

**Langalibalele
and the
Natal Carbineers**



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NATAL CARBINEERS

The Story of
the Langalibalele Rebellion, 1873.

No. 437

Editorial Committee

R. O. Pearse

Dr. J. Clark

P. R. Barnes

Mrs G. Tatham

Published by the Natal Historical Society
1921

Printed by Western Printing Company (Pty) Ltd.
Ludhiana



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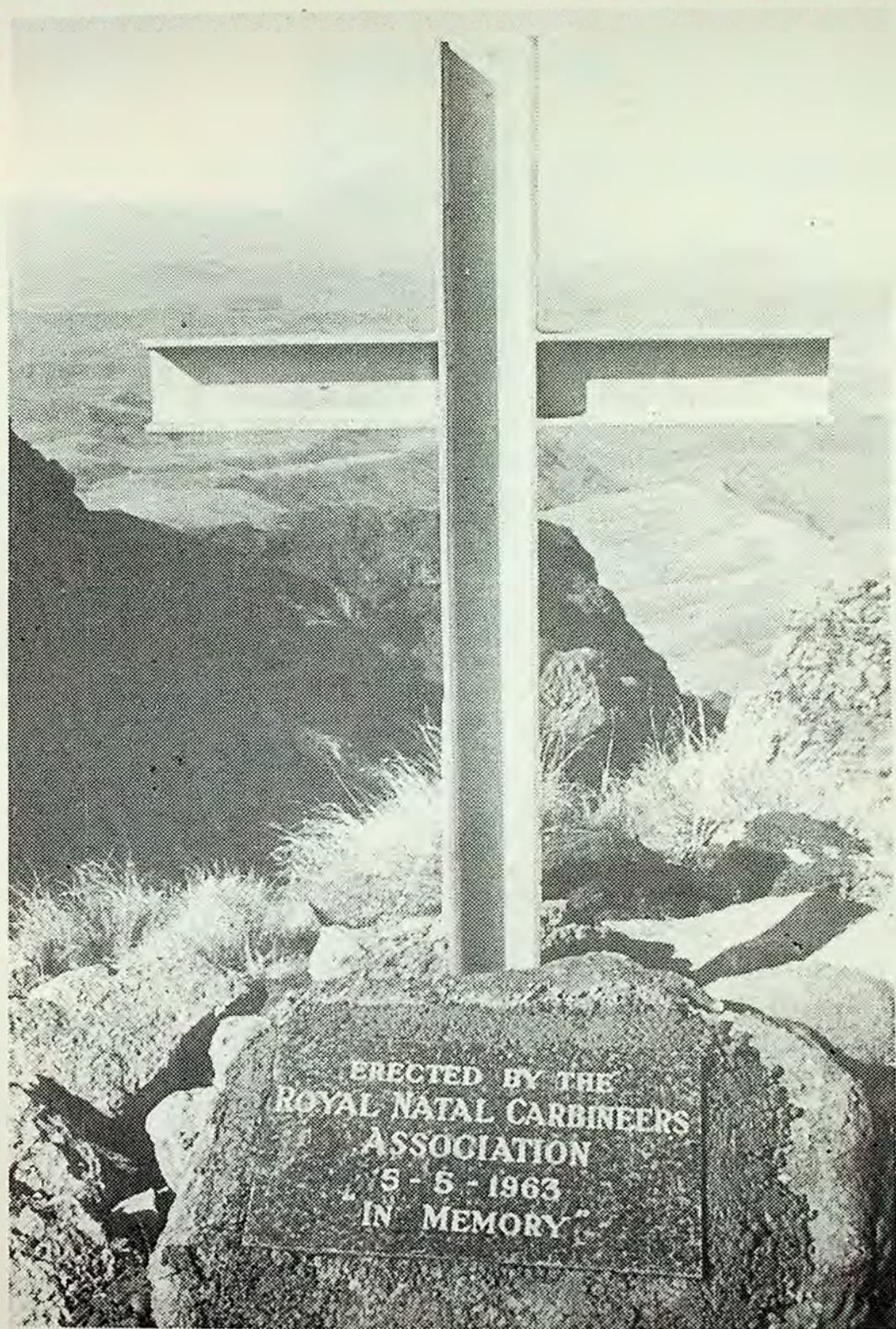
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Published by the Ladysmith Historical Society
1973.
Printed by Wescott Printing Company (Pty) Ltd.,
Ladysmith.

In a good cause they perished,
wept for, honoured, known,
One country
One interest : one object
The same effort : and the same death

*From the Memorial in the Town
Gardens, Pietermaritzburg, to
the Carbineers and loyal
Africans who fell in the
Langalibalele Rebellion,
4th November, 1873.*



ERECTED BY THE
ROYAL NATAL CARBINEERS
ASSOCIATION
5-5-1963
IN MEMORY

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Langalibalele and the Natal Carbineers

Foreword

History comes alive through the eyes of eye-witnesses. In publishing this commemorative booklet on the Langalibalele Rebellion, 100 years after the events took place, we have chosen to tell the story in the form of a number of personal records left behind by the men who participated in the ride of the Carbineers on 3rd November, 1873, and in the engagement at the head of Bushman's River Pass on the morning of November 4th. If it does nothing else, it is hoped that this book will be of interest to research workers and collectors. But we believe that it will do more than this, for it tells, vividly, and from first-hand experience, a story of matchless courage and endurance, and of a skirmish on the summit of the mighty Drakensberg that had a profound effect on Colonial history and on the lives of a number of well-known Natal personalities.

We wish to express our thanks to the following people who have helped materially in the compilation of this narrative: - Dr. B. J. T. Leverton, Chief Archivist of Natal; Mrs. Daphne Strutt, Curator of the Durban Local History Museum; Miss J. Duggan, Chief Librarian, Killie Campbell Africana Library; Mr B. F. Vanderplank; Miss U. E. M. Judd; Chief Librarian, Natal Society Library; Royal Natal Carbineer Association; Mrs Brian Spencer for information from her (unpublished) Register of Early Settlers; Mr T.B.F. Varty.

Ladysmith Historical Society.



Langalibalele

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Prologue

A brief account of the Historical Background and of the Events of November 3 to 5, 1873.

We give, first of all, a very brief account of the historical background, of the ride of the Carbineers, and of the action at the head of the Bushman's River Pass (now known as the Langalibalele Pass) on 4th November, 1873.

Langalibalele was the chief of the Amahlubi tribe, living on the left bank of the Buffalo River in Northern Natal, in the present Utrecht district. He was born round about 1818. In 1848 he and his tribe were driven out by Mpande, and they fled across the Buffalo River into Klip River County, from where they appealed to the Lieut. Governor, Martin West, for help.

The Natal Government decided to move the Amahlubi, together with the related Putini clan, down into the midlands of Natal, where they were settled in 36 450 ha of good arable country, immediately to the north of Giant's Castle, one of the most prominent peaks in the Drakensberg. Part of the idea behind this move was that they would act as a buffer between the marauding Bushmen and the settlers. By 1873 Langalibalele's tribe had grown from a remnant of 7000 men, women and children, to 94 000.

Langalibalele himself (the name means 'the sun is boiling hot') was now a man of 55 years of age, described by John Shedden Dobie the traveller, as 'a big pudding-headed beast of a man', though Bishop Colenso thought more kindly of him, and described him as 'tall, in good condition ... with that dignity and grace in his actions which so commonly, amidst the most savage nations, proclaim the king.' But he was a difficult man, brooding darkly, and had already caused the Natal Government considerable trouble. When, early in 1873, he was commanded to hand in for registration the guns his young men had acquired in the Diamond Diggings, he first stalled for time, then flatly refused. Sir Benjamin Pine, the new Lieutenant-Governor, ordered him to be brought to his senses; Langalibalele prepared for open rebellion, armed his men, and made plans to flee over the Drakensberg and into Lesotho.

On Wednesday, 29th October 1873 the Government called up for active service a number of volunteer regiments. These were backed

up by the military, and on the following day a large force moved out of Pietermaritzburg and up the Town Hill, heading for Fort Nottingham, near the source of the Umgeni. They arrived at the Fort on the Saturday afternoon.

The plan of military operations entailed, first of all, throwing a strong cordon round the Amahlubi and Putini tribes, stretching from Champagne Castle in the north to Giant's Castle in the south (see Map), thus closing them off from the rest of Natal, and then sending two flying columns to the summit of the Drakensberg so as to seal off the Bushman's River Pass and so prevent Langalibalele's escape into Lesotho. Captain Allison, with 500 armed loyal Africans, was to go up a pass at Champagne Castle, and then head south along the summit to Bushman's River Pass, while Captain Barter, with one troop of Karkloof Carbineers and half a troop of Pietermaritzburg Carbineers, was to head up Giant's Castle Pass and ride north, the two forces converging, in a sort of pincer movement, on Bushman's River Pass, up which Langalibalele was planning to flee. The plan called for both forces to be in position at the head of the Pass early on the morning of Monday, November 3.

But the military blundered badly. They did not know the country, and made no attempt to use the services of the few settlers who did know it. Allison never even reached the summit, while the Carbineers, (now under the command of Major Durnford) who were expected to go up Giant's Castle Pass (this is the Pass which gives access to the northern slopes of the nek which joins Giant's Castle to the main escarpment) went up the Hlatimba Pass instead, in error. This is a pass 9,9 km (6 miles) to the south of Giant's Castle Pass, and it led them through impossible country, a maze of steep ridges and deeply-cut valleys. As a result they arrived at the rendezvous, the head of the Bushman's River Pass, twenty-four hours late. The story of this epic ride, which deserves to be better known, is told fully in the following pages.

Arrived at the head of the Bushman's River Pass at 6.30 a.m. on Tuesday morning, November 4 (instead of the Monday morning, as planned) the Carbineers found the Amahlubi tribesmen already in possession. A short, sharp engagement took place in which three Carbineers, Robert Henry Erskine, Edwin Bond and Charles Davie Potterill, † were killed, together with two loyal Africans, one of them Shepstone's interpreter, Elijah Kambule, and the Carbineers, hopelessly outnumbered, retired precipitately along the way they had come, back along the summit to the Hlatimba Pass, down the Pass, and so along one of the sources of the Umkomaas to Fort Nottingham, from where they had set out three days earlier. Again our narrators, in the following pages tell the full story of this engagement and of the ride back home.

† Brief biographies of these three young men will be found in the Notes, on page 86.

Langalibalele escaped into Lesotho, and four flying columns were quickly organised to capture him, two from the Natal side, one from East Griqualand and one from the north. Langalibalele was captured on December 11th, just outside Leribe, and brought back in chains to Natal.

On Christmas Day they entered Natal, and on the last day of December, 1873, the cavalcade reached the capital, Pietermaritzburg, after their long descent of the Town Hill. The streets of the town were lined with hundreds of people, and excitement ran high as the long line of men, headed by a strong escort of mounted Volunteers, moved up Chapel Street, turned, into Church Street, and marched on to the gaol. The prisoners consisted of Langalibalele, his five sons (young men still in their teens), many of his headmen, and upwards of 300 of his tribesmen. The chief, mounted and in chains, rode between two men. His sons, and the other prisoners, were on foot. When the chief dismounted at the gaol and was led inside, he was visibly overcome, and his 'feelings found vent in a flood of tears'. For two or three days he had eaten very little, and on the way down into Natal had asked his escort to shoot him out of hand.

As the column marched up Chapel Street a distressing incident occurred. John Potterill, father of one of the young men who had been killed at the Pass, rushed out of his house and tried to pull Langalibalele off his horse. He had to be forcibly restrained.

Langalibalele's subsequent mockery of a trial, and the uproar that followed in Natal, are too well known to need recapitulation here, and may be read in full in **Barrier of Spears** by R. O. Pearse. After being banished to Robben Island for a while, Langalibalele was allowed to return to Natal, where he was settled in the Swartkop Location under Chief Telelegu.

