

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 1900.

SOUTH AFRICAN NEWS

Interesting Anecdotes of the Principals of the Present Campaign.

THE BOER WOMEN.

They Spur the Men to Greater Resistance by Their Work.

None but the elderly women among the Transvaal Boers can remember the great trek of 1836 when their fathers and grandfathers abandoned the homes they had made in Natal and toiled up the passes to the lofty plateau where they founded their republic. Those days were more trying than any the Transvaal women ever saw until the present war began. They were still living in their tent wagons when those terrible wars with the Matabele branch of the Zulu tribe began and no women could show more wonderful spirit and constancy than those wives and mothers of the Boer pioneers in the midst of appalling dangers and hardships which did not end until the Matabeles had been driven north of the Crocodile river. Not a few of those women, and their children with them, perished by the assaults of savages; but not one of them would have dreamed of returning to the peaceful homes and gardens in Natal which they had left behind. The British had proclaimed that country their own, their colonists were pouring in and the Boers would die before they would come again under British rule.

The wives and mothers of the soldiers who now confront the British are the descendants of those stout-hearted women who loaded the guns of their husbands and boys while savages rushed upon the brush heaps that were the sole protection around their laagers. Perhaps no women in the world have changed so little in two generations. The women of the Boer farmsteads now are just what their grandmothers were when the Matabeles sought their lives. The Bible is still their only book, they still prefer a quiet sedentary life and the simple duties of their modest homes, and they have scarcely risen in any respect above the plane of intellectual cultivation which their grandmothers occupied; and they are like their grandmothers, too, in the courage, constancy and sublime devotion with which they are facing the awful trials of another crucial period in the history of their people.

A report sent by the French Consul at Pretoria to his government, though brief, is perhaps the best statement yet received of the part the women of the Boers are taking in the present war. He says they are doing everything they can to aid the soldiers in the field. Indeed hundreds of them are in the field and form the majority of the working force in the ambulance and hospital service. In their denunciation of the British they are far more bitter and outspoken than the men themselves but in their mission of mercy they know no enemies. All the wounded British soldiers who have fallen into their hands have been treated as brothers and friends. The Boer nurses extend to them the same care that they give to their own stricken soldiers. We all know that despatches from the despatches from the British army have often referred to the kind treatment received by their wounded who are prisoners in the Boer camps.

The French Consul adds that the women throughout the two republics exerted a powerful influence in kindling enthusiastic support for the war when it became certain that the conflict could not be averted. They sent many of their sons into the commandos or militia organizations, even though the striplings had not quite reached the age of 16, when they are liable to military duty. One day a crowd at the railway station in Pretoria was cheering a commando that was going to join Joubert's army around Ladysmith. A mother in the throng saw her young son with a gun over his shoulder and wearing a cartridge belt, just as he was entering a car. She followed him to his seat, and laying her hand on his shoulder, said:

'My boy, why did you not tell me of this?'

'Mother,' he answered, 'perhaps I was wrong but I could not bear to bid you good-bye. You were to be told just as soon as we left. You see, mother, it was my duty to go sooner or later and I thought the sooner the better. Forgive me if I have done wrong.'

'You are right, my son,' the mother replied, 'it is your duty to go and I am willing you should go, though I thought it might be better to wait a few months. Go, you have my blessing, but you should have told me.' She kissed him farewell and there was a smile on her face as she left the car, though tears stood in her eyes.

Everywhere the movement of troops in

the Boer States, as they have started for the fighting lines, has been a triumphal procession. In all the towns and hamlets the women cannot do enough for the soldiers. They have marched with all the commandos to the railroad stations. They visit all the camps before the start for the front, bringing baskets of food warm from the ovens and bits of handiwork, such as the 'housewives' many of the soldiers carried in Civil War, containing mending material and implements compactly packed, and other things that may somewhat alleviate the discomforts of soldier life. The women of Bloemfontein who, perhaps, are today expecting the speedy investment of their beautiful little town by the British army are said have been especially enthusiastic in cheering on the soldiers, doing everything in their power for their comfort and filling the ranks as full as possible.

