PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EARLY MONTHS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR.

By Lieutenaant-Colonel T. Du B. Whaite. Royal Army Medical Corps.

Having finished a tour of service in India, on November 24th, 1899, I landed at Southampton from the hired transport "Dilwara," after one of the saddest voyages I have ever experienced. We had on board many wives of officers who had left India for Natal, and at each port gloomy news awaited us.

The prospect of a tour of service in England was not hopeful, and, indeed, at the War Office I learned I was at the top of the roster for active service, and if anything like a corps d'armée were mobilised, I should be the first to go. I made a virtue of necessity, waived any claim I had to leave, and was posted to Dublin, where I reported myself on November 30th. On December 2nd I was warned for active service, on the 4th I was ordered to Portsmouth on mobilisation, and after gathering together my field service kit, I reported to the Principal Medical Officer, Southern Command, on the 7th. Next day I became one of the personnel of the 3rd Divisional Field Hospital, and as there was no quartermaster available, I was appointed to act as company officer and quartermaster, and buckled to, checking stores with invoices. The weather was intensely cold, and the stores at the old station hospital at Portsmouth a miserable place to spend hour after hour counting the various articles of field hospital equipment, and placing a distinctive mark on each package, so that we should have no difficulty in sorting out our own belongings when we came to disembark at the seat of war.

The personnel was as follows: Major (now Colonel) R. W. Ford, myself, Lieutenants Siberry and Wingate, and Serjeant-Major Soule.

As equipment for officers' little mess, we decided to take with us the following articles:

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Stewpans</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pudding basins</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skewers, sets</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soup ladle</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Flesh fork</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Jugs, enamelled</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spoons, wood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spoons, metal</td>
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<td>Knife, paring</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Castors</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Coffee pot</td>
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<td>Pie dishes</td>
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<td>Fork, toasting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bowl, wooden</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Bake pan</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Gridiron</td>
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<td>Roller, paste</td>
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In addition to these, each officer had a bucket canteen fitted complete, and a box of the following stores with trifling variations:

- Cocoa and milk .. tins 24
- Tea, compressed .. lbs. 5
- Jam .. .. tins 12
- Anchovy sauce .. bots. 2
- Worcesters .. .. 4
- Whisky .. .. 2
- Butter, Danish .. lbs. 10
- Milk, unsweetened .. tins 24
- Marmalade .. .. lbs. 6
- Curry powder .. .. 1
- Mustard .. .. 2
- Tobacco .. .. 3

A traveller's Berkefeld filter completed the equipment, but by some mistake it was not put in the box of stores, and I did not get it until many months afterwards.

On December 29th, 1899, we all embarked at Southampton in the hired transport "Orient," Captain Kershaw. The other troops on board were the 1st Battalion West Riding Regiment and details. We had four horses on board, including mine—a nice, sturdy, brown cob. It was blowing so hard that we anchored for the night off Hurst Castle, and dropped into the English Channel early next morning.

The voyage to the Cape was not very exciting. The time on board was spent in giving inoculations against enteric fever, learning the semaphore, taking as much exercise as is possible on board ship, and filling in the rest of the time with reading, music, cards, sketching, &c.

We coaled at St. Vincent and had a run on shore. The place is just like a cinder, barren and dry; the only green to be seen is a scanty amount in the ravines by the seashore, and some trees in the main streets and at the offices of the telegraph company. All the vegetables come from a neighbouring island, San Antoine, which is very fertile. As we approached Cape Town we were caught in a fog for several hours, and when it lifted found we had overshot the entrance to Table Bay, and had to steam north until we got our bearings, and came to anchor about 1 p.m. January 19th, 1900.

The embarking medical officer informed us we were to proceed to Naauwpoort, and after we had come alongside the wharf we unloaded the ship and packed our field hospital into two railway trucks. This kept us busy until after midnight, working as hard as we could; but thanks to the distinctive mark—a large yellow cross—which we had painted on each package before we embarked, the labour of sorting out our equipment was greatly reduced. Next day we left our swords at an agent’s office in Cape Town, and wearing Sam Browne belts only, we entrained at 1.30 p.m., and after forty-two hours or so the main body reached their destination.

