

MEMOIRS OF FIELD-MARSHAL LORD GRENFELL

MY LIFE AS A SUBALTERN

By kind permission of Major Martin Everett

"In 1873, having been twelve years a subaltern, and seeing no prospects of either promotion or active service, I had determined, with my father's approval, to leave the Service. I had sadly left my battalion at Portland; I had given away my uniform to my brother officers, and had been on leave for about a month, when I received an offer to accompany General Sir Arthur Cunynghame to South Africa as his A.D.C. My application to retire had been more than a month in the War Office, and it was a question whether I could get it cancelled or no. On receiving the offer, I went up to London, and saw General Hawley, who had lately commanded the 4th Battalion of the 60th and was Assistant Military Secretary. I told him of the offer, and begged him if possible to cancel my application for retirement. He said, "I fear it is too late, as your application has gone to Balmoral." However, he rang the bell, and sent for the chief clerk. It had not yet started, and General Hawley then ordered him to take out my letter and bring it to him. He did so, and the General gave it back to me and said, "My dear Grenfell, this is the narrowest shave I ever remember." I then called on Sir Arthur Cunynghame, and told him that his application for me would be sanctioned, and early in October 1873 I embarked with Sir Arthur and Lady Cunynghame, three Miss Cunynghame's and Lieutenant-Colonel Forestier-Walker, Scots Guards, in the "S.S. Teuton" for Capetown.

Sir Arthur Cunynghame was an officer of the old school; he had served in the Guards and in the 60th Rifles; had been on active service in the Crimea and in India, and was a highly enthusiastic soldier, and a clever writer. Lady Cunynghame was a kindly lady, daughter of Lord Hardinge, and by Lord Hardinge's influence Sir Arthur had been greatly assisted in his military career. After a voyage of nearly twenty-five days we arrived at Capetown.

SOUTH AFRICA IN THE SEVENTIES

In 1873 everything at the Cape was in a state of transition, owing to the rush to the Diamond Fields. The Colony had lately received responsible government, and the new fiscal policy made many necessaries very dear. Fruit and fish were, however, cheap, fine grapes a penny a pound, Cape salmon and crayfish cost but little. Servants were almost unobtainable, dirty half-savage natives asking five shillings a day for their services. One reason for the independence of the natives was the cheapness of fish. The Malays, who are the best servants, lived almost entirely on fish, and could buy what they wanted as daily food for four pence or five pence a day; therefore they would only work a few days in the week. A proposal to import Chinese labour was made in 1874, but the Minister, fearful of losing votes, would not even consider it.

Sir Arthur Cunynghame, in his book "My Command in South Africa," referring to the opposition to the Chinese, relates one of the absurd stories which were circulated at that time, and fully believed by the Dutch community. "It was said that some Chinamen who arrived in San Francisco started a shop with a sausage-making machine, but lacking capital to carry on the concern, two of them agreed to murder the third, and turn him into sausages; this was done and was the beginning of their success in business." The story was implicitly believed by the unenlightened Dutchmen, and was used as an argument against this entry into the Colony of the emigrant Chinese.

In May 1874, Sir Arthur Cunynghame visited Bloemfontein, driving in mule wagons from Port Elizabeth (the railway not having then been made) via King William's Town, Queenstown, Stormberg and Aliwal North to the Diamond Fields. At the latter place we came across a natural warm sulphur spring, which ran into a small pond, and as we had been some time on the trek, we had a bath in it. When Sir Arthur, Colonel Walker and I were well in, a procession of Cape carts approached, which contained to our dismay the Landrost and all the principal inhabitants of Aliwal, sent by the President of the Free State to welcome us. It was a difficult situation, but with our heads above the foul sulphurous water, we implored them to drive on and return for us, which they did, the stolid Dutchmen seeing no joke in the incident. We visited also Grahamstown, and King William's Town, returning by Ladybrand, Basutoland, Herschell, Grahamstown, back to Port Elizabeth.

We stayed some days at Bloemfontein and were kindly received by President Brand, who, however, expressed himself courteously, but firmly, as regards the iniquity of the Government in annexing the Diamond Fields.

The following from my diary: -

“Fine, but cold: left Bloemfontein at 7.30 after breakfast with Mr. Page, who has the large English store. The General stayed to call on the President and picked us up on the Veldt. Saw buck, Koran and two sorts of Namaqualand partridge, got a springbuck, some partridge and small bustard. Were to have slept at Heinecke but lost our way, horses got knocked up, and we had to ask for shelter at the farm of one Petrus Lombard; our host was an old Boer, weighing about twenty-five stone, and apparently in the last stage of dropsy. The house was filled with Kaffir and Hottentot women and children, all shrieking and yelling, dressed in filthy skins, and of all shades of colour. We ate our own provisions and were given a dirty room stored with fresh-killed ox and buck-skins, with one bed, on which we all three slept, or rather did not sleep, as Lombard made night hideous by howling for brandy.”

At the next farm we met the District Surgeon, who amused us by his stories of the simple manners and customs of the Boers. A medical friend of his nearly lost his practice with a Boer family for prescribing ablutions for an elderly Dutch woman, her husband strongly remonstrated, saying, “Young man! You are a stranger in this country and recommend new customs contrary to our usage. I have been married to my Vrow for thirty-five years during which time water has scarcely touched her body! You are ignorant, Sir, of our mode of life, and do not understand our wants! Begone!”

On our return to Capetown I found Mr. Anthony Froude, my uncle, had landed, having been sent by Lord Carnarvon to report on the possibility of the Federation of the South African States. I had not seen much of him before, but I saw a great deal of him here, and had many interesting conversations with him. He failed, however, in his object.

