

THE WAR.

A peculiar feature of these last of the century wars is the unreliability of many of the news items. About six weeks ago we were all hurrahing and making a great time generally over the alleged relief of Ladysmith and the capture of untold numbers of Boers. Then, we have heard of the death and capture of Buller, of the complete destruction of British regiments. Such news gave us grief, but our grief was turned into joy when we found that these items of news were not founded on fact. It is plain that stock jobbers are responsible for much of this bogus news but what with that and other unreliable reports one wonders what to believe. The next thing we will be hearing is that Her Majesty has abdicated in favour of Oom Paul Kruger. Here and there we get a glimpse of the true state of affairs. Probably this is accurate:—BUFFALO, Jan. 26.—The 30,000 Canadians residing in Buffalo are now being accused of having a powerful influence in converting American citizens to pro-British sentiment. The accusation was recently made at a public meeting of sympathizers with the Boers, and given as an excuse for the marked indifference in the city to the movement engineered by a Hibernian Society for holding a mass meeting at which speakers would denounce the British and express sympathy with the Boers in the present war. The Hibernian who made the accusation declared that the prominent men of Buffalo are so 'contaminated' by association with the Canadians who reside and are in business here that there was little hope for their signatures to a call for a mass meeting at which anti-British sentiment would be expressed. He also complained that President McKinley and other prominent men at Washington are pronouncedly pro-British and anti-Boer in their attitude towards the war in South Africa.

LONDON, Jan. 28.—The following is the text of General Buller's despatch, dated Spearman's Camp, Jan. 27, 6 10 p. m.:

"On Jan. 20th Warren drove back the enemy and obtained possession of the southern crests of the high table land extending from the line of Acton Holmes and Honger's Poort to the western Ladysmith hills. From then to Jan. 25 he remained in close contact with the enemy.

"The enemy held a strong position on a range of small kopjes stretching from north-west to southeast across the plateau from Acton Holmes through Spion Kop to the left bank of the Tugela. The actual position held was perfectly tenable, but did not lend itself to an advance, as the southern slope was so steep that Warren could not get an effective artillery position, and water supply was a difficulty.

"On Jan. 23, I assented to his attacking Spion Kop, a large hill, indeed a mountain, which was evidently the key of the position, but was more accessible from the north than from the south.

"On the night of Jan. 23 he attacked Spion Kop, but found it very difficult to hold as its perimeter was too large and water, which he had been led to believe existed, in this extraordinary dry season was found very deficient.

"The crests were held that day against severe attacks and a heavy shell fire. Our men fought with great gallantry; would especially mention the conduct of the Second Camerons and the Third Kings Rifles who supported the attack on the mountain from the steepest side and in each case fought their way to the top, and the Second Lancashire Fusiliers and Second Middlesex, who magnificently maintained the best traditions of the British army throughout the trying day of Jan. 24, and Thornycroft's mounted infantry, who fought throughout the day equally alongside of them.

General Woodgate, who was in command at the summit, having been wounded, the officer who succeeded him decided on the night of Jan. 24 to abandon the position, and did so before dawn Jan. 25.

"I reached Warren's camp at 5 a. m. on Jan. 25, and decided that a second attack on Spion Kop was useless, and that the enemy's right was too strong to allow me to force it.

"Accordingly, I decided to withdraw the force to the south of the Tugela. At 6 a. m. we commenced withdrawing the train and by 8 a. m. Jan. 27 (Saturday) Warren's force was concentrated south of the Tugela without the loss of a man or a pound of stores.

"The fact that the force could withdraw from actual touch—in some cases the lines were less than a thousand yards apart—with the enemy in the manner it did is, I think, sufficient evidence of the morale of the troops and that we were permitted to withdraw our cumbersome ox and mule transport across the river, eighty five yards broad, with twenty foot embankments and a very swift current, unmolested, is, I think, proof that the enemy has been taught to respect our soldiers' fighting qualities."