I was dropped at De Aar to get the transport, but, as Lord
Kitchener had modified the scale, I only drew another water cart, twelve mules, and four horses, with harness and saddlery. The horses were all rather thin, except one Argentine, but I soon found out that the Cape horse does not, as a rule, carry much flesh, and these were wiry and stood the work well. I remember being rather puzzled, in reading the lists over, to make out what a "bugle, belly, leathered" might be, until I found it was the Cape equivalent for our old friend the tonga-bar, only that it hung in two curves under the animals, instead of being fixed on top of the saddle pad.

I got my wild lot of mules and ponies and the Cape boys into trucks and left De Aar about 1.30 p.m., travelling in the brake van, and got to Naauwpoort late at night, and had the greatest difficulty in finding our camp among the many which lay around the town, as nobody met my train at the station; and before I left I had to see all the beasts fed and watered in their trucks, and leave them to detrain next morning. There were very few lights about the railway lines, and several times I barked my shins badly over the point levers and other obstacles.

We had been in occupation of our camp for a day or two, and had got everything pretty orderly, and finished drawing our equipment, when we were ordered to shift our ground to another situation a mile away. Four days later we were sent back again to our old position, and although it was looked upon at the time as rather a nuisance, it really was a very good piece of practice in packing and loading our field hospital, and showed our men how to do it better than any amount of lecturing.

I find in my diary that eggs here were 2½d. each, but that price was beaten in Johannesberg afterwards, when they fetched as much as 9d.!

We found that English saddlery needed much alteration to fit the razor back and smaller girth of the Cape ponies, and we took advantage of our rest in Naauwpoort to shorten girths and surcingles. Breastplates also hung like festoons on the horses' chests, and being on the whole quite unnecessary, we discarded them. The dust and wind were perfectly beastly, and every day we were treated to a heavy duststorm, until it culminated in a thunderstorm on January 29th, which cleared and cooled the air.

On February 2nd, we packed up our camp, "trekked" to the railway station, and were getting our belongings into the trucks most comfortably, when a certain senior officer came along and altered all the entraining arrangements and made himself generally unpleasant to everybody, and I doubt very much if he succeeded
in pleasing himself. He did not belong to our corps nor to the staff of our division. Later in the day we left with General Kelly-Kenny and his staff, and with that occurred our first change of designation, and we were styled the Field Hospital, Divisional Troops, 6th Division; so good-bye to all our letters until our new style and title become known to the Field Post Office.

Modder river was our destination, and there we landed too late to detrain that night. Next morning we shunted to the Bloemfontein siding, got out our baggage, and encamped close by. There were signs of battle all around. Boer trenches, empty mauser cases, and houses well battered by shell fire. Our old enemy the duststorm again attacked us at 5 p.m., and blew unceasingly for two or three hours, making everything abominable. The sun at that time of the year was intensely hot, and although there was a portion of the river bank labelled "officers' bathing place," we were too busy for a couple of days to take advantage of it. Those days at Modder River Station were a perfect succession of sandstorms, and the sun between whiles was scorchingly hot; no shelter was to be had for the animals, and my cob got fever and his eyes were swollen up from the glare of the sun and the irritation of the sand. He was so bad that I was obliged to leave him behind when I started off on February 9th for Enslin with all the horses of the medical units and nearly all the water carts and ambulance wagons. All our kit had been cut down to the lowest scale consistent with efficiency; we were moving with few tents and the lightest possible equipment; in fact, we were the advanced party of Lord Roberts' great turning movement, and the remainder of our equipment was to follow by train next day. We sent our portmanteaus to Cape Town, and, wonderful to relate, they all got there safely. At 2 a.m. I left with the advance guard, which included a field company Royal Engineers, en route for Enslin via Klokfontein and Honeynest Kloof. We had no lights and the night was very dark; but after we cleared the outposts the track was fairly easy to keep to. At 8 a.m. we halted at the last-mentioned place to get some breakfast and feed and water the animals. The spring for the latter was about 1½ miles away, up a gorge, and it took a long time to go there and back and water all the beasts.

