

'The Secocoeni War, 1878-79', by Captain C. Lacon Harvey, late Staff Officer of the Forces in Transvaal. Extracted from The United Services Magazine, Nov & Dec, 1879

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THE SECOCENI WAR.—1878-79.

BY CAPTAIN C. LACON HARVEY, 71st H. L. I.

The Colony of the Transvaal, which was annexed by Great Britain on the 12th of April, 1877, comprises the territory which lies between the 22° and 28° of south latitude, and the 26° and 32° of east longitude; this country is bounded on the north by the Limpopo River, on the east by the Drackensberg and Lebombo

Mountains, on the south by the Pongolo and Vaal Rivers, and on the west by the Notuani River.

On three sides of, and contiguous to this border, several independent Native tribes have established themselves, the most powerful among these is the Matabele tribe, under the Chief Lobengulu, a son of Mosilikatze.

The first recorded account of the natives of the Transvaal is about the year 1820, when Mosilikatze, one of Chaka's generals, left his chief, and, in command of a large force of Zulu warriors, crossed the Drakensberg Mountains into the territory now known as "the Transvaal." He found the country thickly inhabited with Betchuanas, Basutos, Bapedis, and Makatees, these he conquered and completely "eat up," *i.e.*, killed men, women, and children, and burnt their kraals. The few survivors sought refuge in the wild mountain district and dense bush of the Olifant and the Limpopo Rivers, where they formed a confederacy, yielding fealty to Sequati, the father of Secocœni. Evidence of the large native population which must at one time have inhabited the plains of the Transvaal, is found in the numerous stone enclosures of ruined kraals scattered all over the country.

The early Boer "Voor Trekkers" began to settle in the country about the year 1836, and drove Mosilikatze and his followers beyond the Limpopo River. The result of the constant wars with the Natives, either with the object of obtaining "black ivory" or to punish cattle-lifting, was the defining of the European district from that of the Natives; these districts may be broadly divided into "high veldt" and "bush veldt" respectively.

The "high veldt" comprises a vast undulating and treeless plain, with an elevation averaging 5,000 feet above the level of the sea, this plateau forms the central water-shed, separating the drainage of the Limpopo River, north, from that of the Vaal and Orange Rivers, south, it also forms the water-shed between the Indian Ocean, east, and the South Atlantic Ocean, west.

The term "bush veldt" is applied to the wooded valleys, and to the broken mountainous country about the tributaries of the Olifant and Limpopo Rivers; the climate of these parts is much warmer, and the grass is more luxuriant than on the "high veldt," but it is not adapted for the permanent settlement of Europeans owing to the malarious fevers, and to the horse and cattle sickness prevalent during the summer, from October until the end of May.

Secocœni succeeded his father Sequati as the recognized Chief of the confederacy of tribes which had taken refuge and settled in the rugged and hidden mountain fastnesses bordering on the Olifant River. The Boers had made a treaty with Sequati in which it was agreed that the limit of country to be occupied by his confederacy of tribes, should be the bush veldt and mountain

district lying between the Steelpoort and Olifant Rivers. Armed Natives were prohibited from crossing the Steelpoort River lest they should annoy and alarm the Boer farmers on the other side, and in the direction of the high veldt.

Soon after his accession to power, Secoceni, being ambitious of extending his tribal influence, encouraged refugees from other neighbouring tribes to place themselves under his protection, and lost no opportunity of obtaining firearms for them. In this manner Umsaet, with a body of Amaswazis and a number of other smaller chiefs, joined, and were allotted portions of the country adjacent to the Leolu Mountains, forming, as it were, outposts between Secoceni's stronghold and the land claimed by the Boers, and extending the Kaffir territory beyond the boundary limit agreed to between the Boers and Sequati.

The extent of bush veldt country thus occupied by the Kaffirs, and which formed the theatre of operations both of the Boer War of 1876 and of the English War of 1878, is comprised within the curve of the Olifant River, ninety miles to the west and north of Lydenburg.

The high veldt ends a few miles north of Lydenburg, at this point a ridge, running from west to east, and joining the Drakensberg Mountains at the Goldfields, forms the top of an inverted T, of which the Leolu range of mountains, extending as far northward as the Olifant River, forms the stem.

This difficult and highly peopled mountain range divides Secoceni's country; it is formed of crags and scarped walls of granite, porphyry, and limestone, which glacier action or water denudation has left with fathomless caves, kloofs and crannies. Isolated outlying masses of piled up rocks and boulders, reaching a height of 600 feet, are dotted over the country, these are called "kopjes."

Secoceni's Kaffirs, "the Makatees," are accustomed, on the outbreak of hostilities, to hand over the bulk of the cattle to the charge of the supreme chief, who takes measures for their safety, and holds the various herds as security for the loyalty of the owners. The capture of this cattle, forming the wealth of the tribes, is the objective of every hostile expedition. The Kaffirs build their kraals at the foot of, and in the recesses of the kopjes. They keep their war stores of grain, ammunition, and even of water in the caves and crevices of the rocks above them, and take refuge in these natural fortresses whenever they are threatened with an attack.

The whole of this country, mountains, kopjes and valleys, is thickly covered with mimosa and camel-thorn trees, as well as with yellow wood and stinkwood, the trees generally are too small to form a forest, but too large to be called brushwood; in the valleys the bush is very close, in clear spaces the view is limited to 200 or 300 yards.

The Makatees are not entirely uncultivated and barbarous savages. Nearly all the men have worked on the diamond fields, or as labourers to Boer farmers, in order to save up money wherewith to buy some cows, to pay for a wife, or to purchase a rifle. There are amongst them a number of half-instructed Christians, who wear clothing, and who can handle a breechloader with skill.

The tribes (which include the Makatees, Mambas, Mapolanas, half-bred Swazies, and others) subject to Secoceni are estimated at 50,000 souls, out of which 6,000 warriors—men between fourteen and fifty years—can be raised, but as Zoutpansberg and the northern banks of the Olifant River are inhabited by a very large Native population, living entirely independently, with no Boer or English farmers among them, it is probable that the recruiting field of Secoceni is extended beyond his own territory.

The Makatees have no organized military power, but their constant internecine wars, and the raids made upon them by Zulus and by Boers, have accustomed them from infancy to warfare. They possess exceptional advantages for defence in their mountain fastnesses; these they improve by stone walls, ("schanzes,") stockades, prickly pear and cactus hedges. The successive terraces and rock entrenchments overlooking their kraals are entirely masked by the abundant growth of thorn-bush and stunted timber of various woods, and are connected by tortuous and concealed paths. The deep and winding ravines called "dongas," overgrown with bush, which lead down the mountain sides to the valleys, favour ambush and the mode of fighting peculiar to these Kaffirs; this consists of creeping up and striking a sudden and unexpected blow and immediately retiring to their strongholds. The Makatees are not a courageous race, they will not—like the Zulus—venture to attack in the open, but they fight behind their rocks with great tenacity, and will remain in their caves to be slaughtered at their posts.

In the beginning of 1876, the Kaffirs became aggressive in their relations with the Boers. Umsaet and Johannes—both refugee Chieftains—made, with their followers, armed encroachments on the farms of border Boers, and stole their cattle; they also attacked wood-cutting parties in the bush veldt. The President of the South African Republic (Mr. Burgers) was at this time absent on a journey to Europe, whither he had gone for the purpose of contracting a loan to enable a railway to be constructed to connect Pretoria with the port of Louvenço Marquez, Delagoa Bay.

On his return, the President sent a message to Secoceni, ordering him to restrain his border tribes from making raids on Boer farmers, and to return the stolen cattle. Secoceni replied that he would do so, but at the same time he asserted his right over the greatest part of the Lydenburg and Pretoria Districts. The Volksraad

thereupon resolved—July, 1876,—to call out a large “commando,” (an unpaid force levied under Boer law).