He died in 1889. As befitted a king, his body was wrapped in a leopard skin, sewn tightly in a freshly slaughtered ox hide, and placed on a wagon. Accompanied by a large impi and followed by a second wagon carrying the dead chief's widows and children, the funeral procession made its seven day journey via Mooi River to Bekuzulu under the shadow of Giant's Castle. At Bekuzulu more than 100 cattle and many goats were slaughtered. A section of the impi was sent to find a suitable burial place, and there prepared a grave. They dug for two days, excavating a tunnel under the rock, and then returned for the body of their dead chief. They bore him high on their hands and interred him in the cavity, together with eight claypots of beer and eight slaughtered goats. The 'sun who was boiling hot', who had defied the might of the British Empire, had set at last.

Geographical Note.

The section of the Drakensberg escarpment which figures in the Langalibalele Rebellion forms the boundary between Natal and Lesotho (Basutoland). It is a high mountain wall, towering up from the plains of Natal at about 4 000 ft. to a height of 10 000 ft. and more, where it forms the edge of a vast plateau stretching into Lesotho. This mountain wall is unscalable in most places except by expert mountaineers, but a number of steep passes lead up from the Natal side, which give easier access to the top. Three of these passes are prominent in the story of the Langalibalele Rebellion.

The Giant's Castle Pass.

Giant's Castle juts out from the main Drakensberg range. It is connected to the main escarpment by a narrow neck of land. Giant's Castle Pass is the gully formed on the northern slopes of this neck. The upper portion is steep and rocky, and it is doubtful whether a horseman could negotiate it.

The Hlatimba Pass.

This is a pass at the head of the Hlatimba River, a tributary of the Umkomaas, and it lies six miles due south of the Giant's Castle Pass. It used to be called Proudfoot's Pass (Captain William Proudfoot, a man of great physical strength, came to be known as the Garibaldi of Natal. He settled at his farm 'Craigieburn' in the Riet Vlei district, and played a prominent part in the Volunteer movement in Natal. In the 1850s and 1860s he was officer Commanding the Carbineers, and took part in many expeditions against the raiding Bushman. He died in 1890). The pass, though choked with rocks and huge boulders in its upper portion, is (only just) negotiable by horsemen.

The Bushman's River Pass.

Now known as the Langalibalele Pass. This is one of the easiest passes in the Drakensberg. It lies 5 miles due north of the Giant's Castle Pass. Standing in the mouth of the Pass (at the top) and facing out into Natal, one would look down its steep grassy, but rock-strewn, slopes into the hills and valleys of the Giant's Castle Game Reserve, far below. To the right and left the ground rises, 100 to 150 feet on the right, a good deal higher and more steeply on the left. Behind is a shallow, saucer-like depression, about a mile across, through which winds a small stream, the headwaters of the Lakelebalele River. Beyond this stream is a series of hills rising to a height of 10 500 feet. The height of the lip, or mouth, of the Pass is about 9 500 feet. Here the action between the Carbineers and the tribesmen of Langalibalele took place.

Roll of the Carbineers who took part in the Expedition.

1. The Pietermaritzburg Troop.

Lieutenant Woodroffe
 Quartermaster Niekerk, I.
 Sergeant James, G.
 Sergeant-major Taylor, J.
 Sergeant Button, J. T.
 Sergeant Whitelaw, W.
 Corporal Moodie, A.
 Corporal Shepstone, G.
 Corporal Fletcher, C.
 Trumpeter Holliday, H.
 Trooper Boshoff, J. C.
 Trooper Boshoff, D. J.
 Trooper Berning, W.
 Trooper Bourke, E.
 Trooper Bower, T.
 Trooper Bond, E. (killed)
 Trooper Church, A.
 Trooper Davis, A.
 Trooper Chatterton, W.
 Trooper Doig, D.
 Trooper Egner, Jas.
 Trooper Erskine, R.H. (killed)
 Trooper Ford, T.

Trooper Freeman, J.
 Trooper Gilligan
 Trooper Goodburn
 (substitute for Doig, W.)
 Trooper Jones, G.
 Trooper Kahts, F.
 Trooper Kevtel, P.
 Trooper London, W.
 Trooper Macdonald, A.
 Trooper Murphy, P. R.
 Trooper Pannewitz, J.
 Trooper Pepworth, H.
 Trooper Potterill, C.D. (killed)
 Trooper Player, J.
 Trooper Pistorius, C.
 Trooper Royston, W.
 Trooper Raw, Crick.
 Trooper Shepstone, A.J.
 Trooper Spettigue, T.
 Trooper Vanderplank, J.
 Trooper Wheelwright, W.
 Trooper Zeederberg, L.

2. The Karkloof Troop.

Captain Charles Barter.
 Captain John Otter Jackson
 Lieut. Parkinson
 Sgt. Meredith Fannin.
 Sgt. Thomas B. Varty
 Sgt. Isaac W. Dicks
 Trumpeter George Ross
 Walter M. Jaffray
 Henry Bucknall
 Frederick Edgar Shaw
 Charles Shaw
 H. Kirby
 W. Wray
 E. T. Taynton
 D. T. Household
 Goodman Household
 Robert Speirs

P. Otto
 Albert Robert Button
 John James Raw
 Charles Raw
 James J. Hodson
 John Holmes
 Walter Holmes
 George Curry, Jnr.
 Robert King
 Frederick Preller
 George Ford
 James A. Lindsay
 Thomas Day
 James Day
 John Day
 Ryno Otto
 Andries Otto
 Erasmus Otto



Charles Barter
Died 7th June, 1904.

Chapter I

Charles Barter

Charles Barter was one of the most colourful characters to have adorned the early history of Natal. Starting his first farming venture in the beautiful Karkloof district in 1856, he called his farm The Start. Forty years later, full of public honours and respect, he retired from active life to his property just outside Pietermaritzburg, which he called The Finish. He also owned the farms The Chase (Chase Valley) and The Check. He was the son of an Oxfordshire rector and a Fellow of New College, Oxford, but he had found the closed academic atmosphere of university life a little stifling to his adventurous spirit, and had emigrated to Canada. Here he had tried his hand at lumbering, but not liking this, had returned to England, only to set out for Natal soon afterwards in the Globe. Here he became a farmer and a noted horse-breeder, but his active mind again sought wider horizons, and in 1852 he published his well-known 'The Dorp and the Veld; or Six months in Natal.', following this up with several other publications, and also becoming a newspaper editor. He then entered politics, and represented Maritzburg County in the Legislative Assembly during the Lieutenant-Governorship of John Scott. In 1876 he was appointed resident magistrate at Verulam, and in 1880 was transferred to the Pietermaritzburg City Magistracy. He was a man greatly beloved and respected, and before he died in 1904 he gave to the city he had served so well the Emma Barter Homes for the aged as a memorial to his wife. He was a keen Carbineer, and at the time of the Langalibalele Rebellion, was officer commanding the Karkloof Troop. Trained observer and accomplished writer as he was, his account of the ride of the Carbineers and of the engagement at the head of the Pass is one of the best we have. It appeared in the form of a letter to the Editor of the Times of Natal of 8th November, 1873, and was reprinted three days later in the Natal Witness. We can but repeat the words of the Editor of the Times: 'We particularly commend to the careful attention of our readers,' he said, 'the letter from Mr Barter, the accuracy of which is beyond doubt.'

Camp at Meshlynn, Thursday.

I have no time, and little strength, to write you a detailed account of the sad events which have marked the commencement of the expedition which was, I hear, derisively called "a Government picnic". These I may give at some future day. But the public will want to know the facts, and I will do my best to satisfy them.

You know that we all met at the rendezvous† on Saturday afternoon. After 24 hours of great discomfort, owing to a continuance of misty rain, the Karkloof Carbineers and 20 men of the Natal Carbineers were ordered out for active service. Intelligence had been

† Fort Nottingham.

received that Langalibalele had retired into the throat of the Bushman's River Pass with the intention of escaping southward, probably to join his brother, who, I believe, lives on the St. John's River†. The task imposed on the volunteers selected, aided by about a score of Basutos, from the tribe of Umbanda, or now Hlubi‡, was to occupy the head of the Pass and prevent the escape of the rebel chief. We were to start at 8.30 p.m. and were to be in the Pass by the corresponding hour the next morning.

Preparations having been previously made, one hour was allowed for final arrangements, and by that time we were all in the saddle, carrying 40 rounds each; provisions at the rate of three days per man, and spare ammunition being carried by pack horses. The expedition was under the command of Major Durnford, R.E. At 1 a.m. we crossed the Mooi River for the second time, within a mile of Meshlynn¶, when it was discovered that two of the pack horses were missing, and that these two carried not only a portion of the ammunition, but the whole of our store of provisions. Our Basuto scouts not being able to discover them, we up-saddled at 3 a.m. and proceeded up what is called the "Game Pass", which ascends the lower range of the Kathlamba§ under Giant's Castle, but a little to the south of it.

I must premise that the data upon which the orders were based were founded upon a sketch, which shows a plateau, or flat top, between the summit of this pass and the head of the Bushman's River Pass. We shall see how this was verified. Travelling through the night, we emerged upon the said plateau, and for some time rode over a fine grass country. Suddenly, however, turning to the right we found ourselves facing a stupendous mountain‡, its sides scarred and scoured with water furrows, and discovered that this obstacle lay between us and our destination. All this time our commanding officer pressed on, eager to fulfill his instructions, the men occasionally munching dry biscuit, helped down by a drop of rum.

After one or two minor inequalities of ground, we came to the edge of an abrupt descent of slippery grass, very steep and long‡, so trying to the necessarily dismounted men that a considerable number were thoroughly knocked up before they reached the bottom.

† The Umzimvubu River.

‡ When the Amahlubi were driven out of their ancestral home by Mpande, some took refuge in Lesotho and were absorbed into the Sotho nation.

¶ A well-known farm, a few miles north-west of Fort Nottingham, and occupied at the time by William Popham.

§ Kathlamba (uKhahlamba) the Zulu name for the Drakensberg mountains, a term in general use by the early settlers. Game Pass is the pass that ascends the Little Berg, the sandstone range that lies below the main, basaltic, Drakensberg.

† Giant's Castle.

‡ The Loteni River.

Crossing the Umkomaas River¶ close to its source, we commenced the ascent of a precipitous hill, which, in any other spot, would be a mountain. Here several of the Natal Carbineers succumbed, of whom three made their way back. How horses and men struggled up, by a succession of springs and rushes, was a miracle; but the ascent was not accomplished without accident. Major Durnford, pulled back by his horse, rolled many feet down a precipice, dislocated his shoulder, and otherwise injuring him in the head and body.

Full of energy, however, he struggled on to the top, which the greater part of us reached, minus our remaining pack horses; one of which was supposed to be seriously hurt, if not killed. A mile of easier travel along a ridge, and we off-saddled on good water and grass, a little after noon. Here we left Lieut. Parkinson and Sergt. Major Otto to bring up the stragglers and to collect the pack horses, and with a force reduced to 32 rank and file, proceeded onward at about 2 p.m.

