's Drift, amongst others the erection of a gallows for making riems. This gallows was some 15 feet high, and the process consisted of cutting hides of bullocks into strips about an inch wide, working in a circle ; the strips then had the appearance of the peel of an apple all coiled up, and in order to be fashioned into straight straps had to be passed over the gallows and through a weighted wagon-wheel below. These strips were then worked over the gallows and through the wheel, stretched and rubbed with fat until the curves were lost, resulting in very long, soft strips of hide, which could eventually be cut into lengths for tying to the horns of oxen as head-ropes. It is interesting to relate that the first use I saw the gallows put to was for hanging Zulus who were supposed to have behaved treacherously the day after the Rorke's Drift fight.

After starting the gallows, I went up to see Captain " Gonny " Bromhead, in command of the company of the 24th, and I told him a big fight was expected, and that I wanted revolver ammunition. He gave me eleven rounds, and hearing heavy guns over at Isandhlwana, I rode off and got into that camp about 8 a.m., just as Colonel Durnford's force arrived. Colonel Durnford was having a discussion with Lieutenant-Colonel Pulleine of the 24th, who had been left by Lord Chelmsford in command of the camp, Lord (Chelmsford and all the troops, including the 2/24th, having gone out to attack the Zulus. Lieutenant-Colonel Pulleine's force consisted of six companies of the 1/24th, two guns under Brevet-Major Smith and Lieutenant Curling, and some native levies.

As far as I could make out, the gist of Colonels Durnford and Pulleine's discussion was that the former wished to go out and attack the Zulus, whilst the latter argued that his orders were to defend the camp, and that he could not allow his infantry to move out. Colonel Durnford and his rocket battery under Russell, R.A., and his mounted Basutos under Cochrane (32nd), then rode off towards a small hill, apparently a spur of the main range, and 1.5 miles from the camp (see A on sketch). Of the 24th, one company (Lieutenant Cavaye) was on picket out of sight of the camp and about a mile to the north on the main range. We could hear heavy firing in this direction even then (8 a.m.). This company was reinforced later by two more (Mostyn's and Dyson's), and the three fell back fighting about noon and covered the north side of the camp. The remaining three companies present (for two under Major Upcher, with Lieutenants Clements, Palmes, Heaton, and Lloyd, only reached Helpmakaar on the 22nd from the old colony) were extended round the camp in attack formation, covering especially the front and left front. Two battalions of native levies were also in this line, but they were not to be relied on and were feebly armed, only one man in ten being allowed a rifle, lest they should desert to the enemy. In consequence of the heavy firing to the north and the appearance of large numbers of Zulus on the main range of hills, and partly, I believe, to support Colonel Durnford's movement, the line was pushed out on a curve, but to no great distance from the tents. Farther than this it never went. Our two guns were at the same time pushed out into the firing-line to the north-east of the camp (see sketch).

At about 12 a.m. the Zulus, who had apparently fallen back behind the hills, again showed in large numbers, coming down into the plain over the hills with great boldness, and our guns and rifles were pretty busy for some time, causing the Zulus again to fall back. It was difficult to see exactly what was going on, but firing was heavy. It was evident now that the Zulus were in great force, for they could be seen extending (i.e. throwing out their horns) away across the plain to the south-east, apparently working towards the right rear of the camp. As far as I can make out, Colonel Durnford with his force never actually left the plain, but was close under the foot of the small spur he originally went to seize.

Nothing of importance occurred, beyond the constant increase of the Zulus and the spreading out of their horns, until about 1 p.m., when they started their forward movement direct on the camp. Our troops were in the positions they had occupied hours before, our two guns busy throughout shelling the enemy.

Forty-five empty wagons stood in the camp with the oxen in. It was a convoy which I was to have taken to Rorke's Drift for supplies early in the morning, but which was stopped until the enemy should be driven off. These wagons might have at any time been formed into a laager, but no one appeared to appreciate the gravity of the situation, so much so that no steps were taken until too late to issue extra ammunition from the large reserves we had in camp.