The population of the Transvaal was estimated, in 1878, at 6,000 English, 30,000 Boers, and 300,000 Kaffirs, inhabiting an area of 115,000 square miles of country.

The commando was divided into three columns. The eastern column, consisting of 300 Boers, was joined about the 12th of July by 2,500 Swazie allies, and operated in the eastern portion of the Lydenburg District, the Ohrigstadt Valley and Krugers Post. Johannes' kraal was attacked, but the success obtained was not as complete as it would have been if the Boers and Swazies had co-operated and mutually supported each other. The western column, consisting of 1,000 Boers and 400 Natives, the whole commanded by General Schmidt, operating on the Olifant River, stormed and took the outlying “kopje” called Mothebi's Kop. In this attack the force lost ten killed and thirty-five wounded. The capture of this stronghold secured the communications between Pretoria and Lydenburg, and between Pretoria and Secocœni's country. The central column, consisting of 2,000 Boers and 1,300 Natives, advanced down the Steelport River to “Magnets Heights,” thus named on account of the quantity of ironstone they contain. These Heights are at the southern end of the Leolu range of mountains. From this point the column advanced down the Mamalube Valley, and after having caused Legolani, (Secocœni's sister,) at Massellerroom, to submit, it marched down the Mamalube Valley to unite with the western column. The combined columns, numbering about 3,500 Boers and 3,000 Kaffir allies, with four Krupp 4-pounder guns and two Armstrong 7-pounder guns, marched down the Olifant River to attack Secocœni. On the way, the kraal and stronghold of Mapaslella, situated on the left bank of the Olifant River, was stormed, and several head of cattle were captured from this Chief.

At the end of July the Force arrived in front of Secocœni's “staadt,” and on the night of the 2nd of August an unsuccessful attack was made on the stronghold by two strong columns. Immediately after this failure the “commando” dissolved, the Boers became disheartened and tired of the war; they hastened to return to their farms to look after their families and their stock, and to escape from the malarious fevers and fatal horse-sickness which would prevail during the approaching summer season.

A force of white and half-caste volunteers was raised in order to contain the hostile Kaffirs within their own limits, these volunteers occupied Forts Burgers and Weeber, situated respectively on the eastern and on the western slopes of the Leolu Mountains. Undaunted by sickness from the malarious fever and the loss of horses by horse-sickness, these volunteers, (Englishmen and Germans,) by their enterprising dash and ubiquity, made the Kaffirs feel the pressure of war; the latter, harassed by the

sudden raids made upon them by the mounted volunteers, took refuge in their mountains and left their fertile valleys uncultivated. The scarcity of grain which resulted from this, caused Secoceni to sue the Boers for peace. In February, 1877, peace was concluded, conditionally on Secoceni paying an indemnity of 2,000 head of cattle, and restraining his Kaffirs from their predatory habits.

On the 12th of April, 1877, Sir Theophilus Shepstone annexed, by Royal Commission, the Transvaal as British territory, and administered its government. He appointed Captain M. J. Clarke, R.A., and Captain Sir Morrison Barlow, Bart., (late 7th Hussars,) as Commissioners, the former for the Lydenburg and the latter for the Waterberg and Zontpansberg Districts. These officers were appointed for the purpose of governing these provinces, and specially to conciliate the independent Native tribes.

In the month of June, Legolani, a sister of Secoceni, whose kraal or stronghold was at Masselleroom, attacked and took cattle from Pogwani and Logrillo, two minor Kaffir Chiefs, who had placed themselves under British protection. Captain Clarke was obliged to proceed in person to cause Legolani to make reparation for this attack. Secoceni at the same time evaded the payment of the indemnity of cattle agreed to with the Boers, which indemnity was transferred to the British Government by the terms of the annexation. His Kaffirs also commenced to rob and attack the border farmers.

In order to arrest any further aggression, sub-Commissioners were placed in both Fort Weeber and Fort Burgers, and their authority was backed by a force of English volunteers and 200 Natal Zulus. By these measures, the marauding propensities of the Kaffirs were for a time checked, without any collision having occurred between them and our frontier police force. This satisfactory state of things was not, however, to exist long.

In February, 1878, a party of volunteers on a patrol met some of Legolani's followers returning from a foray against a friendly Kaffir Chief under British protection. The cattle which had been captured were taken from Legolani, together with the guns with which the raiders were armed, and both cattle and guns were given to the despoiled Chief. Soon after this occurrence, on the 8th of March, the Kaffirs who owed allegiance to Secoceni rose against the English. Commandos consisting of several hundred well-armed Kaffirs simultaneously invested Fort Burgers and Fort Weeber, and also attacked the farms in the Ohrigstadt and Spekboom Valleys. Lieutenant Eckersley, with the few men he had with him at Fort Burgers, escaped under cover of the night. A few days later Captain Clarke also evacuated Fort Weeber, and returned to Lydenburg in order to organize a force with which to punish Secoceni. He sent an embassy to Mapoch—a powerful

independent Chief, whose territory adjoins the Lydenburg and Middelburg Districts—to invite him to become our ally against Secocœni. This he refused to do, but he has preserved a strictly neutral attitude throughout the war. A similar invitation, but with like results, was sent to the King of the Amaswazis. (This tribe is at hereditary enmity both with the Zulus and with the conglomerate tribes under Secocœni.) Reinforced by volunteers who came from the Gold Fields and from Pretoria, Captain Clarke marched back to and re-occupied Fort Weeber, and on the 5th of April he assembled the following force for the purpose of attacking Legolani:—Forty Mounted Volunteers under Captains Van Deventer and Ferreira; 150 Natal Zulus under Lieutenants L. Lloyd and Dacomb; 300 Bechuanas, Native Auxiliaries, under A. B. Tainton, Esq.

The town, or kraal, of Legolani, consisted of a number of straw and wattle and daub huts, beehive-shaped, situated at the base and on the terraces of a mountain of rocks and huge boulders 700 feet high, covered over with thick clumps of bush. The huts at the base of the mountain were surrounded by an impenetrable hedge of prickly pear; a single entrance, barricaded with timber, led through an avenue of prickly pear and cactus into the group of huts surrounded by palisading, wattle screens, and stone walls. Each group of huts was commanded by the rocks above; from behind these a direct, flanking, and enfilade fire could be poured on the attacking party, which, on account of the intricacy of the ground, would be compelled to advance in single file along the tortuous goat-paths leading up the mountain. In addition to the cover afforded by the caves and fissures in the rocks, schanzes, or low stone walls, were built up wherever favourable positions with safe means of retreat presented themselves. The paths leading from one rock entrenchment, or terrace, to the one above it were so concealed by rock and bush as to be difficult to find. Finally, the Kaffirs' most valued treasure, the cattle, was placed on the summit of the mountain, on a level plot of ground, surrounded by a stone wall.

Masselleroom, as this stronghold was called, was stormed from two sides; Lieutenant Llewellyn Lloyd, (killed at the action of Zlobane, Zululand, on the 28th of March, 1879,) with astonishing intrepidity led his Zulus to the very summit of the mountain, and actually captured 230 head of cattle from the kraal, while the brave Van Deventer, with the volunteers, assailed the enemy from the other side. The positions which had been so successfully gained could not be retained, owing to the misbehaviour of the Kaffir Auxiliaries, who would not be persuaded to face the rocks; the force therefore drew off, with a loss of twelve men killed and wounded. Both Lloyd and Van Deventer were severely wounded, the latter died shortly afterwards.

When the summit of a stronghold has been crowned, and

members of a tribe have been killed in its defence against the enemy, Kaffirs invariably abandon the place under a superstitious dread of the power of the "Evil One," who is supposed to have revealed to their foe the inmost recesses of their caverns and rendered the shelter no longer safe. It was doubtless under this apprehension that Legolani and her followers abandoned the mountain in the course of the following night and retired into the Leolu range of mountains.