A short ride brought us again to the Umkomaas§, with no very abrupt descent. The scene before us was savage in the extreme. Down the bare side of the mountain† hung ribands of water, showing the spot to be the very birth-place and nursery of rivers; above, huge krantzies frowned, while the masses of unburnt dry grass, hanging like a vast curtain, gave a sombre and malignant aspect to the scene. How we slipped and struggled, fell to get up and struggle again, or lay panting on the ground, despairing of accomplishing the task, it would be tedious to tell.‡ Trooper Fannin was the first man out, about sunset; myself the last, about 8 p.m. I should say that this Pass is the one mentioned by the **Witness** as little known, except to Bushmen etc., and certainly little known to the Government, who represent the country as a plateau. Had Mr. Popham been at home, he could have corrected this mistake; as it was here that his cattle were slaughtered by the Bushmen some years since. The last part of the ascent is terrific, among boulders of immense size, on sloping ground, offering no hold for anything but a naked foot. When some hundred yards from the top Major Durnford fainted, and lay where he fell for the night, sedulously attended by Trooper Erskine of the Natal Carbineers, who twice descended with brandy and other available comforts, stayed with him through the night, and with the assistance of two of the Basutos, brought him out of the Pass between 1 and 2 a.m. We had linked horses, and camped

¶ The Loteni, the Bohle and the Hlatimba Rivers, all tributaries of the Umkomaas, were invariably called the Umkomaas in those days. Barter means here the Loteni.

§ See note above. This is either the Bohle or the Hlatimba, most probably the Hlatimba. Barter's description fits the headwaters of the Hlatimba exactly.

† The main wall of the Drakensberg.

‡ They are now climbing the Hlatimba Pass.

out above, at a height by aneroid of 9,100 feet above sea level; and after a few hours of such sleep as the intense cold would permit, were again in saddle a little after 2 a.m.

Proceeding over a stony and rugged surface, we began to near our destination[†] and at about 6.30 on Tuesday morning (instead of 8.30 on Monday morning), occupied the Pass, weary and jaded but in thoroughly good spirits.

I have hitherto omitted the important fact that it had been announced to us that Mr. Allison, the late Border Agent, was to be on the spot by the original hour appointed, with a large force of natives, to support us. Why he failed us will be a matter for enquiry.

Our commanding officer formed the men in single line across the mouth of the Pass, and we proceeded to make a careful inspection of its depths. All seemed quiet at first, and we congratulated ourselves upon our success. We had seen some natives above, but as they showed no hostility we took little notice of them. A large herd of cattle was also feeding above, and as hunger has no law, Major Durnford gave orders to the Basutos to stab one of them, as it would not, of course, do to fire a shot. This was not effected till four or five had been wounded, as there was, of course, no means at hand for securing them. One was at last slaughtered, and such was the raving hunger of the men, that some eat (sic) pieces of the raw meat, while others devoured the paunch, after the manner of Kafirs.

By this time a lot of natives had gathered in our rear, and might be seen approaching in a body. We at first supposed them to be part of Allison's contingent, but we were soon undeceived. Major Durnford, after some conversation with Elijaht, whose behaviour throughout was excellent, rode off to parley with them, refusing my offer to accompany them. I afterwards rode up with a trooper, seeing their excited gestures, and knowing well that mischief was brewing. It appeared that the elders and headmen had no wish to commence hostilities, but were unable to control the younger. This was shortly seen; for when a number of them ran up the rocks on either side, and taking position, deliberately covered our little troop with their muskets, they were deaf to every order or remonstrance of their elders, though in one case enforced by a blow.

We had set our look-outs along the ledge of rocks on both sides, and were soon apprised that the men from above were calling those from below to come up. This we had orders to resist, but not to fire the first shot; the consequence of which was that the men forced through us; and soon both sides of the opening were lined with enemies. Some were mocking and jeering at us, some sharpening their assegais upon the rocks, and calling to us to bring up the real army.

The plot thickened. For a long time the men had stood quietly,

[†] The top of Bushman's River Pass.

† Elijah Kambule, one of Sir Theophilus Shepstone's interpreters.

seeing themselves caught in a trap, commanded by the pointed guns of their foes, and compelled to remain inactive. At length, several of the oldest and steadiest of the Karkloof Carbineers came to me and said that it was plain that we were surrounded and caught in a trap; that there was neither support nor open country behind them, and that as they could not accomplish the work they had set to do, they ought to retire before the numbers were increased, or the excitement reached a climax. These feelings were not calmed by Sgt. Clark† who loudly shouted that we were going to be murdered, etc., and whose experience in Kaffir war gave his words authority.

I decidedly thought, and think still, that to match 32 men, jaded and sick with hunger, even with the very efficient aid of the Basutos, would have been madness. In defence of home and country, men will encounter fearful odds; but I hold that the rest of the rebels would not have compensated for the loss we have already sustained. Had we arrived before any portion of the tribe, there is no doubt we could have held the Pass as long as our ammunition lasted; though the injunction to await their fire‡ involved the certain sacrifice of one life. But our ammunition gone, and night upon us, what must have occurred? In our actual position, I am perfectly certain that, had we not retired, few, if any, would have lived to tell the tale. The first volley would have struck many down; and though the men would have fought well, with the ball once opened, they would have served principally for targets; the enemy having the advantage of position, knowledge of the ground, and the feeling that they were fighting for their chief and their home. They were surprised at first, and a bold dash might have struck a panic; but, as they drew together and saw their strength and our weakness, their insolence increased, while the confidence of our men diminished.

Our commanding officer, as gallant and determined a man as ever breathed, would have cheerfully sacrificed not only us, but himself, in the execution of his orders. He is doubtless right from his point of view, and had he insisted, I am sure that the bulk of the men would have obeyed his orders. He yielded, very reluctantly, to my remonstrance, though not before making an effort to provoke hostilities. We were not allowed to commence by forcing the natives, who were above the Pass, back into it. This necessitated a division of the little force. The natives, moreover, determined to run no unnecessary risk, simply gave way slowly, while on the other side they were gathering. This was the side that commanded our retreat, which they meant to intercept.

My own impression was that if they gained their object of keeping the Pass open, they would not care to molest us. The result

† Sgt. Wm. Clark was a regular soldier who had been assigned to the Carbineers to stiffen a regiment hitherto untried in battle. See page 37.

‡ The order not to fire the first shot had been given personally to Major Durnford by the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Benjamin Pine.

showed I was mistaken. When the word was given to retreat, the men formed fours, and retired at a walk, as steadily as on parade. They were then extended into half sections, and as they were forming files from either side, the fire began. As we turned and entered the gorge, with a stony hill close, the bullets fell like hail. I drew pistol, and looked at the hill, but could see nothing but little jets of smoke, and feeling sure that it was all over with us, cantered on.

Just as we rounded the corner nearest to the hill, I saw poor Erskine struck, and am certain that he was dead before he reached the ground. He had supported the Major in his wish to continue the occupation of the Pass, and had behaved with the gallantry which distinguishes all his family¶. Sergt. Varty's horse falling dead, he siezed the grey which had carried poor Erskine, to be again unhorsed by a chance shot. This time he must have been lost but for the assistance of Troopers Fannin and Speirs, one of whom caught a led horse, and the other helped to shift the saddle from the dead steed to the living one. This is all that I saw of that fearful ride.

Poor Elijah, whom the Editor of the *Witness* will, I am sure, regret, fell by the side of Major Durnford. The Major, leaping a gully, was beset by two Kafirs, one of whom seized his bridle. The ready pistol disposed of one, and a parting shot rolled over another. We rode up a hill with the idea of taking up a position, but some still pressed on, and our retreat became more and more straggling.

In the throat of the big Pass† we met our comrades whom we had left behind, and continued our route. Trooper Hynton (*sic*) ‡ had a narrow escape here. He had stayed behind to look for a missing haversack, when three of our Basutos warned him that two of the enemy were coming down. They took shelter behind a rock, and after exchanging a few shots, one of the enemy fell, and the other ran back up the Pass.

Arrived at the bottom, we took a path suggested by Trooper Fannin, and plunging into the recesses of the Umkomaas, followed the valley for miles, and reached camp without further molestation, having been out 52½ hours, of which 40½ were spent in the saddle, or climbing hills; having crossed a country such as no cavalry corps has probably ever before attempted, and doing even this on dry biscuit sparingly administered.

I make no comments, leaving facts to speak for themselves, nor have I time for more.

Yours etc.,

Charles Barter.

¶ Robert Henry Erskine, a rising young Advocate in the Supreme Court, was the son of Major Erskine, Colonial Secretary. See page 86 for full biography.

† The Hlatimba Pass.

‡ A typographical error on the part of the newspaper for **Taynton**.

Chapter II

H. A. Church

On November 3rd, 1926, the following account appeared in a Natal newspaper:

AT BUSHMAN'S PASS 50 YEARS AGO - DURBAN SURVIVOR OF THE FIGHT.

By the Town Hall in Pietermaritzburg stands a monument to the men of the Natal Carbineers, three in number, who fell at the fight in the Bushman's River Pass 53 years ago tomorrow.

The story of the Carbineers' march to intercept the native chief, Langalibalele, is one that the present generation of Natalians has almost forgotten, but it is interesting to learn that there is one survivor still alive and hearty in Durban in the person of Mr H. A. Church. Mr. Church is in his 75th year, and he was but a lad when he marched out of Maritzburg with the Carbineers under the ill-fated Col. Durnford, afterwards slain on the tragic field of Isandhlwana. But his memories of the action at the Bushman's River are clear and vivid, and his account of the fight itself remarkably interesting.

The column left the City on October 30, 1873, and their commanding officer had foolishly been given the order 'Not to fire first', an order which he carried out to the letter, with consequences that came very near to being disastrous.

There were 44 men of the Maritzburg Troop, and at Fort Nottingham they were joined by the Karkloof Troop, whilst large numbers of other armed forces were operating with them. The orders for the campaign were signed by Sir Benjamin Pine, then Governor of the Colony, but they worked out very badly. Practically no proper preparations had been made for an advance into the mountainous country of the Drakensberg, and the sufferings that men and horses were called on to endure were appalling. The Carbineers travelled up towards Giant's Castle, but men and horses were thorough (*sic*) done, rations failed, and they were tremendously reduced in number before they reached the Bushman's Pass early on the morning of Tuesday, November 4, and threw themselves in a thin line across the pass, their orders being to intercept the rebel chief on his retreat into Basutoland.

Only 32 men, faint with hunger, tired out by three days' continuous marching - they had scarcely rested at all - formed up on the summit, whilst the native levies to the number of 500, which were supposed to be there to support them, failed to materialise. And very shortly the men discovered that a portion of Langalibalele's

warriors had already gone through the pass and were actually in their rear, whilst the others were advancing,

The day dragged on and the position of the Carbineers was obviously untenable, until reluctantly the order to retire was given. By that time they were practically trapped, and the moment they moved the natives opened a hot fire, being well armed with rifles. That only three were killed says much for poor shooting, and the steadiness of the Carbineers, who eventually extricated themselves and reached camp after having been out for 52 hours, of which 41 were spent in the saddle.

It was a badly managed affair and created a tremendous fuss, the wonder being that any at all escaped. Langalibalele himself crossed unmolested through the pass, but was afterwards driven into the arms of troops from the Cape and captured.

The three troopers of the Carbineers who fell at the pass were Erskine, Potterill and Bond, all members of well-known Natal families. Mr H. A. Church, as has been said, is to-day the sole survivor of the Maritzburg Troop, and it is believed that there are two survivors of the Karkloof Troop which took part in the action.

Mr Church is an Englishman who came out here with his father in 1868, and after a brief sojourn in Capetown reached Natal in 1869. He lived in Maritzburg until 1878, when he went to England again, and did not return until 1896. He is naturally proud of his part in the early history of Natal's most famous regiment, the Carbineers, and his reminiscences of that time, and particularly of the sorry battle of Bushman's River Pass, when official ineptitude nearly caused the massacre of a whole troop of men, are deeply interesting.

Long may he live to tell the story of those early, exciting days in the young Colony!