In 1875 we settled at Newlands, in the country, about five miles from Capetown. In the spring of the year difficulties arose at the Diamond Fields between the diggers, German-Jews and Fenians, and the Governor. A provisional government was established, the Governor was made a prisoner in his own house, and the Government eventually decided to send an expedition to Kimberley to re-establish the authority of the Governor, Sir Arthur Cunynghame going in command. As no cavalry were available, the first mounted infantry used in the British Army was organised out of volunteers from the 24th Regiment, and placed under the command of Captain Carrington. The force consisted of two hundred and fifty infantry, forty mounted infantry and two Armstrong guns and twenty-five men of the Royal Artillery. The force we had to meet at Kimberley was reported as seven hundred men all armed, with two squadrons of cavalry, drilled openly by Germans, and Irish Fenian officers. Reliable information was received that the rebels had secured two guns, and stated that they intended to meet the Imperial troops at Modder River and dispute the passage.

On the 30th June the troops entered Kimberley; the Landrost and a party with white flags met us. To our disgust, the rebellion had subsided and the force was received with great enthusiasm by the inhabitants. The cavalry and infantry were marched in two parties to the top of the crater from whence the diamonds were being dug, and the various arrangements were there explained to them by Government officials.

The great mine at Kimberley was very different in 1875 from its present appearance; then it was worked by hundreds of different owners, each of them holding small claims of six feet by four, wires on which the buckets travelled leading from the side of the crater where the sorting was done to the claims at the bottom, so that the whole area was interlaced with countless wire ropes with thousands of buckets ascending and descending. Round the margin of the crater a mass of natives wheeled or carried the blue clay to the sorting tables, mostly clad in cast-off tunics of cavalry, infantry and artillery: I was glad to find a 60th Rifleman among them. Illicit dealers were doing a roaring trade. The temptation to the natives was irresistible. A case had just occurred of a diamond having been sold for £15, for which the Jew who bought it received £1,660, and, after being caught, many years penal servitude.

Besides the Kimberley Mine, then known as New Rush, work was going on at Du Toits Pan and at de Beer's, where we met the original old de Beer who had owned the farm, a very crusty old gentleman who considered he had not received nearly enough for his property, which was of course the case. We heard that he only sold it for £3,000 in 1872.

The troops then moved to Barkly on the north side of the river Vaal, the location of the early diggers before the New Rush was discovered. One day we saw a large number of carts approaching the camp, they contained blue clay from Du Toits Pan and were sent as a present to the troops. This was fairly divided, each company getting its own quota, and carefully sorted. Many diamonds were found, but no large ones; however, I remember that the Quartermaster-Sergeant at Headquarters got eighteen pounds for a stone which he found in his share. The Force stayed four months at Barkly and then returned to

Capetown, the ring-leaders of the disaffected diggers having been arrested and order restored, and so ended the Griqualand Expedition.

One curious incident deserves mention. On the arrival of the Force at the Diamond Fields, some of the most respectable inhabitants, owners of stores, farmers, and municipal councillors, disappeared. They were all good and loyal men, but it transpired that they had been deserters from the Army at the time of the old Cape War, twenty years before, and had to absent themselves. The General, however, gave them all protecting certificates and they returned and resumed their various avocations.

After returning from the Diamond Field Expedition I developed a bad attack of rheumatic iritis, and was invalided to England. This painful disease in my eyes tormented me for several years. It began in Dublin in 1865, and in Canada it lost me the Red River Expedition. I suffered from it in India, and had two attacks at the Cape, and one in the Transvaal. But, as prophesied by Librecht, the German oculist, when I arrived at the age of forty, it completely left me. I spent Christmas at home, and found my father well and strong at seventy-eight years old; this year, I saw for the last time my aunts, Mrs. Kingsley, Mrs. Warre, and Lady Wolverton.

While in England, I joined the Slade School of Art at Kensington, and also worked at the model at Fritz's Life School. I also attended many Spiritualistic séances, and saw things I could not account for, but I came to the conclusion that the rooms in which the manifestations took place were perhaps not absolutely dark to the practised eye of the professional medium.

In March 1876, I returned to the Cape. On arrival at Capetown I accompanied my general on his Inspection of Troops in Natal. While in Natal, we made the acquaintance of Bishop Colenso, and occasionally attended his cathedral; he was a most clever, agreeable man, and full of information about the Zulu nation – speaking their language, and being acquainted with their folk-lore. He gave me a copy of his book on the Pentateuch. He had been a friend of my uncle, Charles Kingsley, and of Maurice, and the opinions for which he was ostracised are now held by many divines still within the fold. He possessed exceptional intellectual gifts, but he lived in a hot-bed of religious controversy from his daring attacks on the narrow-minded sectarianism of the day.

In the spring of 1876 Sir Bartle Frere arrived as Governor and Sir H. Barkly left. The Native question, especially the Zulu one, was causing anxiety, and the Government wisely appointed the best man available; but when difficulties arrived did not support him. While determined to act upon the principles of Constitutional Government, Sir Bartle had to deal with an infatuated Cape Ministry, who declined to acknowledge that any danger to the Colony existed, and refused to make proper defensive preparations. The Galeka, Gaika and Zulu Campaigns were the result.

The first of January was spent at Government House. I saw the New Year in at Grooteschur, an old Dutch mansion, since purchased by Cecil Rhodes, and by him left as a legacy to the Premiers of Cape Colony. Rumours of native unrest existed, but were explained away by the Government, and Sir A. Cunynghame left Capetown for a prolonged tour in the Transvaal, taking with him Colonel Walker and Lieutenant Coghill, A.D.C. (afterwards killed with Melville at Isandula). I remained in Capetown, and in March I had another bad attack of rheumatism and was again invalided, landing at Plymouth in June, from whence I went straight down to Swansea to see my father, who was bearing his seventy-nine years well, and was full of interest in all that was going on.