The effect of this action and of the loss of life incurred, convinced Clarke that it was useless to sacrifice men in storming caves and precipitous rocky heights, the possession of which could be of no value and have no influence in obtaining a decisive success. He therefore altered his tactics to the defensive-offensive. Reinforced by additional volunteers, he established a cordon of forts, about twelve miles from each other, along the fertile valley on the western slopes of the Leolu Mountain range, with a view of harassing the Kaffirs by preventing them from cultivating the Indian corn.

Forts Mamalube and Faughaballagh were added to that of Fort Weeber, and the monotony of the garrison life of the volunteers who occupied these forts was relieved by the constant mounted patrols between the forts, the cattle raids, and the lively skirmishes that ensued therefrom. These forts were constructed to hold about fifty men, their walls were made of rough stones or of sunburnt bricks and sods, built up to a height of six or seven feet; loopholed bastions at the opposite angles flanked the walls and ditches. The terreplein of these bastions was generally raised above the level of the fort, and a 4-pounder Krupp gun placed there to fire en barbette. The garrison encamped inside the fort, or the men made for themselves wattle and daub huts; Kaffir auxiliaries together with horses and cattle were placed in sunken ravelins outside the forts.

The volunteers—many among them gentlemen by birth and education—in their forts, had ample scope for actions of daring individual enterprize. They were always watched by the Kaffirs from the surrounding rocky mountains; traps and ambuscades were laid for them, and if a mounted force sallied out from the fort, the intelligence would be signalled from mountain to mountain, by day with shouts and blowing of horns, and by night with signal fires lit by the enemy's scouts. The Kaffirs from their rock recesses would sometimes taunt and jeer at the garrison in Dutch or English, daring them to go up the mountain. On the other hand, volunteers went out and lay ambuscades at night to surprise and cut off Kaffirs proceeding from kraal to kraal, or to cultivate in their fields, and "cattle lifting" expeditions were planned and boldly carried out. Two instances of successes gained by the Kaffirs in this war of ambuscade and surprises will suffice to show

the necessity there was for extreme caution and vigilance on the part of the volunteers in moving outside the forts.

On the 26th of July a party of Kaffirs concealed in the long grass and bush close to Fort Faughaballagh suddenly sprang up, and interposed itself between the fort and the horses and cattle which were grazing, protected by a guard of two mounted volunteers. One of the guard, named Fourie, was shot dead, but the other succeeded in escaping, leaving six horses and seventeen head of cattle in the possession of the enemy. Again in the month of August the Kaffirs surprised the guard, and seized fifty-two horses and forty head of cattle from the "Diamond Fields" Horse, outside their intrenched camp on the Dwas River, this corps was thereby rendered incapable of performing active service, and was disbanded on expiration of its term of engagement.

The monotony and tediousness of garrison life became very distasteful to the Zulu Police and the Native Auxiliaries,—recruited from the naked savages of various tribes, whose system of waging war is to make a sweeping rush, destroy crops, burn kraals, and carry off women and cattle—they could not understand the patient waiting and comparative inaction of the defensive. At the end of July the Native Auxiliaries, having shown signs of disaffection were sent back to their kraals, and a short time afterwards a troop of Mounted Infantry had to be hastily sent from Pretoria to Fort Weeber to disarm and make prisoners of the Natal Zulu police who had broken out into open mutiny.

The southern end of the Leolu range of mountains was, as already stated, called "Magnets Heights." These heights and slopes covered with boulders of rocks and thick clumps of bushes were occupied by the Kaffirs who had several populous kraals built on them. From this ridge they commanded the main Lydenburg—Fort Weeber road, and the Fort of Faughaballagh; The latter was situated about 1,200 yards from the lower slopes. The Kaffirs had been growing more aggressive, attacking waggons on the road, creeping up through the bushes and firing at short range into the fort. A plan was consequently made to attack and drive them from these heights. In the beginning of July seventy volunteers were assembled from the three forts, and attacked the rocks in two columns. The Kaffirs retired firing from rock to rock, like monkeys, luring the white men on until they became thoroughly entangled in the boulders and thornbush. Whenever the volunteers gathered in small knots to burn the straw huts, or to assist a wounded comrade, they suffered loss from the cross-fire which was brought to bear upon them from caves and crevices. The attack was made with great dash, but it failed to secure success owing to the absence of mutual support and proper combination, also to the fact that the paucity of numbers did not allow of a reserve being formed to cover the retreat. The casualties of the action were twelve men killed and wounded.

In July, 1878, the British troops in the Transvaal were distributed as follows:—The Headquarters and four Companies of the 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, and half a squadron of Mounted Infantry at Pretoria. Two Companies of the 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry at Leydenburg. One Company of the 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry at Middelburg. One Company of the 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry at Standerton. These garrisons were necessary to enforce the authority of the British Government over the discontented Boers, and to act as supports to the Volunteer Force in the Field. It became evident that this small force, while sufficient to check the aggressive attitude of Secocœni, was insufficient to attack the stronghold, or to attempt the capture of cattle with a fair prospect of success. The border farms were all deserted, and a feeling of uneasiness and insecurity prevailed among the white settlers in the Transvaal. The revenue of the colony was also considerably diminished, as the Native hut tax, (ten shillings per hut, per annum), could not be collected. An additional regiment—the 80th Regiment—was therefore ordered to march from Natal to relieve the Headquarters and Detachments of the 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, and to release that regiment for active service against Secocœni. Colonel Rowlands, V.C., C.B., Commandant of the Transvaal, made preparations for a further campaign, stores, arms, ammunition and equipment were demanded from Pietermaritzburg, 400 miles distant, or were bought locally at Pretoria, Potchefstrom, and Kimberley, and these were forwarded by degrees to the intended field bases at Fort Weeber and at Leydenburg, distant from Pretoria respectively 130 and 185 miles; the enrolment of volunteers was also actively carried on in all the towns of the Transvaal, and hundreds of horses were purchased.

The same day on which the 1st Detachment of the 80th Regiment reached Pretoria (28th August, 1878) a column consisting of headquarters, and three companies 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Gilbert, and thirty-seven men Mounted Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant Brown, 1st Battalion 24th Regiment, marched out on its road along the banks of the Olifant River. The track—there are no made roads in the Transvaal—entered the bushveldt about fifteen miles from Pretoria. The march begun at five a.m., was only interrupted by the breakdown of oxen or wagon in crossing ravines and rivers; but at each of these frequent mishaps the whole column was obliged to halt in order to avoid a dangerous gap occurring in the serpentine line through the bush. The heat and fatigue of the march were easily borne, as the officers and men knew that the camping place would afford the pleasures of bathing, fishing, and shooting. In the Olifant River, besides crocodiles, there were barbel, eel, yellow and other fish, while the bush abounded with koodoo, hartebeest,

daika, steinbock, raebock, with guinea-fowl, partridges, pheasant, geese, duck, plover, hare, &c.

As the column passed by the kopjes and rocky cliffs, at the base of which are situated the "staadts," or kraals of Makok and Majajie, the Kaffirs of these friendly chiefs crowded outside their cactus and prickly thorn edges to look at the "rooi bajejes," red coats. At the bivouac they greedily eat up the remnants of food, while the chiefs asked the officers for rum and "square-face," (gin).

On arrival at Fort Weeber the column was joined by two companies 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry. Colonel Rowlands' plan of campaign was to leave garrisons in forts on the western slopes of the Leolu Mountains in order to paralyse Secocœni's mountain garrisons, and to confine them to their positions by threatening them with an attack, while he detached all his available horsemen and troops to operate along the eastern slopes of the Leolu Mountains. This force was intended either to capture the tribal cattle, (a large proportion of which were at that time in the valley of the Olifant River, about twenty-five miles from Secocœni's staadt) or to attack Secocœni's stronghold if practicable.