Chapter III

John Otter Jackson

John Otter Jackson arrived in Natal about 1850. His parents had come out to the Cape in 1835 to undertake missionary work. He settled in the Karkloof, and for many years farmed there. He was a keen Carbineer, and at the time of the Rebellion held the rank of sergeant. He then entered the Natal Civil Service, and held the position of magistrate in many Natal towns. He acted as magistrate at Greytown during the Zulu War of 1879, and in 1900 was magistrate at Newcastle, he and his wife being taken prisoner by the advancing Boer forces. He later became Acting Judge of the Native High Court.

He and his wife had three sons and four daughters, two of his sons, Morrison and Stanley, becoming Chief Native Commissioners in Rhodesia. His eldest daughter married Judge William Broome. (Mr. Justice F.N. Broome is their son).

When, in 1913, he died while on a visit to his two sons in Rhodesia, the Natal Witness spoke of 'his kindly heart, his courtesy to all with whom he came into contact, his unflinching sympathy and help for others, his high courage and rectitude, combined with a keen sense of humour' which had produced 'a charming personality which could not easily be forgotten.'

In 1873 Jackson took part in the expedition against Langalibalele as a sergeant in the Karkloof Carbineers. Thirty-seven years later he wrote his 'Recollections' of what had happened at the Pass on that eventful morning, and this was published, as follows, in The Pictorial of April 27, 1911.

From the time of the formation of the Karkloof Troop of Volunteers as the left wing of the Natal Carbineers in 1860, until 1875, I was a member of the first-named troop.

On October 31, 1873, we were under orders to turn out for active service against Langalibalele, who had refused to attend at the seat of Government when summoned.

On Nov. 1 we mustered at Fort Nottingham, where we were joined by the right wing (N.C.) from Maritzburg. A force of Regulars were there under the command of Colonel Mills.

On Sunday, Nov. 2, we, under orders, packed ammunition on two pack-saddles, also biscuits and boiled beef. As we were preparing to turn in, after 8 p.m., the order to 'saddle-up' was sounded. We fell in and were marched off - cavalry only - finding ourselves after some marching under the command of Major Durford R.E. (We were not told our destination, nor the name of our commander.) Pack-horses were in the rear, each of us carrying 60

rounds of ball cartridge.

Before midnight the pack-horses were reported missing, and we waited near the sources of the Mooi River for an hour or two, lying down in front of our horses, but heard nothing of our packs, which were in charge of four troopers. We marched on, and at daybreak we got up the Game Pass - a spur of the Drakensberg - from which we had a clear view of the Bushman's River Pass, our commander ordering 'ball cartridge, load,' and 'aim low and fire slow'.

Langalibalele was supposed at that time to be still in his location near Ntabamhlope, but from this point it could be seen that cattle were being driven up the Pass, some five or six miles to our front, very rugged country intervening.

A detour to our left was then ordered, and we worked our way through the kloofs at the sources of the Umkomaas in order to get into Giant's Castle Pass and so up the Berg. The Basuto chief, Hlubi, had joined us, with some 15 to 20 men, some of whom were scouting. We kept on all day under the heat of a November sun, without food, Major Durnford having about noon seriously injured his arm by losing his foothold and rolling down the steep side of a kloof. His sword scabbard was doubled up, and a Basuto carried the naked sword, which was found in Basutoland in January, 1874, in the hands of rebels. It fell to me to render him assistance, and at sunset we entered the Giant's Castle Pass. Here he fell down exhausted, giving me orders to push on, collect all who had reached the top, and there await his coming. This was done, and we lay down, holding our horses, men straggling in, including our captain (Captain Barter, K.C.)

About 3 a.m. on Tuesday Major Durnford joined us, his arm in a sling, and he ordered us to march. Erskine had been with him until he got up the Pass, and had 'borrowed' a few spoonfuls of ground coffee of me - all I had. Scouts had come in, who reported many cattle at the head of the Bushman's River Pass, also that the rebel chief had long before gone over to the Orange River sources. The remainder of our force were far in the rear, many having been knocked up the day before. We rode into the top of the Pass (Bushman's River) about 7 a.m., finding cattle in the Pass in charge of armed herdsmen. The movements of cattle and herds ceased after we arrived, and Sergt. Button rejoined with his men.

A beast was killed by order of Capt. Barter, and those who could fancy it chewed some of the raw beef. The killing of this beast gave rise to an altercation between Major Durnford and Capt. Barter, the former saying we ought to pay for it. The order was given to force the rebels back into Natal, the interpreter (Elijah Kambula) passing it on to Hlubi's Basutos, part of the order being, 'Whoever fires the first shot, I will blow his brains out.'

Some mounted natives appeared at a short distance from the top of the Pass about 8 a.m. We were placed across the Pass at intervals of six paces, dismounted. On seeing the mounted natives, Major Durnford exclaimed, 'There are Capt. Allison and his men,' towards whom he at once rode, accompanied by some of the Basutos and

Elijah Kambula. (In January, 1874, a note in pencil was found on a rebel written by Major Durnford, saying that he was surrounded and asking for help.)

A long parley ensued, the mounted natives proving to be some of the rebel tribe, their numbers steadily increasing on the rock-covered ground above us. After the lapse of about an hour, a shout was heard from the rocks above us, 'Ai kupuk' impi' (let the armed force come up), and we soon had armed men passing through our open formation, dodging round our horses; and the rocks above us were occupied by rebels, saying, 'Now we shall see,' while going through the motions of sharpening their assegais on the stones.

Major Durnford abandoned his parleying, Elijah Kambula begging me to tell our commander that the rebels would soon attack, to which I replied that he could do it while I could not. We were then ordered to mount, and marched on to higher ground, where we were broken up into sections of four, and told to push back groups of rebels to their allegiance, but to no purpose.

Captain Barter said to me, 'Go and tell Major Durnford these men want to fight.' I went and gave my message, on which Major Durnford said, 'Go back to your place.' He was pointing his revolver at a group of rebels at the time, saying 'Go back to your allegiance.' I returned to my place.

It must have been fully 10 a.m. An order was then given by our commander, 'Close to your centre,' and we were marched in close order back into the mouth of the Pass and there halted, the rebels closing in, and there we sat for five to ten minutes, when the order was given, 'Retire by the way you came. Fours, right, march.' Major Durnford wanted to retire down the Pass, but was dissuaded by Capt. Barter, who said we should keep on the high ground and pick up our packs and the men left in the rear. As soon as our small column was in motion, Major Durnford, Elijah Kambula, and one Basuto (the latter leading the Major's spare charger), took along lower ground on our right and were soon out of sight, we continuing along a ledge of rock which terminated in what was practically a gorge. Finding that our ledge was narrowing, I, as troop leader, turned my head and passed down word to form half-sections, and during the necessary halt in the rear a single shot was fired, followed by a fusilade, when those in the rear pushed forward, and there Erskine, Bond and Potterill (N.C.) were killed, the horse of a fourth man (Raw, N.C.) being wounded. The rebels still being on higher ground we cantered 800 to 1 000 yards, and while doing so the horse of Varty (K.C.), on my left, was shot. Erskine's horse was soon caught, and Varty mounted it.

Seeing Major Durnford's spare horse running loose, I went after him, the fire of the rebels still going on, and after catching him I rode towards a group of our men, finding that Varty was again unhorsed. The horse I handed to Trooper Fannin, N.C., and he, R. Speirs, and Bucknall assisted Varty, at great risk to themselves. We were all in range of rebel fire at the time, and Varty was once more mounted. I rode to the rest of the troop, who were standing still, and

then saw Major Durnford cantering past us alone, shouting "Carbineers, Carbineers", but he did not draw rein at the time. He gave no order. We found later that Elijah Kambula and the Basuto were killed. We obeyed his last order to retire by the way we came. He took another way. We did fire a few shots, but at men behind stones, Speirs dropping one who came out in the open. Sergt. Clark, our drill instructor, called on us to ride to a ledge of rock, as we were under the rebels' fire. We did so and dismounted, but seeing our commander, with some Basutos and four or five men, going towards Giant's Castle, we mounted and followed at a walk. The horse of Trooper Church, N.C., was knocked up, and Bucknall, K.C., put Church on his horse and walked. The horse of Jaffray, K.C., was also knocked up, and Jaffray abandoned him and walked with us. About noon we reached Giant's Castle Pass, and there we found our commander, also Lieut. Parkinson, with some twelve others, and our pack-horses, carrying ammunition and biscuits.

A descent of the Berg was ordered. On being asked what we were to do, Major Durnford said, 'Get down the mountain.' Taynton, K.C., turned back to recover his lost haversack. He later rejoined us with a rebel's gun, the owner of which he had shot when fired on.

At dusk we off-saddled for the first time after saddling up at Fort Nottingham on Sunday evening. We also had our first feed of biscuits after a 48 hours' fast. Later on we marched to the camp at Meshlynn, reaching it at 3 a.m. on Wednesday morning, and at once fell asleep by our saddles.

Thus ended the first incident in the Langalibalele Rebellion, a glaring instance of mismanagement.

Chapter IV

Albert Robert Button

Albert Robert Button was born in March 1849 at Brundish, Suffolk, and was the son of James Clark Button (1803-1855) who was a farmer at Bishop Colenso's Mission Station, Ekukanyeni. A. R. Button married Annie Smith Buchanan in 1872, who was a niece of David Dale Buchanan, founder of the Natal Witness.

This manuscript, hitherto unpublished as far as we know, was found amongst the papers of the late Samuel Marriott and handed over to the Durban Museum in 1947. It is now in the Durban Local History Museum.

On Sunday evening about 8 o'clock we started from Fort Nottingham. Our destination was not known to us. Twenty Carbineers under Sergeant Major Taylor started in company with the Karkloof Carbineers under Captain Barter, the whole being under command of Major Durnford.

We had ammunition and three days' provisions on pack horses. The pack horses were placed in the rear of the whole line. Orders were given for us to march in files. Marching so we crossed a large extent of ground. There were a lot of Basutos to the front in company with Major Durnford.

Shortly after leaving Camp at Fort Nottingham orders were given that silence had to be kept in the ranks but we were allowed to ride at ease and a good many pipes were going accordingly.

The evening was a very foggy one and at times the fog was very dense. After we had gone about half a mile orders were given that all the men were to have two cartridges loose in their pockets so that they could be got at without much difficulty. Of course an order of that description excited a few. Many were looking forward to some rough work.

We rode through a very strange country, ups and downs nearly all the way. Crossed over Mooi River and found some of our Basuto allies in charge of the Pass opposite. Rode on through this fog until we reached the Mooi River near Mr. Popham's farm. After crossing which, we off-saddled for nearly two hours finding that two of the pack horses had been left behind or strayed from the right track (these two had ammunition and our provisions on them).

Started again at 3 o'clock and rode up the Valley of the Mooi River, the two missing horses not having caught up with us. Doing a little steeple chasing as a change to the monotony of the scene - none

came to grief much to the surprise of many. The remaining pack horses were placed between the two Corps after our second start.

The Major threw out scouts from the Basutos to either side of us and others to our front to protect our flanks. Here the Major ordered us to load and told us that he would take the first division in the event of an alarm and that the second division would form the support - that we were to extend six paces between each man and to remain two hundred yards in the rear - that he wished to impress upon us the absolute necessity 'to fire slow and to fire low'. The ground over which we were travelling was such that we could not possibly have extended as he ordered had we been called on to do so.

After we had gone some distance we came in view of what I believe is called by or known to many as Popham's Pass†. the sun just rising. The Pass before us we looked upon as being a very heavy pull but were informed that the country beyond was almost level, but our expectations were not fulfilled as will be seen in further perusal.

