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HARD TASK

BULLER BESET WITH DIFFICULTIES IN RELIEVING LADYSMITH.

Positions Held by the Boers Are All Strong and Defended with Courage, Skill and Gallantry.

HEAVY FIGHTING ON TUESDAY

NOTHING RECEIVED FROM NATAL AS TO LATER OPERATIONS.

British, When Last Heard from, Were Exposed to the Enemy's Artillery Fire on Three Sides.

LOSSES PROBABLY HEAVY

233 CASUALTIES REPORTED BEFORE NOON ON TUESDAY.

Gen. Buller Expected to Advance from Chieveley and General White to Sortie from Ladysmith.

FIGHTING IN CAPE COLONY

ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN GENERAL MACDONALD AND THE ENEMY.

Lord Roberts' Movements Velled Gatacre, French and Kelly-Kenny Trying to Effect a Junction.

LONDON, Feb. 9, 4 a. m.—All the messages from the observers with General Buller throw in a phrase or two about "the strength of the Boer position," but they do not carry events beyond Tuesday evening. Their last slender narratives leave the British advance on Vaalkrantz in the center of a semi-circle, where the troops are exposed to the Boer artillery on both sides and in the center. The fighting continued until 9 o'clock Tuesday evening and almost without doubt continued Wednesday, as the Boers would certainly not leave this wedge into their lines untested. It is also inferred that General Buller must either continue his advance or retire.

The heaviest fighting appears to have been on Tuesday. General Buller's 233 casualties are mentioned as having occurred before noon Tuesday. Large lists are consequently expected for the rest of the day. The casualties already reported bring the total British losses during the war to 19,244 killed, wounded and captured.

General Buller's occupation of Vaalkrantz, the key to the lower ridges, while a praiseworthy achievement, is not by no means signifies that he and General White will inevitably join hands. Before General Buller there are several days of hard fighting, and any attempt to forecast the result would be valueless. If based on precedent, which can hardly be done in warfare, it would be bound to be in favor of the Boers, for, apparently, the conditions have not materially altered since the last fruitless attempt. On the other hand, the British troops are smarting under defeat and undoubtedly are nerved to more desperate efforts than ever before, and if furious gallantry can carry General Buller over the kopjes that face him, Ladysmith will be relieved within a week. But, so far, British bravery has been, in the main, woefully misguided. It is more than likely that General Buller, at Chieveley, may be strong enough to advance on the Tugela and render valuable assistance from the southeast, while the beleaguered garrison itself, according to the latest dispatches, should be able to create a potential diversion when General Buller has overcome the initial difficulties which lie in the kopjes immediately north of the Tugela.

IN CAPE COLONY.

The disposition here is rather to minimize the importance of the fighting in Natal, and to suggest that this is only an incident anyway, putting hope on expected decisive engagements in northern Cape Colony and on the invasion of the Free State by Lord Roberts. At all events, this is the official view. The public does not like these new waits, and there is sharp anxiety for further news. In Cape Colony General Macdonald has had a skirmish with a thousand Boers at Koodoosburg. This was on Monday. The Boers have been taking the offensive against General French, near Renburg.

The Boer attack on General Gatacre's forces, reported Feb. 7, fizzled out, the artillery of the burghers, after shelling the camp, retiring on the arrival of British reinforcements. The affair scarcely warrants being called a skirmish. The British casualties were only one man killed and four men wounded. The latest advice from Sterkstroom announces that General Gatacre's cavalry is in pursuit of the Boers. While nothing has resulted from this affair, it indicates that the burghers are fully alive to the importance of the concentration which is on the verge of occurring between the forces of Generals Gatacre, Kelly-Kenny and French, and they do not hesitate to take the aggressive against established positions in an attempt to thwart it, though it is believed that a sufficiently large body of troops will soon be massed at Coleburg to insure the unopposed advance of the invading army when it is ready to start. That it is not prepared for this move at present, and that all this activity is merely preliminary to what is known as Field Marshal Lord Roberts's main movement, is evidenced by a dispatch from Cape Town, under date of Feb. 7, announcing that the director of transport was advertising for ox-wagons and drivers. Without these it would be hopeless to think of carrying on the invasion, and it must be a month before they are ready. Another preliminary is that Gen-

eral Roberts has only just sanctioned the formation of the new colonial yeomanry, consisting of a troop of 100 men for each district of the colony, to protect the local farmers. This force will be officered from among the local yeomen.

