

WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA.

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

FIELD-MARSHAL LORD ROBERTS.
V.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

By Major Arthur Griffiths.

Among the passengers on board the P. & O. steamer Ripon, which left Southampton, England, in February, 1852, to perform the stage of the so-called overland route to India, was a youth named Frederick Roberts, who had just been appointed to a cadetship in the Bengal Artillery. Some there are who still remember that youth on that, the outset of a remarkable career; they remember him as a small, delicate-looking, very despondent lad, who did not take kindly to the profession in which he was destined to earn great fame.

He appeared hipped and homesick and very sorry for himself, doubtful whether he would be able to stand the Indian climate, as his health from childhood had been precarious. The heat in the Red Sea nearly overpowered him, and he was heard to express wonder how any fighting could be done in India under its torrid sun.

Yet to India and the great opportunities that soon came to him, to be turned to such splendid account, he owes everything—name and fortune, and the high esteem of his fellowmen. Nearly half a century since that sorrowful debut, he again embarked on the service of his country, a peer, a field-marshal, a leader of such acknowledged prowess and power that every eye turned to him as the man most likely to bring England through a great national crisis.

Lord Roberts is approaching the limit of man's allotted term, but two years short of the three-score and ten that end most lives; but he is still the hard-bitten, wiry, indefatigable, irrepresible worker of the old days, one who has quite grown out of ill-health, and who can still ride to hounds with the first flight; who delights in lawn tennis, and is an enthusiastic cyclist.

When suddenly called upon to start for South Africa he went with as little fuss as though he had merely to call a cab. It was in this prompt, straightforward way that he hurried down to Delhi forty years ago, when all artillery officers were gathered in to help at the siege, travelling down from Peshawar in the mail cart with no more baggage than a thin roll of bedding, his saddle, bridle and sword.

As the child is father to the man, so the Lieutenant foreshadowed the Field-Marshal. Roberts displayed in early life the same traits that have since gained him great distinction. He was ambitious in the best sense from the very first, repining much in his youth for the opportunities that tarried, eager at all times to throw himself into any line of work

that gave him a chance of showing what he was worth.

His first great aspiration was to get "the jacket," to be appointed to that famous branch of his corps, the Horse Artillery, with its grand traditions and its gorgeous dress. The Bengal Horse Artillery had done much in the unceasing conflict that had consolidated the Indian Empire; and its splendid appearance, with gold-braided jacket and leopard-colored helmet, was just what would most appeal to an ardent young military spirit.

When Roberts gained this, his first coveted prize he pined for yet more. He soon obtained an appointment on the staff, under the Quarter-master General, a branch of the staff in which he remained almost without a break, rising higher and higher, until he left it finally at its head.

What Roberts did in the Mutiny, at Delhi, Cawnpore, Lucknow,—his presence at all the serious actions of momentous issue, his personal gallantry and constant unquestioning exposure of his life—all these are recorded in history and are too well known to need recapitulation. He was still only a subordinate, a youngster, on his promotion, and richly deserving it, but ended with no more reward than the rank of brevet-major, the decoration of the V. C., and a promising reputation. Long years of peace service followed, broken only by small campaigns into the Umbeyla country, in the expedition to Abyssinia under Napier, and against the Looshi, when, as usual, he did good service, and more firmly established his military reputation. As a staff officer his value was shown in the compilation of various works, such as "route books" and other regulations for marches to inculcate that topographical knowledge so necessary in such a vast territory as India.

One of the secrets of Roberts' success has no doubt been his personal influence upon his staff as upon all who come in contact with him.

In a lesser sense, as regards the rank and file, Lord Roberts has always enjoyed the fullest confidence of his men. This may be partly due to the fact that he has always been successful. Troops are quickly brought to believe in a general's capacity, and particularly in his luck. Little "Bobs" has never yet been beaten, although there were some near shaves in his second Afghan campaign as when the rising *en masse* of the whole of the tribes about Kabul obliged him to evacuate the city, and Bala-Hissar, to take refuge in the Sherpur cantonments.

That was a very near thing, for quite 100,000 Afghans surrounded his small force of 10,000, not half of them British; and when they made their great attack on the 23rd December, 1879, but for Roberts' excellent dispositions and the pluck of his men, he must have been overwhelmed.

It was no doubt to his personal as-

pendency, so quietly but firmly exercised, that we may trace the simple but implicit faith that all, including his native reverents, have reposed in him. Although the most dangerous episodes of the Mutiny he was waited on quite as a matter of course even under the hottest fire. His kitmutgar, or native butler, brought him his meals regularly in the battery on Delhi; his grooms waited with his horse wherever ordered regardless of the storm of shot and shell. In the middle of the fierce onslaught of the Afghans upon Sherpur, his bath attendant came to him in the thick of the fight and touched him quickly in the shoulder, with the simple words, "Bath ready," that was his duty—what was expected of him, just as he was sure his master expected to wash even in the middle of a battle.

The most touching devotion to his person was shown in the Afghan campaign, by his native orderlies, of whom he had two Sikhs, two Ghoorkas, and two Pathans. They never left him; two or more followed him wherever he went, night or day; they had always the best news of what was in the wind, and if there was any dangerous business afoot they turned out and kept close to their beloved general wherever he might go. If he got into a tight place, they were there to keep him from harm if they could; and in one fight a tall Sikh stood in front of him with his arms outstretched to shelter his small chief, and receive any bullet that might have endangered Roberts' life. Throughout the whole service Lord Roberts has ever identified himself with his troops. His first thought has been for them, and for their comfort and well being.