After leaving the top of the Pass we had a fine grass country to ride over. Here Major Durnford ordered me to remain in the rear and bring up all stragglers in order. We travelled at a good pace and I was necessarily kept a good deal in the rear, all alone until James Lindsay, one of the Karkloof Corps dropped behind to keep me company, and thus we jogged along merrily until we reached a very high mountain which lay between us and our destination. We went along until we had to descend into the valley of the Umkomaast which was very steep. Half way down I found James Egner of ours who had completely knocked up and had sent his horse on. As mine was a quiet horse I, with the assistance of poor Erskine, lifted him onto it and we took him down.

When we reached the river found several of ours completely done in. The Major had by this time gone on to the top of the hill on the opposite side and we could see the men struggling up the hill which appeared to be almost impassable.

Leaving Egner and the others who were behind in charge of Sergeant Major Taylor who relieved me from my unenviable position of 'picker-upper' I followed Erskine who had gone on in front. About two-thirds of the way up we passed the remaining pack horses which could not budge an inch. Then came the tug-of-war. By jumps and jerks I managed at last to land my horse on the top where I found poor Erskine looking miserably tired.

After resting a few minutes Erskine and I started on leaving three or four fellows behind. We had, comparatively speaking, a fair road to the place where Major Durnford had off-saddled. We then found that Major Durnford had had a fall over the precipice and had put his collar bone out. I reported to him the state I had left

† Another name for Game Pass.

‡ The Loteni.

the fellows in below and he sent a guide back.

Rested for a quarter of an hour when Major Durnford again gave the order to march forward. We left Lieutenant Parkinson, Otto and several others to bring on the stragglers and ammunition. After going some distance we again descended into the Umkomaas, the path down being better than any of the others, but the opposite side was enough to appal the stoutest heart as we looked forward to such work as had not been hitherto accomplished by any of us, but we had to go.

After we crossed over the river the struggle began and poor Captain Barter was on the point of yielding several times, but we one and all encouraged him on and what with slipping, struggling, gasping for breath and lying down in the grass, we managed to reach the top of the first range of mountains† and came in full view of a pass which at first sight appeared almost perpendicular. The scenery here was very grand indeed, streamlets of water dropping over the perpendicular rocks whilst moss and other plants here and there added to the beauty.

After waiting a few minutes we started up the pass. The work was frightful and such as ought never to have been done by men and horses. Here the Major fainted and stayed below all the evening. When we reached the top we had a level country to ride over for about half a mile where we found water which tasted better than any nectar could have done. We off-saddled and had a drink of water and smoked our pipes as our dinner.

After we had rested there some time Sergeant Clark came up to us with orders that we were to proceed back to the top of the pass which we accordingly did, and after linking our horses and placing guards over them we had to get some sleep but it was so bitterly cold that sleep was almost out of the question.

Poor Erskine attended to the Major in the most kind and devoted manner during the whole of the evening, taking down water, etc., to him. I do not believe he slept during the night.

About 2 o'clock in the morning Major Durnford came up assisted by the Basutos and again were the orders to march forward given. We then numbered thirty-two all told. We rode in half-sections over a spongy and rocky country. Had rain fallen I doubt whether our horses could have reached their destination. We skirted the top of the Berg for some distance and in some places could see cattle and horses in the plains and valleys below us. When we approached the top of the valley leading down to the head of the Pass‡, Major Durnford sent word that we were to march as fast as we could and we managed to screw a canter out of our horses, and away we went through bogs and over stones and down a steep hill and kept up the pace until we reached a small spruit where Major

† The Little Berg.

‡ Bushman's River Pass.

Durnford halted and said he would take the right division and that I was to remain in charge of the second division to form a support in the event of their being attacked. And away he went with some of the men and all the Basutos and reached the top of the Pass creating a panic amongst the few kafirs who were there, taking possession of some guns and disarming them of assegais and forcing and frightening them down the pass. A Basuto came and beckoned us forward so we advanced and found Major Durnford in possession of the Pass.

We formed up in line in front of the Pass to show our strength. (I certainly thought our weakness rather). Everything appeared to be peaceable below. Herds of cattle were in the Pass numbering thousands. I reckoned them at fifteen thousand or more. We could see the herders herding them. Major Durnford sent out scouts to the right and left of the Pass.

After a short time a number of Kafirs approached from the open country behind who we supposed were part of Allison's force, but who turned out to be Langabelle's (*sic*) men. Major Durnford and Elijah Kambule went up to them for the purpose of sending them down again. After a long talk they retired behind the hill. Major Durnford ordered a bullock to be stabbed 'Not shot' and the Basutos went to obey his orders and after stabbing five or six managed to kill one. Upon again appearing in sight Major Durnford went over again. Whilst he was talking to them some of them were ranging themselves round us, taking up position and pointing their guns at our poor devoted little number. I am glad to say that all our men remained calm and cool under the trying circumstances. The interview seemed to be a stormy one and a lot of us asked Captain Barter to go over for fear they should try foul play on the Major.

When he went over a lot of the Kafirs went on to the top of the Pass and called their comrades up saying that they would be safe, that they were only a few. The Kafirs pushed past us as we had orders not to fire which was fatal to the day. Poor Elijah Kambule (who was killed afterwards) repeatedly asked the Major to fire and said that we should all be killed if we did not. Would that his advice had been taken! They ranged themselves at a distance of about eighty yards from us laughing and jeering at us, sharpening their assegais, and so on. Had we been allowed to fire a far different account would have been before the Public. It was a great hardship after attaining our object at the risk and toil we had gone through to lose it in the manner we did.

Upon the Major returning he took some of the Volunteers to the left of the Pass. Others he gave into Captain Barter's charge who took up a position some distance in our rear. The others were left at the top of the pass. The Basutos tried to take up a position behind the Kafirs to our right but were forced back by the Kafirs but no shot fired.

Shortly afterwards Major Durnford came back having left the

men under his charge round the hill. Captain Barter, at the request of several of the old and experienced hands then came up to him and told him that it was the universal opinion that unless we retreated we should be massacred to a man, so he recalled the men who were under his command, also those under the command of Captain Barter. The two scouts to the right had come in on their own hook. Those to the left seem to have been entirely forgotten and probably would have remained there had we not beckoned them with our hats.

Major Durnford proposed paying for the beast which he had slaughtered but we all objected to such a step being taken. When we received the order to retire the word was given for us to go fours right, then to half-sections which was calmly and deliberately done, the Natal Carbineers being all behind.

As we were breaking into files the first shot was fired and then the bullets began to play round us like hail. Major Durnford who had been behind with Elijah Kambule came galloping past me. Poor Erskine was the first to fall. My horse jumped over his as it fell. Poor Bond was the next to fall. Potterill fell last. As we turned the corner Corporal Varty's horse fell. He caught Erskine's horse as it passed and jumped upon its back but had not gone far when it also fell, having been wounded. Fannin and Speirs stayed by his side whilst he took the saddle off the dead horse and put it on to the Major's led horse and then on again. Fannin potted one man there. The Major called upon us to show a front and a great many of us did. I was by his side at the time. It being pointed out to him that the Kafirs were running up a hill to our left for the purpose of cutting us off he then turned his horse's head and retreated.

I had to get off my horse and put the saddle back as it had slipped on to his rump. The bullets played uncommonly close all the time. Went over the same ground as we did when we approached the Pass. The way we travelled back was something wonderful on jaded and knocked-up horses and yet going at a walking pace.

The Kafirs followed us a long way towards the Pass which we had to go down, and two were rash enough to follow even to the top of the Pass, one of whom was shot by a Basuto or by Tainton. Found Lieutenant Parkinson's men on top of the Pass. Went down the Pass and Merdith Fannin led us down the valley of the Umkomaast a much shorter and better route.

Major Durnford fainted as we went along. Fortunately I had some gin and water which I obtained from one of ours who was with Parkinson, which we kept giving him, otherwise I do not believe he would have reached much further.

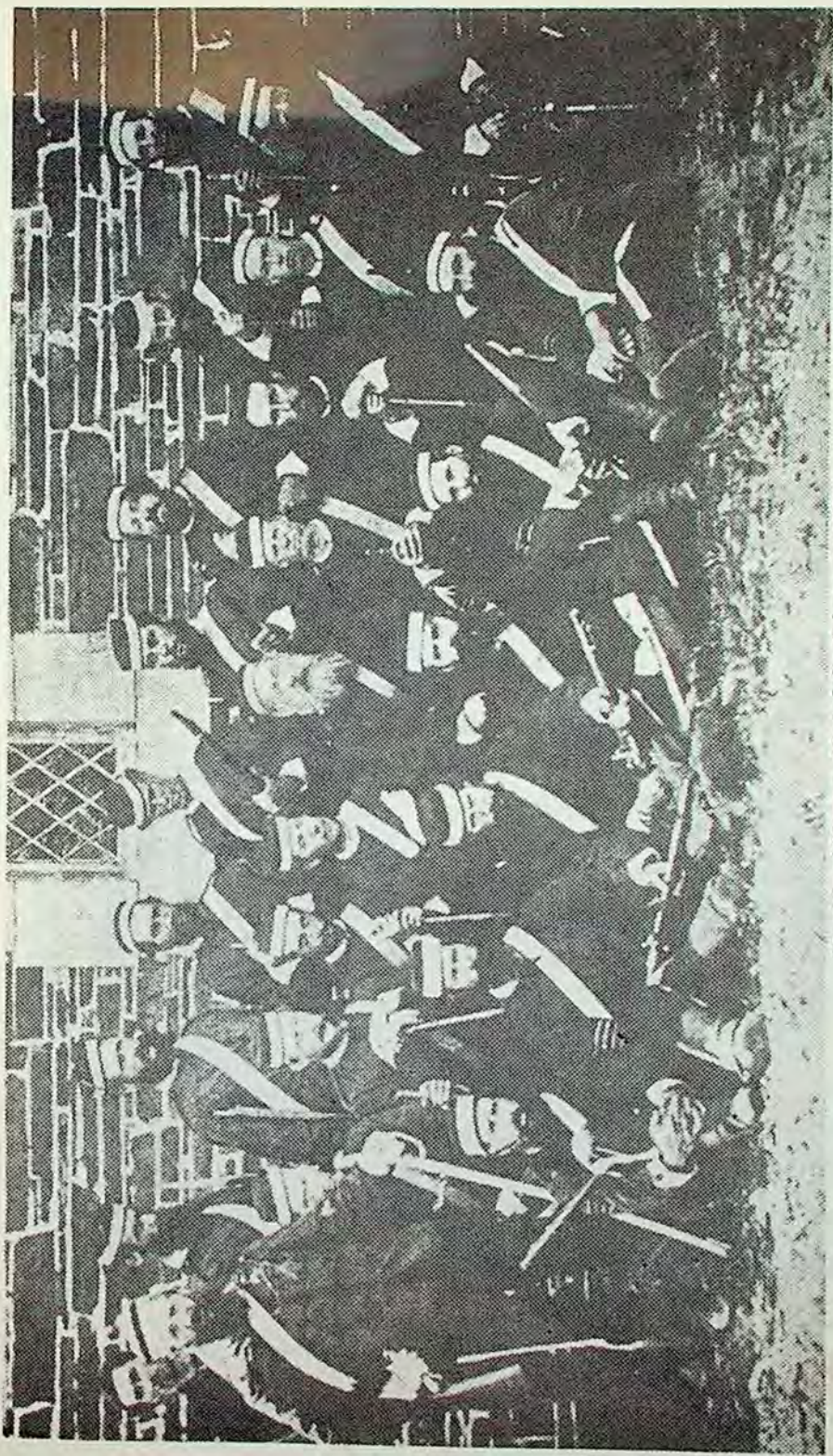
After waiting a short while went on again. Lieutenant Parkinson and several others off-saddled and upon the Major coming up he asked who had given orders to off-saddle. Parkinson said he had

† Either the Bohle or the Hlatimba.

done so. Immediately the Major told him to saddle up again as it was dangerous off-saddling with all the hills around us and that the Kafirs might be upon us at any moment and that it would be dangerous to off-saddle in our present temper.

