

MAJOR GENERAL
HECTOR A. MACDONALD

C.B., D.S.O., L.L.D.



• DAVID CAMPBELL •



MAJOR-GENERAL HECTOR MACDONALD.
(The Portrait sent to the Queen by Royal Command.)

GENERAL
HECTOR A. MACDONALD

C.B., D.S.O., A.D.C. TO THE QUEEN
LL.D. (Glasgow)

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BY

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"OLD SCOTTISH STORIES" "HIGHER ENGLISH"
ETC. ETC.

LONDON
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16 PILGRIM STREET, E.C.

*They say that "war is hell," "the great accursed,"
The sin impossible to be forgiven—
Yet I can look beyond it at its worst,
And still find blue in heaven.*

*And as I note how nobly natures form
Under the war's red rain, I deem it true
That He who made the earthquake and the storm
Perchance makes battles too!*

*The life He loves is not the life of span
Abbreviated by each passing breath;
It is the true humanity of man,
Victorious over death,*

*The long expectance of the upward gaze,
Sense ineradicable of things afar,
Fair hope of finding, after many days,
The bright and morning star.*

*Methinks I see how spirits may be tried,
Transfigured into beauty on war's verge,
Like flowers, whose tremulous grace is learnt beside
The trampling of the surge.*

*Thus, as the heaven's many-coloured flames
At sunset are but dust in rich disguise,
The ascending earthquake dust of battle frames
God's pictures in the skies.*

WILLIAM ARMAGH.

THE PALACE,
ARMAGH, 28th October, 1899.

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PREFACE

A WAVE of military enthusiasm is passing over the land, and there is, at the present moment, a rising tide in the affairs of the army, which, it is to be hoped, our statesmen will have judgment to take at the flood. Whatever reforms may be carried out as the issue of our South African experiences—and that radical changes will be demanded no one doubts—nothing, we believe, will more tend to raise the status of the service or improve the *morale* of its individual members than the promotion of a larger proportion of men of valour and worth from the ranks. Restore the old French idea of the Marshal's baton in every knapsack—an idea that was often realised as fact under the *régime* of Napoleon—let the recruit feel that somewhere in his kit there lies a commission, which, by

his being loyal to his colours, "good at need," and, above all, true to his own self, may some day be the guerdon of his devotion,—and the army will become in time of peace what war-time always perforce makes it appear—a worthy career for the able, the well-doing, and the ambitious.

But this naturally suggests an all-important question. Why should the income of an officer be incommensurate with either his position or its expenses? It is not quite to the credit of the nation that, in even a single instance, the reward of a commission should mean to a gallant soldier either ruin or the life-long misery of a sense of social inferiority. When General Macdonald had his choice of the Victoria Cross or promotion from the ranks, he chose with the wisdom that has characterised all his actions in life. And to the honour of the bluest blood in our magnificent array of officers be it said, he has never been made to feel other than an equal of whom all are proud—one of Nature's nobles.

But even Macdonald, if all accounts are true, has not held his commission without some family sacrifices of the most honourable kind, and a less daunt-

less spirit, especially if entirely destitute of friendly backing, might have shrunk from a position involving possible isolation and the withering influence that comes from a haunting feeling of a seat below the salt. It is not difficult to divine the reasons that might lead a brave but sensitive man to choose less wisely than Macdonald. The army will undoubtedly gain in prestige, efficiency, and numbers by the promotion of capable men, and it should not surely be beyond the wisdom and ingenuity of those in authority to devise a scheme whereby all fear of such a reward should be eliminated. Let the pay be made sufficient, or let special grants and endowments accompany preferment from the ranks for distinguished service. The people that ungrudgingly, nay gratefully, vote huge sums to successful Field-Marschals, would hail with enthusiasm any proposal which would enable men of the stamp of Hector Macdonald to accept, without financial apprehension, positions in which they could render still greater service to Queen and country.

This brief sketch attempts to tell the life-story of a former private in the Gordon Highlanders, who is now a Major-General of the British army, and

Commander of the Highland Brigade in South Africa.

The biographical details have been gathered from many sources—from information orally obtained, from letters, speeches, newspapers, and magazines—and the writer has endeavoured to sift the wheat of truth from the chaff of myth, and to present the career of Hector Macdonald in a connected and popularly interesting form.

Where materials have been so freely “commandeered” from all quarters, individual acknowledgments are impossible, but special thanks are due to General Macdonald’s brother, County Councillor William Macdonald, of Rootfield, without whose valuable help this Life would have been wanting both in completeness and in accuracy.

D. C.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL INSTITUTION,
EDINBURGH.

MAJOR-GENERAL HECTOR A. MACDONALD

C.B., D.S.O., A.D.C. TO THE QUEEN, LL.D. (Glasgow).

MILITARY SERVICE.

- I. Enlisted in 92nd, now 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders, 1870.
- II. Colour-Sergeant; Afghan War, 1879-80; mentioned twice in despatches; Maidan Expedition, 1880; March from Kabul to Kandahar; medal, clasps, decorations; promoted 2nd Lieutenant.
- III. Boer War, 1881; Majuba Hill; mentioned in despatches.
- IV. Nile Expedition, 1885; Assiout.
- V. Suakin, 1888; mentioned in despatches; medal and clasp; 3rd class Medjidie; Khedive's Star.
- VI. Suakin, 1889; mentioned in despatches; Companion of the Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O.); clasp.
- VII. Capture of Tokar, 1891; 3rd class Osmanieh; clasp to Khedive's Star.
- VIII. Commanded 2nd Infantry Brigade, Dongola Expeditionary Force, 1896; mentioned in despatches; promoted Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel; Khedive's medal with two clasps; British Medal.
- IX. Commanded, 1897-98; including Abu-Hamed, mentioned in despatches, clasp; Atbara, mentioned in despatches; Khartoum (Omdurman), mentioned in despatches, two clasps; received the thanks of Parliament; Aide-de-Camp (A.D.C.) to the Queen; promoted Colonel.
- X. Brigadier-General, commanding troops in Sirhind District of India, 1899-1900; Major, Royal Fusiliers.
- XI. Major-General, commanding the Highland Brigade in South Africa, 1900; Paardeberg, slightly wounded, 16th Feb. 1900; remained at the front, and entered Bloemfontein along with Lord Roberts.

GENERAL HECTOR A. MACDONALD

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY

“But duty spurred us to the foremost place,
And honour beckoned with a smiling face.”

WHEN the gallant Black Watch charged “into the jaws of death” at Magersfontein, the Highland Brigade lost in General Wauchope, its intrepid commander, who fell fighting at the head of his splendid force, a soldier whose brave death touched the heart of the nation, and came as a special sorrow to Scotland. The disasters of the early stages of the great Boer War, the reverses of the “Black Week”—Magersfontein, Stormberg, Colenso—“unfortunate occurrences,” as they were euphemistically styled, cast a gloom over the whole Empire. But the appointment to the supreme

command of the army in South Africa of Lord Roberts of Kandahar, with Lord Kitchener of Khartoum as Chief of the Staff, brought about a feeling of relief and sanguine hopefulness. Not less lively was the satisfaction with which the country learned that General Hector Macdonald, who was fretting his heart out in India, had been summoned to South Africa to take command of the Highland Brigade. It was felt that the Government realised the extreme gravity of the military situation, and it was confidently anticipated that Roberts, Kitchener, and Macdonald, as "brain of our army," would surely, if not speedily, push the war to a successful issue.

Like so many other soldiers who have risen to eminence in their glorious profession, Hector Macdonald owes his success entirely to his own genius and exertions. As to "family influence," he had none. He is a self-made man in the best sense of the phrase. He was not born great; neither was greatness thrust upon him. But he has achieved greatness. No British "ranker" has as yet risen from the lowest to the highest round of the military ladder. But in our reformed army system, dominated though it still is by class influences and prejudices, the attainment of such distinction is, at all events, a reasonable possibility.

Even now, elevation from the ranks is no uncommon announcement; and some of the most

capable officers of our day are men who, by sheer ability, steady conduct, and conspicuous valour alone, have carved their way to commissions. "The days are now long gone by," said Lord Wolseley last year to the lads of the Duke of York's military school, "in which it can be said that only birth can put men forward; worth is now regarded as more than birth. In the Khar-toum campaign, amongst those who led Her Majesty's and the Egyptian troops was one whose name had now become a household word, not only in Scotland, where he was born, but in every part of the Queen's dominions. It would be difficult to find an officer who had led his men better in action than had Brigadier-General Macdonald, who entered the army as a private soldier, determined to rise, and, if possible, reach a high position, and had not only become a colonel, but had the honour of being an aide-de-camp to the Queen."

Lord Beaconsfield used to say that to every man once, at least, in his lifetime there comes an opportunity, if only he be prepared to take advantage of it—an everyday rendering of what has been written for all time :

"There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

Hector Macdonald is one who was prepared to take the flood-tide. He entered the army fired

with ambition, and throughout his whole career he kept steadily in view the goal of his early aim. He knew there is always room at the top; he made the best of himself in whatever position he was placed; he watched his chances, and he seized his opportunity on the road to Kabul. He is still in the prime of life, "fit" as ever, a born soldier as he is also a born gentleman, eager for action, and with a restless, watchful eye for timely daring. His career has been a veritable romance of war; and he may well be trusted, as opportunity offers, to achieve yet greater triumphs.

Macdonald has rendered brilliant service to his Queen and his country. But he has done more: he has ennobled the profession of arms. In Scotland, and especially in his native Highlands, he is the best recruiting agent Her Majesty ever had. He has brushed aside for ever the reproach of enlistment. Time was—and that not so long ago—when the lad that 'listed was looked on as a youth who had joined the ranks of the submerged. The son who was "awa' wi' the sojers" was the "black sheep" of the family, after whom went the prayers of his father; over whom were shed the tears of his mother. By kith and kin he was regarded with pitying sorrow, and for him was augured no good fate. The army, indeed, was regarded as the forlorn hope of the idle, the dissipated, and the man that had been caught in a scrape. Sympathy was the conventional feeling to



MACDONALD FAMILY GROUP: FATHER, MOTHER, AND BROTHER.
HECTOR IS THE YOUNGER BOY TO THE RIGHT.

(From, old Photograph.)

farm in the neighbourhood of Dingwall, and, when it was over, to remain for two or three months in charge of some cattle and ponies.

The time came, however, when he must leave the old home in the Black Isle for good. So he bade good-bye to a life in the country, where, amid the yellow whins and the purple heather, in the open fields and in the great pine woods, had been laid the foundations of his iron constitution. He exchanged the sharp, invigorating mountain air for the somewhat stuffy atmosphere of a draper's shop in Inverness. Hector Macdonald was duly apprenticed in 1868 to Mr. William Mackay, of the Royal Clan Tartan Warehouse in the High Street, close to the Town Buildings and the famous Clachnacuddin Stone.

Town life has a strange fascination for the lad who has been bred in the country, and the capital of the Highlands is a town of infinite charm. Beautifully situated on the short but picturesque Ness, it is the centre of law, education, trade, and tourist transit for a wide region. It has a castle, a cathedral, and a romantic history of its own. Not many miles away is Culloden Moor, while on a bleak tongue of land between the Firths of Moray and Beaully rise the grey ramparts of Fort-George, whose garrisons furnish the streets of the town with ever welcome soldier visitors. Young Macdonald found much to interest him in the new life, and he threw himself

into his new duties with the earnest energy that is part of his being.

A shop-girl of the time records his arrival: "A braw loon, wi' een like lowin' coal. And the great broad shoulders o' 'im! He was mair like a smith than a draper. But, mind ye, there was naething surly about Hector, as we used to ca' him. He was terrible obleegin', aye offerin' to lift up or doon bundles for us lassies." And he has ever been so. That is the quality that has gained for him the hearts of the swarthy Soudanese, and that has made him the darling hero of the Highland Brigade.

During his brief sojourn in the Highland capital, Macdonald joined the Merchants' Company of the volunteer corps which was then known as the Inverness-shire Highland Rifle Volunteers, a battalion which was under the command of Cluny Macpherson of Cluny. The military spirit was then in the air, and the enthusiasm was so great that it was a usual thing for the drill instructors to be engaged for nearly two hours every morning licking the recruits into shape; and, besides squads of men, many officers were regularly on the shooting range as early as six o'clock in the morning. As a recruit, Macdonald was what he had been as a boy at school—diligent, attentive, determined to become thoroughly efficient. His old comrades of the volunteers in Inverness are now proud to remember that they marched by his side, though they little thought then that they were shoulder to shoulder

with a young man whose brilliant qualities, brought out by hard experience in the field, would win for him a name second to none on the roll of honour of the British Army—one whose noted deeds of arms would lend bright lustre to the stateliest annals that tell our nation's stirring story.

In season and out of season, Macdonald was quietly grasping every detail of military duty. Morning and evening too, he was faithfully on the drilling ground in Bell's Park; while, in his leisure hours, and when he paid his regular home visits, he was always reading about war and studying books about drill and tactics.

"Doonricht mad on volunteering," as one who knew him then says, he carried a drill instruction book to the warehouse, and pored over it at every chance opportunity. Like David Livingstone, who conned his Latin whilst attending to his work in the factory at Blantyre, Macdonald often stole a sly glance at his book, and then resumed his work with the absorbed air of one committing something to memory.

As illustrating at once his obliging disposition and his strategical powers, a little story of afternoon tea in the draper's shop may be told. The proprietor was opposed to the practice among the girls, and threatened dismissal on the next offence. One afternoon, while a surreptitious tea-drinking was in progress behind a screen, Hector observed the master coming into the shop. Seizing a yard measure, and

meeting the "governor" half way, he pretended to be chasing a rat. Reinforced in the sham pursuit by his master, he contrived to raise a commotion sufficient to alarm the girls, who thus narrowly escaped detection and its consequences.

During the winter of 1869, he got a few holidays, which he, of course, spent at Rootfield, and he helped to pass the long dark evenings by going with unfailing regularity to the night school. Some of the lads proposed that Hector should teach them drill. Macdonald assented with eager alacrity, and there, in the playground of the old school, on the top of Mulbuie, under a chill, star-lit sky, he assumed his first command. It is current statement in the north that the lads were at the end of one week as perfect in their movements as a company of the line.

But the martial instincts of his race began to glow within him, and his ambition was fanned by his talks with the kilted lads from Fort-George. Chafing somewhat at the lack of promotion in the warehouse, at the end of two years he told his mother of his growing impatience at being kept so long in a subordinate position, and then, one fine morning in the summer of 1870, with a drill-book already in his pocket, he took the Queen's shilling, and, without word of warning to either parents or employer, enlisted in the Gordon Highlanders, which then figured in the Army List as the 92nd.

Macdonald went up to the recruiting sergeant in Inverness, and told him he wanted to enlist. On

being asked his age, he replied that he was seventeen. The sergeant, after looking him up and down, said, "Do you really want to become a soldier?" Macdonald said he did, or else he wouldn't be there; whereupon the sergeant silently filled in the age column, but the quick eye of the young recruit saw that he was being set down as eighteen years of age, so as to appear to be above the legal minimum. But he took care to make no remark to the recruiting sergeant, who then sent him to the Granite City, the depôt of the 92nd (Gordon Highlanders), giving him minute directions with regard to finding his way from Aberdeen railway station to the military barracks at Castle Hill, where he arrived in due course, and began his military training by learning the "goose step."

"One morning in June 1870," said Mr. Mackay to the writer, "when he had been with me for about two years, on my going to business, and on inquiry at the manager, I was told that Hector had not put in an appearance, and that he had enlisted in the army."

From Kabul, in 1880, Colour-Sergeant Macdonald wrote to Mr. Mackay, apologising for the unceremonious way in which, ten years before, he had taken French leave, and generously acknowledging "that any strides I made in my profession, or any more I may make, are due, in a marked measure, to the observance and imitation (so far as could be applied to a soldier's life) of your methodical and

business-like manner of conducting your establishment; for I may add that what you taught—punctuality, order, cleanliness, method, and (here I fell with you, and received a lesson) implicit faith and obedience—are the main attributes of a good soldier.”

General Macdonald himself attributes his success to the encouragement and kindly sympathy and instruction he received from the officers and non-commissioned officers in his battalion when he was a boy, as well as to “sheer hard work and devotion to duty.”