After a short time at home, I thought the Native question in South Africa was looking black, and, though my leave had not expired, compelled by premonition, I felt I ought to return on the chance of active service. I went to the War Office and consulted my old Colonel, General Hawley, who did not believe from latest reports in the possibility of a rising, and tried to dissuade me from returning. I thought of the lines: -

“There is a tide in the affairs of men

Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;”

and so, against all advice, especially of my family, I decided I must start. I had then been eighteen years in the Army and had never seen active service, and I felt that my destiny was now in my own hands. I ran down to Nottingham and said good-bye to my father, whom I was never to see again, and left by the “Dunrobin Castle.” At St. Helena the news was decidedly warlike, and when I landed at Capetown, I heard that Kreli, Chief of the Galekas, was on the war-path. A column was ordered into his country and I received orders to join it as Staff Officer.

My presentiment was true. This was the Tide which led (if not to fortune) at least to active service in the Galeka, Gaika and Zulu campaigns, the Transvaal expedition, and the Egyptian campaign including Tel-el-Kebir and the capture of Cairo. At the close of 1878 I was still a Captain, in September 1882 I was a full Colonel, and Aide-de-Camp to the Queen, whereas, had I hesitated to return, another officer would have gone in my place, and I might have missed the campaign and lost promotion to Brevet-Major. I should not then have received my Lt. Colonelcy at the close of the Zulu War.

Four Kaffir Wars had taken place in South Africa, viz.: in 1819, 1835, 1846, 1851, and now the fifth was imminent, the rebellious tribes being the Galekas under Kreli – who occupied the country between the Kei and the Bashee Rivers – and the Gaikas, under Sandilli, in the Eastern part of the Cape Colony, termed British Kaffararia. The Galekas were to open the ball. North of the Transkei were located Fingoes (Amerfengu), a powerful tribe, originally slaves to the Galekas, but emancipated by the British. The tribe had joined us in the war of 1835, and therefore were hated by the Galekas. Kreli, having armed his men with rifles, supplied by certain colonists, felt himself strong enough to attack the Fingo; the first hostile collision taking place at a beer drink in Butterworth. Sir Bartle Frere, anxious for peace, summoned Kreli to meet him on the frontier; he refused, and was deposed from the Chieftainship.

A Galeka Joan of Arc affirmed that she had heard in the voices of the wind and the waves the downfall of the Whites, now headed an attack on a camp of Frontier Mounted Police and Volunteers, who had been hastily pushed across the Kei. Her force was defeated with great loss and the witch killed, but the Colonial troops after one or two successes were retired; the Kaffirs swept into the colony, and the aspect of affairs was so threatening that a Naval Brigade with seven guns was landed at East London from H.M.S. "Active." The 24th and 88th Regiments were ordered to the front: Colonial Horse and Foot were organised, and reinforcements from England were demanded. As the Russo-Turkish War was in progress and a prospect of our being drawn into the conflict was still possible, Lord Beaconsfield's Government found it difficult to comply with Sir Bartle Frere's demands.

On the 18th December I left King William's Town for the Transkei, passing Deadman's Gulley, Hangman's Bush, and Murderer's Kop (not very encouraging names), and arrived at Ibeka, our Headquarters, on the 20th December, overtaking the Naval Brigade and 88th Regiment on the way. Ibeka had been attacked a few days before, but the Kaffirs were easily beaten off, and I went over the ground, covered with unburied bodies. Feldtman, the Fingo Chief, exhibited with pride to the General the head of the female witch, which he kept in a sack; it was (for sanitary purposes) covered with lime, and looked as if it were painted white, while the frizzly hair, carefully combed out, added to its horrible appearance.

Three small columns were now organised, and operated against the enemy. No severe fighting took place, though many cattle were taken; but on February the 7th Kreli (who had been joined by Sandilli's Gaikas) gathered for an attack on our fortified post at Quintana.

Quintana in Galekaland has been selected as a defensive post, being a good position, and shelter trenches had been hastily constructed there on rising ground. When I got into camp in the early morning, I found the garrison at their posts, mounted men saddled up, and the Gaikas and Galekas reported about four miles out. Our total force was four hundred white men and five hundred and sixty Fingoes. I was in a difficult position. I was aware that the General had sent me because he thought an officer senior to those with the small force should command the mixed force of Army and Navy. At the same time, I had only just arrived. I had not reconnoitred the ground, and the attack was almost in progress. So I decided that, under the circumstances, I would not assume command, and told Captain Upcher of the 24th I would serve under him. He then desired me to take command of the mounted men – the Frontier Horse under Carrington, the Mounted Police, and a detached company of 24th, to work on the flank of the enemy.

Any novelty, early in life, is vividly remembered. A change of address as a child, a boy's first pony, first impressions at school, the day of joining a regiment, but I venture to say there is no reminiscence so vivid as that of the first time of going into action. Serious thoughts no doubt may prevail before the action actually commences, but after the first shot is fired and the whiz of the first bullet experienced there must be, mixed with the feeling of responsibility, a sense of great satisfaction that the stigma of "Never having seen a shot fired" is removed, and the recipient of the *Baptême de Feu* realises that the most important stage in his career as a soldier has been reached.