Descending a place that appeared almost above trying - got down without mishap barring the losing of a portion of the ammunition which went down so quickly that we could not put our hands on it again. After getting to the bottom safely we again went on. The Major would not hear of off-saddling. Down another most delightful descent - how our horses kept their feet is a mystery to me - again proposed off-saddling but the Major would not allow it saying that we were commanded all round by heights and that we were not to off-saddle until we were out of danger.

Toiling on, horses getting too tired - up hill and down dale until we reached within a short distance of Popham's Pass. There we off-saddled for an hour or so. Then on again until we reached Meshlynn. Out of fifty-two and a half hours, forty-one and one half were in the saddle.



Karkloof Troop, Natal Carbineers 1867.

Back Row: W. Jaffray, J. O. Jackson, J. J. Hodson, F. Bucknal, F. E. Shaw, R. Otto, J. King, H. Kirby, W. Wray.
Second Row: Lieut. Parkinson, H. J. Stansfeld, M. Fannin, C. J. H. Turvin, F. Steer, Capt. C. Barter, W. C. Shaw,
G. Ford, F. Methley, E. J. Tainton.

Front Row: J. Methley, W. Shaw, T. B. Varty, Lieut. R. Lawton, P. Otto, T. Priest.



Robert Henry Erskine
(1846-1873)

Chapter V

Sergeant T. B. Varty

Thomas Boyd Varty came to South Africa from England in 1853 at the age of 20, for health reasons. He settled in the Natal Midlands where he bought a 3,000 acre portion of the farm "Riet Vlei" in company with his two brothers Arthur and William, his section being called "Bellevue". Land values were beginning to soar, for they paid the high price of 250 pounds - previously the farm had changed hands for a bag of tobacco and a roll of moleskins.

Thomas married Anne Eliza Kirby, daughter of John Kirby (of "Haidee") in February 1854. They had 12 children, 7 boys and 5 girls. His eldest surviving grandson, Thomas Boyd French Varty, still farms on a portion of the original estate known as "Umvoti Heights".

Sergeant Varty was a noted shot in his early pioneering days and won many awards both in Natal and in England.

Farming in those days was difficult in the extreme. Droughts and stock disease brought the family almost to ruin, so in company with his neighbour, Jacobus Uys, he transported yellow wood planks from Karkloof to the Orange Free State where the timber fetched one pound per plank.

Tom continued his wanderings as far as Kimberley diamond mines where he collected himself a nest egg of six hundred pounds, and on returning to the farm and his family he started cattle breeding.

Captain William Proudfoot (a bachelor) was his neighbour. He was the first settler in the Rietvlei valley and led many patrols into the Drakensberg in pursuit of Bushman raiders. He followed Bushmen through remote passes in the Berg and one of these was known as "Proudfoot's" pass for many years afterwards. (It was this pass, also known as the "Hlatimba Pass" that the Carbineers took while in pursuit of Langalibalele, but nowadays it is known by its Zulu name "Hlatimba Pass").

Thomas Boyd Varty returned to the land of his birth, only to die in London on April 11th 1910 at the ripe old age of 77 years. The hard, open air life in South Africa had proved a good cure for poor health. He was 40 years of age during the Langalibalele rebellion.

For many years this MS was preserved by John Otter Jackson. Unfortunately, the first two pages, describing the ride to the Pass and the commencement of the fight are missing. Page 3, with which we commence, starts after the order to retire had been given.

..... to my assistance, and these men were, according to the military authority, bolting. R. Spiers K.C. caught me poor Erskine's horse that was rushing past with saddle turned almost under its belly, and he not only brought me the horse but dismounted and got me my rifle out of the bucket, a work of some little difficulty as the dead horse lay on it. I tried also to get my saddle off, as it was a very good one, but could not. I then ungirthed Erskine's horse and put on the saddle well, and rode off to join my comrades.

Several stood round me, amongst them Mr Bucknall, K.C., who dismounted and fired. I heard one of our men say it was foolish to stand there, (I think it was Fannin K.C.) as we were too close under the hill. I also saw our Commander close to me with his face to the hill and heard him say something about 'If we were Englishmen'. Someone replied that it would be madness to stand here, in fact we had lost confidence in our leader. On the fresh horse I rode perhaps 100 yards when he, previously wounded, received another shot in the flank and pulled up suddenly. Three or four of my companions tried to catch another horse for me. One tried for one belonging to some Kafir dismounted but Sergt. Jackson K.C. caught me Major Durnford's spare charger and rode back with it. Mr Fannin K.C., being better mounted than Jackson, received the horse and brought it to me. The horse was a fine spirited animal, half wild with the shooting. The grey of Erskine's was an animal of small girth - the fresh horse was large. Fannin sat on his horse holding mine and I did my best to put the saddle on, but for some time could not do so, as the girths would not meet.

All this time the Kafirs were firing at us, and as we were about 150 yards in the rear, we formed rather a large mark and drew their principal fire. But strange to say, though so close they failed to hit either us or our horses although one or two shots threw the soil in my face, and one or two whistled unpleasantly close. R. Speirs dismounted close to us, but moved off a little to one side, as he thought we were too large a target. Yet these men were bolting! Fannin, myself and others fired a few shots as we retired to join the bulk of our men, whom I caught up, perhaps half-a-mile in advance riding slowly, Major Durnford being with them. I apologised to him for taking his horse and his reply was that I was perfectly welcome, and the only condition required was that if the horse that he was riding failed, he must ride behind me. I and others expected that on the hill-top we should be ordered to make a stand, and though some eight or ten men, panic-stricken, were riding far ahead, the majority were with our Commander, and I was confident that they, if called upon, would have stood to a man.

One of our men, Walter Jaffray, K.C., had his horse shot through the knee cap and at a distance of about 4 miles from the Bushman's (River) Pass the horse gave up. He therefore shouldered his rifle, **walked** on, and got to the Giant's Castle Pass at least five minutes before anyone else, so that if we bolted we did it

very **deliberately** and in rather slow time. Again, going up the hill from the Spruit, Trooper Church's (N.C.) horse being very fat and slow, Bucknall (K.C.) gave him his own horse to ride and took his. We were at the time well under fire. Most of the men, in fact nearly all, walked, leading their horses up the hill, acts which certainly men that were bolting would never have done.

And now about what I saw of the Basutos, who rallied and covered our retreat, according to His Lordship's account. That they are a brave body of men, and that they behaved well I admit, but that they rallied and covered our retreat I deny. When we started to retire they were in the rear, yet before my horse fell four or five of them passed me at a gallop, and as, after that, I was, most unwillingly, the last man, I never saw any stand made except such as I have stated. As to our Commander riding to the flank to reconnoitre this is perhaps correct, but, being in front at that time, I could not see if he did, but I obeyed orders to the letter and marched straight forward right under the muzzles of the Kafir's guns. If we had been told to cross the Spruit and avoid going close to the stony hillside would any sensible man doubt for one instant that we should have done so? Our Commander might have **intended** that we should do so, but he never told us so. When we first arrived, hungry and jaded, but still in good heart, we had unbounded faith in our Commander, whose thoroughly plucky conduct we could not but know, as suffering from a fearful fall he struggled manfully on, but we soon found out that his hands were tied. He had orders not to allow us to fire first, and we could not fail to see that the stony hill which commanded our retreat was allowed to be occupied by the enemy. The Kafirs soon found out that we must not fire, and naturally put it down to fear, so they passed us in numbers and took up a strong position. We knew, if our Commander did not, all that they said. We saw, if our Commander did not, them taking aim from different places, and sharpening their assegais. And our confidence in our leader fell lower and lower as we saw him talk to the kafirs, and try to **talk** them into going down the Pass. Kafirs only respect decision, and they could not fail to see that our Commander was unable to force them down the Pass. They very soon found out that they could pass him with impunity.

The description of the ground by his Lordship's military authority is so far correct that there was no narrow gorge, but it practically was reduced to a gorge, as we had to retire in the narrow road between the steep hillside and boggy Spruit. Of course the military authority had opportunities that I did not have of going carefully over the ground, measuring the distances, sounding the Spruit as to where a horse could cross, etc. and so far has the advantage over me who only saw the ground under a different aspect. As to the number of Kafirs present most of my comrades estimate it at 400 to 500, and the number of guns at about 200. I think that this number is about right as the guns were all muzzle-loaders and as a rule Kafirs load

slowly, yet the fire was rapid.

At the top of Giant's Castle Pass we met Lieutenant Parkinson and about a dozen Carbineers, with the ammunition and some of our number asked our Commander if we should defend this Pass, but he ordered us still to retire to the foot of the mountain in the Valley of the Umkomaas. The leading men offsaddled their horses, they having then been under saddle twelve hours, but on our Leader coming up we were ordered to up-saddle immediately and did not off-saddle until 7 o'clock and then only for an hour.

Chapter VI

Henry Bucknall

Three Bucknall brothers and two cousins (Frank and Benjamin Bucknall) figure fairly prominently in the early history of Natal. Henry, the eldest of the three brothers, had emigrated from Australia in August 1862 with John Sheddon Dobie, the sheep-breeder, traveller and diarist. He had two brothers, Fred and Edgar, the latter being murdered tragically in 1866 on the Cape/Natal border by Africans (his body was never found, but his possessions, widely scattered, kept turning up for years in the kraals of the district).

Henry settled in the Karkloof area and started sheep-farming. He married Emily Fannin, of Kilgobbin, a member of the well-known pioneer Natal family which had landed in Durban in December 1847. She was sister to Meredyth Fannin, the trooper who figured prominently in the Langalibalele Rebellion. Henry was a member of the Karkloof Carbineers. He and his wife later returned to Australia. His account of his part in the Rebellion is in the form of a letter to the Natal Mercury, dated 11th November, 1873.

Meshlynn, Nov. 7, 1873.

Sir,

The Karkloof troop mustered at Fort Nottingham on Saturday, 1st November, where there was a fine show of tents, wagons and soldiers. Sunday was wet, but at 7 o'clock in the evening we had orders to saddle up by 8 o'clock, when it was all bustle; we were up to time, and sat waiting on our horses for the artillery; presently they rattled out, and we after them; they disappeared over a hill, and we turned up a valley and saw no more of them.

We followed our leaders in silence and darkness, crossed the Mooi River, and at 12 o'clock at midnight crossed it again, under the mountain range, close to Popham's, off-saddled, lay down and went to sleep for an hour; on again, daylight broke as we went up the valley between the glorious mountain ranges and precipices, and by sunrise we were out on the top, the Giant's Castle standing grandly out against a clear sky above us, about fifteen miles away†, and the country below us covered with a blanket of fog.

Passing under the spur of the Castle, someone saw a baboon on the top, and declared it was a Kafir spying us out. Horses and men were getting tired, but there was no rest for us; we then turned our

† Actually only about eight miles.

backs on the Giants Castle, left a height of about 7,000 feet, right into the valley of the Umkomaas, a drop of 1500 feet down a mountain, steeper than the roof of a house, up again on the other side, where it was steeper still, with ridges of rocks to get up; here many of the men lagged behind.

Major Durnford was leading his horse up one of these slopes of sandstone; the horse would not follow, Major Durnford lost his balance, and went head over heels like a ball bounding down for about fifty yards. Several of our men ran to him, pulled his shoulder in, and bathed his head in water; he was very much bruised and shaken, but would not be left behind; with assistance he got up the rest of the way; off-saddled at the first stream we came to. Those who had brought a few biscuits in their pockets were well-off, for the pack horses and men had been lost in the fog during the night march, so we were left without food; we managed to get a wine biscuit apiece, and water out of the stream. About a dozen off-saddled there at first with the Major, but others kept dropping in for an hour and a half, when we were ready to go again, all but two of our men having come up, and about ten of the town troop.