The garrisons of these forts acting on the defensive-offensive, were placed on 12th September under the command of Major England, 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, viz.: Fort Weeber—headquarters of the command, sixty men 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, one 3-pounder Witworth gun, seven Mounted Volunteers. Fort Olifant—one hundred men 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, one 4-pounder Krupp gun, forty Mounted Volunteers. Fort Mamalube—fifty men 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, forty Mounted Volunteers. Fort Faughaballagh—fifty men 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, one 4-pounder, twenty Mounted Volunteers, one hundred Native Auxiliaries. The forts,—twelve miles distant from one another,—stretched over thirty miles of the fertile valleys separating Secocœni's Kaffirs from the friendly tribes under our protection.

The garrisons of the forts were to patrol constantly and at uncertain times the ground between each two forts, to prevent the Kaffirs from cultivating their fields; to stop the import of grain from Mapaslella and other chiefs living to the north of the Olifant River, who were covert allies of Secocœni. The Commandant of the above garrisons was also instructed to harass the enemy, and occupy his attention by making such reconnaissances and attacks as the limited number of his troops would permit.

Three weeks later, Major Tucker, 80th Regiment, arrived with two companies of his Regiment, and took over the command from Major England; the latter rejoined the main column with a portion of the detachments of the 13th Light Infantry. The duties of the garrisons occupying these forts were arduous and fatiguing;

whenever they went outside the fort to gather wood or to fetch water, they were in danger of attack by parties of Kaffirs lying in ambush, behind rocks and bush, or in the long grass. The patrols of mounted men, led by Major Tucker and Captain Fereira, were engaged both by night and by day in many "cutting out" expeditions, seizing oxen laden with grain on their way to Secocœni, from the other side of the Olifant River, or some of the enemy's cattle seen in a remote kloof; the garrison of Fort Faughaballagh was, however, the one whose existence was most in peril. This fort was dominated by the rocks of "Magnets Heights," which the Kaffirs always held in large numbers. They used to creep up the ravines to within short range of the fort, and thence fire into it, the scouts on the heights would call out to the Kaffirs, and thus give them time to escape before the sallying out party of soldiers reached the spot, or they would assemble under cover of the ravines and bush, and suddenly pounce upon a picquet, or an armed water party. At night they often approached close to the fort and fired into it, the garrison always on the alert, would, on such occasions, "man" the loopholes, and fire low-aimed steady volleys. From sunrise to sunset the outlying picquets from the fort were exchanging shots with the enemy hidden behind some rock, tree or mound. In this desultory and most unsatisfactory warfare, many men were killed and wounded, both of the Volunteers and of the 13th Light Infantry. Many pages might be filled with the narrative of individual exploits, and deeds of noble self-sacrifice, which have remained unnoticed, owing to their having occurred in guerilla warfare with obscure savages, in the remotest corner of our South African Colonies. The reward of these brave men must be the consciousness of having done their duty well.

The communications between the forts were always most precarious, and therefore carts with stores were sent accompanied by strong mounted escorts. One night in October a cart was sent, under cover of the darkness, from Fort Faughaballagh to Fort Weeber, and as this road was considered safe, one corporal and three privates 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, were sent as escort. About half way, a ravine runs parallel with the road, as the cart drawn by four oxen was passing this, a volley was suddenly fired from the bush at the escort, who were riding in the cart, the men immediately jumped out, and the corporal fell severely wounded. In the darkness, two of the men became separated, and escaped into the bush, but the third man, Private Dogherty, knowing that Corporal McNeary was lying wounded, stood his ground, fired three rounds and killed three Kaffirs, they now rushed in with assegais, Dogherty not having time to fix his bayonet, thrust the muzzle of his rifle in the face of a Kaffir, and broke his cleaning rod in his eye, he then clubbed his rifle, and fighting like a demon, cleared his way, and escaped into the bush;

his belt was cut through by an assegai, and he had another cut through the fleshy part of his thigh.

The plucky defence made by Dogherty, gave Corporal McNeary time to crawl away a few yards behind a big stone, where he remained undiscovered, owing to the darkness of the night. When the Kaffirs had plundered the cart, and made off with the cattle, Corporal McNeary dragged himself, as best he could, to Fort Weeber, which he reached in the morning, aided by the Native bullock-driver, whom he afterwards met in the bush.

(To be concluded in our next Number.)

TRAVELS IN PERSIA.

BY COMMANDER G. BELTON, F.R.S.E., M.A., &c.

CHAPTER I.

PERSIA.

In the night, indeed, of Persia, is the valley in the high of
 Ireland called after King James, which is a very good one of the
 few parcels of Persia. The following are the names of the
 places which were the objects of great natural beauty. The first is
 the Church, which is a very good one. The second is the
 Church, which is a very good one. The third is the Church, which
 is a very good one. The fourth is the Church, which is a very
 good one. The fifth is the Church, which is a very good one. The
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The soil of these so-called gardens is dry and unproductive, but
 nature is beautiful, and the weather is delicious with the sea.

* The temple of the gods, which is the only one of the kind.

THE SECOCENI WAR—1878-79. (*Conclusion.*)

By CAPTAIN C. LACON HARVEY, 71st H.L.I., late Staff Officer of the Forces in Transvaal.

The main column under command of Colonel Rowlands,* left Fort Weeber on the evening of the 13th of September to march to the valley of the Steelpoort River, and thence to the eastern side of the Leolu Mountains. The Kaffir scouts on the mountains signalled the advance by large fires which were repeated for thirty miles along the whole length of the range. The following morning the column, stretching one mile and a half in length, entered the defile under the Magnets Heights. The track over boulders and through ravines was execrable; the thorn bush on either side pressed so close to the waggons as to render communication from front to rear impossible. The Kaffirs began by firing shots at the column from the rocky heights, but later they crept down the bush-clad slopes, and attacked the head of the column. Their bullets and balls, fired from every description of weapon—from an elephant gun to an express rifle—crashed through the branches and whizzed overhead, as the Kaffirs generally fire without bending the head to bring the cheek on the butt, the direction of their fire being good, but the elevation always too great. The progress of the column was checked partly by the fire of the Kaffirs which caused all the waggon drivers and leaders, (natives), to hide under the waggons, and partly by the total breakdown of a waggon which necessitated its abandonment, and the loads being equalized among the waggons in rear as they passed the wreck. Eckersley's Swazies, supported by a company of the 1st battalion of the 13th Light Infantry, ran into the bush and drove the enemy back, Eckersley and his men pursuing them right up the rocks. Our casualties were only one Swazie wounded, and one horse killed. A few days previous to this a convoy escorted by Raafs' volunteers, and accompanied by Commissary E. Hughes was similarly attacked and had three casualties.

The next and following days the column leaving the track leading to Leydenburg on its right, advanced along the Steelpoort Valley, its order of march was as follows:—the Mounted Volunteers and Eckersley's Swazies in extended order to the front and flanks, examined every ravine and secured the column against ambuscade, twenty-four men of the 1st battalion, 13th Light Infantry, of whom twelve were in shirt sleeves with picks, spades, and felling axes, and twelve men carrying two rifles each formed the "advance" under the direction of the Staff Officer. This party, followed by an intrenching tool cart, cleared the bush, felled

* Two 4-pounder Krupp guns, two 6-pounder Armstrong guns, one 6-pounder Whitworth gun, 280 men of the 1st battalion 13th Light Infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel Gilbert; thirty-six Mounted Infantry, forty-two Van Deventer's Volunteers, under Carrington; sixty Eckersley's Swazies; thirty-three waggons.

the trees, eased the descent and ascent of the banks of ravines and rivers, filled up water ruts and made a way through the trackless bush. The main column, following 1,000 yards behind this "advance," consisted of the train of waggons—each drawn by fourteen oxen—preceded by a strong company and the guns. The rear was closed by another Company and the Mounted Infantry.