We reached Enslin at 1 p.m. on the 10th, and were joined there next day by the remainder of the medical units, and all moved to Graspan except myself, who was in the position of a "mud major," and was moreover left behind to find one of our mules that had strayed in the night. Our Cape boys had marked
our animals by clipping their tails in rings, but as the tails of the mules of unscrupulous drivers were almost devoid of hair, it was obvious that a "close crop" was the mark par excellence for a commandeered team. I discovered our mule among the team of another unit, and after some trouble got possession of her.

The difficulty about a horse was surmounted by my taking charge of a mount intended for Major Sylvester, of Ours, and riding him as far as Grasspan, which I reached by mid-day. We drew two buck-wagons at Enslin, and in this we were more fortunate than some, for Majors Sawyer and Raymond, R.A.M.C., had no transport whatever, and we left them behind. At Enslin I first saw a wireless telegraphy installation, but the man in charge said it was no use and only kept muttering some unintelligible gibberish. The inefficiency was attributed to the quantity of ironstone in the kopjes close at hand, but I now think it must have been due to placing the mast on the low ground between the hills. Our halting-place at Grasspan was on fine red sand, exactly resembling that used in egg-boilers, and it simply penetrated everything, and with a strong wind blowing made us very uncomfortable. The staff officer here—an Irishman, whose father I knew in India—with a keen sense of the ludicrous, had chosen "cheerful" as the password for the day!

Four o'clock in the morning saw us started off straight across the veldt for Ramdam, 15 miles away, and when we got there we took possession of a small grove of trees for our hospital, but a brigadier-general turned us out and we had to camp in the open, where, during the night, a runaway buck-wagon dashed through our lines and was within an ace of crushing my head. The water for the animals was good and plentiful, but the same cannot be said for the troops' supply. It was rather a nice farm, with poplars, fig-trees, pumpkins, and vines. Fresh beef was issued to us. The nights were brilliant moonlight, and I wrote the notes in my diary by Selene's fair beams. Dust, I may state, was as usual plentiful, and the fine peaty particles suspended in the air enhanced the glory of a magnificent sunset by throwing a haze over the foreground. The march from Ramdam to Waterfall Drift on the Reit River was about 8 miles and fairly good going, but as we did not start until late in the day we had to negotiate the Drift in a duststorm which came on at dusk. It was a terrible business getting the wagons over, and after a hasty meal we turned in, as we had been warned for an early start next day. The force moved off at 1 a.m., and it was a most wearisome procession. The night
air was very chilly, and we kept dropping asleep in our saddles, to be aroused by the pony stumbling into a hole or deep rut. Like so many South African animals, my mount refused to be led, and after several attempts to keep myself warm by walking, I had to abandon the effort.

With the dawn of February 14th we came on large flocks of sheep and goats, and many were slaughtered by the troops, joints cut off hastily and carried on, while the bulk of the carcases were left on the veldt. An enormous quantity of good meat was thus wasted. I got a big draught of sour milk at a Kaffir kraal and found it very refreshing. At 10 a.m. we got to Wegdraai and found that many of our mules were badly galled, and the buck-wagons we got at Enslin were very rickety about the wheels. I wedged them up as best I could, and put some sacking on the naves to be kept wet and swell the wood. Our mules were feasting at night off the "disselbooms," and would have eaten the wheels if they could have managed the tyres. We nailed some biscuit tins on the poles and put a stop to further destruction. Here we got news that Jacobsdaal was captured, and the Boer supplies to Magersfontein cut off. Orders came to push on, and the same evening we inspanned and marched until midnight, when we turned in on the trail and slept until morning.

February 15th.—Klip Drift and heavy rain; thousands of troops here, and more batteries and cavalry coming in. At 9 a.m. the artillery were busy shelling the enemy, and we, though we knew it not at the time, were earning our clasp for the Relief of Kimberley. Six or seven Boer prisoners were brought into camp, and all were wearing red crosses!

