

I very much fear
That the Zulus are near
So, hang it, I'm off to Dundee!

Thus ran the doggerel that alluded cowardice on the part of Captain Alan Gardner; it was a ditty sung with spiteful relish by officers of Lord Chelmsford's army throughout the Zulu war of 1879. But the question remains: was Gardner a coward or cavalier?

It was the 22 January 1879 and Captain Alan Gardner of the 14th Hussars was in for a long day. He had been woken in the early hours of the morning and ordered to assemble with his fellow staff officers. They were to immediately accompany Lieutenant General Lord Chelmsford, the officer commanding Her Majesty's forces in Southern Africa, together with a column of over 2,000 men, in a foray against the Zulu army. Gardner's army career spanning, 19 years, had been varied but unspectacular. He had served in the Bombay Artillery, Royal Artillery, 11th Hussars, Derbyshire Yeomanry and presently the 14th Hussars. He spoke French and Hindustani, had spent two years in India, a short stint with the Intelligence Department at the W.O. and had also successfully passed through Staff College. Now, at the age of 35 and still only a Captain, he had been lucky enough to secure a staff appointment with Colonel Glyn's No. 3 Column (to which Lord Chelmsford had attached himself and effectively taken over command).

So, some six hours after Gardner and the column had left camp at Isandlwana, and had marched east for 12 miles, it seemed as though they had all embarked on a 'wild goose' chase. There had been some skirmishing but the Zulus had remained most elusive.

At 10.30am, Lord Chelmsford had ordered Gardner to return to Isandlwana with a message for Lieutenant Colonel Pulleine of the 24th Regiment who had been left in charge of the camp.

With several other officers and a small mounted escort, Gardner rode back across the broad undulating plain that was surrounded to the north and south by weird-shaped hills and jagged escarpments. To his front, through the heat haze, the sphinx-shaped hill of Isandlwana grew more distinct with its temporary apron of 400 white bell tents shimmering like a mirage.

As they drew closer, Gardner was alarmed to see that the whole camp had been "Fell-in" facing the Nqutu plateau which dominated the camp; more alarming were the silhouettes of thousands of Zulu warriors that he could see appearing along the plateau skyline. And to give the scene an even more sinister aspect, as Gardner entered the camp the sun started to dim in an almost total eclipse.

The battle of Isandlwana was about to begin and the rest is well recorded and so needs not to be repeated here.

At the start of the ensuing chaos and slaughter, Gardner showed his mettle by immediately advising Lieutenant Colonel Pulleine to ignore the General's now inappropriate orders that he, Gardner, had carried. Then in the heat of the battle, as the enemy broke through the thin line of infantry, Gardner gathered some 30 to 40 mounted men from around the camp, and galloped them to the front. There they supported the retiring Natal Native Horse and together succeeded in halting the left wing of the advancing enemy. Then in Gardner's own words:

Leaving the mounted men who were under Captain Bradstreet [Newcastle Mounted Rifles], I returned to Lieutenant Colonel Pulleine who had previously told me to remain with him. Shortly afterwards observing the mounted men retiring I rode back to ascertain the cause – Captain Bradstreet told me he had been ordered to do so by Colonel Durnford who soon afterwards told me himself that he considered our position too extended and wished to collect all the troops together – but it was now too late – large masses of the enemy were already in the camp and completely surrounded the men of the 24th Regiment.

The mounted men then fell back to the camp area and there, with Durnford and Bradstreet, were slaughtered almost to a man. Gardner tells of his own escape:

Many were killed, a few of us managed to escape by riding down the hill on the right, but many were shot riding along the narrow valley [Fugitives' Trail] and more were drowned and shot in crossing the Buffalo River [Fugitives' Drift]. When I saw all was lost, I sent an order by a Basutho [a trooper of the Natal Native Horse] to the officer on Rorke's Drift telling him to fortify and hold the house. I also sent a similar order to Helpmakaar.