Suitable open ground to bivouac upon regulated the length of march, the difficulties of the road were such that the rate of progress was frequently only one mile an hour. Tents were never used while advancing in Secoceni's country. The waggons were laagered in horse shoe-shape, the open portion of the horse-shoe being in the direction of clear ground whence an attack was improbable. The troops were assigned positions all round the waggon laager, where they slept in their ranks by companies, ready to support the picquets in advance of them, on the slightest alarm. Glades were cleared through the bush to enable neighbouring picquets to see each other and small shelter trenches were sometimes thrown up, though the diversity of cover in every direction rendered this precaution rarely necessary. During the day the bivouac was the object for desultory rifle practice of Kaffirs concealed behind rocks and bushes in the mountain above. They appeared to delight in annoying the men when bathing in the river. Marksmen among the officers and men watched through their binoculars the spots whence the puffs of smoke issued, and directed their return fire on them; at night, the Kaffirs by twos and threes, crept through the bush, but their bullets always pinged harmlessly over the reposing bivouac. No notice was taken of this reminder of their vicinity, beyond the company officer visiting the picquets on the front attacked. The picquet sentries, as they lay motionless, stretched full length behind cover, intently watching the ground to their front, were accustomed to see strange animals gliding through the bushes on their nightly prow. Lions, tiger-cats, jackals, and various kinds of baboons, and blue monkeys, were surprised to find their common enemy occupying their haunts.

The march of the column through the wooded valley, round kopjes and mountain bluffs, would have been seriously interrupted by the Kaffirs occupying the commanding rocks, and firing upon the men and waggons, had it not been for Van Deventer's Mounted Volunteers led by Carrington who, with a good eye for country and able judgment, always occupied the difficult passes some time before the column reached them. The sight of the red turbaned wideawakes seen through the foliage of the bush covering a sinister looking "kopje" was always most grateful to the eyes and relieving to the mind!

The long dry grass at this season of the year—the end of the winter or dry season—was a source of danger to the bivouacs, as

it was easily set on fire. One afternoon when burning a belt round the camp to prevent the enemy from firing it, the waggon conductor nearly accomplished the very destruction he intended to take precautions against, a breeze suddenly springing up caused the grass fire to spread with extraordinary rapidity, threatening to consume the waggons and to blow up the ammunition; the alarm was sounded and all hands turned out to beat out the fire with sacks and bushes, but not before it had destroyed a number of great coats, blankets, waterproof sheets, &c.

On leaving one of the bivouacs where the Force had been much annoyed by the bullets of the enemy, an ambuscade was made by some of the volunteers; the Kaffirs, unsuspecting, came down from their impracticable cliffs, and when in the comparative clear ground they found themselves compelled to fight, the result of the skirmish was that two of their number were killed. On another occasion Captain Clarke, who, as Commissioner of the District, accompanied Colonel Rowlands to assist him by his knowledge of the tribal chiefs and of the country, taking his Zulu servant and two volunteers, visited one of Johannes' kraals and falling in with a small party of Kaffirs in the open, a skirmish ensued in which one Kaffir was killed, the others fled leaving a waggon in Clarke's possession. The deserted kraal was subsequently burnt.

On the 19th of September the column reached the valley of the Spekboom River and after a temporary halt it reached Fort Burgers, and encamped at the junction of the Spekboom with the Steelport River. This fort, constructed by the Transvaal Volunteers during the war of 1877, was found partly ruined, the Kaffirs having burned all the wood of buildings and revetments. Working parties were at once employed to repair it. The fort had six bastions, each face being thirty yards long, with a parapet six feet high, which was revetted with hurdles and fascines. The ditch ten wide by six deep, was V shaped, and a lever drawbridge secured the entrance of the fort. The curtain of two of the bastions was prolonged in order to make a kraal or enclosed space twenty-five yards wide and fifty yards long, for the security of horses and cattle. At the furthest extremity of the cattle kraal, an irregular bastion, with elevated terreplein, gave a command of fire over the ground beyond it. The thick bush had been cleared away from round the fort. Situated on a small plain at the junction of two valleys, Burgers Fort is hemmed in by mountains and surrounded by wooded kloofs, stony gorges, and eminences thickly covered with mimosa and camel-thorn bush. It was cut off from supplies except such as could be brought through the winding defiles and dangerous passes of the Doon's Kloof and the Waterfall Valley. The Leolu range of mountains stretched away to the north, and their summits formed of crags and precipitous cliffs of red rock, granite and porphyry gave a variety of colouring to the landscape. To the east, successive ridges of mountains ended in the parent range—the Drackensberg.

A mounted force, based upon Fort Burgers, could intercept communications between the Leolu Mountains and the Ohrigstadt Valley and Goldfields, also between the Olifant River and Leydenburg, and could stop the main issue from the mass of mountains, glens and valleys, leading towards Secocœni's stronghold, twenty-five miles distant. By the end of September the column was joined by reinforcements of Artillery, Mounted Volunteers, and Detachments of the 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, its total strength was:—

Two 6-pounder Armstrong guns, Lieut. Slade, Royal Artillery ; two 7-pounder Mountain guns, Lieut. Nicolson, Royal Artillery ; two 4-pounder Krupp guns, Captain Reidel, Transvaal Volunteers ; 440 men of the 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, Lieut.-Colonel Gilbert ; 70 men and horses, Mounted Infantry, Major Russell, 12th Lancers ; Frontier Light Horse, 240 men and horses, Major Buller, C.B., 60th Rifles. Van Deventer, Raaf and Schulte's Volunteers, 120 men and horses, Captain Carrington, 1st Battalion 24th Regiment ; 110 natives, Swazies, Lieutenant Eckersley. Out of this number strong escorts had to be provided to accompany convoys of waggons to and from Leydenburg, the field base, sixty miles distant.

While the Force remained in camp at Fort Burgers to await the arrival of reinforcements, the Infantry were employed in clearing the bush, opening the road, and re-constructing the Fort ; the mounted men were sent in every direction to patrol the country, and open the roads leading along valleys towards Krugers Post and Leydenburg, also to explore the wild and unknown country in the direction of the Steelport Valley up to its junction with the Olifant River, and the deep and wooded valleys up Secocœni's mountain fastnesses. This last special patrol was undertaken by Major Redvers Buller, C.B. Taking with him 100 men of the Frontier Light Horse, and a white man who pretended to be a guide, he penetrated over twenty miles through valleys, wooded kloofs, and under the precipitous cliffs of frowning mountains until at last he found himself wandering in and among ravines covered with dense thorn bush, surrounded by the kraals of Secocœni's followers. The information given by the guide proved to be totally unreliable, and but for Buller having taken compass bearings of his route, he and his party would probably have been lost in the woods. The patrol had to pass the night in the bush, men standing to their horses and being fired at by the Kaffirs. At dawn next morning they ran the gauntlet of the enemy's fire, in passing through an avenue of prickly pears which formed the defences of some kraals. The patrol returned to camp with two prisoners and 150 captured head of cattle.

One night, while encamped at Fort Burgers, the whole Force stood to arms, roused up by two shots fired by the double sentry of the picquet at the River Fork, splashing of water was distinctly

heard, and objects were seen moving through the trees into the river. The spot was examined by the aid of lanterns, and the head of a bullock, recently slain, together with the "spoor" in the sand of wolves' claws, explained the cause of the alarm. This was the only false alarm during the campaign, and on that occasion the two shots only were fired.

Guided to some extent by the information derived from Buller's patrol as to the route which a column would have to follow in advancing to Secocœni's stronghold, Colonel Rowlands determined to make a reconnaissance in force with a portion of his Force to ascertain the position of the stronghold. He intended to intrench his Force in front of it, and there await the remainder of the column, provided that the doubtful supply of water and grazing would permit of his assembling there for the purpose of storming the *Staatd*.

On the 3rd of October a Force consisting of two 7-pounder mountain guns, under Nicolson, 340 mounted men under Russell, Buller and Carrington; 130 men 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry under Captain Perssé; 50 of Eckersley's Swazies, and 26 waggons, marched out of camp at Fort Burgers, and took a N.N.W. course through a valley averaging three and a-half miles in breadth, covered with thick bush.