Such, I may say, were my feelings as my little force galloped up to the left flank of the enemy's advance, and by my order, dismounted, and fired at the advancing Kaffirs, who came on with loud shouts, some in the open, some creeping up the kloofs, taking advantage of the long grass and rocks; Sandilli's men attacked on the right, Kreli's on the left, meeting us with the discharge of motley weapons – rifles, blunderbusses, sporting guns, with slugs, potlegs, and bullets as ammunition; many, armed with spears and assegais came pluckily on; but my object was not to stop the advance, but to bring the rebels under the infantry fire; so having inflicted severe punishment, we retired on to the camp followed by hundreds of the enemy. The country was an undulating plain, open near the Fort, but broken up in the foreground, with deep wooded kloofs on either hand; the Kaffirs advanced steadily, singing their war song, constantly reinforced by fresh men who swarmed up the hill and through the bush. Their total strength was about four thousand men.

When well in the open and committed to the attack, the guns, a Naval Rocket Tube and entrenched infantry opened fire on them; many fell, and the others, after a plucky rush, broke and retired, throwing

off their blankets, pursued by my men, the Fingo levy and the guns. About three hundred were found dead on the ground, while our loss was insignificant. Thus ended my first action.

The prisoners informed us that Gneto, Kreli's Witch Doctor, commanded the Galekas, all of whom he had doctored by painting on the forehead, and to every man he had sold a necklace of two short pieces of wood fastened by a string – nearly all the dead had the wood in their mouths, having been assured that if they bit the charm the white-man's bullets would lose their power. From the defeat the Galekas never recovered, now seldom showing in the open, but haunting the kloofs and bush in small bands, and Kreli fled to the forest. Had we had a proper force of cavalry for the pursuit the Kaffirs would never have got into the Amatola Mountains, and another Kaffir War which followed the Transkei operations might have been prevented.

The following was addressed by Sir Arthur Cunynghame to the Secretary of State for War: -

Cape Town, 1878.

“Captain Grenfell, 60th Rifles, my Senior A.D.C., has rendered during my command in S. Africa constant good service. In this war he has exerted himself most zealously: he has performed various duties – Commissary of Ordnance, and Staff Officer to Col. Glyn during his late successful campaign in Galekaland – he has accompanied the various columns for the last 3 months, and has commanded many useful Patrols. In the late decisive battle of Quintana he commanded the Cavalry, in pursuit – and contributed materially to the great success of the engagement. I beg most strongly to recommend him for a brevet Majority.”

This was successful. I was promoted Major.

The Galekas being disposed of, Sandilli, chief of the great Gaika tribe, took the field, the start, as was usual in all Kaffir wars when the natives take to the bush, being the murder of white colonists in isolated farms, an unfortunate family named Tainton being the first to suffer: others followed, and then hundreds of refugees arrived at King William's Town.

Colonial troops were now hastily raised, among them Carrington's Horse. Captain Warren, afterwards Sir Charles Warren, G.C.M.G., raised a mounted regiment at the Diamond Fields. Lonsdale and his Fingoes were soon on the war-path and reinforcements from England were called for, and the various strategic posts, so familiar in old Cape Wars, were occupied.

With the news of the start of reinforcements we heard that Lt.-General the Hon F. Theisiger was to command in the new campaign. It was with regret that we heard that General Sir Arthur Cunynghame, who had been successful in quelling the Galeka outbreak, was to be superseded. But he was getting old and a Kaffir War was a most serious business. The Galeka country was an open one with very little dangerous bush in it, consequently their attacks on our fortified posts had been easily defeated, but the thick bush of the Amatola Mountains and the dense forests occupied by the Gaikas who had fought so gallantly in former Kaffir Wars required a much larger force, and with it a younger General to command.

The staff of the new General consisted of Colonel North Crealock as his Military Secretary, Captains Gosset and Molyneux as A.D.C.'s Evelyn Wood and Redvers Buller and others as Special Service Officers – the former to command his regiment, the 90th, the latter to raise the celebrated Frontier Light Horse which he commanded later in the Zulu War. I heard to my great joy from Buller that my services were to be retained in South Africa, and that I was to join the Headquarters Staff as D.A.A.G.

When the General and Staff arrived at King William's Town, all the farmers – German, Dutch and English – had abandoned their farms, their cattle had been driven off and their farms looted, so their women were accommodated in the towns and the men joined the army in some capacity, the most soldier-like of them being the men of the old German legion who had been given grants of land near King William's Town after the close of the Crimean War. These were placed under the command of a fine old warrior, Von Linsingen, and a well-known man in the Colony, Commandant Schermbrucker, and the next three or four months were spent in operations in and about the Buffalo Range.

On the 18th April a great drive of Gaikas from the Gwili Gwili Mountains took place, an attack on the mountains being commanded by Colonel Evelyn Wood. Wood had great difficulty in getting the burghers into the bush until he went in himself, when they behaved well. The result was that the Gwili Gwili Mountains were cleared of Kaffirs and a good many were killed by the force waiting for them at the outskirts of the bush. Close to where I happened to be placed five hundred women and children came out of the bush waving white flags, sat down on the side of the hill and quietly watched the operations. They showed no fear of British troops but would not trust themselves alone with the Fingoes. This was their common practice when the bush was driven. They were hungry, poor things, and our men generously fed them, and in the evening at the close of the operations they invariably returned to their husbands again.

During these operations I saw a great deal of Evelyn Wood and Redvers Buller and their various commands, the 80th and the Frontier Light Horse. Both were in their prime, both absolutely fearless, cool, careful and untiring, they soon mastered the mysteries of bush fighting which they had formerly experienced in the Ashanti Campaign, and it was greatly due to their exertions, coupled with the assistance of Brabant and other good Colonial leaders, that by the end of May the Gaikas were completely broken up, the end coming by the death of Sandilli and most of the leading chiefs.