Opinion is divided as to whether Field Marshal Lord Roberts's sudden river or to General MacDonald's activity in the former locality, combined with the belief that the Colesburg movement is to draw off a portion of the Free State force, has given rise to the hope that General Methuen will shortly be enabled to make a successful attack resulting in the relief of Kimberley, while the gradually thinning forces surrounding Mafeking will altogether melt away.

BULLER'S CASUALTIES.

Seventeen Officers and 216 Men Killed and Wounded.

LONDON, Feb. 8.—General Buller has cabled to the War Office that the approximate British casualties in the fighting at Potgieters drift, up to noon on Tuesday, were: Two officers killed and fifteen wounded, and 216 noncommissioned officers and men killed and wounded. The officers killed were:

MAJOR JOHNSON-SMYTH, Durham Light Infantry.

The officers wounded include:

COLONEL FITZGERALD, Durham Light Infantry.

COL. A. J. MONTGOMERY, Royal Artillery.

LIEUT. SIR T. A. A. CUNNINGHAM, Rifle Brigade.

NAVY NOT FIRST CLASS.

Many of Britain's Ships Armed with Muzzle-Loading Guns.

LONDON, Feb. 9.—Since the war has strained the resources of the military system Englishmen have been troubled by the possibility that sea fighting might show naval defects which would weaken the first line of defense in which the country has placed such complete trust. This apprehension has suddenly found expression. During the last two or three days in half the newspapers in England the government's attention has been specially directed to the muzzle-loading guns. Even public men have been painfully surprised to learn that sixteen battleships and eight armored cruisers depend on muzzle loaders. This means that smaller but faster ships with modern guns would be able to stay one thousand or two thousand yards out of range and be able to take a more effective part in the naval battle which appears in the naval list as "first-class." The Admiralty is understood to be preparing to remedy this defect and to propose also considerable additions that will preserve the present ratio of Great Britain's naval strength to that of France and Germany.

A supplementary army estimate to March 31 was laid before the House of Commons yesterday, but was not made public. It is reported that the call is for £20,000,000, which would make the cost of the war up to that date £30,000,000.

The maintenance of 200,000 men at the front, it is estimated, costs between £8,000,000 and £10,000,000 per month.

Sir John Gordon Sprigg, the former premier of Cape Colony, has cabled to Mr. Chamberlain, the colonial secretary, in behalf of the imperialists of Cape Colony, congratulating him on the government's overwhelming majority in the House of Commons and declaring the government's policy, if steadfastly pursued, would secure South Africa, under British supremacy, permanent prosperity.

FIERCE BATTLE ON TUESDAY.

Boer Shell Drops Near Buller-Kaffirs in the Enemy's Trenches.

LONDON, Feb. 9.—The Daily Telegraph has received the following dispatch, dated Tuesday, Feb. 6, from Spearman's Camp: "This is the second day of the battle and the fighting has been fiercer than it was yesterday. At dawn the Boers began the action by shelling our bivouac with their 'long Tom' and pom-pom guns from Doornkloof. Their six-inch shells fell near the spot where General Buller and his staff were watching the engagement. One shell burst amid a squadron of Thirteenth Hussars, but not a soul was touched. Our guns from Swart's kop and on the plains soon silenced the enemy's artillery, but repeatedly the Boers brought back their guns, popped them into work over the hills, fired a few rounds and then again changed their position."

"During the morning our gunners succeeded in blowing up the enemy's ammunition wagon from Doornkloof."

"General Lytton's brigade was shot at from three sides and had a warm time upon Vaalkrantz."

"Desperate efforts were made by the Boers to recover the smoking hill. The Durham Light Infantry, the King's Royal Rifles and the Scottish Rifles gallantly charged and cleared the position. General Hildyard's brigade relieved General Lytton's brigade towards sunset."

"Fighting continued until 9 o'clock. Several prisoners have been taken. The Boers declare that the Boers yesterday lost heavily. The enemy suffered severely to-day. It is reported that among their dead in the trenches armed Kaffirs were found."

A dispatch to the London Times from Spearman's Camp says that when the Durhams reached the top of Vaalkrantz "over fifty of the enemy, who were still defending the position, fled," and "more than half these were armed natives."

A cable dispatch received in this city from Spearman's Camp, under yesterday's date, says: "Buller holds his position. Relief is certain."

Prepared for Night Attack.

LONDON, Feb. 9.—A dispatch to the Morning Post from Ladysmith, dated Feb. 6, says: "Little can be seen of General Buller's action owing to the haze. It appears that the Boers have withdrawn their big guns from the hills here southward. A large force of Boers still remains and the garrison is prepared for a night attack."

PAVING WAY FOR BAD NEWS.

London Times Calls Attention to Buller's Difficult Task.