In 1899, the year in which he was overwhelmed with welcomes, addresses, and banquets, he made his way, after the public ceremonies were over, through a dense crowd of the people of his native district, to the National Hotel at Dingwall. As he entered for a quiet half-hour with a few friends, he turned and said to the boys and young men who surged cheering round the doorway, “Now, boys, as there are no reporters here, I will give you a speech all to yourselves. That speech is, Be good boys, join the volunteers or the army, and don’t forget your parents, Queen, and country.” The lads acknowledged the advice and the compliment paid all to themselves by repeated rounds of ringing cheers.

CHAPTER III.

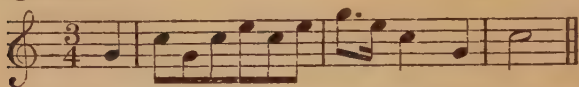
THE GORDON HIGHLANDERS

“Gordon Highlanders, glory to your name,
Your fame’s as great as hands and hearts can make it ;
Never will it die, your famous battle-cry—
‘The Gordon Highlanders will take it!’”

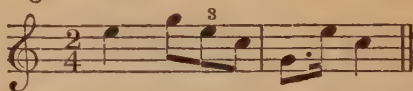
A FEW particulars regarding the regiment—recently styled by Field-Marshal Roberts “that grand regiment, the Gordon Highlanders”—with which Hector Macdonald was so long connected, may be of interest to the general reader.

As is well known, every unit of the service has its own regimental call, which the soldier can interpret under any conditions,—in barracks, in camp, or amid the carnage of battle. When the clarion notes of the bugle appeal directly and exclusively to him and to the other members of his battalion, and then utter the note equivalent to the one word, “Charge!” he is “splendid,” as General Redvers Buller said of his troops in South Africa. No regimental call has been oftener the prelude to victory than that of the Gordon Highlanders. There is of necessity always a considerable

difference between the respective calls for the first and second battalions of a regiment, as will be seen from the contrast between that of the 1st Gordon Highlanders—



and the comparatively simple one of the 2nd Gordon Highlanders—



—a call which, followed by the infantry “Charge!” was responded to so nobly at Elandslaagte.

The Gordons have always been distinguished for their devotion to king and country, and the Dukes of Gordon from their vast domains enjoyed in the olden time an almost kingly power in the Highlands. After 1745, the Government succeeded in enlisting the loyal services of this powerful family, and three successive regiments were raised. But they were all either disbanded or merged in the 92nd, raised in 1794 by the Marquis of Huntly, afterwards Duke of Gordon.

It is a common saying that they were “kissed into being,” for the beautiful Duchess went round the country-side with a drum to secure recruits for her son’s regiment, and when other inducements failed, she offered a kiss from her charming lips, between which the magic shilling was placed.

The record of the "Gay Gordons" has been exceptionally brilliant, and their colours are emblazoned with names that thrill our hearts with patriotic pride.

In the expedition led by Sir Ralph Abercromby against the French in 1799, the 92nd was commended for its "noble and steady conduct." While acting as escort at Egmont-op-Zee, they were fiercely attacked by a column of 6000 French. Undauntedly the Gordons stood the dreadful shock of onset, when bayonet met bayonet, and hundreds fell in the fatal embrace. But "it was the charge of the 92nd which began the action, their steady and persevering gallantry which sustained it, and their unsurpassed valour which completed the victory."

In Egypt, the Gordon Highlanders shared in the glory of the action at Mandora. They shared also, sad to say, in the poisoned breath of pestilence at Walcheren, for out of 1000 men of the Gordon Highlanders who lay in the fever-stricken island only 300 returned effective to England. They bore the brunt of the Peninsular War, and crowned their achievements by a brilliant exploit among the Pyrenees. Whilst threading one of those dangerous passes, where, according to the Spanish proverb, "The father waits not for the son, nor the son for the father," the Highland Brigade was fiercely assailed by a corps of 15,000 French, who drove the 50th Regiment back on the 71st and 92nd, and very nearly hurled them out of the pass.

For ten hours, however, they stood bravely at bay, and at last the Gordon Highlanders, when every cartridge was expended, and in face of succour almost at hand, by a wild charge decided the victory as their own. "So dreadful was the slaughter, especially of the 92nd, that it is said the advancing enemy was actually stopped by the heaped mass of dead and dying. Never did soldiers fight better; seldom so well. The stern valour of the 92nd would have graced Thermopylæ."

At Quatre Bras, Wellington witnessed their splendid valour. Crouching in a ditch by the roadside, they impatiently waited for the furious oncoming of the corps of Marshal Ney. "Now, Cameron," cried the "Iron Duke," "now is your time; you must charge these fellows, and take care of that road." The gallant Gordons emerged from the awful conflict a bleeding but victorious remnant.

At Waterloo, too, at a critical moment, late in the day, the Gordons, supported by the Scots Greys, and both together shouting "Scotland for ever!" rushed impetuously on the enemy, and utterly ruined their column. Sir Denis Pack, who had beheld the magnificent charge and its important result, exclaimed, "You have saved the day, Highlanders!"

The later history of this "grand regiment" is too well known to be repeated. It includes the leadership of Sir Colin Campbell and Sir George

White, the thrilling episodes of the Crimea, the Indian Mutiny, and Afghanistan, the tragic blunder on Majuba Hill, and the heroic achievement on the steeps of Dargai.

The speech addressed to the Gordons at Dargai by Colonel Mathias was brief but immortal: "Men of the Gordon Highlanders, the General has ordered that position to be taken at any cost. The Gordon Highlanders will take it!" And then, while their wounded pipers played "The Cock o' the North," the slogan of the regiment, they swept like a whirlwind across the fire zone, scaled the heights, and—took it.

A word of explanation regarding the two battalions of the Gordons may not inappropriately be given at this point. When the linked battalion system was introduced in 1881, the 92nd, lying in camp at the foot of the Drakenberg Mountains, learned with dismay that by the new arrangement there was to be a regiment of Gordon Highlanders, of which the 75th was to be the First Battalion, and they, the 92nd, the Second Battalion.

At midnight on the 31st of July, the officers and men formed themselves, on the lone African veldt, into a funeral procession, and carried by torchlight the effigy of an old Gordon Highlander to his grave, amid the wailing of the pibroch and the muffled roll of drums. Next day it was exhumed and riddled with bullets.

At the same time the 75th, who were stationed

at Malta, were exchanging the trousers for the kilt, and composing their own epitaph, which ran thus :

“ Here lies the poor old 75th,
But, under God’s protection,
They soon shall rise in kilt and hose—
A glorious resurrection ;
For, by the transformative powers
Of Parliamentary laws,
They go to bed the 75th,
To rise the Ninety-twas.”

The combined regiment has more than sustained the reputation of the “ Gay Gordons ” for plucky dash and cool daring. Wherever danger has to be braved the Gordon Highlanders are “ Ready, aye ready ” ; wherever a position has to be captured, “ The Gordon Highlanders will take it ! ”

CHAPTER IV.

VICTORIA CROSS OR COMMISSION

"Cannon-shot, musket-shot, volley on volley, and yell upon yell—
Fiercely on all the defences our myriad enemy fell."

HECTOR MACDONALD'S enlistment was the deliberate choice of one who knew his true vocation. "The army's not such a bad place as you think, maybe," he said to an old neighbour who remonstrated with him on the step he had taken. "There's plenty chances of promotion to those who do their duty, and I don't intend to be a common soldier all my days." By this doing of his duty, and doing it with intelligence, he cut, with cool decision, each step in his upward pathway.

Sir Redvers Buller, on one occasion, said he had never seen men that hung so well together as the men of Devonshire; but the same thing can be said of Scotsmen in general, and Highland clansmen in particular. Blood is thicker than water everywhere, and it must have been a sore day when the soldier son bade good-bye to his friends on Mulbuie, and the old folks at Rootfield. But he tried to

comfort his sorrowing mother by saying to her in Gaelic, "Just you wait, mother; you will see I will be a good lad yet."

It is pleasant to know that both father and mother lived to learn of the bright promise of his career—he was Captain Macdonald before either of them died—though neither of them lived to see his home triumph after the "red rain of Omdurman." But it must have thrilled the crowd assembled in front of the Mulbuie schoolhouse, like one of the touches that make the world kin, when an old woman called out to him in Gaelic, "Ochone, it's your mother would be a proud woman this day!" For motherhood, too, is the same all the world over.

On his arrival at Aberdeen, the young recruit was met by a non-commissioned officer of the 92nd and conducted to Castle Hill Barracks, where, he tells us, from the commanding officer to the smallest drummer-boy, he was treated exactly as if he had been in his own family. Everything possible was done; he was shown what to do, and how to do it; and General Macdonald has never forgotten how much he owes to his old regiment. He was recognised as a recruit of ability, education, and ambition, and was speedily made a lance-corporal, a distinction he was allowed, contrary to custom, to retain when he joined the regiment in India.

For some years the Gordon Highlanders moved

about, doing route marches under a burning Indian sun, and also garrison duty at various stations in the North-West. It was not till he had been eight or nine years in the regiment that he went on active service and received his "baptism of fire." But all the time Macdonald was mastering the details and the duties of soldiering, and within three years of his enlistment he had risen to be colour-sergeant of his company.

"When I was about to be promoted to the rank of sergeant," said Colonel Macdonald in one of his speeches, "the commanding officer called for me, and said, 'Corporal Macdonald, I have no fault to find with you, and I am going to promote you to the rank of sergeant. Remember this, that a sergeant in the 92nd Highlanders is equal to a Member of Parliament in the United Kingdom.' I therefore felt it to be my duty to strive as much as I could to attain to something at least equal to a Member of Parliament."

Sergeant Macdonald drew up for his company a scheme of "internal economy," the key to which lay in the simple rule that there is a place for everything, and that everything ought to be in its place. His scheme won the approval of his superiors, and its adoption as the rule of the regiment was the means of reducing what had hitherto in barracks been disorderly chaos to methodical arrangement.

In this connection, too, it may here be men-

tioned, as showing the high opinion held by the war authorities of his knowledge of military tactics and his powers of skilful organisation, that when he was on service in Egypt he was brought home to act as a member of the committee entrusted with the revision of the Army Drill Book—a work in which he took a full and much appreciated share.

These “piping times of peace” were varied by two events of imperial importance. The first was in 1875, when the Prince of Wales made his tour through India, and Colonel Roberts, as quarter-master-general, was responsible for the carrying out of the details of that historic progress. It was a time of gaiety, huge assemblages, and stately ceremonial, and the manœuvres arranged in honour of the royal visit at the great military camp of exercise were planned on a gorgeous scale.

The second was the proclamation, at Delhi, on the 1st of January 1871, of the Queen as Kaiser-i-Hind, Empress of India. Again Quarter-Master-General Roberts had to bear his part in the formation of a great camp at the old Mogul capital, and again, too, Colour-Sergeant Macdonald was a witness of one of the most brilliant ceremonials in the whole history of India. The scene which Macdonald witnessed has been thus described, and its effect on the soldier, whose early memories were of the far-off Black Isle type, must be left to the reader’s imagination: “The scene on the

morning of the Proclamation assumed a varied and dazzling character. Every ruling Chief, and every European Governor and Lieutenant-Governor sat under his own banner, surrounded by native nobles and European officials. Every effort was made to mingle the ruling Chiefs with European officials, so as to avoid questions of precedence, which have excited bitterness and heartburnings in India from the remotest antiquity.

"The result was such a display of Oriental costumes and insignia, with British uniforms and banners, as was never witnessed before. Sixty-three ruling Chiefs of India were present in the amphitheatre. They and their retinues, all in gorgeous costumes of satin, velvet, or cloth of gold, were everywhere mixed up with European officials in their uniforms of red and dark blue.

"The guests being all seated, a flourish of trumpets by the heralds exactly at noon announced the arrival of the Viceroy. His Excellency took his seat upon the throne, arrayed in his robes as Grand Master of the Star of India, the National Anthem was played, the guards of honour presented arms, while the whole of the vast assembly rose as one man. The chief herald was then commanded to read the Proclamation. A flourish of trumpets was again sounded, and Her Majesty was proclaimed Empress of India."

But troubles had for some years been brewing in Afghanistan, and when war became inevitable, and

it was necessary to force the Ameer, Shere Ali, to receive a British mission at Kabul, Major-General Roberts was entrusted with the command of the Kuram Field Force. In the spring of 1879, however, Yakoub Khan, the son of Shere Ali, became Ameer, and hastened to sign the Treaty of Gandamak, which practically reduced Afghanistan from its position as an independent "buffer State," and established the suzerainty of the British Crown. But the treaty was "torn into bloody shreds" on the 3rd of September, when the Residency at Kabul was attacked by Afghan soldiers, and in a few hours Sir Louis Cavagnari and every member of his Embassy were murdered. The massacre caused a shudder of horror in British India, and came as a shock to the whole world. To Sir Frederick Roberts again was assigned the work of avenging the foul outrage. The Government telegraphed: "The occupation of Kabul is a necessity, and the advance upon it should be immediate." General Roberts left Simla on the 6th September, and on the 11th the Shutargardan Pass was occupied by the main body of his army without a shot being fired.

The 92nd Highlanders formed part of the small force, under 8000 men, placed at the disposal of General Roberts; and Colour-Sergeant Macdonald, who was with them, found his chance in life on the Shutargardan Pass. General Roberts was pushing on with the cavalry to join the British camp at

Kushi, when he received a warning from the front that an attack was imminent. An ambuscade had been carefully planned by a force of over 2000 Afghans, who were perfectly concealed behind the rocks of the wild and gloomy defile.

General Roberts was engaged in conversation with Dr. Townsend, the chief medical officer, when a volley of bullets came whistling about their ears. The General was unhurt, but Dr. Townsend was severely wounded.

As the attack, however, had not been unexpected, Jemadar Sher Mahomed Khan, with a little band of forty-five Sikhs, had been sent on ahead to reconnoitre, and they were soon engaged in close conflict with another body of Afghans. They were, of course, vastly outnumbered, and that, too, by an enemy of splendid fighting qualities ; nor was the force a large one when augmented by Colour-Sergeant Macdonald and eighteen of the Gordons, who had promptly hurried to their aid.

There was not a moment to be lost, and there was no one at hand to take counsel with. But it is the great attribute of the Highlander that he can adapt himself on all occasions to circumstances, and one leading trait in the character of Hector Macdonald is "to see through a situation, and, when an emergency comes, to act promptly." Here was a situation that might well have paralysed one less cool and collected, but Macdonald saw only one line of duty, one course to adopt.

Without a moment's hesitation he assumed the command of the small force—consisting of only sixty-three rifles all told—and with the rallying cry of “At them, Gordons!” he led the detachment across a stream and up a steep hill in face of the crouching enemy. His methods were cool, soldierly, resolute, and he dislodged the enemy from every “coign of vantage,” until at last they fled in utter rout.

General Roberts came up in time to see for himself the flight of the Afghans before the fierce onset of the gallant Gordons and brave Sikhs. He was greatly impressed by the skill and the valour displayed by both leaders, and in a despatch from Kabul, dated 15th October, Sir Frederick Roberts says: “Meanwhile a warm engagement had for some hours been carried on in the direction of Karatiga, and presently large numbers of the enemy were seen retreating before a small detachment of the 92nd Highlanders and 3rd Sikhs, which had been sent out from Karatiga, and which were, with excellent judgment and boldness, led up a steep spur commanding the defile.

“The energy and skill with which this party was handled reflected the highest credit on Colour-Sergeant Hector Macdonald, 92nd Highlanders, and Jemadar Sher Mahomed, 3rd Sikhs. But for their excellent services on this occasion, it might probably have been impossible to carry out the programme of our march.”

The fact that the conduct of a non-commissioned officer could attract the attention of the distinguished General in charge of the operations is the best proof that his services were of a conspicuously gallant character, while the high honour of mention in despatches—an honour but rarely given to the name of a non-commissioned officer—is no less a proof of the General's generous appreciation.

It was a bit of gallant daring coolly done, and the doing of it placed Macdonald's foot on the first round of the ladder of promotion and military fame. His further "upward steps" have not been "by slow degrees," but with swift precision, for he has never once missed his footing from that day in the Afghan Pass till now. Nor will he, it is fervently hoped, until "he does attain the topmost round."

On the 2nd October a general advance from Kushi took place; and General Roberts, with the full powers of a plenipotentiary, "was a greater man than formerly," and a guard of honour of the 92nd Highlanders, under a European officer, watched over his tent, in addition to the Gurkha guard, a stalwart Gordon Highlander pacing in front, while a sturdy Nepaul Highlander stood sentinel in the rear." In little more than a month after leaving Simla, he made his triumphal entry into Kabul. He had, however, to clear the way at Charasiah, where he inflicted on the Afghans a severe defeat, and captured two of their standards and one hundred and

fifty of their guns, without the loss of a single officer.