Many of the various Kaffir Mission Stations (not Church of England) situated in and near the Perie Bush secretly assisted the natives and harboured Sandilli's men. A large number of the converts joined their brethren in the bush, the most curious instance being Edmund Sandilli who had left his father at a very early age, had been baptised when quite young and brought up at the Mission Station, eventually being one of the leading teachers in the schools. He and his wife, Emma, professed Christianity, spoke and wrote English perfectly, and were, indeed, highly educated. Still, when his father rose, Edmund cast off his English clothes, took to the native blanket and was shot in the Perie Bush. By the end of May the Gaika Rebellion was over. At the end of the month Sandilli fell mortally wounded, his head was cut off and brought in, and the Rebellion entirely collapsed.

In proroguing Parliament in August 1878, Sir Bartle Frere announced the successful conclusion of the war with the Galekas and Gaikas, but, alluding to the unrest among the natives in South Africa proper, trusted that the reinforcements on their way out would restore public tranquillity; but in Natal constant uneasiness prevailed in consequence of the large force of Zulus close to the frontier and kept in a state of military organisation by Cetewayo (pronounced Cetchwayo). At the end of July two serious violations of the understanding made with Cetewayo, King of the Zulus, were officially reported on the British side of the Buffalo River, Zulu women who had fled for protection being seized and brought back into Zululand where they were put to death. Cetewayo attempted to settle this question by an apology and an offer to pay down a certain sum of money, but by September the position of affairs in Natal was very critical. Zulu regiments on the border organised royal hunts on a great scale, armed Zulus watching the Drifts into Zululand, and various acts of trespass across the border being reported. Natal natives were expelled from Zululand and reported that large parties of armed natives were hastening to Ulundi, Cetewayo's great military camp, under orders to concentrate to fight the English. The safety of the Colony being in peril, Sir Bartle Frere issued an ultimatum, but a message was received by Mr. John Dunn, an Englishman residing in Zululand and a friend of the King, reporting that the Zulus were determined to fight as Cetewayo believed that the force that could be sent against him could be easily disposed of.

Early in 1879 the invasion of Zululand was determined on, the plan of the General (who through the death of his father had by this time become Lord Chelmsford) being to move in four columns simultaneously on Ulundi, Cetewayo's stronghold. The first column under Colonel Pearson, 3rd Buffs, was to make its way after crossing the Tugela to Etshowe: the right centred column, under Lt.-Colonel Durnford, R.E., was to act on the defensive until the concentration was well in hand: the third column, under Colonel Glyn, was to cross Rorke's Drift: the fourth, under Colonel Evelyn Wood, had Utrecht for its base and was sanctioned on the Blood River: a fifth column was eventually formed, under Colonel Hugh Rolands, V.C. I was detained on the Headquarters Staff at Pietermaritzburg to forward all the troops as they landed to join their several columns.

On the 19th January, Colonel Glyn's column marched along the track from Rorke's Drift to the Ideni Forest, and camped near an isolated and curiously formed hill, known as Isandhlwana. Next morning a general advance was made, the enemy retiring without fighting on. The object of the Zulu commander was to detach as many men as he could from the camp at Isandhlwana and then make a determined attack in force upon those remaining. Colonel Harness, R.A., in marching with reinforcements to join Colonel Glyn, heard guns, and shells could be seen bursting against the hills. A European officer arrived from the camp, stating that it was surrounded and would be taken if not immediately reinforced. News arrived at Headquarters in the afternoon from Commandant Lonsdale who had made his way towards the camp and found it in the possession of the enemy. Durnford with his two hundred and fifty mounted natives and the Rocket Battery had reached the camp at about 10.30 and assumed command. News came that the enemy were retiring in every direction, and on hearing this, Colonel Durnford sent troops of mounted natives to ascertain the enemy's movement and he personally cantered on and suddenly found himself in the presence of an immense impi of Zulus who advanced rapidly on the camp. In the retreat of Durnford's men they came upon the remains of the Rocket Battery which had been cut up by the enemy.

Major Pulleyn, left in command of the camp, concentrated the men in the strongest position possible at the foot of the mountain. A desperate charge was made by the Zulus, the native contingent gave way and a retreat towards Rorke's Drift was made by the whole of the native contingents, the 24th Regiment standing gallantly at their post with a view to cover the retreat.

Some three months after, when I was sent to accompany the first party which returned to Isandhlwana after the reorganisation of the force at Pietermaritzburg, I found the dead bodies of about two companies of the 24th, lying with hundreds of cartridge cases around them, and their officers, who were then perfectly recognisable, lying with the men. About forty men crossed the river at Rorke's Drift, about twenty-five white men arriving at Helpmakaar, where a laager was formed. Over fifty officers and about eight hundred white men besides a large number of natives were killed by the twenty thousand to twenty-five thousand Zulus who attacked the column.

At the time this dreadful tragedy occurred, I, who had been left to bring up the last remnants of the force from Pietermaritzburg, having fulfilled my duty, had started on the 19th with orders to join Lord Chelmsford's Headquarters Staff wherever they might be. I rode one horse, and a black servant, whom I had borrowed from Captain Shepstone, led my other horse. It was about eighty miles from Pietermaritzburg to Helpmakaar, which was the first place where I could hope to rest. When I had got about half way, one of my horses fell lame; this delayed me for some time and I did not get to my destination till the evening after the defeat of our forces at Isandhlwana had taken place. The news, however, had reached the natives, as before reaching Helpmakaar they were deserting their kraals and running over the country, driving flocks and herds. The delay caused by my horse breaking down probably saved my life, as if it had been sound, I calculated I should have arrived at the camp of Isandhlwana after Lord Chelmsford's force had started, and before the Zulu attack in the morning.