LONDON, Feb. 9.—The Times, in an editorial dealing with General Buller's task, says: "The problem before him is unquestionably most difficult. We cannot be surprised or disheartened should he be unable to solve it with success. His task is not merely to force a way through the Boers' line to Ladysmith. That operation would be formidable enough. But it would be easy compared with the feat he must perform if large strategic results are to follow."

HIS LIFE ENDED

COL. RICHARD W. THOMPSON HAS PASSED WITHIN THE PORTAL.

All Day Yesterday He Was Unconscious, Sinking Slowly Into the Sleep That Knows No Waking.

HIS SONS HURRY HOMEWARD

ONE IS COMING FROM TEXAS, ANOTHER FROM CALIFORNIA.

His Other Children, a Son and Two Daughters, Were by His Side in the Home at Terre Haute.

ALL PRESIDENTS SAVE TWO

SPAN OF LIFE EXTENDING FROM JEFFERSON TO McKinLEY.

Incidents in His Career—In Congress with Clay and Lincoln—In Hayes's Cabinet—His Eloquence.

Special to the Indianapolis Journal.

TERRE HAUTE, Ind., Feb. 8, 2 a. m.—Col. Richard Wigginton Thompson died at 1:10 o'clock this morning.

His death had been hourly expected all day, and when Dr. Roberts left the residence of Colonel Thompson, some time after midnight, he said the colonel was barely alive, and probably would die within the hour.

Colonel Thompson was unconscious all day yesterday, his brain being paralyzed.

A telegram from his son, Richard W. Thompson, Jr., of Marshall, Tex., says he will arrive here to-morrow. Fred Thompson, another son, is in California. At the colonel's bedside were his son Harry and his two daughters—Mrs. D. W. Henry, wife of Collector of Internal Revenue Henry, and Miss Mollie Thompson.

Colonel Richard Wigginton Thompson was born in Culpeper county, Virginia, June 9, 1809, and was of Scotch-Irish descent. He received a good education, and in 1831 removed to Louisville, Ky., where he served for a time as storekeeper's clerk. Thence he went to Lawrence county, Indiana, where he alternately taught school and engaged in mercantile pursuits, at the same time reading law at night. In after years he founded the Lawrence County Seminary. In 1834 he was admitted to the bar and began to practice in Bedford. The same year he was elected to the Indiana State Legislature and re-elected in 1835 and 1836. It was in the latter year that Mr. Thompson gained the title of "colonel," Governor Noble having appointed him member of his staff, with the rank of colonel. Mr. Thompson was elected to Congress in 1841, but declined a second term. President Taylor offered him the position of minister to Austria, which he declined, and was appointed chief of the Land Office. Lincoln made him judge of claims, and President Hayes made him secretary of the navy in his cabinet. In 1880 Colonel Thompson resigned to accept the chairmanship of the Panama Canal Company in America, and later he was elected to the bench of Vigo county and then appointed internal revenue collector for the Terre Haute district. Among his literary works are "Recollections of Sixteen Presidents," "The Footsteps of the Jesuits," "The Papacy and the Civil Power" and "A History of the Tariff."

Colonel Thompson was long the oldest ex-member of Congress, and the only one living who served in the Congress elected in 1841. A few years ago, when his book, "The Papacy and the Civil Power," was published, he sent a copy to Robert C. Winthrop, of Massachusetts, who served with him in that Congress, and with himself and ex-Governor Bradbury, of Maine, were then the only survivors of the Congress, but Mr. Winthrop died before he finished reading the book. Governor Bradbury has since died. It is not thought there are more than three or four living ex-members of the Congress of 1841, in which Mr. Thompson and Mr. Lincoln sat side by side. The span of Colonel Thompson's life is best comprehended by comparison. The year of his birth, 1809, is known as the year of "great babies." A list of statesmen, scientists and men who achieved fame in literature, art and music, who were born in that year, is a long one, including Lincoln, Gladstone, Darwin, Tennyson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Mendelssohn, and all like the few named are dead. His public career, beginning in 1834, when he was elected to the Legislature, covered a period in which many men who acquired national reputations were born, grew to manhood, entered public life, and, after an ordinarily long career before the public, died and were forgotten.

A MASTER POLITICIAN.

His Part in National Events of Unusually Political Magnitude.