Gardner is seldom credited for the vital part he played in the drama of Rorke's Drift (arguably the most celebrated battle in the history of the British Army). Bearing in mind that the garrison had little more than an hour in which to prepare their makeshift defences, each minute was absolutely crucial and Gardner's message arrived at least 110 minutes before Lieutenant John Chard R.E, the senior officer present, got back to the depot where he found, due to Gardner's note, the defences already being built in feverish haste.

Gardner also makes little of the nightmare ride down to the Buffalo River, the fugitives being pursued without mercy for six miles over what must have been for horsemen, some of the most hazardous terrain in Southern Africa – and a man without a horse was a dead man. Only Gardner and four other imperial officers escaped from Isandlwana.

Having made it safely to the Natal bank of the Buffalo River, Gardner and a Captain Edward Essex tried to gather about them the few other rank and file that had survived, but most were in no mood for further orders. Instant flight to Helpmakaar and then press on to the safety that lay beyond was the general feeling.

Quartermaster Macphail, a volunteer of the Buffalo Border Guard, reminiscing 50 years later at the age of 90 remembered:

Captain Essex when he got through gave some orders but no-one paid any attention to him. He said we had better get into some order and go to Helpmakaar, but there was no order at all. Nobody took any notice.

Nevertheless Gardner, having got the one message off to Rorke's Drift ordered, or persuaded, another trooper of the NNH, to ride ahead to Helpmakaar (the next outpost into Natal) and warn the garrison. That being done, he and the rest of the survivors began the long slog up the escarpment, arriving at Helpmakaar around about 6pm where they immediately joined in the frantic preparations to fortify the commissariat store.

It is likely that they could hear the distant sounds of battle echoing up from Rorke's Drift which had now been under attack by a Zulu impi, 4,000 strong, for over two hours.

There had been two companies of infantry at Helpmakaar earlier in the day and they had marched down to reinforce Rorke's Drift at about the same time as Gardner had arrived. However, the infantry, nearing the bottom of the escarpment were met by other fugitives who wrongly assured them that Rorke's Drift had already fallen, whereupon the troops were about turned and marched back the way they had come. On arrival at Helpmakaar their news seemed to confirm the erroneous belief there, that the defenders of Rorke's Drift were long since dead. As for Lord Chelmsford's column, armed with less than 70 rounds of ammunition per man, it seemed inevitable that it had either been besieged or massacred somewhere beyond Isandlwana. Therefore Natal was virtually at the mercy of the Zulu army – and with Helpmakaar the first outpost in its way, it is easy to understand how a number of its defenders, having already witnessed the horrors of the day, were seized with terror.

It was imperative that Natal be warned and riders, either ordered or on their own initiative, started off on the 100 mile ride to Pietermaritzburg. No doubt there were too many volunteers ready to take the road south-east to comparative safety as, according to Macphail, Essex, in order to stop a rash of desertions, gave instructions for all the horses to be turned loose and those near the camp to be shot. It was an order that started something of a stampede with men declaring "*if the horses go, we go!*" It was certainly enough to cause Macphail's departure. He and his friend Moodie took off in the darkness for Dundee, the nearest settlement of any size, 24 miles to the north west.

Gardner was aware of another British column, commanded by Colonel Evelyn Wood, somewhere beyond Dundee and Utrecht, that would be ignorant of the day's disaster and consequently vulnerable. It too must be warned, but Gardner soon found that although there were volunteers aplenty to ride south east, none were prepared to venture in the opposite direction, following the Buffalo River border into a territory whose ownership had been disputed between its black and white settlers, and largely in turmoil, long before the war had started. Although he offered money, no one was prepared to come forward.

By this time Gardner had been on the go for 24 hours without rest, and was utterly exhausted, but when the two companies of infantry returned to Helpmakaar, he decided to ride himself with a warning to Wood.

He scribbled a pencil note headed "*Helpmakaar January 22 '79*", which is a masterpiece of brevity, for in 120 words it tersely describes the events of the day, the size of the enemy army and completely appraises the recipient of the current situation as known.