On the 23rd January, having heard of the attack on, and gallant defence of, Rorke's Drift, I rode with about two or three companies, which were all that could be spared from Helpmakaar, towards Rorke's Drift. On arrival, we found the small defensible position intact. The perimeter had to be reduced according to the small strength of the garrison, which was under seventy men. Lieutenant Chard, R.E., told us how, hearing that attack was imminent, he had by using Commissariat stores – chiefly mealie bags – in about a couple of hours, made a defence of the post. They had hardly completed their wall, two bags high, when the Zulus advanced at a run against the South wall. The enemy suffered heavily from well-sustained fire and were driven back into the bush. It was a curious sight when we arrived. Parson Smith was looking after the wounded, and the dead were being buried. Altogether it was a gallant defence, as the number of attackers exceeded three thousand Zulus.

We then heard that Lord Chelmsford, whose men had passed the night in the camp at Isandhlwana among their dead comrades, had moved on to Rorke's Drift. It had always appeared to me, and indeed to most other officers present at that period, that an unfortunate mistake was made by Lord Chelmsford in not waiting longer at Isandhlwana to bury the dead. The fact of their dead comrades lying out for three months unburied had, no doubt, great influence in promoting attacks, some of them quite unjustified, which were made upon him after the disaster.

Previous to the arrival of Lord Chelmsford at Helpmakaar, I was sent back by the Officer Commanding with despatches to Pietermaritzburg. I left as I had come, my horse having recovered from his lameness, but about twenty miles on the road I passed what had been on my journey up quite a small spruit, or stream, but which severe rain had now transformed into a very formidable river. However, I felt it necessary to push on, and we rode in. When we reached the middle, it was so deep that the three horses were washed off their legs, we were all carried down, and, after a severe struggle, I remembered nothing until some time afterwards I found myself half under water with my arm round the branch of a tree, on the further side of the river. I saw my own horse getting out of the river about half a mile down; the other two horses and the unfortunate native I never saw again; but his body and one of the horses, badly injured, were eventually recovered. Luckily the despatches were in the holster of my horse, and I spread them in the sun and dried them before proceeding.

On arrival at Pietermaritzburg I found rather a disgraceful scare proceeding. The town had been placed in a state of defence, which was all right, no doubt, but a condition of alarm and confusion existed which was not creditable. Reinforcements were sent out from England and every effort made to re-create the army for the invasion of Zululand. Two new columns, under Generals Crealock and Newdigate, were constituted as 1st and 2nd Divisions of the Field Force, while Colonel Evelyn Wood remained in independent command of the Flying Column, I joining the Headquarters Staff in Lord Chelmsford's camp and serving as D.A.A.G. under Colonel Bellairs, the A.A.G. of the Force. The situation of affairs was now in the same state that had prevailed after the tragedy of Isandhlwana. The difficulties of transport and rations delayed the advance of the column.

On May 24th Lord Chelmsford moved Headquarters to Landmansdrift, and on June 1st the whole Division, under Lord Chelmsford, crossed the Blood River and marched to the Itelizi Hill, and on this, practically the first day of our advance in Zululand, occurred the dreadful tragedy of the death of the Prince Imperial.

On March 27th the Prince Imperial joined the Force at Ladysmith, and I soon became fairly well acquainted with him. He was a handsome youth, dark hair and eyes, classic features, but with no trace of his Napoleonic ancestry; small, slight and well-knit in form, one recognised but little of the Frenchman in him. Reserved, self-restrained, yet longing for his chance, proud, brave and reckless, the blue blood of the Montijos was strongly developed. He was a Spaniard from top to toe.

His friends in the Force were Bigge, Slade and Wodehouse, young Artillerymen with whom he had been at Woolwich; to the rest of us, while courteous and respectful, he was always somewhat cold and dignified. His craving for effect was shown in various ways. He seldom used his stirrup to mount his horse, but generally vaulted into the saddle, a practice which in all probability caused his death. He was ardent for opportunities of distinction, difficult to control, and on two or three occasions he had displayed rash gallantry which alarmed the officers told off to attend him. In a reconnaissance with Buller's Horse, the Zulus gathered, and a fight seemed imminent, but when, on the advance of the detachment, they dispersed he charged them at full gallop. Buller, having reported his recklessness, refused to be responsible for him in future; he was therefore detailed to work with the Quartermaster-General, Colonel Harrison, who received a written order that the Prince should not be permitted to quit the camp without the express orders of the Commander-in-Chief.

No incident of any great moment occurred until the arrival of the Force at Koppie Allein on the 31st May. The infantry then received orders to march about eight miles on to the Itelizi Hill.

On the morning of June 1st the Prince begged Colonel Harrison to give him an escort and allow him to make a sketching expedition beyond the ground covered by the cavalry. Harrison was reluctant to consent, when Lieutenant Carey suggested he should accompany the Prince to the Ityotyzi Valley, where the next camp beyond the Itelizi was to be, and a sketch should be made of the ground there. For the escort six white men and six Basutos were told off, and placed (according to Colonel Harrison) under the command of Lieutenant Carey.

That morning I had ridden with Colonel Harrison to the Itelizi and marked out the camp. After completing this duty, I was about to return to meet the advancing column, when I saw the Prince and Lieutenant Carey, accompanied by the escort of white men; Colonel Harrison had told me that there were also Basuto scouts, and I concluded that they were far away covering the party. As my work for the morning was over until the arrival of the column, which would not take place for some two or three hours, I told the Prince I would ride with him part of the way and look at the position of the camp in the Ityotyzi Valley, and we rode away – the Prince and I together, Carey behind.