I will return to the advancing Zulus' line at about 1 p.m. It was a marvellous sight, line upon line of men in slightly extended order, one behind the other, firing as they came along, for a few of them had firearms, bearing all before them. The rocket battery, apparently then only a mile to our front, was firing, and suddenly it ceased, and presently we saw the remnants of Durnford's force, mostly mounted Basutos, galloping back to the right of our position. What had actually happened I don't think we ever shall know accurately. The ground was intersected with "dongas," and in them Russell with his rocket battery was caught, and none escaped to tell the tale. I heard later that Durnford, who was a gallant leader, actually reached the camp and fell there fighting.

And now the Zulu Army, having swept away Durnford's force, flushed with victory, moved steadily on to where the five companies of the 24th were lying down covering the camp. They were giving vent to no loud war-cries, but to a low musical murmuring noise, which gave the impression of a gigantic swarm of bees getting nearer and nearer. Here was a more serious matter for these brave warriors, for the regiment opposed to them were no boy recruits, but warworn, matured men, mostly with beards, and fresh from a long campaign in the old colony where they had carried everything before them. Possessed of splendid discipline and sure of success, they lay on their position making every round tell, so much so that when the Zulu Army was some 400 yards off, it wavered.

After the War the Zulus, who were delightfully naive and truthful people, told us that the fire was too hot for them and they were on the verge of retreat, when suddenly the fire slackened and on they came again. The reader will ask why the fire slackened, and the answer is, alas! because, with thousands of rounds in the wagons 400 yards in rear, there was none in the firing line ; all those had been used up.

I will mention a story which speaks for the coolness and discipline of the regiment. I, having no particular duty to perform in camp, when I saw the whole Zulu Army advancing, had collected camp stragglers, such as artillerymen in charge of spare horses, officers' servants, sick, etc., and had taken them to the ammunition-boxes, where we broke them open as fast as

we could, and kept sending out the packets to the firing-line. (In those days the boxes were screwed down and it was a very difficult job to get them open, and it was owing to this battle that the construction of the ammunition-boxes was changed.)

When I had been engaged at this for some time, and the 1/24th had fallen back to where we were, with the Zulus following closely, Bloomfield, the Quartermaster of the 2/24th, said to me in regard to the boxes I was then breaking open, " For heaven's sake, don't take that, man, for it belongs to our Battalion." And I replied, " Hang it all, you don't want a requisition now, do you ? " It was about this time, too, that a Colonial named Du Bois, a wagon-conductor, said to me, " The game is up. If I had a good horse I would ride straight for Maritzburg." I never saw him again. I then saw Surg.-Major Shepherd, busy in a depression, treating wounded. This was also the last time I saw him. To return to the fight. Our right flank had become enveloped by the horn of the Zulus and the levies were flying before them. All the transport drivers, panic-stricken, were jostling each other with their teams and wagons, shouting and yelling at their cattle, and striving to get over the neck (see sketch) on to the Rorke's Drift road; and the red line of the 24th, having fixed bayonets, appeared to have but one idea, and that was to defeat the enemy. The Zulu charge came home, and, driven with their backs to the rock of Isandhlwana, and overpowered by about thirty to one, they sold their lives dearly. The best proof of this is the subsequent description of the Zulus themselves, who, so far from looking on it as a decisive victory, used to relate how their wagons were for days removing their dead, and how the country ran rivers of tears, almost every family bemoaning the loss of some near relative.

When this final charge took place, the transport which was in-spanned had mostly cleared the neck, and I jumped on my broken-kneed pony, which had had no rest for thirty hours, and followed it, to find on topping the neck a scene of confusion I shall never forget, for some 4,000 Zulus had come in behind and were busy with shield and assegai. Into this mass I rode, revolver in hand, right through the Zulus, but they completely ignored me. I heard afterwards that they had been told by their King Cetywayo that black coats were civilians and were not worth killing. I had a blue patrol jacket on, and it is noticeable that the only five officers who escaped—Essex, Cochrane, Gardner, Curling, and myself—had blue coats. The Zulus throughout my escape seemed to be set on killing natives who had sided with us, either as fighting levies or transport drivers.