As long as the commandos are within reach delegations of women from many towns are with them, helping in the commissary department, sewing and bringing fresh food from home for the companies in which their interest is especially estranged. Other delegations or committees of women have been permitted to go from Pretoria or Bloemfontein almost to the fighting lines in charge of recruits or the hospital service, and of the distribution of many supplies. By every means in their power the women of the two republics are working day and night to promote the interests of their cause, and if their good, honest hatred of the enemy might sap his strength and paralyze his arms there would certainly be no fight left in the British ranks. The following extract from a letter written by an educated woman at Pretoria, about a month after the war began, embodies a sentiment which all Boer women of every class express.

'Up to this time, all of my children who are old enough to study, have studied English; but I pledge my word that, if I can help it, my youngest daughter shall not learn a word of language we have cause to hate. If the English win, they will proscriber our language. If we succeed in driving them out of our country we will at the same time drive all English words from our lips and from those of our children.'

Such words may perhaps be criticised as narrow and vindictive but they illustrate the prevailing feeling among the women of a sturdy race whose hearts and lives are bound up in the success of their cause. While the battle rages around them, and the enemy is pouring over their plateaus, the dauntless women of the Boers are today as brave, devoted and steadfast as any women of the past who have had the unhappy lot to be environed by the horrors of war.

BOERS IN SOUTHWEST AFRICA.

The Report That Kruger Will Join Them if the British Win the Transvaal.

It has recently been reported from South Africa that President Kruger has no intention of spending his declining years in the Transvaal if the Republic he has fought so hard to preserve is overthrown by the British. He had fully decided, when the war began, that in case his cause were irretrievably defeated, he would retire to German Southwest Africa and spend the rest of his life under the German flag. Among the Boers who have settled in the German possessions is an intimate friend of the President who has acquired a large tract of irrigable land and is engaged in cattle raising. If the worst comes to worst Mr. Kruger will join his friend and live quietly in this newly developing region, 750 miles from Pretoria. Should coming events make it desirable for him to adopt this course, he will be far from his beloved, whose land political and military fortunes he has helped to share for so many years, but he will at least be free from such weighty cares as he has borne since the influx of the outlanders introduced new issues in Transvaal politics.

The exiled statesman would find a good many of his compatriots in German Southwest Africa. Since the first great migrations of the Boers in the third decade of

this century when they trekked north and east to get out of sight of the British flag, there have been several minor emigrations from the Transvaal. Some of the people did not find the Transvaal exactly to their liking and so they set out to find new homes far north of the Zambesi and gladdened wearily across the wilderness for five years before they reached the Huilla district of Portuguese West Africa, within a hundred miles of the Atlantic Ocean, where they still live. In the past few years other Transvaal Boers, believing that the growing troubles with the outlander could have no peaceful solution, have also sought new homes, turning their faces chiefly toward the vast region on the Atlantic coast which the Germans were just beginning to develop. At the end of last year, according to the statistics of the Deutschen Kolonialblatt, 637 of them, women and children as well as men, were living in the new country. They already form 22 per cent. of the total white population and their families comprise nearly half of the white women and children in the country, and these Boers now form the majority of those whites who have gone to the country to make it their permanent home. Soldiers and the administrative force still form the largest element in the white population.

More than half of the Boers are living in the northern part of Great Nama Land. The German explorers say that a large part of the interior may be converted into one of the large cattle regions of the world. It would not be surprising, in the event of the overthrow of the two Boer Republics, if another 'great trek' should take place. Hundreds of the Boers who are determined not to live under the British flag may journey in their tent wagons across the Kalahara waste to live under German rule on the plains of German Southwest Africa.

Fording the Modder River.

In connection with the South African war, readers have become familiar with the name Modder River. When swollen by rain this 'mud'—or Modder—River is exceedingly difficult to cross. Bridges are often carried away and there is nothing to be done but to ford. In 'To the Cape for Diamonds,' Mr. Frederick Boyle gives a picture of such a passage:

We found a regular camp upon the higher side of the swollen stream, and the plain was alive with oxen, mules and horses. The heavy wagon of the Boer and light carts innumerable were there. Men, black and white, clothed only in their innocence and the deep river slime, were tearing about brandishing great whips, and making the air reecho with their crack. Patient oxen were grumbling thunderously beneath the yoke.