In 1876, a portion of the Boer commando on abandoning the attack on Secocœni *Staatd* had returned by this way; but the track of their waggons was completely obliterated by the growth of thorn bush and long grass. The news of the march of the Force had been forwarded to Secocœni by the ever moving and watchful scouts shouting by day and lighting beacon fires by night on the mountain tops overlooking Fort Burgers.

As the column advanced up the narrowing valley, the Kaffir chiefs blew their horns, and sounded their peculiar low piping, to summon their men from the kraals and to warn women and children to hide in the caves. Concealed behind rock and bush, the invisible Makatees fired long shots at the column, as it wound round a mountain spur or neared a kopje. Their nearer approach was checked by the mounted men, who, spreading fanlike round the column, occupied the heights until it defiled through the dangerous passes. The men and cattle suffered much from thirst, as the watercourses were all dried up, and the grass was withered owing to an exceptionally long drought. On the second night the Force bivouacked on the high bank of a ravine in which there was no water; but by digging holes in the damp sand a small quantity of water was collected by filtration, sufficient to assuage the thirst of the men, but insufficient to water horses and cattle. A kopje and broken ground beyond the watercourse afforded a good position for a picquet of infantry and the Swazies. The waggons were echeloned on the open ground, and horses and cattle were sheltered between them and the precipitous banks of the water-

course. With the exception of the guards over the horses, the men were lying down in their ranks, as supports to the advanced picquets, and all were settling down to the sleep of the weary, when of a sudden a volley of bullets followed by sustained independent firing, whistled over the bivouac. The oxen were tied to their yokes, but the horses and slaughter oxen stampeded off, the horses had been "ringed," and were stopped by the guards after a little trouble, the slaughter oxen, however, charged through the line of picquets, and were no more seen. On the following days trek oxen had to be slaughtered for food.

Meanwhile the men of the 1st Battalion of the 13th Light Infantry and the mounted men, led by their officers, advanced and fired into the bush and darkness, the Kaffirs were quite close and could be heard talking and piping, rushes were made after them, but in the wooded and broken country they could easily withdraw under cover of darkness. Traces of blood, which were found next morning on the rocks, showed that some execution had been done. The only casualties on our side were one soldier 1st Battalion of 13th Light Infantry, wounded, and one horse shot.

On the 5th of October the march was continued, although the cattle, through want of water and food, began to show signs of distress, in drawing the waggons through the bushes, and in and out of deep gullies, as the column rounded the easterly spurs of the Leolu mountains. On reaching a mamelon, from which the Staadt of Secoceni could be distinctly seen at the head of a valley about two and a-half miles distant, the mounted men reported that two pools of a dried up stream, about a mile lower down, would yield sufficient water for the whole Force. The waggons were parked, Russell's mounted Infantry and a Company of 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, were ordered to climb up to the top of a kopje, which commanded the pools, and remain there in support of a troop of Frontier Light Horse, which had been placed there by Buller some time before, but which was now threatened by numbers of the enemy. Nicolson's two 7-pounder guns made good practice at 1,500 yards, with shrapnell shell at groups of Kaffirs, who were collecting on the mountain top overlooking our halting place; this commanding ground was afterwards occupied by half a Company 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry and the Swazies. The halting place ("outspan") being thus secured against a coup-de-main by the enemy, both horses and cattle were sent down by reliefs to water at the pools.

The kopje above mentioned is in the centre of a valley leading up to Secoceni's stronghold, the head of this valley is closed by a conical hill, on either side of which narrow gorges lead into a small plain, which forms as it were the arena of the amphitheatre of mountains, at the base of which Secoceni's staadt or kraals are built, these are surrounded by a formidable barrier of prickly pear, having only one main entrance. In the plain, in front of the

staadt, two or three rocky elevations afford good cover for a number of men, and form as it were outworks to the main defences of the stronghold, which consists of almost inaccessible caverns and grottoes in which grain, water and ammunition are stored; these are surrounded on every side by ledges, kloofs, holes and crevices concealed by bush. The strength of this natural fortress is further improved by stone "schanzes," and a system of paths communicating from one recess to the next above it. A mounted reconnoitring party having reported that there was water about three and a-half miles further down the valley, the column continued its march in order to bivouac in more open country at some distance from the mountains and nearer to water. While making this move beyond Secocœni's Staadt a troop of the Frontier Light Horse, led by Captain R. Barton, Coldstream Guards—a Bayard, "sans peur et sans reproche," who was killed at the action of Zlobane, March 28, 1879—managed to cut off from the mountains a party of armed Kaffirs, the latter took refuge in some stony kopjes, and after fighting for some time, slipped away by a bushy ravine, leaving their dead. The loss on our side was two horses killed. Later in the day a large kraal, at the foot of the Leolu mountains, was stormed and taken by a troop of Frontier Light Horse, having been previously shelled by Nicolson's guns. Water was collected by digging trenches in the wet sand, and by making dams; the supply barely sufficed for men and horses. There was none left for the cattle, and not a blade of green grass. This want of water and fodder caused Colonel Rowlands—after consulting with Russell, Buller and his Staff—to abandon the attack on Secocœni's stronghold, and to retrace his steps to Fort Burgers.

On the 6th of October, at five a.m., the column left the bivouac and commenced its march. Mounted men had been sent in advance to occupy the kopje overlooking the pools where it had watered on the previous day, as it was intended to let the cattle drink at these pools before proceeding on. The Kaffirs were already in possession of this kopje, and hundreds could be seen running across the valley to reinforce them. Carrington, taking with him Raaf's and Van Deventer's Corps, numbering one hundred men, galloped into the valley to engage the string of Kaffirs, who were making for the kopje. He posted his men so as to cut off the Kaffirs occupying it from receiving further accession to their force, while Raaf penetrated up the valley, and for a time kept the enemy at bay, by the judgment and pluck with which he and his men skirmished and held their ground, until nearly surrounded. An Order had been given to Captain Persse, 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, to storm the kopje with his 130 men and the Swazies; but it was afterwards countermanded, as hundreds of Kaffirs were seen coming from the staadt, and every moment added numbers to the group occupying the mountain tops. In every direction the Kaffirs

were blowing their war horns and pipes; Colonel Rowlands seeing that his Force, which now numbered only 300 men (as the Frontier Light Horse had ridden away from the last bivouac, to water horses at a stream twelve miles distant) was in danger of being surrounded and having its retreat cut off, ordered the guns and waggons to move on, covered by a rearguard of Russell's mounted infantry. Some time after the last waggon had left the halting place, the mounted infantry bugler rode into the bushes to repeatedly sound "the retire," and recall the volunteers, who had attracted the attention of the greater portion of the enemy, and thus enabled the column to gain a start.

Dark masses of Kaffirs could be seen running through the bush along the flank of the column, advancing and firing, straining to reach the mountain spurs and rocky cliffs under which the column had to pass. The mounted men under Russell and Carrington took up positions to prevent the enemy from approaching within close range of the column, they maintained these as long as possible, only leaving them to gallop off and occupy others. When the fire of the Kaffirs became too close, the soldiers of the 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, acting as flankers to the line of waggons, advanced into the bush and fired at the puffs of smoke which they saw issuing from some rock hole or crevice concealed by bush. These sturdy soldiers did not require to be told that any wavering or demoralization on their part would imperil the safety of the column and cause a disaster. With the thermometer at 110° in the shade, their feet scorched by the hot sandy soil, and suffering from a maddening thirst they marched and fought as sturdy British soldiers should.

Colonel Rowlands had despatched Baron von Stettencron,* to recall Buller with the Frontier Light Horse, and the Baron with a small escort was all but cut off, and obliged to gallop for his life.