At 7 p.m. we received a signal from General French saying he was dining at the club in Kimberley, whereat great cheering broke out in camp. Next day I was detached from my hospital by the Principal Medical Officer, 6th Division, and sent to the 13th Brigade Field Hospital to assist in dressing the wounded. While we were busy with that, somebody annexed the Serjeant-Major's khaki jacket. I happened to be wearing two, as I had donned an extra one on account of the cold at night, so I lent him one, and, being a small man, he looked quite lonely in the garment. He returned it to me a few days afterwards and told me he had replenished his wardrobe from a dead "Buff."

In the farm outbuildings I came across a bowl that had been used for oil paint, and when I had scraped it and scoured it with sand, I found it was a choice piece of Crown Derby! It was the
visitors' porridge-bowl afterwards in hospital, for being so fragile I could not carry it about, and left it behind when I departed to take charge of the Essex Regiment. Years afterwards, Colonel Rhodes, the Signalling Officer of our Division, who used often to mess with us, remembered the basin, and made tender enquiries for it. I expect it was broken eventually.

Civil-Surgeon E. took charge of the wounded, and I made my way to Klip Kraal, when I came up with the 13th Brigade Bearer Company, who very kindly regaled me with a cup of haricot beans and a knuckle of mutton. In their company I set out again for the front, at 5 p.m., and we lost our way in the dark. Fortunately, we found the farmhouse of a Scotchman named McC., who was away in Kimberley. Mrs. McC. sent her little son Philip with us to Brantvlei Drift, over the Modder River, after crossing which we outspanned and lay down to rest, just as the Highland Brigade were passing us on their way to the field of Paardeberg.

The Boers, I believe, speak of this action as the battle of Osfontein, from the farm on which most of the fighting took place. Paardeberg Farm lies on the opposite side of the river, and more to the west.

Sunday, February 18th, 1900.—We marched at 5 a.m., and en route got some small grapes and pumpkins from a garden, and in a farmhouse found some potatoes and haricot beans, which we annexed. Our animals, as well as ourselves, were feeling the effects of short commons, and, as our ambulances were empty, we put in a couple of sacks of oats we found on the road, and hurried on towards the sound of firing in front.

I found my hospital in the shelter of Stinkfontein Kopjie, busy dressing the wounded, and we worked hard at it all the day. We had planted our Geneva Cross flag with the Union Jack on a clump of rocks between our hospital and the river, the distance from the latter being about two miles.

In the afternoon we came under "pom pom" fire, and a bullet came through the tent while we were operating on Major K., who was wounded in the neck. As the firing kept up, I thought that perhaps our flagstaff had been knocked over, but I found it there all right, and a staff officer with mounted orderlies clustered round the spot. The officer was coolly writing despatches, but he withdrew when I politely called his attention to the fact that he was drawing the fire on our hospital. The Boers seem to have got hold of the idea that the Union Jack marked Lord Roberts' headquarters, and the fire later on became so hot and continuous that we were
obliged to evacuate the position altogether, and leave our tents standing. A pompom shell struck a camp kettle full of beef tea, and spilt the contents. One watercart had gone to the river earlier in the day, as we were assured by a staff officer it would be quite safe, but we never saw it again. Last of all, we moved the flag, which Lieutenant W. and I secured under a hot fire.

We had only two ambulances, and these went backwards and forwards until the mules could do no more, and between the trips we worked like blacks, assisted by Major T. and some men of the West Riding Regiment, to get the wounded to a place of safety. Carrying a heavy man any distance in a blanket (not an improvised stretcher) is a most painful thing for the fingers and nails, and I found that a small stone or a firm bundle of grass twisted up in the border of the blanket gave a much better grip and rested the fingers.

All night long the cries of the wounded and their calls for water were heartrending, and we had none to give the poor fellows, and, not knowing where to go, we had perforce to remain until dawn revealed a suitable place to pitch our camp.