At half-past 12 we started again - 33 strong - reached the foot of the Berg; then came the climbing; it was not steeper than we had done before, but more continuous, except one siding we had to go down, where, by standing upright, putting the hand on the shoulder and raising the elbow, it would touch the bank level with it. The uninitiated would say, it was impossible for horses to go down it; but we went, and along, and through a great many places equally bad, then along a long siding, at an angle of about 50 or more, for a mile, then up, sideland still; everyone was too tired to give more than a passing glance at the stupendous masses of projecting rock above us, like a rugged wall, half a mile high; we would scramble up 20 or 30 yards, then sit down, scramble another 20, and sit down again, leading our horses, which made it much more tiring than it would have been without them, for in keeping out of their way we would slip down at almost every step, which made it five times harder. It was worse for us than the horses, for we had only two legs while they had four; one of theirs slipping would only take away quarter of their support, while one of ours would take away half. Many of the men despaired of ever reaching the top, but still kept going on, and by sunset most of them were out.

Our gallant Major fainted at the bottom of the steep part, and Trooper Erskine stayed behind with him. I will give you my own feelings because I know what they were, and all were very much alike. I was crawling on about ten yards at a time, with heart palpitating and every nerve in my body, arms and legs aching like rheumatism, bathed in perspiration, and a cuttingly cold wind blowing, when some one, about 100 yards ahead near the top, shouted that there was water there. By and bye I got there, popped a pannikin under the dripping moss, got a mouthful from one who had

a few spoonful collected, and lay down utterly done for; there were several others there too, and we agreed to camp out, took our saddles off our horses, and let them run up to their companions on the top.

My pannikin by this time was full of deliciously pure iced water; had a good drink, almost burning my lips, when someone said the Captain was just below, completely done, so I took a pannikin of water and ran down to him. Presently someone from above shouted out: "Look out for that Kafir with the brandy"; told him to take it to the Captain; but no, he would not, but was taking it round the other side to avoid him; but when I took up a stone and ran down after him, he came back sharp; we had a good drink all round, which enabled the Captain to come up to where we were camped at the water. The moon was shining brightly, making the rocks and shadows show out splendidly. Two of our companions were asleep, and Hodson said he had a little coffee, so we gathered some dead heather, made a fire, and boiled two pannikins of coffee each; got half a loaf out of the sleeper's pouches, sent the largest half of it up the hill to our companions, took the sleepers their share of it, and sat down to enjoy it by the fire; it came to nearly half a pint of coffee, and some dry bread, about the size of a small apple.

About 3 o'clock in the morning Major Durnford came by, helped along by his kafirs; he said we were to start at once, so we had to pack up and go; rode for about 15 miles across the top of the mountain, over ridges 1500 feet high, and a rocky, spongy, boggy soil. But first I looked at the aneroid, which showed a height at the top of the Pass of 9000 feet†, which is about the same that it showed when I was up there before, several years ago,‡ then I and a party went into the Giant's Castle, showing that to be 2000 feet more, so that now I have no hesitation in saying that the Government maps are out in the height of the Giant's Castle by 2000 feet; it is 11,000 feet above sea level§.

We galloped in onto the head of the Bushman's Pass, about half past six in the morning, frightening the Kafirs who were attending the cattle nearly out of their wits. Several herds of cattle had come up, and large herds were still coming. We were ranged round the head of the Pass, which was a splendid one, with plenty of width where the kafirs could run up the mountain on either side, instead of being walled in on both sides, as most of the others are; the mouth of it, too, is low, opening into a valley, with a mountain rising on each side covered with rocks, giving splendid shelter to riflemen for easy gun shots, and there we sat on our horses with orders to stop anyone

† Actual height 9300 feet.

‡ In February 1864 Henry Bucknall had visited the area with Bob Speirs, Augustus Bovill (a surveyor) and his two brothers, Edgar and Fred. They climbed Giant's Castle (the first recorded ascent) and went on to discover the Hlatimba Pass.

§ Correct height 10,878 feet.

coming up, but not to shoot until they fired the first shot.

All was quiet, so a cow was assegaied, and the men at once began at the paunch, raw, without washing. I could not manage that, but got a piece of rump steak and set at it raw. I should have come off better, but for supplying others from my piece. The horses were led out to graze, without off-saddling; but the grass was very bad, for there had been frost within the last few days.

Very soon armed kafirs began to collect on the hills about, whilst others came up the Pass. We were told to jump on our horses and form at the head of the Pass again, and stood there in line, facing down the Pass, while the Kafirs were getting behind the rocks, and looking at us along the barrels of their guns, seeing how beautifully they could rake us. Major Durnford rode out with an interpreter to speak to the principal body of Kafirs, and there we sat on our horses in close order, watching them sharpening their assegais, and taking sights at us, and trying different positions behind the stones, along the face of the mountains.

Several of us asked the Captain to go to the Major and tell him. I felt so uneasy that I backed out of the ranks and rode after him as orderly, when I felt very much more at ease, because I was single and not in such a mass. We rode quietly on till we came close to where the Major was talking, when we rode out and went back with the Captain to the troop. He told me that, while he was talking to the Kafirs, one of them came up to him, making faces and shaking his assegai at him, when his own head man knocked the fellow down with a kerrie. He had already told them that we would let them, if they would, go quietly down the Pass, take their families to Colenso, and save their lives, or otherwise we would sweep them off the face of the earth.

By this time Kafirs were pouring up the Pass fast, and those he had been talking to came in still closer, but did not seem inclined to go down. The Major rode to the front of them and ordered them back, but they only came on past him. Then we were ordered out skirmishing to drive them down, **but we were not to fire first**; but they only tried to pass and get behind us, which we prevented by forcing our horses on them, they with their assegais raised and we with our revolvers at their heads. If they had liked they could have run in and stabbed us before we could have shot a couple of them, for they were as 10 to 1 against us, standing in a line within a yard of our horses' heads. We kept moving as much as possible to prevent their doing so, but we had not the power to make any great exertion, we were so weakened by work and want of food; our hearts were sound, but our muscles would not obey as they ought.

This movement was found useless, so we were called off and formed again below, and ordered to retreat fours about, and half sections, and single file, when whiz came a bullet; then they poured in thick, like the pattering of a hailstorm. I wheeled out of the ranks at the first shot, to get out of the mass of bullets, the retreat becoming

a race. As I came round I saw the whole hillside a cloud of smoke and running Kafirs, and the hill we had yet to pass the same. I tried to take aim, but it was such a scattered, moving mass, with my horse at a gallop, that I could not.

Coming into the line the others had gone round, some heavy ground turned my horse out of it, for he was labouring hard. Others had gone through, and one horse was floundering, his rider, a Kafir, pitched over on his head, jumped up, and trying to get him out; Kafirs rushing in stabbing and floundering together; bullets whistling and fizzing about, as our bad bullets do; but the shooting was horrible, that is, they did not hit as they ought to have done at the distances, which were from 40 to 100 yards. Most of them went over our heads.

Next time I got a chance to wheel was on the next flat, with Trooper Varty's horse floundering, and the blood spouting from its side, and Trooper Fannin catching another horse; there Major Durnford passed me with his revolver in his hand, shouting "Halt! whatever are they running for." I told him I had heard there was some one down. He shouted back what a shame to leave a companion. Could not get a shot, wheeled again across the stream and jumped off for a shot, but did not hit anything; when I tried to take a fixed sight I again found the same want of power over myself that I had felt before. A person ought to be fresh for this sort of work. Trooper Fannin passed me and called out "Do not do that or you will be left behind, your horse will break away from you."

The men were stretching away up the next valley and hill in a line a mile long. I wondered at their doing it, thinking they could not be such good men as I took them to be, but I found the explanation afterwards. It was Sergeant Clark leading them on with "Come on, boys, come on, boys, it is of no use staying here to be shot, let us make a stand on top of the hill," but then a bullet hit the ground between two of them, and he never stopped again till he got to the end of the Pass. †

When we mustered our men we found that all the Karkloof men were there except those with the pack horses and two others, and they with a lot of the town men met us at the top of the Pass. Three of the town men were killed, but no one knows much about it, it was such a scurry.

Then down the mountain and back to Meshlynn, a distance of about 120 miles ‡, up and down mountains that no one can have any idea of who has not seen them, in 52½ hours, of which 40 were in the saddle.

I must send this off without correction, as I may be half way to

† The Hlatimba Pass.

‡ Bucknall is referring here to the **whole** ride, to Bushman's River Pass and back. The distance from Hlatimba Pass to Meshlynn could not have been more than 40 miles.

the Berg again by morning.

The men stood well, without a growl that showed any fear while we were stationed at the mouth of the Pass, in spite of the chaffing of the Kafirs who shouted to us, "You have come here, but you will not get away;" "You will never get away," and so on, shouting to each other to come up the Pass or they would be cowards, etc. We could understand it, but the officers could not.

There were six of our Basutos killed§. They behaved very well, led at night without a miss, and did a great deal more walking and work than we did. We had about a dozen of them.

Yours etc.

H. Bucknall

This letter elicited a reply from Sgt. Clark, three days later, in the Natal Witness, which reads as follows:-

Sir,

I see by the **Mercury** newspaper of the 11th instant, a report on the attack and retreat at Bushman's Pass by the Carbineers, written by H. Bucknall of the Karkloof Carbineers, in which report he attempts to make a hero of himself on that retreat, at the expense of reflecting discredit on the want of courage of myself and a number of his comrades. Your readers will see by that report that the writer bolted twice from the ranks of his comrades, to get out of the danger that they were exposed to, and twice he made an attempt to fire on the enemy, but could not aim, because his nerve was so shaken by the fright that he received in the ranks with his comrades.

I shall not make any remarks on what the writer has cast on myself, but I will leave it to the public to judge what reliance can be placed on the words of such a man in such a state of fear. So far as my own character is concerned I shall demand a full investigation by a Court of Enquiry on the return of the Expedition.

I am, etc.,

W. Clark

§ Only one was killed (Katana), plus, of course, the African interpreter, Elijah Kambule.

Chapter VII

Sergeant W. Clark

It is generally conceded that what finally triggered the panic of the Carbineers was Sgt. Clark's cry that the end had come; they were surrounded and were about to be murdered. Clark was a regular army pensioner, who had been seconded to the Regiment to stiffen the somewhat young and inexperienced Carbineers. He had served for six years with the 43rd Regiment in the Cape, and was with them throughout the Kaffir War of 1851-2. He had then served for seventeen years with the C.M.R., ten of these as troop Sgt. Major. At the time of the Langalibalele Rebellion he was drill-instructor to the Carbineers. After the affair at the Pass he was severely criticised in the Press. He demanded an enquiry before the House of Assembly, but the evidence was too strong against him, and his request was refused. Later he was dismissed from the service. In a final letter of 27th December, 1873, he concluded as follows: "As no old soldier can live in a country and be pointed at and branded as a coward, I am leaving Natal . . .". He wrote several other letters to the Press in an attempt to clear his name, the following appearing in the "Natal Witness" of 14th November, 1873.

to the Editor of the **Natal Witness**,

Sir,

With regard to certain statements made in the city on the conduct of myself and the Carbineers at the attack on Bushman's Pass, I beg, Mr Editor, you will give me a small space in your valuable paper to explain to the parents of the poor boys who were killed in the retreat, as well as to the public, a full account of what took place, and what I saw; also my private opinion of what was the cause of the great loss, and the severe privations that the Carbineers had to undergo in that dreadful march. I need not describe the country that we had to go through, which has been so ably done already by Captain Barter in his letter to the **Times** newspaper of the 8th instant.