After getting through the mass of Zulus busy slaying, I followed in the line of fugitives. The outer horns of the Zulu Army had been directed to meet at about a mile to the south-east of the camp, and they were still some distance apart when the retreat commenced. It was this gap which fixed the line of retreat.

I could see the Zulus running in to complete their circle from both flanks, and their leading men had already reached the line of retreat long before I had got there. When I reached the point I came on the two guns, which must have been sent out of camp before the Zulus charged home. They appeared to me to be upset in a donga and to be surrounded by Zulus.

Again I rode through unheeded, and shortly after was passed by Lieutenant Coghill (24th), wearing a blue patrol and cord breeches and riding a red roan horse. We had just exchanged remarks about the terrible disaster, and he passed on towards Fugitives' Drift. A little farther on I caught up Lieutenant Curling, R.A., and spoke to him, pointing out to him that the Zulus were all round and urging him to push on, which he did. My own broken-kneed transport pony was done to a turn and incapable of rapid progress.

The ground was terribly bad going, all rocks and boulders, and it was about three or four miles from camp to Fugitives' Drift. When approaching this Drift, and at least half a mile behind Coghill, Lieutenant Melvill (24th), in a red coat and with a cased Colour across the front of his saddle, passed me going to the Drift. I reported afterwards that the Colour was broken; but as the pole was found eventually whole, I think the casing must have been half off and hanging down. It will thus be seen that Coghill (who was Orderly Officer to Colonel Glynn) and Melvill (who was Adjutant) did not escape together with the Colour. How Coghill came to be in the camp I do not know, as Colonel Glynn, whose orderly officer he was, was out with Lord Chelmsford's column.

I then came to Fugitives' Drift, the descent to which was almost a precipice. I found there a man in a red coat badly assegaid in the arm, unable to move. He was, I believe, a mounted infantryman of the 24th, named Macdonald, but of his name I cannot be sure. I managed to make a tourniquet with a handkerchief to stop the bleeding, and got him half-way down, when a shout from behind said, " Get on, man; the Zulus are on top of you." I turned round and saw Major Smith, R.A., who was commanding the section of guns, as white as a sheet and bleeding profusely ; and in a second we were surrounded, and assegais accounted for poor Smith, my wounded M.L friend, and my horse.

With help of my revolver and a wild jump down the rocks I found myself in the Buffalo River, which was in flood and eighty yards broad. I was carried away, but luckily got hold of the tail of a loose horse, which towed me across to the other bank, but I was too exhausted to stick to him. Up this bank were swarming friendly natives, but I only saw one European, a Colonial and Acting Commissariat Officer named Hamer, lying there unable to move. I managed to catch a loose horse, and put him on it, and he escaped. The Zulus were pouring in a very heavy fire from the opposite bank and dropped several friendly natives as we climbed to the top. No sooner had I achieved this than I saw that a lot of Zulus had crossed higher up and were running to cut me off. This drove me off to my left, but twenty of them still pursued for about three miles, and I managed to keep them off with my revolver.

I got into Helpmakaar at sundown, having done twenty miles on foot from the river, for I almost went to Sandspruit. At Helpmakaar I found Huntley of the 10th, who had been left there with a small garrison, and also Essex, Cochrane, Curling, and Gardner, from the field of Isandhlwana, all busy placing the post in a state of defence. We could see that night the watchfires of the Zulus some six miles off, and expected them to come on and attack, but we knew later they had turned off to attack Rorke's Drift.

I at once took command of one face of the laager, and shall never forget how pleased we weary watchers were when, shortly after midnight, Major Upcher's two companies of the 24th, with Heaton, Palmes, Clements, and Lloyd, came to reinforce. These two companies had started for Rorke's Drift that afternoon, but had been turned back to Helpmakaar by Major Spalding, a Staff Officer, as he said Rorke's Drift had been surrounded and captured, and that the two companies would share the same fate. Luckily, his information proved to be wrong.