SPEARMAN'S CAMP, Jan. 26, 6.40 a. m.—On Tuesday night last a force under Gen. Woodgate attacked Spion Kop and took the position at the point of the bayonet. At 1.45 a. m. on Wednesday the British were half way up to the summit and the field guns were pushed forward. Gen. Lyttleton's brigade was extended in the centre opposite

Potgieters Drift. With telescopes, Boers could be seen beckoning to comrades who were climbing behind the rocks on the west side of the hill while the British advanced from the east. There was a tremendous cross fire from the highest point of the hill. The troops must have suffered heavily while crossing the zone of fire. The Boer guns were hard to locate, their positions had been selected with masterly skill. At 10 a. m. the Boers began climbing down over the neck, the naval guns playing lyddite on them. At 2 p. m. the whole hill up to the neck was held by the British, who began throwing up entrenchments.

At about three o'clock advances began on the west side. The Third Kings Royal Rifles and the second Camerons made a magnificent assault upon the most precipitous side of the sugar loaf mountain, reaching the summit at 5.15. This is the north-east extremity of the key of the position.

BOER HEADQUARTERS, Modder Spruit, Upper Tugela, Wednesday Jan. 24, midnight, via Lourenzo Marquez, Thursday, Jan. 25.—Some Vryheid Burghers from the outposts on the highest hills of the Spion Kop group rushed into the laager saying that the kop was lost, and that the English had taken it. Reinforcements were ordered up, but nothing could be done for some time, the hill being enveloped in a thick mist.

At dawn the Heidelberg and Carina contingents, supplemented from other commandoes, began the ascent of the hill. Three spurs, precipitous projections, faced the Boer positions. Up these the advance was made. The horses were left under the first terrace of rocks.

Scaling the steep the Boers found that the English had improved the opportunity and entrenched heavily. Between the lines of trenches was an open veldt, which had to be rushed under a heavy fire not only from rifles but of lyddite and shrapnel from the field guns.

Three forces ascended the three spurs co-ordinately, under cover of fire from the three state Krupps, a creusot and a big Maxim. The English tried to rush the Boers with the bayonet, but their infantry went down before the Boer rifle fire as before a scythe.

The Boer investing party advanced step by step until two in the afternoon, when a white flag went up and one hundred and fifty men in the front trenches surrendered, being sent as prisoners to the head laager.

The Boer advance continued on the two kopjes east of Spion Kop. Many Boers were shot, but so numerous were the Burghers that the gaps filled automatically. Toward twilight they reached the summit of the second kopje, but did not get further.

The British maxims belched flame, but a wall of fire from the Mausers held the English back. Their centre, under this pressure, gradually gave way and broke, abandoning the position.

The prisoners speak highly of the bravery of the Burghers, who, despising cover, stood against the sky line edges of the summit to shoot the Dublin Fusiliers, sheltered in the trenches. Fire continued for some time and then the Fusiliers and the Light Horse serving as infantry threw up their arms and rushed out of the trenches.

The effect of the abandonment of Spion Kop by the English can hardly be gauged as yet, but it must prove to be immense.

An unusually high proportion of lyddite shells did not explode.

LONDON, Jan. 29, 4.15 a. m.—The week has opened with the utmost gloom for the British public, and the reaction is all the stronger because of the high hopes that were reposed in Gen. Buller's turning movement and of his announcement that there would be no "turning back."

At the very moment when Dr. Leyds is being received as an honored guest in the high circles on the continent Great Britain has to face the worst disasters in a campaign thus far disastrous. Open talk is heard of the absolute necessity of abandoning Ladysmith to its fate, while Lord Roberts reverts to the original plan of an advance over the Orange River upon Bloemfontein.

