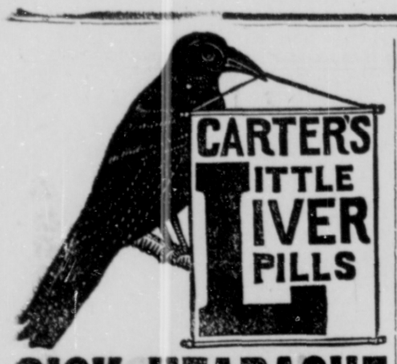

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War in The Transvaal

Particulars of the Struggle in South Africa.

Burial of Wauchope.

Some of the most brilliant work, in the way of descriptive writing done recently by war cotrespondents, is just appearing in the London papers. After tracing the terrible loss suffered by the Highland Brigade at Margersfontein, the Daily News correspondent thus writes of the burial of General Wauchope:

"Three hundred yards to the rear of the little township of Modder River, just as the sun was sinking in a blaze of African splendour on the evening of Tuesday, the 12th of December, a long, shallow grave lay exposed in the breast of the veldt. To the westward, a broad river fringed with tree runs murmingly to the eastward; the heights still held by the enemy scowled menacingly; north and south, the veldt undulated peacefully, a few paces to the northward of that grave fifty dead Highlanders lay dressed as they had fallen on the field of battle; they had followed their chief to the field and they were to follow him to the grave. How grim and stern those men look as they lay face upward to the sky with great hands clenched in the last agony and brows still knit with the stern lust of the strife in which they had fallen. The plaids dear to every Highland clan were repsesented there, and as I looked out of the distance came the sound of pipes, it was the general coming to join his men.

"There, right under the eyes of the enemy, moved with slow and solemn tread all that remained of the Highland Brigade. In front of them walked the chaplain with bared head, dressed in his robes of office; then came the pipers, with their pipes, sixteen in all, and behind them with arms reversed, moved the Highlanders, dressed in all the regalia of their regiments—and in the midst the dead general, borne by four of his comrades. Out swelled the pipes to the strains of "The Flowers of the Forest," now ringing proud and high, until the soldier's head went back in haughty defiance, and eyes flashed through tears like sunlight on steel; now sinking to a moaning wail, like a woman mourning for her firstborn, until the proud heads dropped forward till they rested on heaving chests, and tears rolled down the wan and scarred faces, and the choking sobs broke through the solemn rhythm of the march of death. Right up to the grave they marched, then broke away in companies, until the general in the shallow grave with a Scottish square of armed men around him, only the dead man's son and a small remnant of his officers stood with the chaplain and the pipers while the solemn service of the Church was spoken.

"Then once again the pipes pealed out and "Lochaber no more" cut through the stillness like a cry of pain until one could almost hear the widow in her Highland home moaning for the soldier she would welcome back no more. Then as if touched by the magic of one thought the soldiers turned their tear-damped eyes from the still form in the shallow grave toward the heights where Cronje, the "Lion of Africa," and his soldiers stood. Then every cheek flushed crimson and strong jaws set like steel, and the veins on the hands that clasped the rifle handles swelled almost to bursting with the fervour of the grip and that look from those silent armed men spoke more eloquently than ever spoke the tongues of orators. For, on each frowning face the spirit of vengeance sat, and each sparkling eye asked silently for blood. God help the Boers when next the Highland pibroch sounds. God rest the Boers' souls when the Highland bayonets charge, for neither death, nor hell, nor things above, nor things below, will hold the Scots back fromtheir blood feud.

At the head of the grave, at the point nearest the enemy the General was laid to sleep, his officers grouped around him, whilst in line behind him, his soldiers were laid in a double row wrapped in their blankets. No shots were fired over the dead men, resting so peacefully, only the salute was given, and the men marched campwards, as the darkness of an African night rolled over the far stretching breadth of the veldt.