All corps and ranks seemed mixed up and lost that night. We had generals and their aides-de-camp trying to snatch a little sleep on the ground by our wagons, and we all felt pretty miserable, but by the greatest luck nobody of our corps or party was wounded.

Next morning we moved from our dreary bivouac to a shady place under the trees on the bank of the Modder River, and dressed cases until the Principal Medical Officer sent me to take temporary charge of the Essex Regiment, vice Captain S., who was ill. On my way across the plain I fell in with some of the Mounted Infantry, and being shelled was compelled to retire. Then finding that the shells were following the Mounted Infantry, I changed my direction, and this brought me nearer to the river bank and the Boer entrenchments, which, much to my surprise, I found were occupied by Boers on our side of the stream. Several of the enemy came out and we entered into conversation. They told me they had asked for twenty-four hours’ armistice, but had not got an answer; in the meantime they were not fighting. I told them I was a surgeon going to attend to some wounded, and then we parted amicably.

I found half the battalion of the Essex Regiment on the river, concealed in a donga, while half were on the other side. There were seven wounded from the assault on the laager on Sunday, and placing two of the worst cases on stretchers, I started to return
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to hospital. Fortunately, I insisted on my party going unarmed.

Soon after we left a small party of the Welsh Regiment also
made a move to return from the river, and the Boers at once
came streaming out on their ponies and caught me in the open.

Bullets were flying all round us, so I made the bearers lie down
and place the stretchers parallel to the line of fire, to give the men
on them a better chance of escape. My horse drew the fire so much
I let him go loose, and the Boers captured him and were taking him
off to the laager with pretty nearly all my belongings on the saddle.

When the enemy made us rise and hold up our hands I fortunately
recognised one of my friends of the morning and remonstrated
strongly with him for taking the horse, and when they found we
had no arms they returned him to me, but took up a position
round my stretchers and fired on the Welsh, trusting they would
not return the fire for fear of injuring any of my party. On my
objecting to this unfair advantage they retired, and I made my way
unscathed to the artillery position. Here Captain W. rode up
and announced that Cronje had surrendered unconditionally, and
the news was received with great cheering and tossing of helmets. It
turned out, however, that he was a little previous, for firing
almost immediately recommenced from the laager and our guns
replied. After this incident I always moved about with a small
red cross flag on a broom stick.

On the 20th I rejoined the Essex Regiment by the river and
found them very short of food, and we dared not light fires to
warm anything, as we got shelled whenever we tried it. Our
emergency rations had to be opened and consumed.

Early next day General Chermside's Brigade, consisting of the
Norfolk and Lincoln Regiments and the King's Own Scottish
Borderers, was heavily fired on at dawn from the laager and
Stinkfontein kopje. They had been moving to relieve us late the
evening before, but not knowing the way, had halted and bivouacked
within 600 yards of the Boer lines. They were very smart in-
spanning under fire, and got to the river with only ten casualties,
which I helped to dress.

A convoy of food for the Essex Regiment had to turn back,
much to our chagrin.

The Stinkfontein kopje, opposite to us, had been a constant
menace since the Boers occupied it on Sunday, and General
Chermside decided to take it. It seems the enemy simultaneously
decided to evacuate it, or else they were threatened by another
force in their rear, for we saw them slipping off towards Osfontein
Farm in batches of a dozen or so. The Maxims were got to play on them, but apparently did little or no harm. The kopje was occupied and about forty prisoners were taken, who being un-mounted were unable to break away.

It was curious I should meet the 2nd Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment on the field of battle, as I was born in that Battalion at Preston in 1862, and the Colonel, though he had never met him, had often heard of my father. With the Essex Regiment I made my way back to headquarters without further adventure, and assisted during the daytime at the hospital and slept at night with the Regiment. Heavy rain came on nearly every evening, which made the soil very stiff and holding to walk over. Tents were only to be found with the field hospitals, and very few there; the men were sheltering themselves as best they could under blankets, and though these latter were so scarce I found the dead were in some cases being wrapped in them for burial, until my representations put a stop to it. About this time I exchanged Major Sylvester's "crock" for a Boer pohy, and he did me very well until we got to Bloemfontein, where I picked up my own horse.