The whole of the sombre heights surrounding the village were alive with Afghans, and they were well armed and supported by artillery ; the rocky gorge that lay beyond the scouts reported to be blocked by the enemy. Just before daybreak the 92nd Gordon Highlanders and some other troops were ordered to advance and clear the Pass. Later in the day, when it was discovered that the mountaineers were in overwhelming numbers, Roberts determined that the real attack should be made by an outflanking movement.

This was carried out in two directions by General Baker and Major White—now General Sir George White, the heroic defender of Ladysmith. The task of dislodging such fearless hordes from their grim and almost impregnable fastnesses proved difficult in the extreme. The Afghans held on to their well-nigh inaccessible peaks with fierce tenacity, and swept the slopes up which the British troops advanced with a withering fire.

A series of peaks on the right was regarded as the key of the position, and it was determined at all hazards to clear them. But the enemy were obstinate, and the dangerous character of the ground compelled even the Highlanders to pause in their uphill rush. But reinforcements were at hand, the fighting became hot, and the firing fast and furious. At last, however, the Highlanders and

Ghurkhas made a final dash for the position. The Afghans wavered, and then began to retreat under a galling cross fire.

A general advance was now sounded, and in response the Highlanders, Ghurkhas, and Punjab Infantry gallantly stormed the main position. The Afghans charged downhill on the Ghurkhas, but were repulsed and driven over the crest of a hill with heavy loss. Again the stubborn foe made a stand for half an hour, but again they were dislodged and forced back.

The enemy's advanced posts to the south, directly in front of the gorge, prevented the British guns from getting within range of their stronghold on the heights. Accordingly two companies of the 92nd Highlanders, among whom was Hector Macdonald, and half a battery of Field Artillery, advanced and captured this post of vantage also.

Soon the Afghan force broke and fled down the farther slope of the hill, taking refuge in the mountain villages beyond. "They rapidly abandoned the height, and retired across the river, pursued by the small body of cavalry attached to White's force and a party of the 92nd. Before nightfall of that day of hot engagements and fierce encounters, the wily foes, with whom the gloomy steep had been alive at dawn, were retreating into the gorges in utter rout."

More than one Victoria Cross was won on that

eventful day, and again the valour and intrepidity of Macdonald attracted the attention of General Roberts. "While the fighting was taking place on the heights," he says in his fascinating *Forty-one Years in India*, "in front of Charasiah, the hills on both flanks of my camp were crowded with the enemy, anxiously watching the result; they did not approach within the cavalry patrols, but one party caused so much annoyance to a picket by firing into it that it became necessary to dislodge it—a service which was performed in a very daring manner by a few of the 92nd, under Lieutenant Grant and Colour-Sergeant Hector Macdonald, the same non-commissioned officer who had a few days before so distinguished himself in the Hazardarakht defile."

In the Kabul despatch, of date 20th October 1879, Macdonald was again mentioned, the official language being slightly different, but not less appreciative: "This difficult service was performed in a most gallant manner by a small party of the 92nd, under Lieutenant R. Grant and Colour-Sergeant H. Macdonald, a non-commissioned officer, whose excellent and skilful management of a small detachment, when opposed to immensely superior numbers in the Hazardarakht defile, was mentioned in my despatch of the 16th instant, here again distinguished himself."

Twice in the course of a few days Macdonald, by his skill in initiative, his coolness in peril, and his

personal bravery and absolute fearlessness, so distinguished himself as to attract the special attention of the General, who was himself adding to his laurels by his skill in conducting the campaign, and stamping his name indelibly on the page of history.

At last Kabul was reached, and soon amid the thunders of a royal salute the British "red, white, and blue," streaming from the citadel, told that the city where the brave Cavagnari and his comrades had been cruelly done to death was in the hands of a British force. Yakoub Khan, on the eve of Roberts's triumphal entry, went privately to the tent of the British General and resigned his sovereignty. The resignation was accepted by the Viceroy, and the native sirdars and chiefs were called upon to continue the discharge of their functions, and to regard General Sir Frederick Roberts as deputy-ruler of the country. In view of a winter occupation, the British and Indian forces were removed to the Sherpur Cantonment, a large enclosure at the foot of some low hills, about two miles from the nearest Kabul gate.

Soon again, however, the army was fighting, not only for the retention of Kabul, but for its very existence. For days around the cantonment the fighting went on, with fanatical zeal on the one side, and splendid bravery on the other. Roberts concentrated all his forces—numbering about 5000 men—within the cantonment, where the gallant

little army made a most unflinching stand. It was bad winter weather, but "all night and every night, the ground covered with snow, and the thermometer marking 16 degrees of frost, officers and men are at their posts." Macpherson's brigade advanced upon the enemy's rear, and the Afghans, who had collected in tens of thousands to drive the British out of the country, fled precipitately.

With the disappearance of the enemy came a busy peace time—of clearing the ground all round Sherpur, strengthening defences, building quarters, re-opening communication with the outer world, and maintaining order in the mud-built city of Kabul.

In all these battles and operations Colour-Sergeant Macdonald bore himself with conspicuous bravery and intelligence. He took part in the expedition to Maidan, and in the defence of Sherpur, including the assault and capture of Takht-i-Shah. He was present also at the action at Childukhtan. In point of fact, there was hardly a single "tight place" during those two years of terrible work and "tight places" in Afghanistan, in which the gay and gallant Gordons and their Colour-Sergeant were not in the thick of it.

In recognition of his services, and especially of his gallant conduct at Karatiga, he received his commission at Kabul, and became Lieutenant in his own regiment—a promotion that was highly popular, not only among the rank and file, but among the officers, who recognised in Macdonald a brave

soldier and a true gentleman, who presented him with a sword subscribed for by themselves, and who warmly welcomed him to their mess. Lieutenant Macdonald was carried shoulder high round and round the square at Kabul, amid the joyous music of the pipes, and the cheering plaudits of the whole regiment. He had proved himself possessed of high military instincts, and his after career has shown him to be a "leader of men"—an officer in whom men have the fullest confidence, one who possesses that rare gift—not granted to many commanders—of knowing how to win soldiers' hearts without loosening the hold of necessary discipline.

No permanent occupation of Afghanistan was intended, and the British forces were actually on the eve of returning to India, in accordance with an announcement made by Sir Donald Stewart at a *darbar* in July 1880, when news of the British disaster at Maiwand was flashed *via* Simla to Kabul. A crisis had come, for the garrison at Kandahar was in a precarious position. Kandahar had to be relieved, if the prestige of Britain was to be maintained, not in Afghanistan alone, but even in India. With the consent of Sir Donald Stewart, Sir Frederick Roberts was placed in command of the Kabul-Kandahar Field Force. The army at his disposal consisted of close upon 10,000 men of all ranks, and eighteen guns, and included a splendid Highland brigade of the "Gay Gordons" and the Ross-shire Buffs. "You need have no fears," wired

Roberts to the Adjutant-General of India, "about my division; it can take care of itself, and will reach Kandahar under the month." On the 9th August, 1880, the immortal column, selected, it should be remembered, from "the flower of the British regiments in India, as well as the crack regiments of the native army," began that march of 313 miles, which has given undying fame to the General in command.

The distance was covered in twenty days, and during that time the force was completely isolated—cut off from all communication with India or the outer world, "lost to view, as it were, for nearly a month." It was a march of trying difficulties, memorable as that of the 10,000 from the plains of Cunaxa to the shores of the Euxine.

"From this point," writes Lieutenant Robertson, "we said good-bye to all trees and verdure of every kind. Time seemed to resolve itself into an endless, scorching Indian day. Man and beast struggled on as if driven by an implacable fate—under foot were stone and sand and choking dust; on either hand, a barren mountain wall, neither closing in nor opening out; and above and below, and all around, the dead, mid-day glare, seeming to dry up the marrow in your bones and make your soul faint within you.

"If shadows could have been made saleable, and rolled up in a commodious fashion, they would have fetched any price. Even the patch of shade

under a horse's girth would have been a marketable object. . . .

"Getting into camp, I have a distinct recollection of often staring with wild, bloodshot eyes at myself and finding my features coated with dust past recognition. But the worst torment that pursued us was unquenchable thirst. Lips and throat were parched beyond the power of beakers of water to cool; and Tantalus-like dreams of impossible draughts of ruby-coloured claret cup or amber cider used to haunt my imagination till I thought I must drink something or perish."

On the 1st September, after a sustained and deadly artillery duel outside Kandahar, Roberts utterly defeated the Afghan leader. It was a day of heroic deeds. Frontal attacks and flank movements were made with splendid courage, and Highlanders and Ghurkhas and Sikhs vied with each other in bayonet charges and the rushing of heights. It was towards the close of that memorable day that Major White, of the 92nd Highlanders, when it was found that the Baba Wali Pass must be taken by storm, called upon his men for just one more charge "to finish the business," and, dashing forward, was the first to reach the spot, but closely followed by his men, who hurled the enemy from their entrenchments at the point of the bayonet.

The Gordon Highlanders, gallantly led by White, and with the daring of Macdonald wherever the

place was "tightest" and the firing hottest for example, behaved with conspicuous bravery in these actions. When they entered a village from which they had driven the enemy, a murderous fusilade was opened on them from the houses and cellars. At one place they entered a lane enfiladed by a loopholed wall, from which there poured a rain of bullets. Hector Macdonald and a few of his men, emulating his fearless heroism, with almost certain death staring them in the face, rushed to the wall, and, thrusting their guns through the loopholes, fired into the barricaded enclosure. It was one of the most signally daring deeds of a campaign that was prolific of noble actions.

After a brief rest, Roberts, who had been weakened by fever on the march, rode to the various regiments in succession, beginning with the Gordons, whose list of casualties was the longest, and thanked them for the successes they had achieved for him. But he tells us, "The cheers with which I was greeted by the troops as I rode into Ayoub Khan's camp, and viewed the dead bodies of my gallant soldiers, nearly unmanned me, and it was with a very big lump in my throat that I managed to say a few words of thanks to each corps in turn."

The heroic column, which had been lost for nearly a month, had accomplished a feat at which "all the world wondered." The watchful anxiety and endurance of the long lost force was equalled by the intensity of suspense that was felt at home.

"The days passed," said Archibald Forbes, "and there came no news of Roberts, and of the 10,000 men with whom the wise, daring little chief had cut loose from any base, and struck for his goal through a region of ill-repute and fanaticism and bitter hostility. The pessimists among us held him to be rushing to his ruin. But Roberts marched light; he lived on what the country supplied; he gave the tribesmen no time to concentrate against him; and two days in advance of the time he had set himself he reached Kandahar at the head of a force in full freshness of vigour and burning with zeal for immediate battle."

The Gordon Highlanders had as light a casualty list as any regiment during that trying march. But they were men of years, and splendid physique,—men who, like Hector Macdonald, were as eager for the fray at the finish as at the beginning of the expedition. They were men, not boys; "and depend upon it," said Lord Roberts in London, "the more men and the fewer boys there are in our army, the more efficient will our regiments be." "It will be as impossible," he added, when criticising with some warmth at the Mansion House, in 1881, the Short Service System, "for a British force ever again to perform such a march as those magnificent troops I had the honour and pride to command made from Kabul to Kandahar. No commander would venture to undertake such a service except with soldiers on whose discipline,

spirit, and endurance he could thoroughly rely. I never for a moment had a doubt as to the result; but then I had tried men, not untried and untrained boys, to depend upon."

And again, in the same speech, he says—and our experience in the present South African struggle is teaching a lesson to the same effect—"It must be remembered that fighting is not the only demand made upon our soldiers: it is of course, the main object to be kept in view in any system of training; but all, especially British soldiers, must possess great powers of endurance. Without them they are really worth nothing. What is it which causes a long casualty roll during a campaign? Not the losses in battle, but the steady, never-ceasing disease brought about by insufficient and badly-cooked food, hard work, night duties, and by exposure to extremes of heat and cold. Against such trials only the strongest can bear up; and unless our regiments are composed of men full-grown and of prime stamina, our armies in point of numbers, weak enough for the work they have to do, must dwindle away very rapidly when they take the field."

Thus ended the war in Afghanistan, and it was no longer necessary to concentrate a large army at Kandahar; the gallant Gordons—the heroes of Charasiah, Kabul, and Kandahar—had more than sustained their old reputation for brilliant daring and steady valour; they had added new lustre to their old renown.



HECTOR MACDONALD AS A DRAPER'S APPRENTICE IN INVERNESS.

(From old Photograph.)

The campaign had also added the experience of war to the military training of Hector Macdonald, who now received the commission for which General Roberts had recommended him at Kabul, in addition to a medal, three clasps, and a bronze decoration.

It needs but little imaginative faculty to realise what must have been the feelings of Lieutenant Macdonald when first he saw his name on the list of officers of Her Majesty's army—his pride as he thought of what they would think who had known him at Mulbuie ; what those at Rootfield, whom he loved with all the warmth of a Highlander's impulsive heart, would think ; what she, above all, to whom he had promised to be "a good lad" would think : and then his dreams of the future—the dreams of a squire who had won his spurs, and who saw before him boundless visions of knight-errantry. From that day to this he has been a soldier who has made no mistake, and a knight *sans peur et sans reproche*.

CHAPTER V.

“REMEMBER MAJUBA!”

“In vain, alas! in vain, ye gallant few!
From rank to rank your volleyed thunder flew.”

THE two South African Republics had their rise in the great “trek” or migration of the Boers which began in 1836 and resulted, in 1854, in the establishment of the Orange Free State. The South African Republic, popularly known as the Transvaal, owes its political existence to the fatal Sand River Convention of 1852, when the independence of the Boers, north of the Vaal River, was recognised. After years of virtual anarchy, misgovernment, and unsuccessful wars with the natives, Lord Carnarvon, British Secretary for the Colonies, decided in 1876, in the general interests of South Africa, on annexation of the Transvaal; and as the result of an inquiry made at Pretoria by a special commissioner as to the wishes of the people, the Transvaal was declared, in 1877, to be British territory. The Executive Council, however, declared the annexation to be “an act of violence,” and despatched Paul Kruger

to London to plead for its reversal. A second deputation to England, consisting of Paul Kruger and Pieter Joubert, presented a memorial against annexation, signed by practically the whole rural population. A new Colonial Secretary, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, refused the withdrawal of British supremacy, but promised some form of self-government for the Transvaal as “an integral and separate” state in a South African confederation. But in 1879, Sir Garnet Wolseley reported to the Colonial Office that “the main body of the Dutch population are disaffected to our rule,” and at the close of that year the Boers, assembled in a great mass meeting, declared that they would not be subjects of the Queen.

The year 1880 is a critical date in the history of South Africa. British generals and soldiers, by their overthrow of the Zulu power, had freed the Boers from all need of British help against native neighbours with whom they could not cope. The Afrikaner Bond, too, founded in that year, started a new form of nationalism. An Afrikaner is a white person, mainly of Dutch or Huguenot descent, who regards South Africa as his country and permanent abode, and the Afrikaner Bond was formed to foster the idea of a united South Africa under a republican flag. When the rebellion broke out, General Joubert declared that he was fighting for a universal Dutch Republic from the Cape to the Zambesi.

Mr. Gladstone was then in power with a vast majority at his back, and, while in his famous Midlothian campaigns he had denounced the annexation of the Transvaal in the strongest terms, he declined when he succeeded to power to restore its independence.

After the Zulu War in 1879, some taxation was imposed on the Transvaal to help to meet the expenses. The Boers, who under their own government had hardly known the meaning of taxation, prepared to resist. Stores of ammunition were accumulated in every farmhouse; the best rifles were bought; and a secret combination was formed. Then just before Christmas of 1880, a large party of farmers rose in open revolt to resist the seizure of a farmer's waggon which had been distrained upon for taxes. The burghers took an oath—each solemnly picking up a stone and casting it on to a cairn as he did so—not to lay down their arms until independence had been achieved. They acted with the utmost promptitude, and managed to inflict a succession of galling defeats on small bodies of British troops—at Laing's Nek, Ingogo, and at Majuba Hill, near the place where Natal, the Free State, and the Transvaal meet.