With this note in his pocket, Gardner set off in the darkness for Dundee where in the early morning he encountered some of those who had also departed the dubious safety of Helpmakaar, but for different reasons, including Quartermaster Macphail. Macphail, like the rest, was off home. Being local Natal volunteers, they had families to protect and rightly considered their safety to have priority.

Macphail again reminiscing from the comfort and safety of 50 years on, when the terrible memories of that night had faded, was rather disparaging in recalling his meeting with Gardner, despite admitting that he and his friends had deserted:

But Captain Essex, who was in command, gave such a foolish order [his proposed shooting of the horses] that it cleared a lot of us out and we left him to fight the Zulus himself.

He went on to say:

At the top of the hill [in Dundee] I overtook a Captain Gardiner [Gardner] belonging to the 24th [14th Hussars] – he was off his head. He wanted to go to Colonel Wood's column over at Utrecht. We had a rest at the top of the hill. Poor fellow. (This is incorrect, as Gardner never got that far - Ed).

Gardner reporting on this incident the following day, the 23rd January 1879, rather than 50 years later, wrote:

A conductor [Macphail was a wagon conductor] at last consented to show me a road by which I could reach Utrecht the next morning – but would not go himself.

There is some confusion as to what happened next: one story is that Gardner gave a local Boer £20.00 to take the message to Utrecht via Newcastle – a longer but safer route, whilst he, Gardner, snatched a few hours sleep. Then, on awakening, he acquired a fresh horse and set off by the direct route, eventually passing his paid messenger and getting to Utrecht Fort first. However, Gardner merely mentions that he arrived at Utrecht at 4 o'clock on the 23rd. This would

have been 4pm as opposed to 4am as one authority has stated, as since leaving Helpmakaar, Gardner would have ridden 75 miles, partly in darkness and by mainly rugged and unknown ways. His eventual arrival in Utrecht only 24 hours after crossing Fugitive's Drift was recorded in the diary of John Scott, a senior NCO of the 90th Regiment (Scott later became the first Commanding Officer of the Cape Town Highlanders):

January 22nd [he meant the 23rd] Gardner of the Hussars rode into Utrecht in a deplorable state, poor fellow, with an old shirt and something resembling britches. His horse was about done up. He desired to know who was in charge and when informed that Lieutenant Justice of the 13th Light Infantry was in command, he shouted "Up with your drawbridge! The General's camp has been taken and every man slaughtered". We put him down as mad, he had nothing to show that he was a military man, but after being closely examined, he proved himself to be captain in the regiment of Hussars.

Gardner's dishevelled condition would, of course, be compatible with a man who had probably discarded cap, boots and tunic in crossing the flooded Buffalo River at Fugitive's Drift.

Now utterly done in, Gardner's note to Wood was handed to a Royal Artillery gunner by the name of Cook, who knew the way to Wood's camp. Cook subsequently passed the message on a trooper of the NNH who finally delivered it to Wood near Hlobane Mountain, a further 48 miles from Utrecht, during the morning of the 24th of January. Wood's column at that moment was very vulnerable and he immediately withdrew to a fortified position. (It is interesting to note that Colonel Pearson, the Commander of No. 1 Column, then at Eshowe, was not informed of the Isandlwana disaster until the 2nd February, ten days after the event).

Gardner then had done extremely well. He had completed a ride of great endurance laced with danger and using his initiative, had successfully forewarned Rorke's Drift and Colonel Wood of impending danger. Not only that, having rested a while at Utrecht and having written a more detailed report for Wood, he started back to Helpmakaar still believing that Rorke's Drift had fallen as stated in his second report mentioned above:

...the Zulus had however advanced to Rorke's Drift and it was reported by a conductor [Macphail?] who fled from them that they had burnt the stores there and destroyed the company in charge". (B Coy 2/24 Regiment – Ed)

On his way to Helpmakaar he learnt that Rorke's Drift had indeed survived, as had Chelmsford's column which had made its way through the carnage of the Isandlwana camp, had passed an oncoming Zulu army numbering 2,000 (with neither of the protagonists firing a shot) and had arrived safe and sound but destitute, at Rorke's Drift on the morning after the battle.