There is no more interesting character in the history of American politics than that of Colonel Thompson. A few years ago he completed an important contribution to history—his personal recollections of the Presidents. From John Adams down to McKinley he knew them all. As a politician he was probably without a peer in the Hoosier State, where he made his home almost from his boyhood days. He was the intimate friend of Oliver P. Morton, the navy, which position he resigned to accept the presidency of the American branch of the Panama Canal Company at a salary of \$25,000 a year. He was prevailed upon to accept it by Count Ferdinand de Lesseps, the great French engineer, who had only a few years before achieved the crowning glory of his profession by completing the Suez canal. The two men became fast friends in the years that followed the beginning of the colossal operations at the isthmus of Panama. Col. Thompson was the soul of honor, and there is no doubt that had he dreamed of the unsavory ending of the undertaking and the scandals that developed a few years later he would have spurned the offer. In the light of what we know now it is evident that De Lesseps, even at that early date, was more of a schemer than the world was aware, and that he urged Colonel Thompson to resign the presidency of the company to accept the presidency of the American branch of the company solely for the effect the announcement that "the American minister of marine had resigned to take charge of our company's affairs on that side of the Atlantic" would have upon the French capitalists who were subscribing the money to carry on the enterprise.

In politics he was a born leader. He had a knack of being instinctively about the actual work of organization, as he had at all times the entire confidence of his party (Republican), and there were plenty of better organizers to attend to the details when once the general plan was mapped out for them. As far back as 1850 he delivered the opening and closing speeches of the national campaign in Indiana at Terre Haute, in both of which he stated that he was growing old and probably would not live to address his fellow-townsmen on the eve of another presidential election. He said the same thing in the '84 campaign, and repeated it in '88 and '92. He was one of the most eloquent speakers in the United States and for many years, even after his hair was silvered by age, he retained the titles of the "Silver-tongued Orator" and the "Old Man Eloquent." One of the most pathetic incidents ever witnessed was when the old man broke down completely in the middle of a speech at a Masonic banquet. He was so disappointed that it made him ill, and for a time he seemed to feel that his end was approaching. He recovered completely, however, and at the Minneapolis convention he made the nominating speech for Harrison.

In his early manhood Colonel Thompson relinquished all hopes of political fame by publishing a book assailing the papacy. He knew what its effect would be, but threw his chances to the wind for the sake of his opinions. He never came before the people for election, and only once after that did he accept a political office. That was when he became a member of Hayes's Cabinet.

When quite young Colonel Thompson entered the profession of law, but he was not successful. Later he served on the bench, and it was the general opinion among lawyers that he was one of the best posted men on law points in the State. He was credited with having advised President William R. McKeeen, of the Vandallia Railroad Company, at the time that property passed into the hands of Henry S. Ives, the young Napoleon of finance whose failure was a national shock. William R. McKeeen was a few years ago.

John G. Williams was general counsel for the railroad company at the time, and drew up the agreement of sale, but an official of the company was responsible for the statement that it was upon Colonel Thompson's advice that provision was made for the reversion of the property to McKeeen upon terms which not only protected him against loss, but enabled him to profit by Ives's failure.

The "Old Man Eloquent" was the townsman and contemporary of the late Senator Daniel W. Voorhees. A comparison of the two would be almost impossible. They were essentially different in all things. Their tastes and habits were as wide apart as it would be possible for two men to be. They differed in politics and religion, and in their views on questions of political economy; but they were friends, and they were friends to the day of the senator's death.

Thompson never went into politics for personal aggrandizement, but rather studied it as a science. Voorhees was repeatedly elected to Congress from what was for many years the Eighth Indiana district, and served several terms in the Senate.

Colonel Thompson was passionately fond of children, and there was scarcely a little tot in his native town old enough to lip his name who would not run to greet him on the street. The old man would stop and kiss dirty-faced urchins, toss them to his shoulder and trot along with them like any schoolboy. He treated rich and poor alike, and it probably was this trait of character as much as any other that endeared him to the general public.

IN HAYES'S CABINET.

Col. Holloway's Story of the Appointment of Col. Thompson.

Colonel W. R. Holloway, who was Governor Morton's private secretary during the civil war and now is consul general at St. Petersburg, once related the following concerning Colonel Thompson's admission to the Cabinet of President Hayes: "Hayes was anxious to show his good will toward Morton, and sent a telegram from Columbus, just previous to the inauguration, for Morton to call on him for counsel about the civil war and now is consul general at St. Petersburg, once related the following concerning Colonel Thompson's admission to the Cabinet of President Hayes: 'Hayes was anxious to show his good will toward Morton, and sent a telegram from Columbus, just previous to the inauguration, for Morton to call on him for counsel about the civil war and now is consul general at St. Petersburg, once related the following concerning Colonel Thompson's admission to the Cabinet of President Hayes: 'Hayes was anxious to show his good will toward Morton, and sent a telegram from Columbus, just previous to the 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