Sir Evelyn Wood was ordered to quell the rising, and Lord Roberts was despatched from India. But nothing further was done. Just when the Boers found themselves face to face

with a British force that would speedily have made an end of them and their pretensions, when Sir Evelyn Wood declared to the home Government that he had them in the “palm of his hand,” a convention, which granted independence to the enemy, was signed on the 21st of March 1881. In the preamble of this convention it is declared that the British Government accorded “complete self-government, subject to the suzerainty of Her Majesty, her heirs and successors.” Whether, because the revised Convention of London in 1884 did not mention suzerainty, the suzerainty was tacitly abolished or purposely dropped, has come to be a matter of party politics. But one thing seems certain—the Boer view of suzerainty has never been the British view.

The peace that was thus patched up gave the Boers pretty well all that they wanted, but it has led, after many years, to a bitterer war on the same battle grounds—a war in which one of the underlying incitements to valour is the sentiment, “Remember Majuba!”

The Gordon Highlanders, flushed with the glory of their achievements in Afghanistan, landed in Natal on their way home just in time to send a couple of their companies to become involved in the final disaster. Sir George Colley, who was Commander-in-Chief and Governor of Natal, about the end of February 1881 marched a small force to the top of Majuba Hill, in the extreme north of Natal—

a movement which Colonel Redvers Buller had anticipated with grave anxiety. "Does Sir George Colley know this African ground as we know it? He may be tempted to go up one of these infernal hills. Very well, he'll climb one of them, but not really get to the top; or, if he gets there, he won't understand that the top's no use unless you know which ridge to guard. And again, I ask, Does he know our African hills?" What Buller feared was exactly what Colley did. At ten o'clock on Saturday, the 26th February, with little more than 600 men, consisting of detachments from three different regiments, the 58th, 60th, and 92nd, and the Naval Brigade, he marched off in silence from the camp—not a soul in the ranks knowing anything of their destination. By and by it began to be known that Majuba was "the end and aim of the night march." Several companies were left near the base to keep up communication with the camp, and the remaining 350 began the perilous ascent of the mountain, which rises 6500 feet above sea-level.

The precipitous sides of the hill were studded with huge boulders, and the men at many points had to scramble up hand-over-hand. "It was a fearful climb," said Colonel Macbean, "and it is a perfect mystery to me how men with pouches full of ammunition, carrying rolled blankets and great-coat, and three days' rations, could ever have got up in daylight, much less on a pitch-dark night."

They reached the summit of the great square-

topped mountain about five o'clock in the morning. The men were duly stationed at different points of the plateau, but the General made the fatal mistake of not allowing rough entrenchments to be thrown up. “All I ask,” he said to the troops as he walked round the posts, “is to hold this hill three days.”

When the dawn revealed to the Boers that the British were in possession of the hill they at once began to inspan with a view of retiring from the Nek, but as soon as they discovered that there were no guns commanding them, they set to work to storm the hill. They advanced, slowly at first, but more rapidly and confidently as they found that every shot from above passed right over their heads. About midday the British were forced back to the last ridge, where the brave but unfortunate General Colley was shot through the head. After this the retreat became a rout, the soldiers rushing down the precipitous sides of the hill, “the Boers knocking them over by the score as they went, till they were out of range.”

Majors Hay and Singleton, with Lieutenants Hector Macdonald, Ian Hamilton, and Ian Macdonald behaved with signal courage and devotion to duty in the whirlwind of destruction that raged around the doomed band. Amid the rain of bullets, for seven hours they sternly held their own, and, revolver in hand, they tried in vain to check the rout that seemed imminent, whilst above the dull groans of the wounded, the sharp rattle of the gun-

shots, and the triumphant shouts of the foe, Major Hay's voice was heard, "Men of the 92nd, don't forget your bayonets!" Again and again the Boers made furious attempts to carry the position at a rush, but each time they were driven back by the blood-dyed bayonets. "The handful of Highlanders," says the *Times*, "were the last to leave the hill, and remained there throwing down stones on the Boers, and receiving them at the point of the bayonet." But the end of the struggle came, and Hector Macdonald found himself a prisoner in the hands of the Boers. He was captured fighting to the last, and the story of his capture is so unique, and the versions of it afloat so varied, that it may best be given in the words of his old friend, Dr. John Robertson, of Aberdeen, who had it from General Macdonald's own lips.

"He was sent with twenty Gordon Highlanders to carry a spur or mound, which he held until the Boers surrounded him on all sides. Out of the twenty men, twelve were killed and eight wounded, he alone having escaped unscathed, although the rocks all round him were literally 'white with bullet marks.' Several of the Boers approached Macdonald with the view of taking him prisoner. One, more venturesome than the rest, sprang forward and clutched Macdonald's sporran. Macdonald could not stand this piece of undue familiarity, and consequently gave the Boer a good kick on the stomach, which sent him sprawling on the hill.

Just as this Boer was regaining his feet, another levelled his rifle at Macdonald's head, but the would-be robber of the sporran put his friend's rifle away with his hand, saying, 'No, no; don't slay him—this man is too good to kill,' and then they took Macdonald prisoner.

“The Duke of Atholl, referring to this incident at the dinner given by the Celtic Society of London to the General on his return from Egypt, said jocularly that the Boers found out that Macdonald came from the country in which they played football.”

“Whosoever blundered,” says the author of *The Story of Majuba Hill*, “the officers and men detailed for the duty of defending Majuba fought as became true British soldiers, and if there was wavering anywhere it was not in the ranks of the Gordon Highlanders, who braved the murderous Boer fire till five-sixths of their number lay killed and wounded on the field. They proved themselves, as at Charasiah and Kandahar, worthy upholders of the prestige which this corps had gained on many a bloody field, and supported the best traditions handed down from the immortal heroes of the long series of victories which culminated at Quatre Bras and Waterloo.”

It is pleasant to be able to add—especially when so many generous tributes are being paid by friend and foe alike to the manly qualities, the honourable disinterestedness, the soldierly bravery, and the

high-toned patriotism of the late Boer general—that Joubert offered a reward for Macdonald's sword, obtained it, and, on his release, presented it with chivalrous courtesy, saying as he handed it to him, "Such a brave man and his sword should not be separated." It was the sword subscribed for by his brother officers at Kabul, and is now to General Macdonald a double reminder of possibly the proudest and certainly the most critical moment in his eventful life.

CHAPTER VI.

SERVICE IN EGYPT

"Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more."

—KING HENRY V.

NORTH Africa, however, and not South Africa, was the scene of Macdonald's most memorable triumphs, and the cradle of his world-wide fame. In the early eighties he was "seconded for service" in Egypt at a time when the Egyptian army, then in its infancy, may be said to have been in a state of demoralised chaos. The old Turco-Egyptian army had been demolished. The Dervishes of the desert had learned, not without good reason, to treat the Egyptian soldiery with absolute contempt. The fierce conquerors of Hicks, Baker, and Gordon lorded it at will over the native soldiers, and a new army had to be created. The duty of doing so was delegated to a small number of young British officers, of whom Macdonald was one. It seemed a hazardous experiment to send out young men from home regiments to positions of immense responsibility. A major in the Egyptian army was, as a rule, only a subaltern in the British

army, while a lieutenant-colonel was either only a captain or a major. But the system worked admirably. "Through the Dongola campaign majors commanded brigades, and captains battalions; at Abu Hamed a subaltern of twenty-eight led his regiment into action. With men either rash or timid such sudden promotion might be dangerous; but the officers of the Egyptian army are at the same time unafraid of danger and equal to it." The task of training ignorant and undisciplined hordes of swarthy savages involved the possession of courage, coolness in the face of danger, resourcefulness in moments of unexpected difficulties, an iron will, and strongly developed powers of organisation and discipline. It took long years of patient training to accomplish the end in view, but the result was a splendid "fighting machine"—an army that swept opposition irresistibly before it, till it planted the British flag on the citadel of Khartoum, and avenged the death of the ill-fated Gordon.

Discipline taught them to do the right thing at the right time, and in the right way. "The Egyptian," it was said to the Sirdar, concerning his training of the *fellahin*, "is a coward to the backbone, and he will never be anything else. Centuries of oppression have broken his spirit completely." "That is a mistake," answered Kitchener. "Give him a chance. The same blood courses through his veins as runs in those of the wild Arab of the desert. Discipline! Discipline! Discipline! is the

one thing needful." The event proved the Sirdar was right, as he usually is.

Lieutenant Macdonald, in 1885, joined the Egyptian Constabulary, and performed the difficult task of forming the Egyptian Gendarmerie, under Sir Valentine Baker. On the death of that officer, he discharged the still more difficult function of helping to form the Egyptian army in 1888. Public attention has been so concentrated upon the particular incident which forms the essence of their admiration of General Macdonald—his last great feat in Egypt—that all he has done has not, perhaps, been adequately realised. He had to forge the instrument with which he was to fight. "He not only used the weapon, but he practically made the weapon that he used; and it was because of the way in which he made the weapon that it did not break in his hands." An officer who had served in the Indian army stopped, on his way from India, for a short time in Egypt. Going to the parade-ground he saw what he thought was a painted palisade. All at once some one shouted out a word of command, and it broke into "columns to the right," as it was called in those days. The officer was under the impression that he had looked at a number of pieces of painted wood! They looked well on parade; but the men were not animated by the true spirit, and they were not trained in such a way as to give them steadiness when the stress came. That same painted palisade went out afterwards

with Hicks Pasha and vanished. It was a severe lesson, but the lesson was well learned by the British officers.

Their best energy was expended from the day when Sir Evelyn Wood went out as Sirdar, to make, out of what was then thought to be a hopeless product, soldiers who could withstand the fierce onsets of the fanatic followers of the Mahdi, and would follow with daring confidence wherever British officers might lead them. When Lieutenant Macdonald took up his command in Egypt, he felt that he had to make, not merely an organised body which could drill upon parade, but a body which could fight against any odds. It was a long process of uphill work in drilling and disciplining the Soudanese to do and dare. But the men of the Black Brigade, whom Macdonald moulded into the force which he led to victory in every action into which he took them, were not drawn from the Soudan alone, nor were they raised by conscription.

A negro, by virtue of race and colour, is liable to be enlisted wherever he may be found, and he is enlisted not for a term of years, but for life. To the easy-going blacks this implies no hardship. It simply means comfort and security in the only profession they would care to select if they were forced to make a choice at all. They are impulsive, and require to be kept firmly in hand, but they make excellent soldiers. Macdonald, though never a martinet, is a strict disciplinarian, and he succeeded

in imbuing these dark-skinned, untutored sons of the desert, not merely with a boundless confidence in him, but with a personal affection for him that is almost pathetic. During the heat of an action, he tells us, they got completely out of hand, and he also completely lost control of his temper. Eventually, after his making a free use of "polite language," they gathered round about him and stroked him down on both legs, and said, "Don't be afraid; we are here, and we shall protect you; have no fear, it is all right," and they gathered round him and dragged him away along with an unfortunate piece of ordnance which they had captured from the enemy.

In spite of the warm affection he inspired, however, it is on record that some of them once mutinied against him. They were making long forced marches over the arid desert under the scorching rays of an African sun when the outbreak was threatened. Macdonald overheard during the march two or three native soldiers discussing him. "Wait," said one, "till the next fight, and this slave-driver of a Colonel will not come out alive. I will shoot him myself." Macdonald instantly called a halt, and sternly ordered the culprits to stand out from the ranks. "Now," he cried, "you are the men who are going to shoot me in the next fight. Why wait so long? Why not do it now? Here I am; shoot me—if you dare!" The conspirators grounded arms in sullen silence. "Why don't you shoot?" he again asked. "Because you

don't seem to care whether you die or not;" and that answer reveals half the secret of Macdonald's hold on the hearts of the childlike but excitable Soudanese. These men followed him devotedly through every action, from Gemaizeh to Omdurman; and in his teaching of drill and duty to them he carried his Highland sentiment so far as to teach them to play the pipes, and his splendid battalion marched through the deserts to the strains of his national music. With this making of an army in Egypt, Macdonald's name will be connected for ever, and will be bracketed with such names as Evelyn Wood, Cromer, Grenfell, Kitchener, and Hunter.

Macdonald, however, had barely had time to enter upon his new duties when he was summoned to join the Nile Expedition of 1885—sent out, too late, alas! to the relief of Chinese Gordon. He went through the toilsome and long-protracted ascent of the Nile, at that season rapidly falling; the trying march across the parched desert, under Sir Herbert Stewart; and the dangerous voyage to Khartoum,—only to find that the tragedy which had been anticipated had been consummated, and that the capital of the Eastern Soudan was in the hands of an overwhelming number of the accursed Dervishes. Then came the weary, disheartened retreat, harassed at every point by the rebels, and the death of gallant Stewart. This fruitless "Campaign of the Cataracts" is a record of hard, unceasing toil. "The whole Expeditionary Force—Guards, Highlanders,

sailors, Hussars, Indian soldiers, Canadian Voyageurs, mules, camels, and Artillery—trooped back forlornly over the desert sands, and behind them the rising tide of barbarism followed swiftly, until the whole vast region of the Soudan was submerged.”

After the British retreat in 1885, Macdonald took up with new energy his duties in the re-organising of the native forces. His experience in the recent expedition had given him a fresh insight into the requirements of the army, and he flung himself with characteristic thoroughness into the work of fashioning the “military machine.” In 1888 he was gazetted to the substantive rank of Captain in his regiment—the Gordon Highlanders—while still retaining his position in the Egyptian Army. In the same year he was ordered to Suakin, where the Dervishes under the ubiquitous Osman Digna were giving trouble. They grew so aggressive, indeed, as to make trenches, shell the town, and place it in a permanent state of blockade. Sir Francis Grenfell, the Sirdar, came down from Cairo with a single British battalion, and some Egyptian reinforcements. A successful engagement was fought outside Suakin, at Gemaizeh, and Osman’s army was routed. It was the first time that “Sambo”—the Soudanese equivalent of Tommy—had been under fire, and his conduct, displaying his two tremendous military virtues, loyalty and fearlessness, showed what a formidable instrument had been added to the army. Their eagerness for battle was their only fault.

The 11th Soudanese Regiment, in their anxiety to reach the enemy, broke their formation, and Macdonald Bey, after exhausting the resources of Arabic, Hindustani, and English, burst forth upon them in emphatic Ross-shire Gaelic. Then he "rode up and down in front of their rifles, and at last got them steady under a heavy fire from men who would far rather have killed themselves than him." Macdonald was rewarded with the Egyptian medal and clasp, the Khedive's star, and the 3rd class of the Medjidie, while his personal bravery on the battlefield called for notice in the despatches. Sir Francis Grenfell said, "I concur in his recommendations of . . . and Captain H. A. Macdonald, Gordon Highlanders, who have ably commanded battalions that have garrisoned Suakin during a harassing siege." On the 25th February, 1890, it was announced by the War Office that the Queen had been graciously pleased to give orders for the appointment to the Companionship of the Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O.) of Captain Hector A. Macdonald for the conspicuous tact and bravery shown by him and his Soudanese in the action at Toski—the brilliant and decisive victory that freed Egypt from further fear of invasion.

The disturbances continued actively until 1891 when Colonel Holled Smith defeated the Dervishes and occupied Osman Digna's base in the Tokar delta. The Dervishes now began to realise that their old tactics were futile, and that they could no

longer strike terror and panic into the hearts of their foes. It was a new army of well-disciplined troops that shattered them to pieces. After this, although the country round Suakin was freely raided by the Dervishes, the port of Suakin, which is the great Red Sea market for the interior of the Egyptian Soudan, was left in peace. Macdonald added to his honours a clasp to the Khedive's star, and the order of the 3rd class Osmanieh. But, best of all, he was granted a step in substantive rank as major in the Royal Fusiliers, a London regiment which is still proud to own him, although he has never led it, and is not likely now ever to lead it, into battle. It must have been with a pang of regret that Major Macdonald severed his connection with the regiment of his boyhood's fancy, but, as recent events have proved, his severance from his beloved Highlanders has been only temporary.

The next few years were a period of preparation under Sir Herbert Kitchener, the new Sirdar, for the final advance on Khartoum. These "were the dreary years of the Egyptian army. The service was hard and continual. Though the operations were petty, an untiring vigilance was imperative. The public eye was averted. A pitiless economy was everywhere enforced. The British officer was deprived of his leave and the Egyptian private of his rations, that a few pounds might be saved to the Egyptian Treasury. The clothing of the

battalions wore thin and threadbare, and sometimes their boots were so bad that the soldiers' feet bled from the cutting edges of the rocks, and the convoy escorts left their trail behind them. But the preparation was ever going forward. The army improved in efficiency, and the constant warfare began to produce, even among the *fellahin* infantry, experienced soldiers. The officers, sweltering at weary Wady Halfa and Suakin, looked at the gathering resources of Egypt and out into the deserts of the declining Dervish empire, and knew that some day their time would come. The sword of reconquest which Evelyn Wood had forged, and Grenfell had tested, was gradually sharpened; and when the process was almost complete, the man who was to wield it presented himself."