Gardner himself was back at Rorke's Drift by the 26th where he wrote, or dictated, a yet more detailed report which was to be used as his evidence at the court of enquiry the following day.

Had Gardner been "jumpy" or "off his head" during the course of his ride – and, as we shall see, due to a smear campaign he would be remembered that way, by the time he arrived at Rorke's Drift he had completely regained any composure that he may have lost. In concluding his last report he described how the presence of cavalry might have turned the British defeat at Isandlwana into victory. It is worth reading:

I trust I may not be thought presumptive if I state my opinion that had there been a regiment, or even two squadrons of cavalry, the disaster at Isandlwana would not have occurred – the enemy's advance across our front which was requisite in order to turn our right, was in extremely loose order. The ground was open plain and could easily have been cleared by a determined charge. The enemy's shooting was so indifferent that our loss would have been very small. The result moreover of a cavalry charge would have had a very different effect on the enemy's morale to the retreating fire of mounted skirmishers, and I feel confident we could have held our own till the return of the General's force.

Alas, Lord Chelmsford or his staff must have considered Gardner's advice presumptuous for it was excluded from his statement and was not tabled at the court of enquiry.

Nevertheless, his report does not smack of a man given to the jitters, and neither did the letter he wrote to his sister Evie on the same day:

I write one line to tell you I am safe. Don't let anyone at home be alarmed. People here are off their heads; but there is nothing to be frightened at. We must wait for more men before we can polish these fellows off.

Gardner went on to say that he had lost everything except the clothes on his back and proceeded to give Evie a long shopping list of items that were to be despatched most urgently; these included a large size bedstead, three horse blankets, six pairs of thin drawers (she had better get them from Jowells in Conduit Street as he is the only man who knew his measurements), two dozen silk pocket handkerchiefs, four pounds of tooth powder, tobacco and spurs.

In the days following Isandlwana, many of the mounted troops still with Lord Chelmsford, were transferred to Wood's column and Gardner went along too, having been appointed to the enviable position of Buller's Chief Staff Officer.

Buller at that time held the reputation of being the most dashing officer in Chelmsford's army. A disciplinarian yet one who shared equally with his men every discomfort of the campaign; his reputation for courage was legendary and he had under his command over 700 tough mounted men, mostly colonial volunteers, who had the appearance of brigands rather than soldiers.

Gardner could well covet his new appointment and had in addition been mentioned in despatches. No doubt there were many who envied his good fortune and in the weeks ahead this envy would manifest itself in spite when even greater recognition seemed about to be bestowed upon Gardner.

Up to this point the Zulu war had been a British disaster and, if the government could not give the people victories, it was anxious to provide them with deeds of gallantry as a distraction. Rorke's Drift had offered an excellent opportunity to award brave soldiers. But no outstanding deeds had come to light as far as Isandlwana was concerned and the War Office was keen to find one. It seems, then, that somebody at home – not Lord Chelmsford or his staff in South Africa, thought of Gardner's ride.

From Dick Turpin to Paul Revere, a lone rider galloping through the night has always conjured up romantic images of courage and even chivalry. Thus, unbeknown to either Chelmsford or Gardner, or anyone else in the local army, some officials proposed that Gardner should be awarded the Victoria Cross. Whilst the awarding of decorations was being pondered over at the W.O., reinforcements had arrived in South Africa. By the end of March Lord Chelmsford was ready to relieve Eshowe where part of Lieutenant Colonel Pearson's column had been besieged for two months.

In order to create a diversion, as Lord Chelmsford believed he would be opposed by the whole of the Zulu army, Wood was requested to create a demonstration. Consequently on the 28th March, Buller led an attack against some Zulu forces occupying Hlobane Mountain, a flat topped natural fortress.

