

## VALIANT BATTLE FOR LIBERTY

Struggles of the South African Republic for Independence.

## PERSISTENT AGGRESSIONS OF THE BRITISH

Story of the Courage and Fortitude of the Dutch Pioneers of the Transvaal—Present Controversy with the British.

The southern end of the Dark Continent is reported to be in that feverish condition which usually precedes actual war. Dispatches furnish fuel for the advocates of war, as well as for the promoters of peace, but as yet affairs have not reached the exploding point. Great Britain is pressing its claims on the Transvaal republic with all the arts of diplomacy and the pressure of superior power. The little land-locked republic, boldy, if not defiantly, resists the demands, and yet yields a little at a time. Perhaps the sturdy burghers will yield some more—enough to avert the dread alternative of war. The proposed conference, which both parties appear to have agreed to, may be a play for time; it may prove a sincere effort to effect a settlement satisfactory to both parties. Time alone will determine.

## Questions at Stake.

The vital question involved is the right of the British to interfere in the internal affairs of the Transvaal. Ever since the fateful Jameson raid, British citizens in the Transvaal have appealed again and again to the home government for relief from what they termed the tyranny and exactions of the burghers. They have by far the largest financial interest in the Transvaal, and yet had no voice in its government. They could not become electors without renouncing British citizenship. Modifications of the franchise were enacted about a year ago, but they were not satisfactory to the outlanders. Recently President Kruger agreed that his government would grant a five-year franchise. That was the minimum of the British demands. But in return he granted President Kruger's demand that Great Britain should not interfere in the internal affairs of the republic in the future. The request was promptly denied. Thus the issue was brought down to the question whether the South African republic has a right to independent existence. The Boers believe that they are a nation. In the London convention of 1884 the British government conceded that the Boer state should be called a republic—its official name being the South African Republic. The only limitation upon its absolute independence to be found in that convention was the stipulation that the republic "will conclude no treaty or engagement with any state or nation, other than the Orange Free State, nor with any native state, or with any state or nation, eastward of this republic, until the same be recognized by her majesty, the queen." That meant sovereign rights in all things excepting the conclusion of treaties with foreign powers. In all other matters its independence was clearly acknowledged.

## Struggle for Liberty.

The situation may be likened to that preceding the outbreak of the revolutionary war in America in 1776, except that the Boers are much better prepared than the Americans were at that time. The British government in 1776 was directly responsible for the war, but the chartered companies, the Rhodesians and the adventurers in collusion with Joe Chamberlain, are responsible for the conditions prevalent in South Africa. The republic stands in the way of the plans of Great Britain in South Africa. It is an obstruction to the expansion of the British empire. Right and justice have no part in the scene.

A more determined people than the Boers has never lived. They are fully prepared for war—but there will be again and the conditions are more favorable to success. They can place 30,000 troops in the field within forty-eight hours, and 30,000 men in less than a month, to say nothing of their kinmen from all over South Africa who will rally to their aid. They are, moreover, the best marksmen in the world. In hunting on the open plains the wild beasts which harry their flocks they have learned to shoot accurately at long distances. It is nothing unusual for one of them to bring down a springbok at 500 or a buffalo at 1,000 yards, and they showed in their battles with the British that their aim was not affected by the circumstance that the game was shooting back. An Englishman who has lived long in the Transvaal says of the sturdy burghers: "They may not be such dead shots as their fathers were, but, in the event of war, if we pursue the same system of old, a large proportion of them will kill or wound their man. I have no doubt of the issue, but it might cost us more than a Waterloo. The Boers would, of course, follow their old style—never fight in the open and always on the defensive. They will show nothing if they can help it but the muzzle of the rifle, and the chance of hitting them is about equal to that of hitting a half-court piece 200 yards off. And, of course, we shall commit the usual folly of presenting our men in comparatively close order and attempting to rush these people."

## Military Organization of the Boers.

An exhaustive article in the *Militärisches Wochensblatt*, a Berlin publication, devoted to military affairs, may be taken as semi-official, and it gives interesting facts concerning military affairs in the two great Boer republics—the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

Though in regard to organization, arms, and tactics there is a similarity between the military of the two states, separate statements are necessary to give a comprehensive idea of strength, formation, and capacity of the military (it is scarcely correct to say army) of each state, because in times of peace they are absolutely independent of each other.