Major Macdonald, in command of the famous 9th (Soudanese) Battalion—called, by courtesy and from battle association, the 3rd Battalion of Cameron Highlanders—moved from garrison to garrison, Wady Halfa, Korosko, Assouan, but "busy always, always hopeful, always expectant of the day that was to prove the value of his steady and unstinting labours."

CHAPTER VII.

THE RIVER WAR

“From the crash of the cannon’s roar,
And the flash of ringing steel ;
Toilsome march and swift bivouac,
Broken by trumpet’s peal ;
From the desert of Afric’s sands,
Long renowned in battle story,
Omdurman’s undaunted field,
Where thy name is linked to glory ;—
Ceud’s ceud mîle fàirte !”

THE curtain was now about to rise upon the final act in the drama of modern Egyptian warfare. The Soudan, “the land of the Dervishes,” the home of fanaticism, which we had watered “with more of our blood than it will ever yield to pay for,” was to be conquered at last. The long struggle was to be crowned by the smashing of the Mahdi, in a victory so complete that we may well “look back on those fourteen indomitable years as one of the highest achievements of the race.”

In the summer of 1896, the Dongola expeditionary force began its southward march, and Major Macdonald was appointed to the command of the Third Infantry Brigade. The late G. W.

Steevens described him then as "one of the soundest soldiers in the Egyptian or British armies. He had seen more, and more varied, service than any man in the force. . . . In the campaigns of '96 and '97, he was entrusted with a brigade; he showed a rare gift for the handling of troops, and wherever the fighting was hardest there was his brigade to be found. . . . So sturdily built that you might imagine him to be armour-plated under his clothes. He walks and rides with a resolute solidity bespeaking more strength than agility. He has been known to have fever, but never to be unfit for duty."

At Akasha, where an advanced base was formed, Macdonald assumed command of the whole force. The Dervishes remained inactive in their position at Firket. Akasha was a difficult place to defend, but by dint of hard work an efficient outpost line was formed, and reinforcements soon arrived. On the 1st of May, the Sirdar joined the expedition, and preparations were made for an attack on the Dervishes. The battle that followed was officially classed as a general action; special despatches were written, and a special clasp was struck.

Macdonald's brigade played, as usual, a brilliant part in the affair. His Soudanese stormed the hills, and excitedly rushed towards the breastworks of the enemy. As they neared the ridge, Dervish horsemen dashed out from their hiding among the rocks and charged. They were immediately shot

down by a fierce volley. The blacks, with wild yells, carried the position at the point of the bayonet. The Dervishes abandoned first one ridge and then another, and were finally pursued down hill and up, and down again, until they became a mass of struggling fugitives, running towards the river. By evening, the entire Dervish camp was in the hands of the Egyptian army. Firket was the dawn of the day Macdonald had been waiting for, and it was followed by the occupation of Dongola and Merawi, the storming of Abu Hamed, and the descent upon Berber. Thus far in the great river war he was mentioned twice in despatches, received two medals and three clasps, and was promoted to the brevet rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. By the occupation of Dongola, which terminated the campaign for the time being, the whole of the province, believed to be the most fertile in the Soudan, was restored to Egypt. After ten years of defensive war, the Dervishes had been attacked, and the Soudan re-entered.

“Fighting the Dervish,” says Mr. Bennet Burleigh, “was primarily a matter of transport. The Khalifa was conquered on the railway.” Here is General Macdonald’s account of the part played by his black followers in the gigantic work of constructing the desert railway. “Late and early, morning and night, they toiled. They were labourers, they were engineers, they were shipwrights, they were builders of their own barracks, and they even

made their own clothes; and I am sure Lord Kitchener would be the first to recognise that for him they worked day and night. They made a railway across a waterless desert. They dug into the bowels of the earth, and from thence they brought forth water; otherwise that railway could not have been laid. They dragged up several cataracts enormous gunboats and vessels carrying food for the army; and I say it fearlessly, there is no doubt that the British nation owes a deep debt of gratitude to the Egyptian army for the enormous labour they expended in connection with that campaign."

The Sirdar at Berber gave the command of the whole native infantry to Major Macdonald, well knowing that it could not be in better hands. On the 14th March, 1898, the brigade cleared out of Berber to watch the Dervishes, who were moving northward and threatening by a *détour* into the desert to get behind the Egyptians and cut the railway—that new and mysterious source of strength. "I saw the start of the 9th, the first black battalion raised," writes Mr. G. W. Steevens; "and fine as are many of our British regiments, these made them look very small. The Soudanese battalions are enlisted for life. I have seen a man who was with Maximilian in Mexico, in the Russo-Turkish War, across Africa with Stanley, and in all the later Egyptian campaigns, and who marches with his regiment yet. However

old the black may be, he has the curious faculty of always looking about eighteen; only when you thrust your eyes right in his face do you notice that he is a wrinkled great-grandfather of eighty. But always he stands as straight as a lance.

“Not that the 9th average that age, I take it, or if they do, it does not matter. Their height must average easily over six feet. They are willowy in figure, and their legs run to spindle-shanks, almost ridiculously; yet as they formed up on parade, they moved not only with the scope that comes from length of limb, but the snap of self-controlled strength as well.

“They love their soldiering, do the blacks, and take it very seriously. When they stood at attention they might have been rows of black marble statues, all alike as in the ancient temples, filling up the little square of crumbling mud walls with a hole in its corner, so typical of the Berber landscape. Then the English Colonel snapped out something in Turkish;—in an instant the lines of each company had become fours; all turned with a click; the band crashed out a march—barbaric, Ethiopian, darky American, or English music-hall, it is all the same to the blacks—and out swung the regiment. They moved off by companies through a narrow alley, and there lay four new-killed goats, the sand lapping their blood. Every officer rode, every man stepped over the luck-token; they would never go out to fight without it. Then out

into the main street, every man stepping like a conqueror, the band blaring loud at their head; with each company a little flag—blue, black, white, amber, green, or vermillion—on a spear, and half-way down the column the colours the Camerons gave them when they shared the glory of Ginnis. Boys trailed behind them, and their women, running to keep up, shot after them the thin screams that kindle Soudanese to victory. A black has been known to kill himself because his wife called him a coward. To me the sight of that magnificent regiment was a revelation. One has got accustomed to associate a black skin with something either slavish or comical. From their faces these men might have been loafing darkies in South Carolina or minstrels in St. James's Hall. But in the smartness of every movement, in the pride of every private's bearing, what a wonderful difference! This was quite a new kind of black—every man a warrior from his youth up. 'Lu-u-u, lu-u-u,' piped the women; the men held up their heads and made no sound, but you could see the answer to that appeal quivering all down the column. For 'We,' they say, 'are like the English; we are not afraid.'"

The battle of Atbara was the first big fight on the road to Khartoum. After a night march which was but a "slow and interrupted crawl," the British and Egyptian army took up a position along a low ridge in the form of a great bow,—the British

brigade on the left, Macdonald in the centre, and Maxwell on the right. Half a mile away at the foot of the ridge was the Dervish *zeriba*. Suddenly the stillness of the morning hour was broken by the bang of a gun, and at a quarter-past six o'clock the bombardment had begun. Within the space of two hours Mahmud and his army were practically annihilated. At 8.25 the "Cease fire" sounded, and the battle ended.

The Soudanese brigade was the first to enter the *zeriba*, though the Camerons dispute the honour with them. They had been trained to attack in Highland style, first firing a volley at close range and then charging with fixed bayonets. When only a hundred yards from the defences, both brigades rushed forward with a wild and furious shout. "All along the front the brigades had struck the *zeriba*, had burst through it, and had fallen upon the stockades and entrenchments. . . . The 11th Soudanese encountered the most severe resistance after the defences were penetrated. As their three deployed companies pressed on through the enclosure, they were confronted by a small inner *zeriba*, stubbornly defended by Emir Mahmud's bodyguard. These devoted men poured a sudden volley into the centre company at close range, and so deadly was the effect that nearly all the company were shot, falling to the ground still in their ranks, so that a British officer passing at a little distance was provoked to inquire 'what they were doing

lying down.' Notwithstanding this severe check, the regiment, gallantly led by their beloved Colonel, and supported by the 10th Soudanese, rushed this last defence and slew its last defenders."

The battle of Atbara definitely placed the blacks in the ranks of the very best fighting troops in the world. When it was over, both officers and men—"every one of whom would beamingly charge the bottomless pit after his Bey"—were joyous and proud of each other, there was much grinning and handshaking, and the universal feeling was, "Very good fight; very good fight!" In the Atbara despatches from the Sirdar, dated 10th April, 1898, we read: "I fully confirm General Hunter's remarks on the valuable services of the three Brigadiers commanding the infantry brigades, viz., Lieut.-Col. Maxwell, Brevet Lieut.-Col. Lewis, and Brevet Lieut.-Col. Macdonald. They handled their troops with precision, leading them gallantly in action, and they have shown themselves fully qualified as commanders of troops in the field."

Then followed the grand advance on Khartoum, which was crowned by the glorious victory at Omdurman, where Mahdism was shattered for ever. It is foreign to the purpose of this biographical sketch either to describe the events that led up to the occupation of Khartoum, or to attempt a description of the signal defeat inflicted on the Khalifa at Omdurman. These are matters that belong to history, and they are of such recent occurrence,

moreover, that they must still be fresh in the mind of the public.

Only one actor in the skilfully planned and faultlessly executed campaign falls to be dealt with here—the man who, by his cool calculating tactics, his masterly movement of his men, his undaunted self-possession, the unshaken confidence of the Soudanese soldiers in his skill and prowess, stemmed the onrushing tide of battle at a highly critical moment, and whose claims to being the hero of Omdurman would not be seriously disputed by the Sirdar himself. It seems advisable, too, with regard to a point about which so much has been written, to give only first-hand information. And surely no one is more qualified to tell what happened than General Macdonald himself.

Speaking at Invergordon in May, 1899, he said, with a modesty, of course, that is all his own, that having served in one of the regiments engaged in the battle of Omdurman, he might be able to give a short account of the battle. He happened to be there in a very humble capacity, and perhaps he knew a little of what occurred in his own immediate vicinity. What took place outside his own division he only knew from others. During the night they all slept in their accoutrements, for fear the enemy might drop in upon them. They did not attack, however. In the early morning they were seen, and not only seen, for the tramp of their marching was heard in the camp. An immense

mass of Dervishes was marching down upon them.

Their own forces were very small in comparison, but they were well disciplined, while the Dervishes were a fanatical horde. They came out of a place encompassed by a wall at least six hundred yards wide, two miles long, between twenty-five and fifty feet high, and six feet thick. The Khalifa's army had been encamped within that structure. He brought them out in an enormously large sandy field, void of bush, or any such thing. But they put an end to his march for that morning. The Khalifa's march was stopped simply by their superior armaments—they had weapons to reach the Khalifa, while his weapons could not reach them. He advanced against the left of the semicircle, that is, the brigades under the command of Cathcart, Middleton, and Walker. Among these brigades were two Highland regiments, the Seaforths and the Camerons, and also his own regiment. There were two English regiments, including Her Majesty's Guards, besides the cavalry, artillery, and maxim guns, and a regiment of camel corps. They were sufficient to stop his progress, and what remained of the Dervishes hid themselves in the desert. This led their commander to make a rapid march into the entrenchments of the enemy, and he was right in doing so. Had the Dervishes remained in their fortifications, it would possibly have taken days, weeks, or even months to accomplish what was done

that morning, and instead of counting their killed and wounded in tens, they would doubtless have counted them in thousands. It was not for him to enter further into this phase of the action.

No; but the story has been graphically told by military experts, who are at the same time brilliant writers, and their descriptions could not be bettered. The late Mr. G. W. Steevens puts it thus: "But the cockpit of the fight was Macdonald's. The British might avenge his brigade; it was his to keep it and to kill off the attack. To meet it he turned his front through a complete half-circle, facing successively south, west, and north. Every tactician in the army was delirious in his praise; the ignorant correspondent was content to watch the man and his blacks.

" 'Cool as on parade,' is an old phrase; Macdonald Bey was very much cooler. Beneath the strong, square-hewn face, you could tell that the brain was working as if packed in ice. He sat solid on his horse, and bent his black brows towards the green flag and the Remingtons. Then he turned to a galloper with an order, and cantered easily up to a battalion commander. Magically the rifles hushed, the stinging powder smoke wisped away, and the companies were rapidly threading back and forward, round and round, in and out, as if it were a figure in a dance. In two minutes the brigade was together again in a new place. The field in front was hastening towards us in a whitey-brown cloud

of Dervishes. An order! Macdonald's jaws gripped and hardened as the flame spurted out again, and the whitey-brown cloud quivered and stood still. He saw everything; knew what to do; knew how to do it: did it. At the 'Fire' he was ever brooding watchfully behind his firing-line; at the 'Cease fire' he was instantly in front of it: all saw him, and knew that they were being nursed to triumph."

Mr. Bennet Burleigh tells the story thus: "With a tact, coolness, and hardihood I have never seen equalled, Colonel Macdonald manoeuvred and fought his men. They responded to his call with confidence and alacrity begotten of long acquaintance and implicit faith in their leader. He had led several of the battalions through a score of fierce fights and skirmishes, always emerging and covering himself and his men with glory, honour, and victory. All of them knew him: they were proud of him. Unmistakably the Khalifa and his son, the Sheikh El Din, thought their fortunate hour had come—that, in detail, they would destroy, first Macdonald, then one by one the other Khedivial brigades.

"What might have happened had both father and son arrived at the same time and distance on both sides of Macdonald, as was evidently intended, I will not venture to discuss. Happily, the onslaughts did not quite synchronise, and Macdonald was able to devote virtually his whole firing strength to the overthrow of the Khalifa's division, before rapidly turning about first one and then another of his



MAJOR-GENERAL MACDONALD.

battalions to deal with the Sheikh El Din's unbroken column. . . . Steady as a gladiator, with what to some of us looked like inevitable disaster staring him in the face, Macdonald fought his brigade for all it was worth. He moved quickly on the best available ground, formed up, wheeled about, and stood to die or win. He was practically unaided. . . . Had the brilliant and splendid deed of arms wrought by Macdonald been done under the eyes of the sovereign, or in some other armies, he would have been created a general on the spot. If the public are in search of the hero of Omdurman, there he is, ready made—one who committed no blunder to be redeemed by courageous conduct afterwards."

Mr. Rene Bull, another war-correspondent spectator, has a similar tale to tell: "The Dervishes came on in huge masses, waving their great flags and banners; Macdonald's brigade alone had to resist them. The enemy's cavalry were galloping for all they were worth into Macdonald's 'thin red line.' The sight was fascinating, and it was impossible to un rivet one's eyes from the scene. One sheet of flame and lead poured from Macdonald's line. . . . The Sirdar stood on the hill with his glasses to his eyes. One could see the anxiety on his face. All this was bad enough, but there was still worse in store. A huge body of Dervishes, which had been hidden behind the hills towards Kerrari, were charging down on Macdonald's

right, and would have cut off his retreat to the river. All hope seemed to be lost. Reinforcements were tearing up, but would never arrive in time. Quicker than it takes to tell you, Macdonald broke his line in half, and formed a right-angle; the cannons and maxims were run back by hand, and the new onslaught was met by a deadly fire."

The *St. James's Gazette* of 4th October, 1898, in commenting on the great victory which recovered the Soudan for Egypt, wiped out a stain from the English escutcheon, and smashed the Mahdi for ever, says: "It is time to say very plainly, that it is now quite certain from these fuller accounts that there was a moment in the battle of Omdurman when our great victory was very nearly turned into a terrible disaster, and that there is one man who stands out, above Sirdar and all, as having been responsible for averting such an awful conclusion to what seemed at first a fairly straightforward engagement. That man was Colonel Macdonald, who commanded the Soudanese Brigade, and his great exploit in beating off the second and unexpected onslaught of the Dervishes, after to all intents and purposes—and even, we believe, in the Sirdar's opinion—the battle had already been fought and won, and the road to Omdurman seemed clear, deserves a much more emphatic recognition than it has yet obtained from the British press and public. . . . So far as the fighting on that great day went, the honours lie with Macdonald. All credit to the

Sirdar, the organiser of victory. But on the battlefield itself even he must now be counted second to the gallant Scotsman who actually saved the day."