The arrival of this reinforcement at about 3 p.m. relieved the column from further anxiety, and the bivouac was reached at 5 p.m. The recollection of the danger and toil of this retreat of twelve hours, during ten of which the column was under fire, will remain vivid in the memory of all the three hundred who shared in it.

It has since transpired that the pools in the bed of what was a stream were the only sources of water supply available to Secoceni, all others having dried up. Had it been possible for the column to have held the kopje and maintained itself there for a few days, only three courses would have been left open to Secoceni:—

1. To have left his mountain fastnesses and caves in order to attack the British force in the more open valley.
2. To have evacuated his staadt and stronghold.
3. To have surrendered.

* An intrepid Austrian cavalry officer, who had served in the Boer Campaign in 1876, he was killed at the action of Zlobana in Zululand, 28th March, 1879.

The casualties of this reconnaissance were wonderfully few, considering the days during which the column was under fire, and the manner in which the bullets ploughed the ground around its line of march—they were one officer and two men wounded, nine horses killed.

On the 1st October "horse-sickness" and "dikkup" (from the name of a bird of the bustard tribe, having rather a swollen appearance round the neck) had set in, and the mortality reached an average of eight or ten daily out of a total of 350 horses; the symptoms were a slight running from the nostrils, the discharge gradually became more copious, and the horse, who from two to four hours before had been well and feeding would suddenly drop down and die. Every kind of remedy was tried but not a single horse was saved.

During the following fortnight the country was patrolled in various directions but no Kaffirs were ever met with in the valleys. Buller accompanied by Clarke and Carrington took a party of 150 mounted men into the Ohrigstadt Valley and the Gold Fields, covering a distance of two hundred miles, this party experienced much hardship from the inclemency of the weather and want of food, it however, succeeded in disarming about fifty of the enemy, and capturing one hundred head of cattle.

In the middle of October a contingent of 350 clothed and christianized Kaffirs, raised in the Rustenberg District, together with two companies of 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry reinforced the column.

The approach of the sickly season, and the setting in of horse-sickness compelled Colonel Rowlands to abandon the offensive against Secoceni, but before leaving the country he decided to attack Umsaet's stronghold, because this renegade Swazie Chief commanded the bravest and most warlike of Secoceni's followers, and it was probable that a success gained upon him would have great influence in causing Secoceni himself to submit.

The Kaffirs of Umsaet had made themselves notorious by their predatory raids, and by their murderous onslaughts on border farmers. Colonel Rowlands, moreover, wished to give the soldiers of the 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry a long looked for opportunity of coming to close quarters with the enemy, who hitherto had been alike unapproachable and invisible.

Leaving garrisons to occupy both Fort Burgers and Fort Spekboom, the column marched on the 25th and 26th October by the pass of Mount Morone to the Steelpoort Valley, and formed its bivouac on the banks of that river, the Kaffirs attempted to do mischief by occupying some stony kopjes on the other side of the river and firing shots upon the men bathing; they were driven out by 150 of the Rustenberg Contingent, supported by a company of 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, and Slade's guns. Buller with a troop of Frontier Light Horse made a circuit to cut them off, but

the Kaffirs managed to gain the mountains and eluded the mounted men by creeping and running along the deep ravines concealed by bush.

On Sunday, the 27th October, details of all arms were left to guard the waggons, and the following Force marched from the bivouac at 4.30 a.m.:—two 7-pounder mountain guns under Nicolson; one 6-pounder Armstrong gun under Slade; 140 mounted men under Russell, Buller and Carrington; 300 men 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry under Gilbert; 100 Swazies under Eckersley; 150 Rustenberg Contingent under Commandant Nel.

In crossing the river a mule, carrying one of the 7-pounder mountain guns, slipped in ascending the bank and fell into the water, a short delay occurred in unstrapping the packsaddle and freeing the struggling animal, which then climbed the slippery bank, and had its load readjusted. This incident is mentioned in order to show how perfectly the method of carrying guns on mules answers in a mountainous country impassable for wheeled vehicles.

After a march of five miles in a broad valley covered with bush and intersected with deep ravines, the Force arrived in front of the opening to Umsaet's stronghold. The kraals of this Chief are buried in the deep kloofs of three narrow gorges. The water-courses of these join in one deep red banked ravine debouching into the main valley along which the column advanced. A prominent mountain spur starting from Umsaet's mountains, advances at right angles to and ends about the centre of the above mentioned broad valley.

The kraals of an Induna of Umsaet, named Tolyana, were situated at the base of, and on a rock between two gigantic masses of rocks of this mountain spur; the base was intersected by deep sandy "dongas" following the same direction as the spur, and joining the ravines, draining the broad valley on the right. Tolyana's mountain was therefore but an outlier to the fastnesses occupied by Umsaet, but it was necessary to take possession of this outer salient before attempting to penetrate into the natural mountain fortress.

To effect this, Colonel Rowlands made the following dispositions:—Carrington with forty mounted men of Raaf's Corps searched and occupied the bush and ravines at the end of the spur on the right, while Russell and Buller with one hundred mounted men performed the same duty on the left, and were enjoined to watch the débouché of Umsaet's stronghold and prevent the enemy from reinforcing Tolyana.

One company 1st Battalion Light Infantry and Eckersley's Swazies were sent round the mountain spur to attack the rock and bush covered eminences from the rear, while two companies 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, and one hundred Kaffirs of the Rustenberg Contingent attacked the front of the position. The three guns of

Nicolson and Slade prepared the attack by firing time and percussion shells at those portions of the rocks where wreaths of smoke denoted the habitat of the Kaffirs. As the Infantry advanced the guns approached and came into action at a range of 900 yards until their fire was masked by the skirmishers of the 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry.

On the left, Russell and Buller made a judicious distribution of their handful of men to enfilade and watch the network of very deep ravines which skirted the left of the attack. The Kaffirs issuing from the gorges of Umsaet's stronghold crept through the thorns at the bottom of the ravines, which were about sixty feet deep, and delivered a close fire from the edge of their precipitous banks. The dismounted men had to rush these banks and by holding them frustrate the attempts of the enemy to turn the left and left rear. The latter now appeared on a rocky spur of the mountain from which they could enfilade the whole course of the ravines. Some of Buller's men were struck by bullets coming from this direction and since they could only with difficulty hold their positions, a company of the 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, forming the reserve of the main attack was sent for to drive the enemy from the commanding rocks. This company advanced by rushes from cover to cover, until it reached a deep ravine, the men descending to the bottom ran along it to the edge of the rocky spur, they then stormed the rocks and held them. From this commanding post the kraals lying in the deep kloofs of Umsaet's mountain fastnesses were plainly visible.

Meanwhile the redcoats and Rustenberg Contingent advanced in skirmishing order up the mountain. On reaching the neck, separating the rocky bluff at the extremity of the spur from the mountain, the line wheeled to its right, keeping up a hot fire on the enemy who were concealed among the stones and boulders, piled in wild confusion and irregularity on top of each other, and in caves, crevices and stone recesses from which taunts, jets of smoke and bullets were continually issuing. A portion of the company which had been sent round to ascend the position from the rear, together with Eckersley's Swazies gained, unopposed, the summit of the neck, and joined the left of the skirmishing line. The men forming the attack, led by Major England, 1st Battalion 13th Light Infantry, now rushed into the rocks; they moved in single files by strings along the narrow tortuous paths round the precipitous boulders of rocks and tangled bushes, the deserted kraals were set on fire, and a herd of cattle and goats together with some guns and assegais were captured; but the Kaffirs were nowhere to be seen, they had all penetrated deep in their caves and crannies. When, in obedience to the bugle order "retire," the soldiers slowly and unwillingly descended the mountain, the enemy issued from out of the holes, and kept up a furious fire,

which caused some casualties in the ranks of the retiring skirmishers.