The large British force, comprising of colonial cavalry and native mercenaries was lured onto the mountain top not knowing that the Zulu army, 25,000 strong, far from being at Eshowe had bivouacked the previous night not six miles away. Consequently half the British force, the half that was personally commanded by Buller, was made to retreat down a precipitous obstacle that became known as Devil's Pass.

The numbers of dead and wounded in this engagement were only exceeded by the casualty roll for Isandlwana. Both Buller and Gardner survived, Buller being immediately nominated by Wood for the Victoria Cross. That evening Buller, in his official despatch concerning the action, wrote:

The Zulus pursued us in force and with so many dismounted men we experienced great difficulty in descending the mountain, and but for the exertions of a few our retreat would have been a rout...especially distinguishing themselves in the retreat, I wish to mention Commandant Raaff, Transvaal Rangers, and Captain Gardner, my Staff Officer, both of whom were also conspicuous in the assault in the morning...Major Leet 13th Light Infantry as well as Captain Darcy.

Such mention in an official despatch was tantamount to recommending those named for decoration. However, it would be up to Wood, as the column commander, to put such recommendations forward to the Commander in Chief.

The day following Hlobane the Zulu army in full force attacked Wood's fortified position at Kambula where, after a five hour fight, it was soundly defeated with a loss estimated at 2,000 dead and wounded. During the battle Gardner received a serious wound. A Zulu bullet from one of the British rifles captured at Isandlwana, passed right through his thigh missing the bone by a hair's breadth. It was the end of the war for Gardner but he did not know it yet. His wound would prove more serious than he thought. Two days after being hit he wrote to his mother, Lady Gardner:

My dearest Mother,

I daresay by now you have seen by the papers that I am wounded, but it is ever so slight and not the slightest danger...I don't expect to be laid up long.

He then goes into longish description of his experiences at Hlobane and Kambula before making, for the first time, reference to the unfavourable comments about himself that had appeared in a local newspaper. He then implied to his mother that he would not have been wounded at all had he not been forced to put on a show of bravado.

I don't think I should have been touched [wounded] but that a scoundrelly correspondent of a local newspaper in revenge for some tricks that had been played on him, put in a paragraph insinuating that I had been badly behaved at Isandlwana. Of course he did not dare to mention by name, but he put in other facts so that there could be no doubt whom he meant. Of course therefore in these last two fights [Hlobane and Kambula] I felt bound to do rather more than I should have otherwise.

Gardner went on to tell his mother that he put the whole matter before Evelyn Wood, asking his advice, and had been told that as he (Wood) and Lord Chelmsford had both reported most favourably about him, he should ignore the newspaper slur.

Two weeks later Gardner was not up and about as he had hoped, but laid, flat on his back, in the Utrecht Fort with only a pocket Shakespeare for company. Writing to his sister Evie again on 11 April he mentions:

There are some 80 cases in hospital here (typhoid) and other forms of fever are plentiful and various. Dysentery and diarrhoea nobody thinks about.

The doctors now predicted that it would be two months before Gardner would be fit for duty and he was in a grumbling mood. He tells his sister that his exploits have been largely overlooked whilst others with less to boast of have received prominence. He mentions that he is the only officer to have been at all three fights (Isandlwana, Hlobane and Kambula) and in this he was most likely correct. (Lieutenant Charles Raw of the NNH and Lieutenant W.F.D Cochrane, 32nd Regiment, were both at Isandlwana and Kambula, but at Hlobane, if present, they would have been with

the column that got off the mountain early and would not have been involved with the fighting). Gardner like many others who had been in the thick of battle, complained about awards of the Rorke's Drift Victoria Crosses:

By the way I see Chard and Bromhead have got the Victoria Cross, they no more deserved it than any servant does.