Common to both states is the most perfect and relentless execution of compulsory service in case of war. This is more so than in Germany, which is saying a good deal. In the Transvaal this duty extends from the sixteenth to the sixtieth year of age, and in the Orange Free State from the eighteenth to the sixtieth. On account of the early physical development of the Boers, even what, according to American ideas, would be considered youth, furnishes a useful material for the army. Similar to the Germans are good soldiers, because their more or less nomadic life as hunters and cattle raisers assures them a degree of "reasoning" unknown elsewhere. Hence, in the case of the two states, it is really a people in arms.

## Every Man Trained.

The record of English aggression upon the Boers goes back to the founding of Cape Colony, when the Boers, yielding to the superior strength and the policy of the English, abandoned their homes and went back into the wilderness. They founded the Republic of Natalia. This was invaded and conquered by British troops. The Boers a second time retreated and founded the independent South African republics. In 1843 Great Britain annexed the land between the Vaal into an unknown territory which they called the Transvaal. In 1852 a convention was signed guaranteeing the Boers the right to govern themselves according to their own laws. Matters then rested quietly until 1877, when the British annexed the Transvaal on the pretext that the Boers did not know how to govern themselves.

In their command. The garrison of this corps is in a fortified camp at Pretoria, where the guns are also stationed—three field batteries and a number of heavy guns, mostly of the Krupp pattern. There are also two batteries of rapid-fire guns.

Since 1894 a law is in existence which permits an organization of volunteer corps consisting of citizens entitled to vote. This is done to keep up interest in military matters. These corps are furnished arms and ammunition and each volunteer receives annually from \$4 to \$100 for periodical service, which includes police service in case of riots or other disturbances. Nearly every large city or village has such a corps, the strongest being at Johannesburg, which consists of 600 infantry and 200 cavalry.

The military strength of Transvaal, however, rests in its militia. Statistics concerning its numbers vary between 25,000 and 26,000 burghers, subject to military service, of whom from 15,000 to 18,000 are in their best years. The white population of the Transvaal in 1881 was a little over 220,000. The Boers, however, number "adults," or "men," who are not being entitled to vote, cannot be compelled to serve. Of the Kaffirs, numbering about 650,000, probably 60,000 are subject to military duty.

The military division of the state is strictly carried out, and makes an incredibly quick mobilization possible, because each citizen is compelled, upon notification, to repair at once, with horse, arms, accoutrements and rations, to the place of rendezvous.

## District Organization.

For this purpose the Transvaal is divided into districts, and each district again into cornernships. Each district has a commander, who, as well as the cornerns, has much authority in peace as well as in war. Even in times of peace, for instance, each inhabitant owes implicit military obedience to his field cornet and his commander.

Encampments and field maneuvers upon a large scale do not take place. In view of the fighting methods of the Boers there is no tactical necessity for such expensive institutions. The Boers are a sort of mounted infantry. From early youth they are active in the saddle, and in the bush, an indefatigable, alert, and excellent marksmen because the Boer is born with a rifle, so to speak. The Boers are natural guerrillas. They go into camp without a baggage train. Each man carries rations for two weeks in his saddle bags.

The fighting methods of the Boers, which caused the English such great loss in 1881, and actually drove them from the open field, is an intelligent skirmishing. They are never massed, and hence field artillery is powerless against them. Moreover, the gunners of the enemy's artillery are rapidly picked off by the excellent marksmanship of the natives. The latter know a good how to utilize the topography of the field to advantage, in the attack as well as in the defense. At all events, they are, in this respect, far superior to the English in infantry. This is proved, among other things, by official reports of the war of 1881. At Laings Nek, January 18 of the year named, 120 Boers forced 1,000 infantry, 200 cavalry and nine guns to precipitate retreat. In the decisive battle of Mount Majuba, where the English lost General Collis, 120 Boers stormed the peak, which was held by 400 troops and 250 marines. Unproportionately large were the losses of the English in that battle. The Boers had only 120 dead and 100 wounded, while the Boers had only 113 dead and 100 wounded. This is a disproportion shown by no other war of modern times. Since that time, 1881, tactical conditions have scarcely changed. Small arms have been brought to greater perfection, but this counts on both sides.