Macdonald, in recognition of his services, obtained from the Khedive the title of Pasha. He received two clasps, was promoted Colonel, was voted the thanks of the Imperial Parliament, and was made an A.D.C. to Her Majesty the Queen.

CHAPTER VIII.

WELCOME HOME

" Maidens ! softly touch the clarsach,
Sing your sweetest songs to-day ;
Pipers ! rouse the magic chanter,
Loud Clan Colla's Gathering play ;
Clansmen ! pledge with Highland honours,
Highland cheer, our Hero's name,
Till the Highland hills re-echo
Back again our Hector's fame.
Ceud's ceud m'le fàilte !"
(A thousand thousand welcomes !)

LORD KITCHENER OF KHARTOUM was the "organiser of victory" in the Soudan ; but it was the "Black Brigade," in the capable hands of the gallant Macdonald, that saved the day at Omdurman, and the gratitude of the nation was officially expressed by his appointment as Aide-de-camp to the Queen, and his promotion to the substantive rank of Colonel in the British Army.

Colonel Macdonald returned to England in the spring of 1899, at the age of forty-six, a self-made soldier, who had been twelve times mentioned in despatches, and had been the recipient of ten decorations, with a dozen clasps and a record of

brilliant action in a score of minor affrays. Little wonder, therefore, that his welcome home was enthusiastic and unstinted. The general public felt that he was one of themselves, one who had risen from the ranks by the sheer force of his genius, and who had won his promotion neither by influence nor by seniority. He was entertained at banquets of spectacular splendour, presented with addresses whose honeyed words of praise would have robbed the bees of Hybla, and girt with costly swords of honour; whilst his visit to his native land was a triumphal progress, in which cities, towns, and hamlets rivalled each other in according him the reception due to a hero of the highest renown.

But before recounting these awards of a grateful country, it may not be deemed out of place here to present the man, Hector Macdonald, as sketched by Mr. James Milne, a compatriot and a distinguished journalist.

“He is broad of chest, but if ever he puts on all his medals and orders there will not be much room to spare. The whole figure is shapely, sinewy—the kind of framework that the mind governing it can take anywhere and do anything with. It has grace, distinction, all those attributes which you mean when you speak of style. In actual stature he is not, perhaps, more than five feet ten inches. Typically Highland also is his face, alike in regular contour and in its expression. You would say broadly that it is something between square and

oval, with rather prominent cheek-bones, and that under its action or sentiment, as the case might be, Colonel Macdonald's face, it strikes you, could in a tense moment, when the march was on, or the battle going, become a perfectly cut square, a challenge to every side, hard, almost relentless. The cheek-bones are prominent at the base as well as at the top; they suggest the strenuous, determined, indomitable man. You think of the tramp of armed men who have no sort of idea of turning back. Even a scowl might gather upon the brow, causing the eyes under it to grow cold, as an angry shower scurries down the side of a Highland hill to ruffle the lake at the foot. When the weather has cleared again, it holds naught but sunshine and laughter."

Newspapers and magazines, both at home and abroad, were filled for weeks after the triumph at Khartoum with articles extolling the great achievements of Kitchener and Macdonald in the Soudan. Macdonald himself, during the few months he was able to spend in his native land, was fêted everywhere he went, welcomed and honoured by men of all classes. The Prince of Wales declared he was proud to meet him; speakers in every quarter literally exhausted the language of laudation; and the firm grip of the hand that was given him by earl and crofter was evidence of the thrill of pride in the veins of his countrymen.

The banquet given in his honour at the Hotel

Cecil in London, by the Highlanders and Scotsmen of the Metropolis, early in May, showed at its best the *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum*, and was but the prelude of a long series of banquetings and receptions held in his honour. Wherever he went he had to listen to praises and a rehearsal of his deeds of valour. But with that genuine modesty which constitutes part of the charm of his personality, he always depreciated the value of his own achievements, and spoke of the ability and the skill of his chiefs and those who were associated with him. The burden of his speeches was, that in honouring him the country was simply doing honour to the army, and to those brave men whose splendid support and steady valour had made his successes possible.

His unaffected humility and his quiet demeanour when honours were being showered upon him, are distinguishing features of his nature. "Colonel Macdonald," as the *Northern Weekly* put it, "literally the hero of a hundred fights, is but a typical Highlander, Highland by birth, name, and upbringing, who has risen by the sheer force of his inborn grit from the ranks of the Highland peasantry to the front rank as a soldier of his country. In this he has but followed in the footsteps of many a 'son of the soil' in these Highlands and islands, who have shed lustre on the page of Britain's military glory; but somehow or other the popular imagination has so fixed itself upon 'the hero of Omdurman' that

few, if any, British soldiers at the present moment are so well known and idolised.

“Colonel Macdonald, however, deserves all the honours that are now being heaped upon him, and his fellow-countrymen in the north have been noting with prideful satisfaction the spirit of quiet humility with which he has been comporting himself during the past few days, in which the best of his country’s nobility and gentry have been vying with each other in singing his praises. It is ever so with the true Highlander—‘Bold as an eagle and firm as a rock, but meek as a child.’ These words are no mere figures of speech in the case of Colonel Hector Archibald Macdonald, as his life-history as a soldier testifies.”

The London reception was thoroughly national. The Duke of Atholl, wearing the uniform of a Colonel of the Volunteer Battalion of the 92nd Highlanders, presided, and among the guests were many officers of distinction, and many civilians who wore the picturesque Highland garb in many coloured tartans. “Fine-sounding names!” was the remark made to Mr. J. M. Barrie, the novelist, as one distinguished lord or handsome Highlander after another advanced to congratulate Macdonald. “Yes,” said Mr. Barrie, “there’s the sound of the bagpipes about them.”

Many of the guests were able to tell Colonel Macdonald of their early recollections of him, as a brother volunteer in Inverness, and for these he

had a firmer clasp of the hand, while his rugged, sun-tanned countenance beamed with a sunny smile.

Sir Francis Grenfell, under whom as Sirdar he served in Egypt, telegraphed from Malta: "We are drinking Macdonald's health here in Malta"; and from General Hunter there came a charming little message, which voiced with touching eloquence the affection with which his fellow-officers regard him: "My best love to comrade Macdonald."

The Chairman traced the career of Macdonald step by step upwards from the day he enlisted, and recounted the triumphs he had achieved. "Wherever hard knocks were going in the Soudan," he said, "'Fighting Mac' was invariably to be found. If Colonel Macdonald had not had his brigade well in hand, and handled it with masterly skill, 'Omdurman might not have been the success that it was.'"

When the Duke buckled the sword of honour to Macdonald's side, he expressed his confidence that in the Colonel's hands it would be used according to the old Spanish maxim: "Draw me not without reason; sheathe me not without honour."

The sword, which was presented "in recognition of his distinguished services in the Soudan and elsewhere by Highlanders and other friends in London," is considered a masterpiece of craft-work. The handle and guard of the sword, and the bands of the scabbard, are solid gold, modelled mainly on Celtic or runic lines. On one side of the hilt

is the figure of a Highland soldier, and on the other that of a Soudanese. In the centre of the guard, on one side, is the letter "M," set in diamonds and rubies, and on the other the Scottish and the Egyptian flags enamelled in colours. Each point of the guard takes the form of a thistle, in the flower of which is a finely-cut cairngorm. The scabbard is decorated in an equally elaborate manner, with appropriate crests, mottoes, arms, and orders. The blade is steel of the finest temper, with runic ornamentation, spaces being filled in with the Macdonald arms, the crescent and star, the sphinx, and the inscription.

In returning his thanks for the gift, Colonel Macdonald made a speech, the first words of which—"Brother Highlanders!"—went straight to the hearts of all present.

"I am deeply conscious," he said, "of the distinguished honour I have received to-night at your hands, for what is owing to no merit of my own, but is entirely due to the support and the loyal service of the British officers, my superiors, and those who served under me. I hope the gratitude which I feel for your cordiality will not be measured by the words in which I return thanks. I lay no claim to distinction, or to what in his generosity the Chairman has been pleased to say about me. I presume it is owing entirely to having commanded a brigade of the Egyptian army that I am here.

"The Egyptian army was a tender plant that wanted great care and delicate nursing. Its first Sirdar, Sir Evelyn Wood, selected his nurses with the greatest care and discrimination. The army was composed of Turks, Soudanese, and Egyptians, and he had to weld them into a harmonious whole for a certain purpose, and that was—to fight.

"You have come here to testify to the manner in which that was carried out. Sir Evelyn was wise enough—although originally a naval officer—not to place the Egyptian army on a naval basis, but to select what we know as the finest instrument in the world for organisation and discipline—the regimental system. It has been modified since then. It began with four companies in a battalion, and we have ended with eight. That shows how elastic it is.

"The British officers were selected with the greatest care to train the men to obedience and discipline. The barrack-room was their playground, and the musketry range was the same. I am not going to detain you with a long speech, but there is one thing I would like to tell you here, because I think it has been very much misrepresented. It is a portion of the action at Omdurman.

"The wisdom and foresight of the Sirdar were shown by his placing three battalions of artillery at my command when he moved on Omdurman,

with the view of getting inside the fortifications before the Dervish army arrived there.

"The next thing I wish to tell you is, that the brigade which was entrusted to me was not assailed by the Dervish army, but I brought up the three battalions placed under my command, and with them I assailed the Dervishes. The fire of these batteries under British officers brought that large host down upon the infantry, which in the meantime were deployed into line with their rifles at rest, ready to fire at the Dervishes when they came within effective range.

"It was thus that the first attack was destroyed, which enabled the brigade to change front. But my object in dwelling upon this is, that I don't think sufficient credit is given to the artillery of the army, and I wish to impress upon you that in all actions it is the handling and due appreciation of all the arms of the service that tends to victory."

Glasgow, the second city of the Empire, bestowed its honours and applause as lavishly on Colonel Macdonald as London had done. But in the midst of it all he remained modest and manly, resolute to put history right, even though by doing so his own glory was dimmed, and never forgetting to speak a good word for those who had served under him.

Colonel Macdonald was entertained to luncheon by the Corporation of Glasgow, and on the same

evening a smoking concert was held in his honour, under the auspices of the Gordon Highlanders' Association. A large number of the Colonel's old comrades of the 92nd—men who had shared the perils and the glory of the Afghan campaign—were present, and he told them, as illustrating his feeling towards the good name of the old regiment, that he had taken their system with him into the Egyptian army, and had carried it through, practically without alteration, in the battalion which he had commanded for seven years, and also in the brigade which he commanded for three years.

But the primary purpose of Colonel Macdonald's visit to Glasgow was to receive a sword of honour from the members of the Clan Macdonald Society. The Right Hon. J. H. A. Macdonald — Lord Kingsburgh—whom the Colonel had referred to on the previous day as the author of a book, called *Drill without Stays*, and who was generally known as "the heaven-born soldier," occupied the chair. In a speech worthy of a great meeting of clansmen and kinsmen, he lauded the loyalty of the Macdonalds and the "tremendous firmness of character" which alone could have enabled Colonel Macdonald to crown his unique career by an achievement so brilliant as that of Omdurman.

The address presented to him in Glasgow on behalf of the "Macdonalds in every part of the world" may be taken as a type of those with which he was welcomed elsewhere:—

“To Colonel H. A. MACDONALD, C.B., D.S.O., A.D.C.
to the Queen, and Brigadier-General in the
Egyptian Army.

“WE, the Members of the Macdonald Society, desire to offer you our warmest congratulations on the occasion of your return to Scotland after a long period of active and brilliant service in Afghanistan, India, and Africa, in all of which you have so signally distinguished yourself—as at Karatiga and Charasiah, in the long and memorable march to Kandahar, in the Transvaal, and more recently in the victory of Omdurman, in which the brilliant feat of arms, under most difficult circumstances, and the great personal bravery displayed by you called forth the admiration of the whole world.

“We have followed with the deepest interest and pride each successive step in your career, and we have been specially gratified that, by universal consent, a very high tribute of praise should have been accorded to you for your conspicuous bravery as a soldier, and your eminent skill as a general, in recognition of which your clansfolk desire to hand you a sword of honour, which they hope you will accept as evidence of the pride and satisfaction with which they view your achievements.

“That you may be long spared to devote your brilliant talents to the service of your Queen and

country, and that you may continue to merit and receive the highest honours attainable in your profession, is the earnest and sincere wish of your devoted clansmen and friends.

"Signed on behalf of the Society,

*"CLANRANALD,
Chief of the Society.*

*"J. H. A. MACDONALD,
President of the Society."*

ETC. ETC.

Mr. Bennet Burleigh on that occasion said he was proud to see that in this so-called effete old nation of ours the virtues were still recognised, and that there was an opening for indefatigable, persevering young men to come to the front. Colonel Macdonald took with him into the battle of life indomitable courage, untiring perseverance, and that application and capacity for taking infinite pains which was genius. He had seen him in a situation from which the ordinary human mind could perceive no means of escape, and had despaired of his ever coming out of it alive. He had seen him surrounded by tens of thousands of the most daring warriors who ever faced steel or death in this wide world, and his own officers—British officers, too—and his men scarcely expected to come out alive. But they had one man to look to, and they looked to him.

It was Colonel Macdonald, and his face and his manner were an inspiration.

They saw him sitting grim and watchful, and giving his directions and orders as if he were on parade, and Fear itself played the coward and went, and they stood and fought the battle under his guidance, successfully crushing not only the Khalifa, but the victorious army of the Khalifa's son, and winning for us perhaps in its truest sense—although no doubt he would deny it—the Battle of Omdurman.

Glasgow paid still another graceful tribute to the gallant Colonel, whose proficiency as a linguist is attested by his facile mastery of some half-dozen languages. He was made the recipient at the graduation ceremonial in June of the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LL.D.), and Professor Glaister in presenting him, recounted his honours and his military exploits, and added: "During his long stay in the Soudan, Colonel Macdonald played the double part of military trainer and educator of the *fellahin*; and it is gratifying to know that the British officer, when in foreign parts, disdains not to play the part of schoolmaster to his less well-favoured fellow-men."

London, the Metropolis of the world, had done the hero of Omdurman honour; Glasgow, the second to London in the Empire, was not a whit behind; and continuing his grand triumphal march, Macdonald came home to his own people laden with a

national hero's honours, to be met with such a genuine display of Celtic enthusiasm as is almost without parallel in the history of our country.

At Conon Station he was literally bombarded with huzzas and shouts of welcome and admiration from those amongst whom he had spent his childhood and boyhood. Next day was a red-letter day in the history of Dingwall, which, nestling beneath its hills, was gay with bunting. Flags of all colours flapped and writhed in the breeze. On the Municipal Buildings two large banners surmounted a fine array of flags and bannerettes and evergreens. The famous Omdurman brass cannon was decked with evergreens, and above it waved the banner captured from the Dervishes by Colonel Macdonald. The shopkeepers outdid each other in the splendour of their decorations, while hardly a house in the little town was without its symbol of welcome.

The Station Square, when the proceedings commenced, presented a brilliant spectacle, a picture of "bravery" never to be forgotten by those who saw it. From the surrounding glens, straths, and hillsides the people poured that morning into Dingwall to show how truly and justly proud they were of the soldier whose heroism had won fresh laurels for the army, and added unfading lustre to the untarnished record of the mountain land to which he owed his birth.

The pipers played a braggart air, and the cannon belched out a salute from the hilltop as Macdonald

drove up to the Square and sprang lightly to the ground. The cheering rose and fell like the veritable roar of battle. For, as Sir Kenneth Mackenzie said, "The Scottish Highlander is pre-eminently a social being. He does not regard himself as an independent unit in the world, but as part of the community in which he was born and reared. For that community he has the warmest and most lasting attachment, and the community reciprocates in fullest intensity the feeling of the individual. It is the warm attachment of the people of a Highland county to one of their own number that has brought together this gathering. And I think I may say, that while other officers that have served with distinction along with Colonel Macdonald in the campaigns of the Nile have received from their countrymen tributes of their appreciation, none has received exactly the same sort of tribute that he, a Highlander, receives to-day from the Highlanders of his own county—a tribute, not only of admiration, but of affection."