On February 24th I was finally detached from my hospital and put in medical charge of the Essex Regiment. During the wet weather I found it an excellent plan to throw up a small mound, the size of the valise, so that my bed-place was above the general level of the ground, and the trench carried off the water. The large waterproof sheet formed a covering which, by a simple contrivance with a string and a picketing peg, could be pulled over the head without trouble, in case it came on to rain during the night. A hollow for the hips and some brushwood to mitigate the hardness of the ground was a refinement of luxury.

Literature, needless to say, was very scarce; a few magazines found their way to us by the post and were eagerly devoured, and a copy of Shakespeare which I had with me was always in great demand. It was very small print, and the margin being cut down made it quite a portable volume. We soon became very learned in his pithy references to the tented field.

Being now permanently severed from my connections with the field hospital, I collected my goods and chattels, which included my little box of stores and a light camp chair of the Roorkee pattern. The latter had a leg broken, but I was able to repair it with an old picketing peg and some strong string. Whenever our Brigadier or any distinguished stranger visited the mess he was accommodated in it, and the leg still remains as originally repaired.

There were at this time all sorts of rumours flying about anent
a contemplated sortie of the Boers, and extra precautions were taken to prevent their escape should they attempt it. As it was the eve of the anniversary of Majuba it was thought they would make some attempt, but we felt prepared.

Majuba Day.—At 3 a.m. we were aroused by a furious fusilade from the direction of the laager. We heard afterwards it was an assault on the Boer position by the Canadians, who had been sapping up for some days past on the other side of the river. Unfortunately, the attempt was unsuccessful and the losses considerable, but it undoubtedly had an effect in bringing the enemy to their senses. A good bombardment of the position by four 6-inch howitzers completed the business, and Cronje surrendered unconditionally with 4,750 men, practically all unmounted, as those who had ponies all got away in small parties during the early days of the investment.

It was indeed a motley crew that filed away under escort, dressed in all sorts of garments, everyone with a bundle of blankets or rugs, many with umbrellas, and one man I saw carrying a handbag and a small animal rather like a guinea-pig, dark brown in colour, and probably a large veldt rat or marmot, whose holes render the riding so unpleasant. Two ladies drove away in Cape carts drawn by mules. I heard that one of them was Mrs. Cronje herself.

The trenches which I examined were very scientifically constructed, and so deeply under-cut as to be practically shell-proof. They were littered with any amount of old rugs, blankets, coats, trousers, &c., as the men only took away with them what they absolutely needed and could conveniently carry. I appropriated an old flask, with a leather cover and a raw-hide sling, to replace my own, which had been broken some time back.

The rifles handed in were piled under a tree with a guard, and included many modern sporting weapons. I coveted, but could not obtain. Major N., of the Essex Regiment, found two saddle-bags full of flour and some baking powder, and I came on some mushrooms growing under a tree; these furnished a tasty addition to the mess lunch, and with the flour I made some capital scones for tea, and baked them between two camp kettle-lids, with hot embers above and below.

Next day the river was in flood, and some of us who had intended inspecting the trenches on the opposite banks did not see the force of getting wet through. An ambulance had stranded in mid-stream, and an ox-wagon which crossed the drift while we were there was nearly swept down with the current, and the oxen were almost swimming. I made a couple of pencil-sketches of the scene.
The country being now quite clear of the enemy, I induced the officer in command of the battalion to fetch water for the men from the spring at Osfontein Farmhouse, as the Modder River water had given nearly everybody diarrhoea (familiarly styled "the Modders"). I remember figuring out the advantage of fetching the water three miles, and how many journeys would have to be made daily to draw enough; and it was finally so arranged. But we only had the trouble one day, for we moved to Osfontein Farm itself next morning. This must have been a very prosperous homestead in the days before the war. The garden was well cultivated and stocked. We found some men busy digging up carrots with a clasp knife; two or three more had just discovered a bed of chillies, and the bright red colour tempted them to taste. The subsequent language was hot and strong! Lord Roberts had his headquarters in the farmhouse, and while making a sketch of it I mislaid my only piece of india-rubber!