Some of the people had been sixteen days waiting. One man had actually trekked along the bank for six weeks, looking for a break. No one could tell how long the river would be in falling. But the banks, here as elsewhere, were precipices of mud, most scantily bound with thorns. Perhaps the sheer descent might be fifty feet, and what small apology for a road had once existed was now washed smooth. But a bullock's life is cheap, and the passage must be made.

With brakes screwed up to the last turn, wheels chained down, and men hanging on behind, a huge wagon started and pitched downward. Few of the wagons had less than twenty-four oxen, most had thirty, to draw them through. There was a mud-hole two feet deep on one side of the incline, and to drop into this was equivalent to a 'stick.'

Sometimes the mud-hole was 'shaved' by an inch or so, and the huge cart went toppling and screaming in its downward course. On the rocks below stood naked Kaffirs to guide it through. The owner, the driver and all his friends, stripped, shouldered a mighty whip, and entered the stream.

Shouts and crackling of whips followed, and above all rose the bellowing of the frightened oxen when, as often happened, they got 'stuck' and the water rose to their necks. Like thunder they united voices

swelled upward. Above this deeper din rose the yells and shouts of drivers and the ceaseless file-firing of whips.

The most serious difficulty lay in the mud upon the other bank. This was frightful. Worked into puddled clay by the ceaseless trampling of hoofs and wheels, it clung to the very axle-tree. To draw five thousand pounds of merchandise through this stuff tested the strength even of thirty oxen. Only one casualty did we hear of—a break by which the hind oxen were crushed to death.

THE BRITISH SOLDIER'S PRAYER.

The Primate of Ireland Composed a Short Prayer and Lord Roberts Adapts It.

A British ex-chaplain writes to the New York Sun as follows:

I have just received a private letter from Lord Roberts, dated 'Headquarters, Cape Town, South Africa, Jan. 30, 1900,' in which he acknowledges his full appreciation of prayers offered in America in his behalf, and he adds: 'The enclosed will, I venture to think, interest you, and I trust that the "Short Prayer for the Use of Soldiers in the Field," composed by my friend the Archbishop of Armagh, may, under God's blessing be a comfort and help to all serving in South Africa.'

What ver opinions the American people may have regarding the respective rights of the Boers and the British, I think this communication will show that Great Britain's grand old Irish General is as much animated with a desire to serve God as President Kruger himself. I forward to you the enclosures.

A BRITISH EX-CHAPLAIN.

ARMY HEADQUARTERS, CAPE TOWN, Jan. 24, 1900.

DEAR SIR: I am desired by Lord Roberts to ask you to be so kind as to distribute to all ranks under your command the "Short Prayer for the Use of Soldiers in the Field" by the Primate of Ireland, copies of which I now forward.

His Lordship earnestly hopes it may be helpful to all of her Majesty's soldiers who are now serving in South Africa. Yours faithfully,

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN, Colonel Private Secretary.

TO THE OFFICER COMMANDING. (Note. A copy of the prayer is being sent to every British soldier in South Africa.)

SHORT PRAYER.

For the Use of Soldiers in the Field. By Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of Ireland.

Almighty Father, I have often sinned against Thee. O wash me in the precious blood of the Lamb of God. Fill me with Thy Holy Spirit that I may lead a new life. Spare me to see again those whom I love at home, or fit me for Thy presence in peace.

Strengthen us to quit ourselves like men in our right and great cause. Keep us faithful unto death, calm in danger, patient in suffering, merciful as well as brave, true to our Queen, our country, and our colors.

It be Thy will, enable us to win victory for England; but, above all, grant us the better victory over temptation and sin, over life and death, that we may be more than conquerors through Him who loved us and laid down His life for us, Jesus our Saviour, the Captain of the Army of God. Amen.

THE PALACE, Armagh, Dec. 28, 1899.

His Gestures.