The same wtiter thus depicts the way in which the disaster overtook the Highlanders:

"During the night it was considered expedient that the Highland brigade, about 4000 strong, ander General Wauchope, should get close enough to the lines of the foe to make it possible to charge the heights. At midnight, the gallant but ill fated men moved cautiously through the darkness toward the kopje, where the Boers were most strongly entrenched. They were led by the guide who was supposed to know every inch of the country out into the darkness of an African night.

"So onward, until three of the clock, on the Monday. Then out of the darkness a rifle rang, sharp and clear, a herald of disaster—a soldier had tripped in the dark over the hidden wires laid down by the enemy, in a second, in the twinkling of an eye, the search lights of the Boers fell broad and clear as the noonday sun on the ranks of the doomed Highlanders, though it left the enemy concealed in the shadows of the frowning mass of hills behind them. For one brief moment, the Scots seemed paralyzed by the suddenness of their discovery, for they knew that they were huddled together like sheep within fifty yards of the trenchss of the foe. Then, clear above the confusion, rolled the voice of the general—"Steady, men, steady"—and like the echo to the veteran, out came the crash of nearly a thousand rifles not fifty paces from them. The Highlanders reeled before the shock, like trees before the tempest. Their best, their bravest fell in that wild hail of lead. General Wauchope was down, riddled with bullets, yet gasping, dying, bleeding from every vein, the Highland chief raised himself on his hands and knees and cheered his men forward. Men and officers fell in heaps together.

"The Black Watch charged and the Gordons and the Seaforths, with a yell that stirred British camp below, rushed onward to death or disaster. The accursed wires caught them round the legs until they floundered like trapped wolves, and all the time the rifles of the foe sang the song of death in their ears. Then they fell back, broken and beaten, leaving nearly 1300 dead and wounded just where the broad breast of the grassy veldt melts into the embrace of the rugged African hills, and an hour later the dawning came, of the grearest day that Scotland has known for a generation past. Of her officers, the flower of her chivalry, the pride of her breeding, but few remained to tell the tale, a sad tale, truely, but one untinted with dishonour or smirched with disgrace, for up those heights, under similar circumstances, even a brigade of devils could scarce have hoped to pass. All that mortal man could do the Scots did; they tried, they failed, they fell, and there is nothing left us now but to mourn for them and avenge them.

"In vain all that day, Methuen tried by every rule he knew to draw the enemy; vainly the Lancers rode recklessly to induce these human rock limpets to come out and cut them off.

"Cronje knew the mettle of our men and an ironic laugh played around his iron mouth, and still he stayed within his native fastness, but death set ever at his elbow, for our gunners dropped the lyddite shells and the howling shrapnels all along his lines until the trenches ran bloody and many of his guns were silenced

"When, at 1.30 p. m. of Tuesday, we drew off to Mooder River, to recuperate, we left nearly three thousand dead and wounded of grim old Cronje's men as a token that the lion of England had bared his teeth in earnest."

A squadron of Lancers in one of the patrols near Ladysmith took with them one day a Lancer of straw. This figure was left near a Boer position and viewed from a distance looked a veritable cavalryman. The figure was left on a rock, and it was not long before the Boers were having shots at the soldier who so daringly exposed himself. Mauser bullet had no offect, and it is alleged that, getting exasperated, they turned one of their big guns on the dummy. The truth was discovered only after a vast quantity of ammunition had been wasted. The Liverpools one day set up a row of effigies, and the Boers were driven crazy by the indifference these men showed to their fire. Then there was the bogus artillery some of our people constructed one night on the town lands in front of Umbuiwane. There were figures of men and something which looked like 15-pounders. The Boers blazed away at this battery and "knocked particulars ——out of it," as an artillery man with many delighted grins said, only to find out that they were being fooled.

One of the most surprising adventures of the war was that of Colonel Sir Henry Rawlinson, at Ladysmith, who went up in a baloon to make a reconnaissance, and a shrapnel shell went clear through the gas bag and exploded some distance beyond. The baloon gently sank, and when it went up again a black patch denoted the spot where the shell had pierced it.

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