On March 2nd we received news of the relief of Ladysmith; Kimberley and Mafeking also relieved, and General Clements again in possession of Colesberg, made the general complexion of affairs decidedly more rosy.

We were expecting to remain here for several days until we had a fortnight’s supplies collected. We got mails from the base, and I heard that my horse had completely recovered and was fat and well.

My new mount was very razor-backed, but I got hold of a very thick saddle-blanket and a leather saddle-cover, which had been abandoned by the enemy, and these were very useful until somebody commandeered the blanket. The saddle-cover I still possess and often use in rainy weather.

We were all on short rations, and I find a note in my diary that I was always most infernally hungry, and a little further on I read, "Made a wholemeal cake, great success."

We were, during that week after the surrender, always prepared for sudden orders to move, and on March 6th we were warned to be ready for an advance at 3 a.m. next day. This we did, but made slow progress until daylight, when we moved in extended order on a line of kopjes known as the Seven Sisters.

The guns searched the position, and the cavalry and mounted infantry reconnoitred and reported them evacuated. We did not fire a shot, and we found the Boers had decamped in a hurry, leaving one man dead. The tents and shanties remained standing and we made a welcome haul of flour, meal, potatoes, and onions. There was also some biltong hung on the bushes, but we did not fancy it.
Platteberg was our next move, and here also we were unopposed, and finally we encamped at Poplar Grove at nightfall, having been fifteen hours under arms. Distance from last camp 15 miles, but as we came, about 25 miles.

Next day we moved off at 10 a.m. for Waaihoek Drift. Four of us had made our breakfast off a small tin of sardines with potatoes and onions. Want of rations handicapped both man and beast. Kruger and Steyn got away from Poplar Grove Farm because the cavalry horses were so cooked they "could not boil a trot," as one of the officers lucidly put it.

Our men broke into and devoured their emergency rations without the formality of an officer's order. Before leaving Osfontein they received rations for two days, but before we reached the next camp they had eaten all. A parade of the Battalion mustered, as well as I remember, only two emergency rations, and they were believed to have been stolen!

March 9th was spent taking a well-earned rest, and on the 10th, at 6 a.m., we marched off, hoping to reach Baber's Pan by the evening. Near Driefontein, however, we found the Boers holding in force a line of kopjes on our front and on the left flank. The infantry were extended and the guns shelled the position.

Thousands of buck galloped past our front, and one which was struck by a rifle bullet was picked up and carried along by two men. When further extension made separation necessary, one man took the buck on his shoulders and continued to skirmish. During the attack Captain B. was wounded in the calf of the leg by a spent ball, which just sank in level with the skin. I extracted the bullet and dressed him and a couple of other men with slight wounds and pushed on to rejoin the Battalion. Our Brigadier with his aide-de-camp got past the end of the kopjie in safety, but just as I passed by the same spot the Boers recommenced to search with a Krupp ten-pounder, and a shell burst almost in my face. A bullet struck me in the right breast, passed under the pectoral muscle, turned on the ribs, and emerged, after ploughing a track about 6 inches long, at the fold of the axilla, and passed out under my arm. It smashed up the vulcanite mouthpiece of a pipe I had in my right breast-pocket. I went and reported to the Principal Medical Officer, who sent me to my old Field Hospital, and a civil surgeon was sent to take my place with the Regiment. It turned out afterwards that large pieces of my jacket, shirt, and vest were carried into the wound, as well as bunches of chest-hair, and it took thirty-five days before it completely closed up.

Next day I moved to the 13th Brigade Field Hospital, com-
manded by Major W. W. Pike, and helped as best I could in establishing a temporary hospital in the farmhouse. Then I met Lord Roberts, who very kindly sent a telegram for me to my wife, who received it half an hour after she saw the report of my wound in the papers.