To Ladysmith the disappointment must be very bitter. A despatch from the Boer laager near the town, dated Jan. 24, describes the garraison as "very evidently preparing a desperate coup, in order to effect a junction with Gen. Buller's army." It may be regarded as a certainty that in the confident hope of early relief Sir George White has lately been issuing extra rations, and this fact has given rise to an exaggerated idea as to the length of time the provisions would last.

Even should it be decided to send Gen. Buller reinforcements and to attempt to reach Ladysmith by a movement through the still more difficult country east of Colenso, it is extremely doubtful whether the garrison could hold out long enough, as such a movement would occupy at least a month.

The Times says: "The most carefully planned and executed movement of that whole campaign has entirely failed, and it can hardly be necessary to dwell upon the extreme probability that we shall learn, a little sooner or a little later, of a catastrophe almost without precedent in our military history, a catastrophe indeed without a parallel, except in the surrender of Yorktown."

"We are checked at every point of the campaign. In fact, the campaign is still to begin. We wish we had clearer proofs that even now the government has any adequate comprehension of the situation. The utterances of responsible ministers have done nothing to reassure the country on this point. Heavy or light the thing has to be done,

and the government ought to prepare for the despatch of 50,000 men and to take steps to send yet another 50,000 if these should be needed. The hopeless attempts to carry on the campaign with four widely separated columns, each unequal to its task, must be abandoned for a concentration of force and of purpose."

All the editorials this morning breathe the spirit of calm determination. Not one will allow that any reverse could deter the country from the object it has set itself to attain, whatever the sacrifices which may be involved.

Important news, if it can be relied upon, comes from a Boer source through Lorenzo Marquez that Mafeking was relieved last Tuesday. Is this so, it can, of course, be due only to Col. Plumer. It will be remembered that a fortnight ago some accounts were given as to Col. Plumer's progress. On the 17th news reached this country from Gaborone that Plumer was there and that troops not Boers were patrolling in the neighborhood of Mafeking. Gaborone is only about one hundred miles from Mafeking. Therefore it is quite possible for Plumer with his Rhodesian regiment to have covered the distance in six days.

LONDON, Jan. 28.—In view of the apparent impasse in Natal, it is reckoned probable that the relief of Ladysmith may be effected by means of the combined action of strong columns, operating from the western and northern borders of Cape Colony. It is clear that Lord Methuen's column is straining in the leash. Generals French and Gatacre are getting into touch. In all likelihood General Kelly Kenny and General Tucker will soon concentrate divisions at De Aar and Naauwpoort respectively.

It is thought in military circles if General Gatacre is reinforced by a brigade and General French by a division, a combined movement made from the Modder river, from Orange river camp and on Springfontein, by way of Colesburg and Norval's Point, the situation would be cleared at once. This would, in fact, be a reversion to the original plan of campaign.

LONDON, Jan. 29, 3.26 p. m.—Great anxiety has been removed by the announcement that Lord Dundonald's cavalry forces, which it was feared had been isolated among the hills in the neighborhood of Acton Holmes, are on the south bank of the Tugela river.

CAPE TOWN, Jan. 25.—A trustworthy compilation obtained mostly from Republican, Church, and other annuals, which has been published by the Cape Times, gives the following as the strength of the Boer forces:

Transvaalers.....	40,000
Mercenaries.....	4,500
Uitlanders naturalized before 1897.....	5,000
Uitlanders naturalized before 1897.....	3,500
Total Transvaalers.....	52,500
Free Staters.....	27,500
Foreigners.....	2,500
Cape Rebels.....	4,500
	34,500

This gives the Boers 87,000 men, but losses have to be deducted.

The Cape Times, discussing the colonial political situation, calls attention to the fact that several two membered constituencies of the House of Assembly have voluntarily consented to the deposition of the Queen in favour of Kruger and Steyn. These constituencies are Aliwal North, Wodehouse, Colesburg, Vryburg, and Barkly West—all Bond, except Barkly West, which is represented by Mr. Rhodes; and others are badly tainted

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