Then followed the presentation by Sir Kenneth, as Lord-Lieutenant and County Convener of Ross and Cromarty, on behalf of the people of Ross and Cromarty, of an address of welcome and congratulation, a sword of honour, and the wherewithal for the purchase of chargers for his use on foreign service. Provost Stewart, a quondam friend in boyhood, presented him with the freedom of the royal and ancient burgh, and he was asked to inscribe his name on the roll of honorary burgesses

—a roll already graced by the names of the Earl of Dalhousie, the Marquis of Stafford, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Chamberlain, and the Earl of Rosebery. A banquet followed, at which the Colonel received a great ovation, and at which “still was the story told” of all the guest’s deeds of valour. As the gallant soldier sat that day there, “the cynosure of neighbouring eyes,” this is the impression he made on one of his fellow-countrymen: “The man who handled the Black Brigade with such consummate skill, and who, by his example, made them maintain that perfect discipline which converted what looked like a forlorn hope into a brilliant victory, visibly flinched under the greeting of his fellow-countrymen. Yet, after seating himself in the chair, and having time to look around, he became cool, calm, and collected again.

“As one looked upon his sturdy form and strongly cast features, with the lower part of his face recalling in a striking manner the strong and determined mould of the Napoleonic countenance, one could not help seeing that ‘Hector,’ as we heard him repeatedly called by admirers in the crowd, was a soldier all the time, and wearing his bright scarlet tunic, the breast of which was covered with orders, medals, and clasps, he was the very picture of what he really is—a true hero.

“In common with many others, we felt, as we looked upon the hero’s manly and typically Highland face, that most of the public portraits of him

have been deceiving. He is not by any means a man of the dour, dogged, heavy type. He is quite the opposite; eager, alert, sometimes almost restless, with keen eye and penetrating, and the mouth and chin of a born leader of men.

"Below the medium height, but sturdily built, with dark hair, his face remarkably free from the lines of discipline which one would expect to see in a soldier so seasoned to the battlefield, one discovers strength and power the moment one's eyes rest on the firmly-set but reposeful features, suggestive of immense and ready resolution, a man of indomitable pluck and never-failing resourcefulness. Such was Hector Macdonald as he sat on that platform in Dingwall, surrounded by so brilliant a gathering of the great and brave and fair, and faced by a crowd of about 7000 of his fellow-countrymen."

Tain's tribute, too, was a day to be remembered in the little royal burgh on the Dornoch Firth, for Dingwall's reception surpassed it only in magnitude, not in either sincerity or enthusiasm. Inverness, again, as became the northern capital, and the home of Macdonald for two years, and the birth-place, so to speak, of his military existence, prepared a welcome on a scale of greater magnificence. There was an address of welcome, executed on prepared vellum and emblazoned in pure gold and colours, and handsomely mounted in a richly gilt Louis Quatorze frame; and there was a stately

banquet, at which Provost Macbean proposed the principal toast—"The Long Life and Prosperity of General Macdonald."

Not the least interesting function of all was that which took place outside the old schoolhouse at Mulbuie, in the playground where long ago he had drilled the lads of the evening school. There was little pomp or display, and there were no guards of honour, but the admiration of "friends and neighbours" found vent in their own hearty and unmistakable way. An address from the residents in his native parish was got up and presented. The old thatched schoolhouse, situated within sight of the Colonel's early home, and used now only for church and other meetings, was far too small to hold the crowd that gathered from the crofts in the countryside, and the meeting had to take place in the open air under a drenching Highland rain. A wooden platform was erected, and around that platform assembled "his own people"—those he had come home to meet and to greet: the playfellows of his boyhood, now grown men; his youthful sweethearts, now buxom wives and mothers; and the fathers and the mothers of his youth, now frail and failing grandparents. The Colonel was, to the great disappointment of his old friends, in mufti, and stood under the shelter of a friendly umbrella. When a former schoolboy chum was moved into the chair, the Colonel laughingly drew attention to the fact that there was no chair

on the platform to take—an omission, however, that was promptly supplied. The chairman, Mr. Forbes, assured the Colonel that though the token of the appreciation of the Mulbuie residents was a small one, he received it with the best of good feelings and good wishes. In presenting the address, the schoolmaster addressed the Colonel shortly in Gaelic—a “touch” which in an instant made the gathering kin,—and it is needless to say that the sentiments spoken in Gaelic, whatever they were, were received with the loudest cheer of the evening.

The address was, on account of the rain, “held as read,” and the Colonel made a more than usually brief but warm reply. There was quite a pathetic meeting on the platform between old Mr. Treasurer and his pupil, and a pleasantly reminiscent speech from the former. The Colonel’s brother, replying to a speech of goodwill for the Macdonald family, said that his youngest brother had been treated by great cities and great towns, but he could not find warmer hearts than on the top of Mulbuie. Whereupon was heard a woman’s voice in Gaelic, “That’s real nice—quite true—the darling!” To which we add, “Yes; another touch which makes the *whole* world kin.”

CHAPTER IX.

INDIA AND SOUTH AFRICA AGAIN

“Over there the camps are spread,
There the trenches lie ;
Just here the charge was led,—
Well, that’s gone by.
Some sleep o’ nights there,
Some sleep for ever ;
Life and death together fare
By the Modder River.”

BESIDES those brilliant “functions” enumerated in the previous chapter, there were corporation luncheons and regimental dinners, caskets, and addresses “too numerous to mention” here.

But on the eve of his departure for India, where, as a reward for his services, Macdonald was appointed Brigadier-General in command of the Sirhind District of the Punjab, he was a guest at the annual dinner of the Gordon Highlanders in London. The Prince of Wales, who is Colonel-in-Chief of the regiment, in responding to the toast of his health, said he was proud to bear the honour of having his name associated with the regiment. No one would gainsay him when he said that

officers like Sir George White, Colonel Mathias, and last, but not least, Colonel Hector Macdonald, were men who would always uphold the traditions of our army, and as long as they had them and men like them in their regiments, he did not think there was any fear of the British army degenerating. They were that night honoured by the presence of a guest, Colonel Hector Macdonald, who occupied his place purely by his personal bravery and merits. There were none who would not congratulate him on having become an aide-de-camp to the Queen, and having been appointed to the command of a brigade in India. His deeds were so well known, and he himself was so modest, that it was not necessary to recall them, but it gave him special gratification on that occasion—and he was sure they all concurred with him—to propose his health. “Success to him,” added His Royal Highness, “and may he continue to live for many years!”

The whirligig of time had brought about a strange revolution of personal fortune to Hector Macdonald since the day he first saw the Prince. The Prince asked Macdonald—the story is given as “true truth” on the faith of a friend of the General’s—how it was that they had not met before. “Pardon me, sir, I think we have,” was the reply. “Where can that have been?” asked the Prince, surprised. “When you were in India, sir, I did sentry-go outside your tent.” “But why was a sentry needed outside my tent?” Macdonald’s answer has not been reported,

but, whatever it was, it caused the Prince much amusement, and when he regained control of his features he held out his hand and said, "General Macdonald, you were doing sentry-go in 1875, and now you are a General in the British army. I am proud to have met you."

Not less strange was the reversal of positions when General Macdonald at Umballa assumed command of the Sirhind garrisons, among which were the very Gordon Highlanders in whose ranks he had commenced his wonderful career as a private, and whose colonel had been his captain when he was only a colour-sergeant. But India, and the Gordons, and its colonel too, extended a warm welcome to the new Brigadier-General of Sirhind.

The announcement that Colonel Macdonald had been appointed to the command of the Sirhind District made a gratifying addition to the more personal recognitions of his fame. With reference to this promotion, the military correspondent of the *Scotsman* says (May 1899):—

"It is probable that if Colonel Macdonald had been compelled forcibly to state what reward he would best like to have conferred on him for his great services, he would, after a violent struggle with his native modesty, have admitted that an Indian district command, coupled with the A.D.C.-ship to the Queen, was his dearest present ambition. In any case, there is no mistaking the substantial nature of the reward, or the possibilities which it

opens up. It is true that the Sirhind District is a second-class district only, and that the rank of Brigadier-General, which is held by the officer commanding it, is temporary or local only; but to all intents and purposes Colonel Macdonald, when he arrives at Umballa, the headquarters of his district, will be a General Officer, will be addressed as such, and wear a General's uniform and appointments.

"When it is remembered that barely nineteen years have elapsed since 'Fighting Mac' left the ranks of the Gordon Highlanders to take a commission as Second-Lieutenant in the same corps, he may well be congratulated on his truly extraordinary advancement.

"But it is when we carry the analysis a little further that the full extent of Colonel Macdonald's good fortune is revealed. Under ordinary circumstances, inasmuch as he had spent over nine and a half years in the ranks, he might have reckoned himself extremely lucky if he had succeeded in rising to Major. As it is, there is no reason why he should not in due course attain to that baton which the French soldier no longer aspires to find in his knapsack. He was only forty-seven* on the 13th of last month; and by reason of his new appointment is, practically speaking, secure from the chance of retirement under the age clause for at any rate another ten years. But in all human

* Correctly, forty-six on 4th March.

probability his promotion to Major-General and Lieutenant-General are assured, and he will have no need to think of retiring until he has reached the extreme age limit of sixty-seven.

“As commander of the Sirhind District he will not only have control of a splendid body of troops (Umballa, which lies about a hundred miles from Simla, is one of the biggest and busiest military stations in India), but will have an excellent chance of a division in any big frontier campaign. It was the proud boast of the late Lord Napier of Magdala that he landed in India a poor subaltern of Engineers, with nothing but his sword, and that he subsequently rose to be local Commander-in-Chief; but it will be a prouder boast for Colonel Macdonald if he is able to say, as he very probably will, that he has fought over the same ground as a Sergeant of Highlanders and as a General of division.”

The fates, however, decreed for Macdonald a speedy transference to the field of active service again. Towards the close of the year 1899, the unhealed wound of nineteen years before in South Africa opened out afresh. After a tedious series of negotiations between the Colonial Office and the Transvaal authorities, the Boer Ultimatum was handed in to the British Agent at Pretoria on the 9th of October. This document declared that Her Majesty's unlawful intervention had caused an intolerable condition of affairs to arise; it demanded that all points of mutual difference should be regu-

lated by arbitration, or by any other amicable course that might be agreed on; that the British troops on the borders of the Republic should be instantly withdrawn; and that all reinforcements which had arrived in South Africa after 1st June, 1899, should be removed from the country. Failing compliance with these demands within forty-eight hours, the Boer Government would regard the action of Her Majesty's Government as a formal declaration of war. No official communication was received from the Orange Free State of their intention to cast in their lot with the Transvaal; but there was no room left for doubt upon the subject.

The Boer Ultimatum was received by the nation almost with a sigh of relief. It put an end to a protracted period of suspense, and it was a call for a prompt and vigorous action. Relatively, the two Republics were better prepared for war than Great Britain, and then there was always the contingency of foreign complication or intervention to be hoped for. The Boers had been preparing for the struggle, practically, ever since the close of the previous war, while the British were taken at a disadvantage.

The nation at first took an optimistic view of the situation. There could be but one issue to the struggle—an easy march to Pretoria,—and people smiled at the audacious Ultimatum and Kruger's braggart assertion about "staggering humanity." Parliament met for a ten days' session on the 17th

of October, agreed, with only the semblance of opposition, to the Government proposals for carrying on the war, and voted £10,000,000 towards its cost. There was, amongst all classes, a great outburst of patriotism, which manifested itself in a universal desire to see the war successfully over, and a firm determination to have the question of British supremacy in South Africa settled once and for all time. The flood of fervour flowed over into Greater Britain. Spontaneous offers of help came from India, from Australia, from New Zealand, from Canada, and from every dependency of the Empire. In the hour of Britain's trial, imperialism triumphed as it had never triumphed before.

But there came a rude awakening to those who fondly dreamed of a walk over for the British arms. The war in South Africa, so far, has been one to remind us always to expect the unexpected: a war of surprises, new conditions, and new experiences. Even tried and experienced Sir Redvers Buller has done exactly what he feared Sir George Colley would do, and did, in 1881,—he allowed his men to go to the top of one of those "infernal hills," only, like the mythical king of the French, to come down again. It is clear that neither courage nor a brilliant record elsewhere is good enough for the new departure in warfare in South Africa. Brave men have walked blindly into Boer traps, and it is painfully evident that something more is wanted

than the "pluck and luck" principle in our dealings with the wily Boer.

The Boers had practically a month's start before the arrival of Sir Redvers Buller and the Army Corps, and Natal, it was obvious, was the objective of their first attack. In the beginning of October, General Sir George White arrived in Durban, and assumed the command of the British forces, Colonial and Imperial, in the colony. The General recommended the withdrawal of the Glencoe garrison, but the Governor of Natal thought otherwise. Military considerations gave way to political exigencies, and this bad start was, according to many competent critics, the parent of subsequent disasters. The victory over the Boers at Dundee—dearly bought by the death of the gallant General Symons and the loss of many officers and men,—the cavalry reconnaissance under General French at Elandslaagte, and the sortie led by General White at Rietfontein—brilliant achievements both,—could not stay the tide of invasion.

In little more than a week the Boers had completely invested Ladysmith, isolating the force of 8000 men under the command of Sir George White, and closing communications with the south of Natal.

General Buller arrived in Cape Town on the day of the Nicholson's Nek disaster. Abandoning his original plan of invading the Free State, he felt the first thing to do was to relieve

Ladysmith. General Gatacre took a strong force to Queenstown, on the northern frontier of Cape Colony, while the remainder of the 16,000 men in Natal were despatched to the relief of Kimberley, on the western border of the Orange Free State.

The problem which Buller himself had to solve was how to cross the Tugela and break down the investing lines round Ladysmith, where Joubert had been gradually tightening his grip. By the middle of December his preparations were almost completed. But the dark days of the "Black Week" were at hand,—the week of the frightful disaster to Gatacre's army at Stormberg, and the repulse of Lord Methuen at Magersfontein, followed by the failure of General Buller at Colenso—failure of Buller's first attempt to relieve Ladysmith.

At Magersfontein the Boer position was clearly visible from the British camp at Modder River. In the advance, the Highland Brigade—the Argylls, Seaforths, Gordons, Black Watch, and Highland Light Infantry—was ordered to the centre. The Boer position was a strong one, enormously increased by a barricade, three lines deep and eight feet high, of barbed wire fence some three miles in length, and, on the fateful 10th of December, Lord Methuen essayed to carry it by a frontal attack.

Under cover of the darkness in the early hours of the morning, after a rainy and bitterly cold night, the Highland Brigade, under General Wauchope, moved down upon the veldt. The men advanced

in quarter-column formation, each man stepping slowly and cautiously, for he knew that any sound meant certain death. But neither officers nor men knew of the existence of the formidable trenches that ran along the veldt in front of them.

Suddenly "out of the darkness a rifle rang, sharp and clear, a herald of disaster—a soldier had tripped in the dark over the hidden wires laid down by the enemy. In a second, in the twinkling of an eye, the searchlights of the Boers fell broad and clear as the noonday sun on the ranks of the doomed Highlanders. . . . For one brief moment the Scots seemed paralysed by the suddenness of their discovery, for they knew that they were huddled like sheep within fifty yards of the trenches of the foe." The whole long, hidden Boer trench belched flame and riddled their ranks with bullets. And, clear above the confusion and panic, rose the voice of the General, "Steady, men, steady!"

In a moment discipline had vanished; there was chaos, confusion, consternation. Some one shouted, "Retire!" and the men broke and fled, here, there, anywhere, literally colliding with one another, and knocking over their own officers as they ran for dear life towards the rear. The paralysing fever of fright lasted for but a little, and then most of the men rallied and re-formed their ranks, falling under the command of their officers, and facing the foe. Thus passed the day till, at the end of fifteen hours' fighting, it was found that the casualties

numbered about nine hundred, eight hundred of whom were swept away during those awful moments of the first attack.

General Wauchope was one of the first to fall. But, "gasping, dying, bleeding from every vein, he raised himself on his knees" in supreme effort to cheer his men. In him the British army lost one of its most distinguished and gallant officers. One of the "bravest of the brave," he was almost idolised by the Highland troops, and the grief of the Brigade and its anger against those to whom the men attributed their ill-fortune found expression in numerous letters, from whose conflicting statements it is not yet possible to arrive at either the exact truth as to the sequence of events or the relative opinions held regarding the attack by General Wauchope and his commanding officer.

The Scottish accounts say that after receiving his orders from Lord Methuen he was seen to be troubled, and remarked that his instructions were so vague that he protested. During the march, too, it is said that he more than once exclaimed, "This is madness!" and, orders or no orders, began to spread his men out in open formation. But before the movement could be executed the troops "found themselves in a butcher's shop." When the disaster occurred—according to the same versions—General Wauchope, dying, said, "I hope my men will not hold me responsible for this."