We rode seven or eight miles on a ridge which runs out into the Valley; it was bare of trees or cover, and therefore, as the Zulus had no horses, even with the smallest escort it was perfectly safe. We had a long talk, and before reaching the crest of the hill descending into the Ityotyzi Valley I thought I could hear the whips of the teams approaching the camp we had just left, I therefore said "Good-bye" to the Prince, and turned my horse round to return to the camp. The last words I said were "Take care of yourself, Prince, and don't get shot." He replied, pointing out to Carey, "Oh no! He will take very good care that nothing happens to me."

What happened then is well known. There was no Basuto escort, the Prince having refused to wait for it; there were only a few white men, none of them English, and Carey with the Prince. When he got to the crest of the hill he saw Kaffir kraals below him, and insisted (as they were apparently deserted) in going down to see them. Here Carey ought clearly to have restrained him, but he did not do so, and allowed him to descend to the kraal, which was nearly surrounded by very high fields of mealies, growing seven and eight feet high. In these mealies were hidden the Zulus belonging to the kraal, consisting of forty men, an outpost of Cetewayo's army, who had fled on seeing our men on the hill.

The Prince off-saddled at the kraal, entered some of the huts, and finally had luncheon in the apparently deserted village. The Zulus, seeing that the party was a very small one, consisting only of the Prince, four troopers and a black native guide, crept to the edge of the mealies, and fired a volley. What happened then is doubtful, two men were killed on the spot, and there is little doubt that Carey and the remainder mounted their horses and fled. The Prince must have got to his horse, as it came in in the evening with one holster, torn and hanging. He had evidently attempted to vault into the saddle, and the holsters had ripped, and he fell to the ground.

In the evening I dined with Colonel Harrison and some of the officers of the Headquarters Staff in our tent on the Itelizi Hill. Carey, who was a member of the Headquarters Mess, had not arrived, but no anxiety was felt regarding him, as we dined at sundown. To complete his sketch and return to the Itelizi would have taken some hours. I, therefore, ordered some dinner to be kept for him, and was alone in the tent when he came in. I said in a chaffing way, "Carey, you are very late for dinner, we thought you had been shot." He replied, "I am all right, but the Prince is killed." I said, "Good Heavens! Have you reported it?" He said, "No, I have only just come in." He was greatly agitated, and evidently had been riding hard. I then said, "You must come immediately to Lord Chelmsford." I

met, if I remember rightly, Colonel Harrison on the way, and told him the dreadful news, and he then took Carey to the Commander-in-Chief.

After the catastrophe at Isandhlwana, gallant officer as he was, Lord Chelmsford's nerve had been sorely shaken, but he had recovered with the months of action, and this fresh blow was a staggering one. I went to see him on military duty late that evening, and found him in his tent with his head on the table in a state of absolute despair. Orders were given that the next morning a strong cavalry escort should leave at dawn to recover the body.

I joined General Fred Marshall, who was in command of the cavalry, and rode over the same road that I had gone over the day before. As the scene of the tragedy was approached, I advanced with General Marshall, and after we had descended the hill, and when near the kraals, we saw in the distance a white object on the ground. We rode to it, and it was the Prince Imperial lying in a donga. He had been stripped of everything except one sock, and a broken spur also lay by his side. We lifted up his head, and found behind his neck a locket containing some relic given to him by his mother. This had either escaped the Zulus, or very likely they regarded it as some religious emblem, and thought it would be bad luck to remove it from the body.

He was assegaied in seventeen places, his arms were crossed over his chest, and his face, which was beautiful in death, was disfigured by the destruction of the right eye from an assegai wound. This wound, the doctor told us, was the first, and the deadly one, the subsequent ones being inflicted on the dead body. It was a sad sight as we, his English brother-officers, stood round the dead body of the hope of the Imperialists of France, the Prince's two servants weeping bitterly, and we all felt the great disaster and the deep disgrace which had fallen on the British Army. His body was raised from the ground, wrapped in a cavalry cloak, and carried by the officers up the hill to the ambulance. That evening in the Itelizi Camp a solemn funeral service was performed by the Catholic chaplain, and the same night the body of the Prince made its first journey towards England and Farnborough, where it now reposes.

The sword he wore was one worn by the great Napoleon in all his campaigns; it was taken by the Zulus, but two days before the battle of Ulundi, which ended the campaign, I, riding ahead with the cavalry, met some Zulus with a white flag. They were sent by the King to say that, hearing the officer killed at the Ityotyzi Camp was a great Prince, he returned his sword in order that it might be despatched to his relatives – a noble act on the part of Cetewayo.

Two months before this tragedy, in the letter to my sister from which I give an extract, I had prophesied disaster: -

Extract from letter to my sister, Mrs. Thornton.

HEAD QUARTERS CAMP,

ZULULAND

May 24th, 1879.

“We are just beginning our second advance. The Cavalry reached Isandula yesterday, and we shall now go through the form of burying the dead. We have already found the bodies of Melvill and Coghill, and three days ago that of poor Smith, R.A., a great friend of mine. We made a reconnaissance into the country near Rorke's Drift, and found a lot of loot from the camp at Isandula. On the top of the hill a Zulu scout was sitting in a portable armchair – the Scout will have to sit on the ground for the future.

The Prince Imperial is with us, and was in great danger last Tuesday. He, and Colonel Harrison, our Q.M.G., joined a reconnaissance of Buller's, missed their escort, and went on with only 5 men. The Zulus caught them on the top of a hill, where they came under fire. The Prince drew his sword and charged up the hill, shouting, his ferocious yells (and I conclude his likeness to his great uncle) alarmed the Zulus, who fled, but they had to pistol a Zulu before they got out, which they did all right, but slept two nights in the open, very cold and miserable.

He is a very plucky little chap, and will, I think, get himself shot before the campaign is over. We shall, I expect, have a good fight in the rough ground near Ulundi, and that, I hope, will end the campaign.”