Such is briefly my story of the 22nd January 1879, and I have endeavoured to avoid personal incidents as far as possible, though I should like my boys to know that on the evidence of eye-witnesses I was recommended for the V.C. for two separate acts on that day. These recommendations drew laudatory letters from the War Office, with a regret that as the proper channels for correspondence had not been observed, the Statutes of the Victoria Cross did not

admit of my receiving that distinction, and having no friends at Court the matter dropped. In view of my latest experiences I am sure that decision was right, for any trivial act of good Samaritanism I may have performed that day would not have earned a M.C. much less a V.C., amidst the deeds of real heroism performed during the Great War 1914-18.

I cannot refrain from remarking that had Lord Chelmsford's orders, as laid down in his Standing Orders for the Field Force in Zululand, been carried out, the disaster would never have happened, for there it clearly directed that no force should ever camp in the enemy's country without entrenching, and yet not a sod was turned at Isandhlwana. Had our magnificent body of men been entrenched, the Zulus would have been driven off, as they were subsequently at Kambula, and even as it was, they would have repulsed the Zulus in the open had not ammunition run short.

The bodies of Lieutenants Melvill and Coghill were found together with the Colour, although they were so far apart in the retreat, and the explanation I would offer is as follows.

Below Fugitives' Drift the river flows into a deep gorge and the right bank is inaccessible. The river was in flood, and a lot of fugitives, men and horses, must have been swept away through this gorge, or only have succeeded in effecting a landing well below the path leading from Fugitives' Drift up the right bank. I surmise that Melvill and Coghill may both have been swept down-stream towards X (see sketch, p. 12), and there have met, and in endeavouring to get back together to the path of the fugitives were killed by Zulus who had crossed higher up. As far as I can make out, their bodies were found near Z. The official account, published in 1881, is quite incorrect as to the movements of these two officers. I may say that I was never consulted.

I had had a long enough day, having been on the move, including a stretch of twenty miles on foot, much of it at a run, for forty-two consecutive hours, and directly Lieutenant Clements (afterwards Major-General Clements of Boer War fame) told me he had relieved me, I lay down then and there on two sacks of grain and was fast asleep in a second.

The next day I rode down to Rorke's Drift, some twelve miles, to resume charge of my depot. There was the improvised little fort, built up mostly of mealy-sacks and biscuit-boxes and other stores which had been so gallantly defended by Chard, Bromhead, and their men, and Parson Smith, and all around lay dead Zulus, between three and four hundred; and there was my wagon, some 200 yards away, riddled and looted; and there was the riem gallows I had erected the previous morning. Dead animals and cattle everywhere— such a scene of devastation ! To my young mind it appeared impossible that order could ever be restored, but I set to work, and next day, whilst sitting in my wagon, I saw two Zulus hanging on my gallows and was accused by the Brigade Major, Clery (afterwards General Sir Francis Clery), of having given the order. I was exonerated, however, when it was found that it was a case of lynch law performed by incensed men, who were bitter at the loss of their comrades. Other incidents of the same sort occurred in the next few days before law and order were re-established.

At that time our enemy appeared to us to be possessed of savagery beyond description, but we had no conception then of how civilisation would produce a refinement of brutality and bestiality alongside which our Zulus would be regarded as comparative angels. As a matter of fact, the Zulus were a very noble race with a high standard of morality, but they bought to kill, and undoubtedly killed the wounded and mutilated the bodies; but a predominant

superstition with them was that if they did not disembowel a fallen enemy, their own stomachs would swell up when that of their dead enemy did, and that therefore they must let out the gas. It was a rule of their race that no man could marry until he had "dipped his spear"—in other words, had killed his man in battle. There had not been a war for a long time. The whole nation was military; a copy of their Army List was obtained, and it disclosed a regular territorial system. Each kraal (native village) or group of kraals provided a regiment called after the locality from which it came. Each regiment had its regular drills. The country was at the time we fought full of young men anxious to qualify for matrimony. Immorality was not tolerated; a woman falling was instantly killed, and one of the causes of the war was the fact that two such women had escaped across the border into Natal and we had refused to give them up to certain death.