It is hardly to be doubted that "some one had

blundered," but it was not the men, who were thus instantly, without one word of warning, brought

"Into the jaws of death,
Into the mouth of hell."

There was panic, it is true, during those first awful moments when they saw their comrades fall on either side and in front of them, but their after efforts of that fearful day to retrieve the error were heroic. Both officers and men showed marvellous courage and endurance, and the camp rang that night with deeds of individual gallantry.

It cannot be amiss here to refer to the reciprocity of sympathy and *camaraderie* that sprang up between the Highland Brigade and the Australians. "These Gordons," writes one of those Colonials who, side by side with the soldiers of the mother-land, have fought such a good fight for the old flag, "have been with us off and on for several days, and have taken quite a liking for the Australians, whom, they say, they would like to have alongside them in a fight. The feeling is reciprocal, for our men would ask no greater honour than to fight shoulder to shoulder with the climbers of Dargai."

"Surely," he continues, "a stronger, more martial-looking lot than these Gordons never trod the earth. They have a determined, cool look, but I would not like to see the light of battle in their eyes if I were an enemy."

These words were written on the eve of Magers-

fontein, when the Australians would fain have gone forward to battle with the Highland Brigade. But the Colonials, fortunately for themselves, were not tried by the fire of Magersfontein. They stayed behind to bewail the Highlanders slain in "the darkest hour Scotland has known since Culloden"—in that dread onset when the Highland chaplain, as one of the Gordons put it, "grat like a bairn" when he saw his men falling thick and fast. The Australian account of the funeral of the dead Highlanders is equally sympathetic and touching. "The procession moved from a quarter of a mile away, headed by sixteen pipers dressed in the full regalia of the clans which the regiments represented. Wild and mournful the weird notes of the pipes rose, with an effect on the spectators which no other music could have wrought. Not Celts alone, but Saxons—men to whom the scream of the pipes had been as frightful as the shrieks of the fiends in hell, or as commonplace as a barrel-organ—wept and wrung their hands in anguish as 'The Flowers o' the Forest are a' Wede Awa'" reminded them of dead men lying yonder under the frowning kopje, and of the lost leader, whose brave heart broke with sorrow ere the enemy's bullet had stilled it.

"Then the tune changed, and the wail of the Gaelic exile, 'We'll maybe return to Lochaber no more,' keened forth slowly and mournfully as the chieftain was laid in the grave. Men grasped each others' hands and, pointing to the kopje which rose

sentinel-like over the plain, and from which the old wolf, Cronje, was doubtless watching the strange scene, muttered grimly, 'Next time.' 'Remember Majuba,' as a watchword, is out of date: there is worse here to avenge; and if ever the Highland bayonet gets among the Boer commandoes the massacre of Spytfontein will be horribly avenged. It is a terrible sight to see strong men weep, but when several thousands of them get at it it is something awful."

But it seems not unlikely that the battle of Magersfontein is the end of the fighting system that was practised by Wellington, Wolseley, and Von Moltke. Changes must be made in coming warfare to meet the new and formidable conditions of war with which we are confronted. The country, which had received the tidings of the disaster with admirable calmness, now thoroughly realised the magnitude of the operations still to be undertaken in order to see the business carried through.

One of the first signs of its determination was the appointment of Field-Marshal Lord Roberts as Commander-in-Chief in South Africa, with Lord Kitchener as the Chief of his Staff. It was an appointment that gave universal satisfaction, which was emphasised when it was learned that General Hector Macdonald had been summoned from India to occupy, in succession to the gallant Wauchope, the proud position once held by Sir Colin Campbell, as Commander of the Highland Brigade. Like

Kitchener in the Soudan, "he had snuffed the battle from afar," and longed to be where he is always at his best—on the field of action.

Both Field-Marshal Roberts and General Macdonald had had ample experience of warfare in a country—Afghanistan—whose topography is curiously like that of South Africa, and whose people are not unlike the Boers in courage, independent spirit, and methods of fighting. In both countries "we have," says Colonel Hanna in the *Speaker*, "high table-lands broken by rugged ranges and detached hills, and intersected by formidable ravines. In both, the rivers partake of the nature of mountain torrents, rising and falling with great rapidity; but whereas in Afghanistan they ran, as a rule, parallel to our line of march, and thus guaranteed a certain amount of water to our columns, whilst affording a certain degree of protection to their flanks—in South Africa they intersect those lines, and can do nothing for our armies but impede their progress, and some day, perhaps, endanger their retreat. Apart from their rivers, most of which in both countries frequently dry up, the supply of water in each is scanty, precarious, and often impregnated with nauseous and deleterious salts.

"Their climates are very similar—intensely hot in summer and bitterly cold in winter, and subject, at set seasons, to sudden variations of temperature. Fever, dysentery, and pneumonia dogged the steps

of the British forces in the Bolan and the Kyber; fever, dysentery, and pneumonia are dogging the steps of our troops in Natal and the Orange Free State. In Afghanistan, hunger, thirst, overwork, and lack of clothing and shelter swept away thousands of cavalry horses and tens of thousands of transport animals; hunger, thirst, overwork, and lack of clothing and shelter are doing the same cruel work in South Africa; but to these, in the present case, must be added the ravages of the mysterious sickness which is said to attack every horse born in, or brought into, the latter country, and to prove fatal in three cases out of four.

“As for the peoples of the two lands, they have in common their courage, their love of independency, and their inborn aptitude for war; but the Boer is a far more formidable enemy than the Afghan, since he possesses a power of sustained and combined action which circumstances have denied to the latter.

“In two particulars only is the situation which confronts Lord Roberts to-day apparently more favourable to him than that to which in 1880 he had to bow—the Boers are far less numerous than the Afghans, and whereas in South Africa there are railways, in Afghanistan there were none.”

General Macdonald arrived in Cape Town from India in the third week of January, and left on the 21st for Modder River. On the 3rd of

February, with the Highland Brigade—"all that was left of them"—the 9th Lancers, and a battery of Field Artillery, he left Lord Methuen's camp for Koodoosberg Drift, fourteen miles to the west. The movement was carried out with great success. The Drift was seized, thus cutting off a body of Boers who were found in laager to the south of the river, and preparations were made for the building of a fort. On Sunday night, General Macdonald, with part of his force, encamped on the north side of the river, and on Monday a hill was seized and occupied, commanding the lower kopjes, where six or seven hundred Boers had taken up a position. It was found impossible, however, to mount guns, owing to the steepness of the hill. On Wednesday the enemy, after maintaining for some time a shrapnel fire on the position, made a determined but unsuccessful effort to drive the Highlanders from the heights. Next day, threatened from the rear by cavalry and horse artillery, the Boers found it safe to retire.

Suddenly the Highland Brigade was ordered to return to the Modder River, where Lord Roberts, almost exactly two months after the check at Magersfontein, arrived just in time to congratulate General Macdonald and the troops on their achievements. Day by day, week by week, the Boers had been extending and strengthening their trenches, until Magersfontein ridge became a veritable Gib-

raltar. But after a time—a time of such strict censorship of news that not a man in South Africa divined what was to happen until it did not matter whether the enemy heard about it or not—the Boers withdrew, and there came a movement swift as it was sudden,—a great strategic movement that was to turn the tide of victory and restore the prestige of the British arms.

An advance was made into Free State territory, and at the same time General French secretly withdrew from Colesberg. In a few days Jacobsdaal, an important base from which the Boers drew their supplies, was occupied by the British forces, and General Cronje's retreat to Bloemfontein was barred, while his rear was threatened by French.

After a hurried council of war, the Boers trekked in an easterly direction, in the hope of gaining the Bloemfontein road and putting a barrier between the British army and the Free State capital. General Hector Macdonald and the Highlanders moved to cut off the retreat by the main drifts to the east, but were brought to a stand owing to the exhaustion of the oxen by the long march. General Cronje, however, was brought to bay, his forces occupying kopjes on both sides of the river, where they entrenched both on the hills and in the bed of the Modder.

Before Lord Roberts arrived, an attempt was made to carry the enemy's laager by direct attack.

The Boers, holding a splendid position, commanded the left of the Highland Brigade, which advanced, partly up the river bed and partly in the open. While the other brigades swung round to the front, the Highland Brigade, on level ground and destitute of cover, were exposed to a terrible fire, which obliged the men to lie prone.

This action at Paardeberg Drift was one of the most fiercely contested in the history of the campaign, the Boers fighting with the most desperate courage and losing heavily. The British casualties were also serious, and both General Macdonald and General Knox were among the wounded. But General Cronje was in a death-trap.

A dashing advance by the Canadian Regiment and some Engineers, supported by the 1st Gordon Highlanders and 2nd Shropshires—a gallant deed, worthy, as Lord Roberts said in his despatch, of our Colonial comrades, and attended, happily, with comparatively slight loss—apparently clinched matters. Cronje, with his army of 4000 men, surrendered unconditionally on the morning of Majuba Day,—a coincidence in the bringing about of which the wounded “Fighting General’s” representations to Lord Roberts had, it is said, a determining effect. The news of the surrender created unbounded enthusiasm, not only among the troops, but at home and all over the Empire.

The result was reported by Lord Roberts in his despatch of the 13th March: “By the help of

God, and by the bravery of Her Majesty's soldiers, the troops under my command have taken possession of Bloemfontein. The British flag now flies over the Presidency, vacated last evening by Mr. Steyn, late President of the Orange Free State."

With the occupation of Bloemfontein ended the first great stage in the war. It is an old maxim that "time tries all," but General Macdonald has made in South Africa a beginning that is wholly in keeping with his high reputation; and "well begun is half done." It was a relief to learn that Macdonald never left the Brigade after Paardeberg, nor went into hospital, and was able soon to return to duty. "I am not able to walk yet," he says in a letter written on the 10th of March, "but I hope to do so in a month or two. The bullet entered the outside of my left foot, just under the ankle joint, and came out at the other side a little lower down—a very clean wound, which if caused by a Martini bullet would have cost me my foot."

Her Majesty the Queen showed the greatest sympathy with the General in his enforced withdrawal from the fighting. She at once despatched a telegram to him, expressing deep commiseration and the hope that his wound was not of a serious character, and, later on, she sent him another message congratulating him on the prospect of his early return to command.

"The disablement of General Macdonald," said a writer in the *Outlook*, "is a serious misfortune for

the British arms at this juncture of the war. Without casting the slightest disparagement on the ability or the devotion of other Generals in the field under Lords Roberts and Kitchener, it is no more than truth to say that Macdonald's place cannot be filled till he himself recovers and resumes it. The born soldier is a rare enough man at any time and in any country, and Macdonald was born to be a soldier and nothing else."

The early experiences of the war were not lost upon the General, and his first lesson to his Brigade at Modder River was one he had learned from a member of his Black Brigade in the Soudan. After the capture of Abu Hamed, he was on his bed on a very bright moonlit night, under the stars of a beautiful sky. In the middle of the night he saw a soldier of one of the regiments under his command moving about. He called to him to come to him, and asked, "What do you want?" The Soudanese replied, "I want to speak to you." "Very well," replied he; "what is it?" "I don't think very much of you," answered the dusky warrior, "as a commanding officer." Macdonald, of course, asked him why so. "Well," said the soldier, "I came to tell you that the 10th Battalion obeyed all your instructions and carried out all your orders, with the result that the commanding officer, the second in command, and a good number of the soldiers are now under the sod. But my regiment obeyed none of your orders: we knew better. There have been

very few of us killed, and I will tell you the reason why. Under your instructions, the unfortunate 10th Battalion waited upon the word of command to fire, with the result I told you. But my regiment, immediately they saw the enemy, opened a tremendous fire upon them, and they could not reply."

The black soldier was right. He had the right spirit in him, and Macdonald has acknowledged that the lesson he learned from that black man he carried into practice at Omdurman. On his arrival at the Modder River, he formulated a new scheme of attack, took command of a company, and—rather a novelty for a General—by practical illustration showed his method. Then, addressing the Highlanders, he told them they had to contend against a wily foe that disdained no subterfuge. In fighting such an enemy, they must bring to bear all the wile and cunning they were capable of, and beat them, if possible, at their own game. Every man must use his own intelligence and think for himself, and it would then at once become apparent what was the right thing to do, and the right time to do it. He wanted everyone to use his rifle intelligently—to pick out, in his advance, a place where he thought someone was firing at him, so that as soon as the "Lie down!" was given, he would know at once what he was going to fire at, and the probable distance the object was from him. He did not wish to see men rushing along with the

firing line, and then lying down with their rifles by their sides. They must use them! They must pump lead into the enemy like the devil! If they did nothing more than keep their heads under cover they had achieved something.

The moral seems plain. Discipline may be applied in a wrong way. It may be so rigid that soldiers will only do what they are commanded to do by those whom they are accustomed to obey. It seems to convey to both officers and men an instruction of intelligent individual action.

In his letters written during his convalescence, as has ever been the case with him, he says little about himself, but is full of solicitude for others.

Writing from Paardeberg on the 27th February, 1900, he says: "To-day is the anniversary of Majuba. This morning Cronje and his army surrendered unconditionally, after a night attack by the Canadians and Gordon Highlanders.

"On Sunday, the 18th, Cronje was completely 'boxed'; my poor Brigade suffering heavily in the closing of it. On Monday, the 19th, we could have done the trick. We are well pleased at the event, and so, I am sure, you will be at home.

"We are sadly in need of officers and of men. In the Highland Brigade we have left fit for work 24 officers and about 1600 men out of 87 officers and over 3000 men. Such is war.

"You will, I am sure, be pleased to learn (after

the aspersions cast on the Brigade about Magersfontein) that I am perfectly satisfied with the work done by them, now in action twice under my eyes—work which perhaps none but themselves would have done half so creditably.”

In a later letter, of date 3rd March, in which he tells his friend Mrs. Macleod, of Cadboll, how very grateful the soldiers would be, as the cold weather was coming on very rapidly, for warmer clothing than khaki, he writes: “The Highland Brigade lacked none of the qualities which made them so famous in former campaigns, and I am very proud indeed of being in command of such men. But the Brigade suffered deeply, and we want reinforcements from home badly, as 24 officers and 1700 men only are left for duty.”

A letter, written in Modder River camp, just before he was wounded, by its natural simplicity not only shows on the part of the distinguished General a warm affection for his “boy friend”—a son of Dr. Robertson, Aberdeen—but reveals in a pleasing manner part of the other “soul-side” of the redoubtable soldier.

“MY DEAR ALAISTER,—Many thanks for the photographs, which I like very much. Can you guess why I like the small one best?

“I am sending you a tin of the Queen’s chocolate, which you can eat with your best friends, and think of me. You should keep the box as a memento.

“We are doing very little here except now and

again, every morning and evening, throwing a few shells into the Boer entrenchments with our naval guns. The Boer army is just four and a half miles from this camp, very strongly entrenched in high broken ground, and 20,000 strong. As we are not more than 8000, we have to sit still until reinforced, or, perhaps, we may have to sit still just to keep the enemy in front of us from going anywhere else.

“And now for a lecture for not giving me more news in detail. News, news, news! to please me—all about your dear self.”

Reinforcements have been arriving since then, the strength of the Brigade has been increased, and the latest intelligence regarding our hero is conveyed in a despatch from Lord Roberts from Bloemfontein on the 24th of April. “As the enemy were holding the neighbouring hills in some strength, the Ninth Division, consisting of Smith-Dorrien’s and Macdonald’s Brigades, has been despatched to support Hamilton.” The present war in South Africa is making reputations, and it is also destroying them. But the Highland Brigade, which has suffered so terribly in the struggle, will, it is hoped, soon again be in its old splendid fighting trim, and ready, with its dauntless leader at its head, to be in at the death at Pretoria.

General Macdonald and the Highland Brigade have just executed a magnificent forced march, moving to the support of General Hamilton with

a rapidity that would not have discredited a mounted force. Time is everything in the enveloping movements Lord Roberts is working out, and Macdonald did all and more than was expected of him. The duty allotted to him in heading off the Boer retreat is onerous, and it is a work that is likely once more to bring the Highland Brigade into the thick of the fight.

A fierce light beats to-day on every man in the field, but "with our military spirit as high as ever it was, with an army living up to its best traditions in South Africa, with daughter States willing, nay eager, to share our burdens and responsibilities, what have we to fear?" Three men, pre-eminently, command the confidence of the nation—Lord Roberts of Kandahar, Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, and Major-General Hector Macdonald.