Little did Gardner know that six days earlier under the heading of 'Foreign and Colonial News', the *Illustrated London News* of the 5th April had published:

The Victoria Cross is to be conferred upon Captain Alan Gardner who by his courage and presence of mind gave a timely warning to the garrison of Rorke's Drift after the disaster of Isandlwana.

The news of the proposed award seems to have increased the vindictiveness of the 'scoundrelly newspaper correspondent' for it was about this time that a spiteful ditty was composed and began to circulate. Each verse of the doggerel ending with the chorus:

I very much fear
That the Zulus are near
So, hang it, I'm off to Dundee

Although the ditty could allude to many, as there were plenty of deserters from Helpmakaar, it was due to the fame brought about by his ride that Gardner was marked as the subject of the song. And it seems once the proposed recipient of the Victoria Cross had been held up to public ridicule, the authorities at the W.O. had second thoughts, for they, by approving the award, would likewise be defamed.

On the 3rd April, General Sir Archibald Horsford, Military Secretary to the Duke of Cambridge, Commander in Chief of the British Army, wrote to Lord Chelmsford seeking his opinion. A rather surprised Lord Chelmsford replied:

Dear Sir Alfred

I received your letter of the 3rd April two days ago. It never occurred to me that Captain Alan Gardner had earned the Victoria Cross for his conduct on the 22nd January. I consider that his services deserved recognition, as his ride to warn General Wood of what had occurred showed excellent judgement and a full appreciation of the importance of information being conveyed to No. 4 column. The ride however was not one of danger but only of fatigue, and consequently could not be construed into a gallant act deserving the VC. I know Alan Gardner to be a fine, courageous officer, and he showed himself this at Isandlwana and Kambula where he was wounded. But unless General Wood recommends him for the VC for his conduct on those two occasions, and I have no reason to believe that he does, I certainly could not myself press his claim to that coveted distinction.

That would seem to have settled the matter but if the "Awards Committee" at the W.O. had any last doubts – and at this time they were still looking for suitable VC recipients for both Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift (the only VC for Isandlwana to Private Samuel Wassell, was not gazetted until June and the Rorke's Drift VC's for Assistant Commissary, James Dalton and Corporal C. Schiess NNC, were not gazetted until November and December respectively), a most vindictive letter that arrived in London shortly thereafter probably stalled any lingering thoughts of a VC for Gardner.

The writer was 41 year old Major Cornelius Clery, at the time Wood's Staff Officer, who was in the habit of writing gossipy letters direct to Sir Archibald Alison, Deputy Quartermaster-General for Intelligence at the W.O., and separately to Lady Jane Alison, the former's wife. Over a period of 11 months Clery wrote 21 such letters, many containing sly and disparaging comments regarding his fellow officers from Lord Chelmsford downwards.

The particular letter about Gardner was dated 16 May and was addressed to "My dear Lady Alison". After giving a resume of his recent movements Clery begins to demolish the reputations of Lieutenant Chard and Bromhead:

Reputations are being made and lost here in almost comical fashion, from the highest downwards. At the risk of being looked on as very ill natured and scandalous, I will have a little gossip with you on this subject.

While, Chard and Bromhead to begin with: both are almost typical in their separated Corps of what would be termed the very dull class. Bromhead is a great favourite in his regiment and a capital fellow at everything except soldering. So little was he held to be qualified in this way from more conquerable indolence that he had to be reported confidentially as hopeless...I was about a month with him at Rorke's Drift after Isandlwana, and the height of his enjoyment seemed to be to sit all day on a stone on the ground smoking a most uninviting looking pipe...When I told him he should send me an official report on the affair [Clery at the time was a staff officer at Rorke's Drift] it seemed to have a most distressing effect on him. I used to find him hiding away in corners with a friend helping him to complete his account, and the only thing that afterwards helped to lessen the compassion I felt for all this, was my own labour when pursuing his composition – to understand what it was all about...Chard there is very little to say about except to say that he too is a "very good fellow" – but very uninteresting. The fact is that until the accounts came from England nobody had thought of the Rorke's Drift affair except as one in which the private soldiers of the 24th behaved so well. As I am rather in the scandal mongering vein today I must tell you of another of our heroes out here – a man named Gardner in the 14th Hussars. His case has caused a great deal of ire".