## The Sister Republic.

It has already been mentioned that the military arrangements of the Orange Free State are similar to those of the Transvaal. In the former the number of whites subject to military service is estimated at 20,000. There, as well as in the sister republic, is a corps of field artillery, with thirty-six pieces of medium guns, stationed in a fort near Bloemfontein. The artillery entered the reserves after three years' service. They number now about 600, mostly technically well drilled and numerically ample to man every gun twice in case of war.

The Orange Free State also has its corps of volunteers, for whose equipment and camp service the state pays. During the last few years these appropriations have amounted to \$300,000 annually. If it is taken into consideration that the Orange Free State has a white population of only about \$30,000, it will be seen that these Boers pay more per capita for military purposes than even Germany, the most soldier-ridden country in the world.

The State militia is, as in the Transvaal, organized upon a strictly territorial basis, and the formation, mobilization, and commands are the same.

## British Forces.

Of British regular troops there are at this moment in all South Africa, according to the New York Sun, only about 10,000 officers and men. They are divided as follows: Two regiments of cavalry, three field batteries, one mountain battery, three companies of garrison artillery, one company of engineers, six and one-half battalions of infantry, two army service detachments, two of the army ordnance corps, and two of the army medical corps, two battalions of infantry are on their way out which on arrival will bring the total force up to 12,000 men. Two batteries of field artillery are under orders, but have not yet left England. The distribution of the force at date is about 6,000 regulars in Natal divided between Pietermaritzburg the capital; Ladysmith, the junction of the railways from Durban, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal and Eshowe. It is proposed to form a camp of observation near Laings Nek. In addition to the regulars, it is calculated that Natal can furnish a volunteer and militia force of about 2,000 men, comprising a field battery, a battalion of infantry and a body of about 900 mounted riflemen and a police force of about 500 men.

In Cape Colony there are about 4,000 British regulars, comprising two and one-half battalions of infantry, two companies of garrison artillery and one company of engineers, all the other regular troops being in Natal. There are besides, the Cape Mounted Rifles, 1,000 strong, and the Cape police, 1,000; forty-four volunteer and mounted rifle companies, about 7,000 men with batteries of eleven field guns. In addition special corps are being organized for frontier service under the officers recently sent out from England. These are to be employed in the protection of the railway line between the Orange river and Bulawayo, particularly the long section of it skirting the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. There will also be a post at Port Tuli on the road from Rhodesia, crossing the Crocodile river, in the Transvaal.

## Persistent Aggression.

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This time they took arms, and as a result were driven across the Vaal into an unknown territory which they called the Transvaal. In 1852 a convention was signed guaranteeing the Boers the right to govern themselves according to their own laws. Matters then rested quietly until 1877, when the British annexed the Transvaal on the pretext that the Boers did not know how to govern themselves.

For the next three years the troubles

in South Africa went on, first the Zulus and then the Basutos were attacked by the English; and in 1859, after exhausting every other means of remonstrance against the officials set over them by the English, the Boers revolted. It was a long, hard, waiting while the English broke the power of their enemies, the Zulus; but the conditions under which they were forced to become a part of the British empire were unbearable. The Boers opened proceedings and acted with decision and dispatch. The first English attempt at putting down the revolt met with disaster at Laings Nek. Reforcements were brought, but the Boers, numbering in all from 10,000 to 12,000 men, surrounded every British force in Africa.

On February 27, 1881, was fought the battle of Majuba Hill, in which the Boers actually stormed a height occupied by British regulars and took it. English soldiers, 26 of the Ninety-fourth regiment of the British army, were all killed, however, numerous "wounded" who were not being entitled to vote, cannot be compelled to serve. Of the Kaffirs, numbering about 650,000, probably 60,000 are subject to rapid-fire guns.

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