It was a dearly bought victory for the Essex Regiment, who lost two officers killed and several wounded. All that day the wounded were being brought in, and many of them were seen by Lord Roberts before he left, and he also sent Lord Kerry to bring in a batch of twenty who were collected under the lee of a hill. Major Pike arrived last in the hospital late in the evening.

With my right arm bandaged to my side I gave all the help I could by administering chloroform and supervising dressings, &c. I had a great deal of trouble the day before preventing all and sundry from digging up a patch of new potatoes and carrots in the farm garden, and it was only by posting a sentry that we managed to save as much as we did to supplement the rations of the wounded. A good flock of sheep was driven into the kraal to feed us, and an old farmer from Abraham's Kraal, 9 miles away, drove over with milk, and was most pro-British in his sympathies. His daughter and a governess drove over in a Cape cart one afternoon and we gave them tea. The governess prided herself on being an Afrikander, and tried to gather indirectly what steps Lord Roberts had taken to safeguard his lines of communications! Major Pike set her mind at rest by informing her we were only the advance guard, and that 50,000 men were close behind. Doubtless this valuable piece of information filtered through to the enemy, who refrained from tampering with our rear; for convoys and my horse came through on subsequent days unmolested via Kimberley, and a battalion of the Royal Warwickshire came via Jacobsdaal to Bloemfontein and saw nothing of the enemy. On the whole we lived very well and made some purchases of luxuries from the old man's shop to supplement our rations. We cut cartloads of rushes from the Pan near by, and made comfortable beds for the sick and injured.

In the field hospital equipment, 1898 pattern, there was no means of sharpening the surgical instruments—an oversight that has been remedied in the new pattern panniers. Fortunately, I had in my kit a small Arkansas stone, with which I was able to keep the knives in order.

A week after the battle three ambulance wagons turned up from Pafontein, and Major Pike asked me to take ten officers and two men into Bloemfontein. We started at 5 p.m., and halted
for the night at Aasvogel Kop, near the deserted school of one, Mr. Minaan. The locality was very offensive with the carcases of dead animals, but we had to put up with it, as we could not pick and choose in the dark. In the morning we moved on, passing on our way Troon's Farm, where we all filled our water-bottles and casks with the best water we had come across for a very long time.

Twelve more weary miles brought us to Daniel's Farm, Hartebeest Hock. The last three miles of the road was a winding track amongst immense boulders, and our way was illumined by almost continuous flashes of lightning from a terrific thunderstorm, which raged for over an hour. At 8 p.m. we got in, and Mr. Daniel and his family made us heartily welcome and gave us supper. I was accommodated for the night in a double-spring bed with white sheets and feather pillows—in fact, in the lap of luxury. Early on the morrow I was up and about and found Mr. Daniel pottering about the dewy grass in his bare feet (Kneip's cure for rheumatism) and he took me round the farm and dairy. Breakfast consisted of a generous menu of porridge, venison steak, mutton chops, grilled chicken, and hot scones, to which, needless to say, we all did ample justice.

Amid cordial good-byes we left at 8.45 a.m., and arrived at Bloemfontein at 1 p.m. We were met by General Kelly-Kenny, Colonel Benson, and our Principal Medical Officer, and carted straight away to the Victoria Cottage Hospital, there to be healed of our wounds by the ministering care of the Sisters of St. Michael. Thus ended the first phase of the war so far as I was concerned.

My experience during these months of the war convinced me of the necessity of having a sanitary officer, with influence and tact at the headquarters, to confer with the general, and not only to advise on the suitability of the camping ground generally, but to assist in fixing the sites for the various hospitals and in posting guards to prevent the ground being fouled by the first arrivals.

It almost invariably happened that sheltered or shady sites, which were most fitted for the accommodation of emergency cases, without incurring the delay of pitching tents, had been used by shy and hypersensitive men as al fresco latrines, and had to be cleaned up for occupation by the medical units on arrival with the rear of the columns. With the sanitary squads as at present organised, I anticipate no difficulty in obviating such an objectionable state of affairs in future campaigns.