COL. KEKEWICH.

DESERVES TO RANK WITH THE MOST GALLANT AND INTREPID OF BRITISH SOLDIERS.

(Arthur Griff in London Mail.)

Of the many momentous lessons taught by the present war, that which may belaid closely to heart is that youth is a nearly priceless gift in a commander of men. There are, of course, exceptions to every rule; cases may be quoted where hale and hearty veterans have achieved abiding success, and at this moment great issues are controlled by the aged commander-in-chief of South Africa.

But for executive work the young and active have obviously and necessarily the best of it. They more than make up in energy, dash and sustained hopefulness of the slow wisdom that maturity gives. There are, moreover, old heads to be found on young shoulders, and the freshness of spirit that has supported such men as Baden-Powell, Kekewich, Pilcher, and Plumer in their arduous tasks has been allied with much cool, calm judgment and abounding self-reliance. It is to these comparatively youthful officers that we owe the most brilliant flashes in the dark pall of disappointment. And they are young.

Col. Baden-Powell is only 42, Lieut-Col. Kekewich is 45, Lieut. Col. Pilcher is 41, Lieut. Col. Plumer just a year older. Another name might be mentioned in this connection, despite the failure with which it is associated: that of Major Thorneycroft, who held the Spion Kop with his local regiment until it was all cut up and swept out of existence. We have it on the authority of their general responsible really for the reverse that the young leader of forty did all that man could do in his terrible position.

Robert George Kekewich, who deserves to rank with the most gallant and intrepid of British soldiers, is a Devonshire man—one of the Kekewiches of Peamore, near Exeter. He entered the army from the militia in 1874, gazetted to the One Hundred and Second Regiment, but passing almost at once to the Third East Kent, the historical and ever-famous "Buff's." He was soon noted for his devotion to his work, and within a couple of years gained the best reward that a young officer can secure—the appointment of adjutant to his regiment,—a post that demands much knowledge of drill and detail, and yet more insight into character and powers of command. He was now to see service for the first time, and when just of age accompanied his regiment, when quartered at Singapore, on the Perak



HOW THE ENGINEERS BRIDGED OVER THE TUGELA—COLONIAL TROOPS MAKING A PONTOON BRIDGE.

[Boston Globe]

expedition, planned for the coercion of a native rajah and a rebellious tribe.

For nearly ten years more Kekewich was to be denied further opportunity for distinction. Through most of the time he continued adjutant to his regiment, working still in the same practical school, that of the management of men. His next chance came in 1884, when the tardy dispatch of the Nile expedition to attempt the rescue of Charles Gordon from Khartoum called into requisition a number of "special service" officers and Kekewich's regimental record in the "Buff's" won him selection with the rest.

To his excellent antecedents he added many useful personal traits. He was already known as a sound, safe young fellow, of untiring energy, and a happy, tactful manner in dealing with others, above and below him. His appointment to the staff of the expedition as deputy-assistant adjutant and quarter-master general was altogether right, and he soon proved it.

Nor did the withdrawal of Wolseley's force from the Soudan end his connection with Egypt as a theatre of war. When Osman Digna and the desert tribes broke into disturbance on the Red Sea littoral, there was a brief campaign from Suakim under Sir Francis Grenfell, in which Capt. Kekewich acted as brigade-major to the British troops engaged.

He was now only brevet major after

eleven years' service, but the full regiment rank was not given him for another five years, and then in another regiment, the Inskilling Fusiliers. While in this rank he had the good fortune to join the staff of the commander-in-chief in Madras as military secretary, and after that to fill the same appointment to the lieutenant-general in that garrison in 1898. He was brought into the Loyal North Lancashire as its lieutenant-colonel, specially selected for the command at a time when the regiment wanted pulling together. It was a mere accident that it was serving at Cape Town last spring, and little else that took him northward to Kimberley with a portion of the regiment a short time before it was beleaguered.

His career since then has been public property, and his name will ever be associated in our military annals. Full details are still wanting to do justice to his efficient leadership, but we can appreciate his fine qualities from the results achieved. Undaunted tenacity in his first place; unlimited resourcefulness, for never have defensive means been more lacking at the outset of a siege or more cleverly improvised and developed during the progress.

He has shown himself a jack-of-all-trades, a master of all arms—versatile, fertile in expedient, skilful, in manipulation of men and material. His keen, practised eyes fixed betimes upon the

most defensible points, he has intelligently controlled his engineers in throwing up works, and his artillery in arming them, in every sortie made, in every engagement, and he has never accepted a merely passive role; the strictest principles have been observed and, whether by ruse and stratagem or open attack, he has never failed to score a success.

In person, Col. Kekewich was inclined to a full habit, but no doubt his ceaseless anxieties, no less the hard fare of a garrison on short commons have told upon him, thinning and fining him down. He is of a cheery, light-hearted nature, a pleasant companion, and his kindness of heart is shown in his remarkable fondness for children.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

—The Montreal Herald says: "There can be, there must be, no dragging of our fellow citizens of French blood into a support of imperialism. If it is desirable that they and all Canadians should look to the incorporation of this nation into a confederacy of British nations, the only way to attain that end is by appeals to the reasoning powers, not by diatribes directed against their loyal y." Hear! Hear!

Why is it that a girl or boy will get sleepy sooner studying their lessons than they will reading a novel.

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TYPICAL MEN OF CRONJE'S COMMAND

[Boston Globe]