



DRAWN BY MAX F. KLEPPER

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE BATTLE

THE WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA

BY JULIAN RALPH, OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT WITH THE BRITISH ARMY

DE AAR, CAPE COLONY, OCT. 31

WHILE THE actual fighting is going on across the country, on the Natal frontier the preparations for what is planned to be the real war are hastening forward at this place, sixty miles from the southwestern corner of the Free State. Three weeks ago this was a railway junction with a post-office, a country crossroads' store, a tavern and a few small cottages, mainly for the railroad employes. To-day little De Aar remains as it was, but in the outlying fields there has grown up a military city, imposing already and soon to be gigantic. Here I am quartered, with the privileges and appurtenances of a lieutenant in the army, and, like all others who are here, am awaiting the arrival of General Sir Redvers Buller and the major part of the army corps now on its way from England. From my tent door on one day I see a kraal, or corral, made with barbed wire and posts, and in twenty-four hours it holds hundreds of mules. In a week, the mules number thousands. Officers are riding all over the country buying horses and mules, and more than as many farmers are driving in those they wish to sell at the stiff prices the army is paying for thoroughly good animals. "The old lady is sparing no expense," said an officer yesterday, referring to the Queen; "everything is to be plentiful and of the very best that can be got."

From my tent door I see a great gang of soldiers attack the grassy veldt with spades on one day, and on the next they have built a substantial fort. On another day I see soldier carpenters laying great beams upon the ground, and twenty-four hours later they are sheathing the sides of a new building with corrugated iron. In this way storehouses, forts, offices, earthworks, corrals and camps of white tents are constantly multiplying and forever springing up, until, as I have said, a large military city has already developed on the edge of the Karroo desert, where in Paul Kruger's boyhood he and the other Boers who wished to keep slaves, to treat the natives with cruelty and to continue their medieval ways of every sort, trekked northward, finding at this very point so many antelope and such abundance of water that they fancied themselves certain soon to come to another Promised Land as rich as that which the Israelites sought of old. It is most curious to think of the lad Kruger trudging out here with his hand in his father's, and to know that to-day we are heaping up guns, gun-carriages and shells, and concentrating the largest force ever gathered by the strongest power on earth solely to undo what that lad came by here to do.



DRAWN BY W. D. STEVENS

AN INCIDENT OF ELANDSLAAGTE—A GORDON HIGHLANDER BRINGING IN A WOUNDED BOER AFTER THE BATTLE

You notice that I speak only generally of what is going on at this headquarters. This is because the correspondents in this war are under the strictest censorship that any of them have ever known. There is less reason for this to-day than there was a few weeks ago, but at that time there could scarcely have been any reasonable fault found had the British excluded correspondents altogether.

Though the Dutch British subjects in the Cape and Natal colonies have no grievance against the Crown, and admit that they are most liberally and justly governed, far too many of them are in sympathy with the Boers of the Dutch republics who have made war on England. It is not merely that they are all related to families in the Dutch republics. There is a graver reason still, which is that they belong to or are worked upon by the "Afrikaner Bond." Made vain by the sudden wealth of the Transvaal (gained by overtaxing the outlanders), and crazed by the fact that the Transvaal Boers were able to rout three hundred English soldiers at Majuba Hill, the Dutch all over South Africa formed a "bond," or band, which has, since 1881, been both openly and secretly conspiring to wrest this half-continent from Great Britain. By the year 1902 they said they would install a confederation of Dutch republics. When this war broke out the situation was so peculiar that no Englishman in the British colonies dared to trust his Dutch neighbors, and it was believed that if the first battles resulted in Boer victories the English subjects of Dutch blood might rise and turn an international into a civil war. This accounts for the strict censorship. It may be relaxed, but, at present, even the harmless matter I am now sending to you would be stopped were it intended for the cable, because in that case it might be as speedily sent back again. I think this supervision may soon be relaxed, because the English victories, and Sir Alfred Milner's proclamation warning all disaffected subjects of the Crown that treason will be dealt with as treason, have had a wonderful effect here already.

In this border country we are living under martial law. Scouts scour the country, sentinels patrol the boundaries and guard the railway station, and passes are essential to those who move about. The Orange River bridge, by which alone the Boers can enter Cape Colony, now that the rains have begun and the river is swollen, is well guarded by the British, and strong forces are stationed at many other points. Kimberley and Mafeking are cut off, as all the world knows; but runners from those towns assure the public