Clery goes on to scandal-monger and by innuendo and omission creates for Lady Alison a deliberately false impression of Gardner and his actions. To summarise Clery's tirade, which runs to 900 words: he firstly takes credit for giving Gardner the message to take back to Isandlwana, as though affording Gardner the opportunity of being in the slaughter of the camp was a fortunate experience! He then implies that the mounted men under Captain Bradstreet, whom Gardner took forward, were his "own men" which clearly was not so as Gardner, like Clery himself, was an officer on Colonel Glyn's staff. Next Clery alludes to Gardner's escape over Fugitives' Drift, insinuating that he left "his men" to their fate whilst escaping himself – and when describing Gardner's ride to Utrecht, he states that Gardner rode straight through Helpmakaar and on reaching Dundee, stopped there having hired a man to take the message to Colonel Wood. This was deliberate misrepresentation as Clery, being a staff officer, would have been aware of Gardner's well recorded arrival and brief stop over in Utrecht. Clery concludes:

So a good deal of fuel has been added to this flame again recently by the arrival of rumours that Gardner is getting the VC or something or other; indeed, court martial and shooting and all sorts of unpleasant things are what are suggested for him in these parts instead of VC's and brevets. So you see we have our small bickerings even in camp life out here, as well as in other places.

Clery, of course, made no mention of Gardner's immediate return ride to Rorke's Drift on the 25th January, his part in the battle of Hlobane, his promotion as Buller's Staff Officer, Buller's subsequent commendation, Gardner's presence at the Battle of Kambula and his serious wound. Nor did Clery mention that Gardner was likely the only officer to be present at all three big engagements of the war to date. Clery had referred to him snidely as "*another of our heroes*" whilst Clery himself, had not been present at any battle so far.

No doubt Lady Alison would have given Clery's letter to her husband to read who, working at the W.O., would have felt obliged to show it to Sir Alfred Horsford and thus onto the Duke of Cambridge. Clery's letter, at one stroke, quashed the probability of a Victoria Cross for Gardner, and at the same time blackened his reputation for the future.

In the idiom of the day, Clery the gossiping sneak, would best be described as a despicable rotter, whilst Gardner, though clearly not deserving of a Victoria Cross, has been fittingly described by Lord Chelmsford as a "*fine courageous Officer*". Had there been any doubt of his bravery, Buller the epitome of courage, would never have appointed him to his staff nor later commended him as being particularly distinguished in battle. I think there can be no doubt that Gardner was made in the mould of a cavalier rather than a coward.

Notes.

Gardner's wound did not heal well and by mid June he was in Durban with a "bad hole in his leg" ready to be invalided home where he was promoted Brevet Major. His position as Buller's Staff Officer was taken by Captain Lord William Beresford who, ironically, won a well-deserved Victoria Cross at Ulundi.

At the end of 1879 Gardner attempted to obtain an appointment to Lord Roberts' staff in Afghanistan but was unsuccessful – perhaps the unjust stigma of Clery's mischief was still remembered in high places.

He resigned from the army in 1881 with the honorary rank of Lieutenant Colonel and a few years later married well to the eldest daughter of Lord Blyth and for many years he and his wife spent their time travelling and hunting around the world. In the latter part of his life he entered politics and in the year before he died, in 1907 at the age of 64, he became a Member of Parliament for a Herefordshire constituency.

Clery remained in South Africa until the end of the Zulu campaign and later saw active service in Egypt and the Sudan, receiving regular promotions. In 1888 he was appointed Commandant of the Staff College. He returned to South Africa in 1899, at the commencement of the Anglo Boer War, as Commander of the 2nd Division. But he did not prove to be a successful general and returned to England in 1900, retiring a year later.

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