Colonel Rowlands ordered "the retire" to be sounded because he saw that nothing more was to be gained in his front, he also entertained some apprehensions for the safety of his guns, which had been left in the plain with an escort of fifty Rustenberg Native Contingent, the left and rear was also seriously threatened by the strenuous endeavours of masses of the enemy to break through on that side, and no "reserve" remained. The Force covered by a strong rear-guard returned to its bivouac at 2 p.m. There were eleven casualties in this fight, two of these were fatal.

On the following day Colonel Rowlands, accompanied by his staff, rode out to reconnoitre Tolyana's Mountain, and to ascertain the effect caused by the previous day's fighting. As he approached the mountain, the scouts began to shout, and the Kaffirs blowing their horns were seen to assemble in numbers, showing that Umsaet was on the alert, and had assembled his warriors to defend the approach to the mountains.

The effect of the fight appeared therefore to make the enemy more defiant, and to warn him to take countermeasures to oppose a second attack. The result of the temporary hold of a mountain close to Umsaet's stronghold was certainly not commensurate with the severe loss in wounded which the Force had sustained; but it satisfied all who shared in this fight of how futile would have been any attempts at storming Secocœni's stronghold with the handful of men composing the field force.

By the end of October horse-sickness had dismounted one-third of the horsemen, the virulence of the disease was increasing, and threatened to carry off all the remaining horses and mules. Colonel Rowlands therefore, with the sanction of General Lord Chelmsford, marched with the column back to Leydenburg, leaving garrisons in the forts and posts already occupied, in order to harass and starve the mountaineers by preventing them from cultivating in the valleys. "Salted horses" (the exceptions which have recovered from horsesickness) were purchased at £70 each to mount the volunteers and enable them to patrol the country. The impending Zulu War caused the different posts and forts to be abandoned, one after the other, as the troops and volunteer corps were required to mass, 350 miles to the southward, on the northern frontier of Zululand, and eventually there to form portions of No. 4 and of No. 5 Columns.

In August, 1879, only one fort—Fort Weeber—remained occupied by Volunteers. In the interval, between the end of the year 1878, and the above date, many brilliant raids and actions have been undertaken by the brave Volunteers, under the direction of Carrington and Ferreira. Marching by night, and concealing in wooded ravines by day, their mounted patrols have ranged over immense tracts of country, they have surprised and "rushed"

the enemy's kraals, and captured many head of cattle, sometimes penetrating far into the dense bush of the wild and intricate valleys of the Leolu mountains. In these operations several Volunteers have lost their lives, but no footing or lodgment has yet been made on any part of the enemy's mountain fastnesses. Secoceni is not intimidated by the collapse of Cetywayo and the Zulus, he will not surrender unconditionally, but having on two occasions witnessed the retreat of a force of white men, he believes that his mountain fortresses are impregnable, and continues to defy the English power.

The military situation of the Transvaal in the month of October, 1879, was as follows:—

Four guns, Royal Artillery; one squadron King's Dragoon Guards, five companies 80th Regiment, under command of Colonel Harrison, Royal Engineers, stationed at Pretoria to guard the capital and to uphold the authority of the British Government over the rebellious Boers of the Transvaal.

Forts Weeber, Burgers, Olifant River, and Spekboom have all been re-occupied, in order to hold the valleys and harass Secoceni's Kaffirs, while a column consisting of four guns, Royal Artillery, one squadron King's Dragoon Guards, one squadron Mounted Infantry, the 21st and 94th Regiments, under the command of Col. Baker Russell, C.B., is on the march through the Transvaal to Secoceni's country. Sir Garnet Wolseley is also proceeding there, having previously despatched Captain Clarke, R.A., to propose terms of peace to Secoceni.

It is to be hoped that the ultimatum will be accepted by the Kaffir chief, and that the loss of human lives by deadly malarious fevers, and of horses and cattle during the unhealthy summer season, October to May, will be avoided.

The cost of the military operations in the Transvaal, from August 1, 1878, to March 31, 1879 was:—

Purchase of horses	.	.	£21,280
„ provisions	.	.	52,180
„ stores	.	.	23,690
Pay, exclusive of Regimental pay	.	.	11,460
Transport	.	.	52,180

			£160,790

The present rate of expenditure is about £30,000 per month.

The lesson taught by the unsuccessful expedition against Secoceni, is that the subjugation of a people occupying a country of such exceptional natural strength as that presented by the Leolu mountains, demands the employment of a much stronger force than that placed at the disposal of Colonel Rowlands.

In the Campaign of 1863, against the Mountaineers, on the North-west Frontier of India, from 6,000 to 7,000 British troops

were employed. The Mountaineers in Montenegro have been able to resist every endeavour of the Turkish troops to occupy their country. If the mountain fastnesses are to be taken, the attack must be made by separate columns advancing from several directions, and scaling several mountains simultaneously in order to distract the attention of the enemy, and to weaken his powers of resistance. In fighting among the rocks in the country under consideration, it is not sufficient to seize a position or mountain and to pass on to the next. Each point gained must be held and occupied, in order to ferret the Kaffirs out of their rocks, galleries and caves, and to prevent them from issuing out of these to fire upon the backs of the attacking force as it proceeds onwards. In any case, the assailant compelled to approach with a narrow front is continually exposed to a fire, to which he can make no effective reply, and each step is won at a sacrifice of life. Sir Charles Napier, in his subjugation of Scinde, starved out the people; this method is a more costly but effectual mode of bringing about the desired result. A comparatively small force of mounted riflemen can harass and starve out an enemy occupying a strong and intricate mountainous country, by making every day patrols of small bodies, which, starting from various intrenched posts can meet and change their course, appearing at distant and unexpected places, surprising and capturing cattle, and visiting every path, glen and mountain top. The Kaffir, terrified by this ubiquity, combined with speed, will not venture to cultivate the "mealie" fields in the valleys, he will feel himself unsafe even in his mountain fastnesses, and scarcity of food will soon drive him to submit. In warfare of this nature the infantry soldier, garrisoning a fort, cannot make a patrol without risking being overpowered by an ambuscade of the enemy concealed in bush or ravine. The want of speed must be made up by increasing the strength of the patrols. The additional number of men entails the serious difficulty of transport of more food from the base Pretoria, 250 miles distant, and from the main base at the Port of Durban, 450 miles farther. In these mountain operations mortars are required to give a vertical fire on strongholds, as it was found that the horizontal fire from the mountain and Armstrong guns was not sufficient to dislodge the enemy. The necessity for pack mules and oxen to carry ammunition and food was always felt, as it was impossible to make rapid marches with ox-waggons or carts, through this trackless mountain district. Mules, with pack-saddle fitted to carry intrenching implements, and mules to carry leather bags filled with water, are also indispensable. The most suitable dress and equipment for a mounted rifleman (worn and used by the Transvaal Volunteers), is a wide awake hat, with the rim bound with leather, and a uniform coloured pugaree, a cord or fustian Norfolk coat, pantaloons of the same material, both of a brown colour, leather gaiters, ankle-boots and spurs. A Martini-Henry carbine

slung over the left shoulder, seventy rounds of ammunition carried in a leather bandolier, passed over the right shoulder, and thirty rounds carried in wallet or in coat pocket; a plain saddle with high pommel and numerous D's, a pair of saddle-bags, canteen, water-bottle, greatcoat and blankets, and a single snaffle or plain pelham bit.

In conclusion, the Transvaal Volunteers, who have mainly borne the dangers and hardships of the long continued war against Secocœni, have shown by their individuality, enterprize, and knowledge of country, a singular aptitude for this kind of mountain warfare; but the serious objection to supplementing Regulars by this provisional force, is the disturbing effect which results from draining an already too scanty population of its youth and vigour among professional men, farmers and artizans; the great expense of this force, the pay ranging thirty shillings to five shillings per diem; the risk of Volunteers, who cannot be under strict discipline and "in hand," becoming demoralized by the result of an unsuccessful attack or of a retreat.