After the death of the Prince Imperial, the Force moved on; a position some four miles beyond the Ityotyzi River was taken up and the cavalry were sent forward to clear a district in the neighbourhood of the Upoko River. The good work now done by Buller's Frontier Light Horse had cleared the country pretty well of the enemy, but about two or three thousand Zulus remained on the Upoko River, and mounted men could not act with much effect. Eventually they were driven off’.

On June 30th both columns moved into the Valley of the Umfolosi through mimosa and long grass – a very difficult country – on to the river. This was the Zulus' chance. If we had been attacked in this difficult country, the issue might have been doubtful. The bush near the river was cleared, a laager of wagons made, and a stone fort built. The great military kraals were in full view on the opposite side of the Umfolosi River.

On July 3rd, the Zulu sharpshooters opened fire on our watering parties, and I, who had taken a bucket to the river to have a wash, had to retire ignominiously behind a tree, leaving my clothes temporarily on the ground, till Buller, with the Frontier Light Horse, crossed the river, drove the Zulus away and followed them up with the view of reconnoitring the ground on which we were to fight next day; this he did very successfully, but came suddenly on a force of about five thousand Zulus and retired with a loss of three men killed and four wounded, but his object was achieved. In the retirement he displayed great skill and gallantry, as he was outflanked by a numerous force which he kept at bay till his retreat was covered by some infantry and guns sent from the camp to rising ground above the river. Lord William Beresford behaved gallantly, and received the V.C. for bringing in a wounded man. An attack was expected, there were two or three alarms, native pickets running in, horses and cattle getting loose, and Lane and I were up nearly all night. I only got about an hour's rest and at daylight the Force started to for the River, the mounted men leading rapidly on to the open ground through the bush, where again the Zulus had a chance of stopping us. It was a lovely day; as we advanced the great military kraals lay below and on all sides of us. At 7.30 we formed a huge square, the native contingent, ammunition and tool carts inside, the 17th Lancers and Buller's Horse covering the square, which consisted of the 80th, 90th, 13th, 94th, 58th and 21st Regiments of Infantry, 6.9 prs., 6.7 prs., two Gatlings (under the command of Captain Owen) and Bengough's native contingent.

As I belonged to the Quartermaster-General's department, I was riding in advance of the square and came suddenly on the body of one of Buller's men, Private Peacock, who had been taken prisoner the day before and horribly mutilated. It was not an encouraging spectacle for men just going into action, so I sent back to ask Lord Chelmsford to send me the chaplain, which he did; as the body lay near a wall, we pushed the loose stones of the wall on to it, the chaplain read a few lines of the Burial Service and the column resumed its march, the general direction being north-east, passing the Great Nodwengu Kraal and halting on the position which had been selected by Buller, Ulundi being about a mile to the east.

The Zulus now appeared in great numbers on all sides of us and soon came into collision with our mounted men who, after firing a few volleys, retired rapidly into the square. The Zulus (who numbered about twenty thousand) following them up came within range of the guns, which did great execution, but did not check them, and they soon came under musketry fire. It was a dramatic sight, the small square of under four thousand men with the Zulus closing in on it, the great Amatola Mountains in the distance and the Zulu army manoeuvring in different regiments, each regiment being identified by the colour of its cow-hide shields, closing on to the square, their skirmishers firing wildly from every sort of weapon, including elephant guns, potlegs from blunderbusses, with Martini bullets (fired from the rifles captured at Isandhlwana) singing over our heads and dropping men in the square, but as a rule the fire was too high.

The Zulus fought in their old way, advancing in a horn-shaped formation, continually feeding their flanks, till the square was entirely enveloped. Their fire ceased and they came boldly on with their stabbing assegais, and sought to close with the British Force. Through the smoke we could hear the hoarse voices of the Indunas urging on their men and could see the dark forms of the Zulu warriors brandishing their spears. Had any panic occurred, we should have been lost, but the men stood well up to their rifles and their well-sustained fore supported by the guns and Gatlings, soon told. At no point did any large number of men get within thirty yards of the square, and falling in heaps, the Zulus began to falter.

At about 9.30 the Zulus were sullenly retiring from all sides of the square, and Lord Chelmsford ordered out the 17th Lancers to engage the enemy. Colonel Drury Lowe passed through the rear face of the square and charged the Zulus. The Lancers pushed on after the enemy, who were now flying to the hills, and did great execution. The troopers were somewhat embarrassed by the Zulu shields, the lance going through them, and being hard to get rid of, but the great use of the lance in pursuit was clearly demonstrated. This action ended the military organisation of the Zulu nation, their power being completely broken.

After the fight, the Zulus entirely accepted the situation and came in, bringing us supplies and very nice bowls of curds and whey, which were very acceptable, and it was a remarkable fact that our men rode about unmolested among the men whom they had lately been fighting.

A few days before the action at Ulundi, Sir Garnet Wolseley had arrived off the coast to replace Lord Chelmsford, who had been recalled to England; but it was a source of great satisfaction to those

who had served under his command that before his supersession he had brought off successfully the action which had broken the power of Cetewayo and his military organisation, though it was left to the new Force, which was about to be organised, to capture the person of the King. Redvers Buller and I both received very kind offers to remain on Sir Garnet Wolseley's Staff and complete the operations, but we neither of us anticipated the chance of any further fighting, and we had both been very hard worked, living in the open for the last two years, so we decided to return home, and obtaining leave to do so, we rode down to Durban.

The campaign had not been a very satisfactory one, the higher Staff duties certainly were not performed with any great success, and the training of the troops of all arms for the anticipated fighting was not as good as it might have been.

n.b. Lord Grenfell's spellings have been left unaltered.