Probably the Catholic Standard which prints this dialogue did not intend that stiff and awkward elocutionists should take it as a helpful hint:

Teacher—Your recitation was extremely good, Johnny. The gestures were particularly natural. Where did you get them?

Johnny—Git what?

Teacher—The gestures.

Johnny—I ain't got the gestures. It's hives!

A Wise Parent.

'No, I never take the newspaper home; I've got a family of grown-up daughters, you know.'

'Papers to full of crime, eh?'

'No, too full of bargain sales.'

Catch-us-Catch-Can.

Mrs. Church: 'Did you ever catch your husband getting?'

Mrs. Gotham: 'That's the way I did catch him.'

STORIES OF KITCHENER.

The Famous General Once Did the Work of a Spy.

Cool, daring, resourceful, and possessed of a wonderful power of self-restraint, Lord Kitchener, says the London Daily Mail, is not the soldiers' idol that Lord Roberts, his great chief, is, because Kitchener never spares his men; nor, for that matter, does he spare himself. Once a project is afoot, once a goal is to be reached, Kitchener means to get there.

It is hardly to be wondered at that a man of this hard, cool, calculating disposition is not loved; and "Tommy" will never make a pet of Lord Kitchener. But he admires him and places implicit faith in his judgement, and would follow him where ever he chose to go. And what more would a commander have? An authority who was with Kitchener in the Sudan wrote to him: 'It seems to be the Sirdar's policy to advance deliberately step by step, to make his position secure after each step before venturing on another, to run no unnecessary risks, but at the right moment to strike hard with unexpected suddenness, and to follow up the blow with energy.'

Every soldier hopes for a chance, and many hope in vain. Kitchener's chance came in 1882, when the rising tide of Mahdism threatened to sweep from end to end of the Sudan. But it was expected that the false prophet's successes were being exaggerated, and young Kitchener was deputed to make investigations and report. He dressed himself as an Arab trader and entered Omdurman, taking his life in his hand. He went among the wild Kababish and treacherous pashas, who had they once penetrated his disguise, would have shown him little mercy.

One day he witnessed the execution of a supposed spy in the town. The poor wretch was subjected to such torture that Kitchener procured a tiny phial of cyanide of potassium, which he concealed about his person. As he subsequently remarked to a brother officer:

'Death at their hands I did not fear; in fact, I expected it. But such a death!'

For two years Kitchener lived under such conditions, never knowing when he might be brought face to face with a violent death, but all the while communicating to heads of the Egyptian intelligence department information of the utmost importance regarding the Mahdi and his movements. So strictly was his identity preserved that the British troops did not know him, and a "Tommy" on the occasion flung a brickbat at the brave young officer, whom he mistook for a 'blooming negro'. The blow inflicted a rather nasty scalp wound, and had the additional result of creating a proverb:

'Throw a stone at a negro and you'll hit the Sirdar.'

Adventures by the score happened to Kitchener in the exciting role of detective of spies. On one occasion two suspected Arabs were brought into the British camp and confined in the guard tent. Shortly afterward they were joined by a third. The trio held an animated conversation for some minutes, and then, much to the astonishment of the sentry, for the latest arrival stepped forward and said in indisputable English:

'All right, sentry; I'm going to the General.'

The third prisoner was Kitchener, who by this daring ruse, coupled with a perfect knowledge of native languages, confirmed the suspicion that the fellows were dangerous spies. They were promptly shot.

Perhaps the most striking trait in Lord Kitchener's character is his disinclination to put a married man in a position of responsibility under him. He appears to hold the opinion that matrimony interferes with business. He backs up his precept by example, as, everybody knows, Lord Kitchener is a bachelor. Like many a notable personage before him, he does not shine in the society of ladies. It is related that on one occasion he was presented to a certain well known Countess at Cairo, and opened the conversation by asking:

'Do you find Cairo nice at this season of the year?'

'Delightful,' she replied.

There was a pause of five minutes, during which Kitchener tagged thoughtfully at his moustache. Then he said:

'Ah, I am glad!'

Lord Kitchener does not claim to be a ladies' man.

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