I beg first to point out the position I held in the Carbineers on the Expedition leaving the city. Major Giles asked me if I would like to go up with the town Carbineers; he said he thought I should be of great service to Lieutenant Woodroffe †, who had but lately joined

† Lieutenant C.A. Woodroffe was second in command of the Natal Carbineers at the time. He remained behind at Fort Nottingham with the second half of the Maritzburg troop.

the troop, and had a great number of young men in his troop who had never seen service. I was also asked by many of the members' relatives to go up with the troop, and do what I could for them. The public must understand that it was not compulsory for me to go, but I did go, and did duty as a sergeant in the troop while I stayed with them.

Before reporting on the night march to Bushman's Pass, I beg to bring to the notice of your readers that from the first start on our line of march with the columns of headquarters † our horses were very unnecessarily kept under the saddle, forming rearguards for the column, which kept us many hours in the saddle waiting for broken wagons and all stragglers left behind. This kept us late going into camp; the consequence was our horses were prevented from grazing for many hours. I never saw cavalry employed on such duty for a column of infantry when on the line of march. Our horses became quite weak by the time that we wanted them for actual service.

On Sunday evening I was told off with twenty men of the Natal Carbineers, under Sgt. Major Taylor, to join the Karkloof Carbineers, commanded by Captain Barter, the whole under Major Durnford. We packed wagons at 8 p.m. and marched off to where not a man in the ranks knew. We had 2,400 rounds of ammunition and three days provisions on pack horses; these horses were led in rear of the troop, and as we had to march on the path in single file, the troop reached over a good deal of ground. By midnight most of the pack horses were lost, having taken the wrong path. The usual plan for pack horses with ammunition or provisions is to be kept at the head of the party marching, in place of the rear.

We off-saddled for an hour or so near Popham's. We up-saddled at about 3 a.m., and proceeded along a pass ‡ which ends near the Giant's Castle. We climbed up a range south of it. We rode over a fine grass country; we then turned to the right, and found ourselves facing a stupendous mountain with deep water-furrows; here our commander, Major Durnford, saw how he had been taken in as to the country being a flat. He now, at this place, saw the country he had to go through to reach the head of Bushman's Pass. Here also, I think, Major Durnford should not have advanced one step further. He should have consulted with Captain Barter as to whether the country was practicable for cavalry to travel, also if safe to venture in without supports; but nothing of the sort was done; 'Forward' was the word, down to the bottom of the Umkomaas River, close to the source.

Now came the tug of war. Up some thousands of feet were the top rocks of the Berg seen from below; before one half the distance

† Clark is here referring to the march from Pietermaritzburg to Fort Nottingham.

‡ Game Pass.

was accomplished, a number had succumbed, others struggled on, yard by yard, until we reached the top of a ridge, where we off-saddled at about noon. We up-saddled again, after having rested an hour, and travelled on a pretty level ridge for about half a mile, when we had again to struggle on, leaving Lieutenant Parkinson, Sergt. Major Otto and several troopers behind, looking after the sick and pack-horses. About thirty of us kept struggling up yard by yard, holding by rocks and grass, our poor horses doing their best.

All that long afternoon was this same struggling going on. I think about six o'clock some of the Karkloof got to the top†. I halted about 400 feet from the top, and looking down this precipice, saw stragglers as far as I could see down. I saw poor Captain Barter struggling on his hands and knees, completely done, also Trooper Church, of the Natal Carbineers, completely beaten. Major Durnford had fainted far down the Pass. Assisted by Trooper Lindsay and another trooper of the Carbineers, we got Captain Barter under a ledge of rocks, where there was a little nice water. I persuaded Captain Barter and Trooper Church to stop there all night and rest, and said I would leave two troopers with them, and send down their blankets from off the horses, who were on top by this time, and that I would see to the camp.

On reaching the top, I saw that the remainder of the men who had got to the top were about 26, who had off-saddled about half a mile from the top of the Pass. I reached the camp, and consulted with Sgt. Jackson of the Karkloof Troop, as to the best means to adopt to protect the Pass, where all our officers and a number of other men were lying, done up. I ordered the 'up-saddle', and retired to the head of the Pass, and linked our horses; poor brutes, they required but little tying up.

About this time one of our spies came and reported that Langeballala's (*sic*) kafirs were driving their cattle up the Bushman's Pass. I sent word at once to Major Durnford by poor young Erskine, who was about starting down with some brandy for the Major, also to inform Captain Barter. Poor Erskine could not have laid down that night; his time was taken up with the Major.

The Major got up to the top between one and two o'clock, assisted by Mr. Erskine and some Basutos. Captain Barter and the other troopers with him struggled up to the top as soon as they heard of the spy. Shortly after the Major arrived up, I went to where he was lying in his blanket, and told him what I had done to protect the Pass and stragglers in it. He thanked me; nothing could be done better, but said he would saddle up and go on to the Pass at once. I informed him that Captain Barter was in camp, but that there must be a good many men still in the Pass, beside ammunition and provisions. He said, 'Never mind; tell Captain Barter to get the troop saddled up.' On mustering the men we found we had thirty two

† Of the Hlatimba Pass.

all told. We started at about 2.30, very cold, and more fit for sleep and rest than fighting.

I must now make a few remarks on the critical position that the troop was now placed in. We had men and ammunition scattered all down the Pass, some quite helpless; we were about putting four hours trek between them and us and in such a position that they could not resist six of the enemy if attacked by them from the top of the Pass. Our own line of retreat was bad enough. I don't think that many commanding officers would have left men and ammunition in such a critical position, with the enemy at a short distance from us. I think that had Major Durnford consulted with Captain Barter as to the advisability of advancing to the Bushman's Pass with so small a force and worn-out men and horses, he, Captain Barter, would have advised him against so rash an act. Major Durnford had no information as to what number of the kafirs was in position, and no idea of the nature of the ground he had to work on; but the word was given to break into fours and move off, Major Durnford leading the way, with his guide and a few Basutos in front.

After about four hours we arrived at the Pass. A few kafirs were then in the act of leaving it. On seeing the Basutos they bolted back into the Pass. There appeared to be about three or four hundred head of cattle straggling about the hills as if they had just come up the Pass, but few kafirs were seen at first. Major Durnford ordered all the troop to be extended in front of the Pass, for the purpose, as he said, of showing his strength.

This was, I think, a fatal error on the part of our commander, for it was no sooner done than some kafirs overlooking the Pass called out to their friends our strength, and for them to come up. This was soon acted on by them. On looking to our rear, I saw a party of about twenty kafirs, which we took at first to be Captain Allison's kafirs, but on nearer approach we found it to be a party of Langebellala's (*sic*) tribe. Major Durnford met them, and had a long talk with them, and I supposed they so found out he was a new hand.

Major Durnford came down to the troop, and ordered a bullock to be killed - to be stabbed, not shot; some five or six were stabbed before one was killed. This was, I think, a great error.

All this time kafirs were coming up from the Pass, and lining the rocks on each side of us at about 80 yards range, taking up cover behind rocks and sighting their rifles at us. As they came up from the Pass, the Basutos had orders to stop them, but they rushed past them, and would not be stopped. Major Durnford had more talk with them. The kafirs were in the meantime pouring up and surrounding us.

Major Durnford now divided the little force; some he took himself; some to Captain Barter, and made an attempt to drive the kafirs back into the Pass; but they declined the offer. By this time a large number had got round us; they now commenced mocking and

jeering at us, some sharpening their assegais upon the rocks, and calling for our real army.

Some of the men now asked me to go to the Major and ask him to come and do something to get them out of it. I had suggested all along that we ought to have manned the rocks when we first took the Pass; the same as the Kafirs now held it; but it was now too late for that, for there were two or three behind every rock, well under cover. Men now got impatient at the delay of the Major in not taking action; they demanded Captain Barter should go and bring him to the troop as they were certain that the kafirs would be down on them. The interpreter, Elijah, asked me in front of the troop why did not we shoot at the kafirs; they would, in a few minutes, swarm down on us with their assegais and cut us to pieces. There were at this time about three or four hundred kafirs round us, and they kept coming up fast, and a good proportion of them armed.

Major Durnford now came in front of the troop and proposed to pay for the ox that was killed; some of the Karkloof said, 'no! let it be as it is, don't pay them'. He then talked about what should be done; he hinted that he must go down the Bushman's Pass amongst them; in this he was supported by poor young Erskine; but none of the rest of the troop would hear tell of it, but thought it would be best to retire the way we came, which the Major consented to.

The word was given, 'Fours, Right', and we moved off at a walk towards the gully we entered. When in the act of reducing the front to half-sections, all walking as regular as marching on a parade ground, a volley was fired by the kafirs at us. Most of the shot must have gone over our heads. All, as one man, stuck spurs to our steeds, the Karkloof leading, as they were on the right when marching off. The three men killed were in the rear sections. A sharp fire was kept up for some distance. As there was no officer in the front to check the pace at the first ridge of rocks, they could not be stopped, but went straight on. It would have been death to anyone to have attempted to rescue the dead bodies, as they fell close to the main body of the kafirs.

Almost every man of the Karkloof and myself were of opinion that had we been ordered to line ourselves in the rocks each side of the Pass when we first arrived there, and not have let them see our strength, we could have held them for hours, and could have retired in good order at our leisure. The Basutos should have got the order to shoot the first man that attempted to pass them when ordered back. If they, the kafirs, had opened fire on the Basutos, then we could have backed them up, which was the order that we went under. I feel certain that but few would have made the attempt to force the Pass against our fire. We had a good open range to our left; the rocks commanded a good range for our marksmen, sixty rounds of ammunition per man could have been on the spot in a few hours as it was got up out of the Pass (). A quick despatch of Basutos to Cap-
† The Hlatimba Pass.

tain Boyes for his kafirs at the Giant's Castle could have reached us in twelve hours easily; we should have had plenty of beef; also our supplies on the pack-horse were close by. I feel certain, and so do all the Karkloof men, that had the above arrangements been carried out, we should not have to record the death of the three poor young volunteers.

The retreat from the Pass was not well conducted. As soon as the word was given to move off by fours, both Captain Barter and the Major should have placed themselves at the head of the leading fours, to be in readiness, in case of an attack on the rear, to form the troop about to face the enemy, and act according to circumstances. But both officers, according to their own account, were away from their men in the rear. I tried my best with my horse to head the troop, to bring them behind some rocks, but could not.

Shortly afterwards, Corporal Varty ‡ rode up alongside of me, and said he thought the men in front were taking the wrong path to the Pass at Giant's Castle. We pressed forward, and found the morning track. All the men were pressing on to get through that dreadful Pass. We should have found it hard work to have got down safe if we had been pressed by any mounted enemy. At the top of the Pass we found Lieut. Parkinson's party with provisions and ammunition. Sergeant-Major Taylor and some men of the town troop had returned to headquarters. †.

In Captain Barter's report in the *Times*, he states that I loudly shouted that we were going to be murdered, etc., etc. I do not remember this; but Captain Barter must know that it was the talk in the ranks for more than an hour, that they could see that Major Durnford would let them sit in their saddles until the kafirs would be down on them and cut their throats. If I did shout, it must have been to bring our stubborn commander to his senses.

We continued our retreat in a scattered manner through the Pass, Trooper Fannin guiding us down to the recesses of the Umkomaas, following its valley for miles. On reaching some nice grass in plentiful supply, Lieutenant Parkinson thought it a good place to off-saddle and refresh both man and horse for a short time, poor Captain Barter being completely knocked up, and many more; but on our commander arriving, Lieut. Parkinson got a severe rebuke from him, and he dared him ever to off-saddle without his order, and ordered us to up-saddle at once. We had now some severe ridges to go down and up. On one of these ascents Captain Barter, looking down to where we had to go, declared that he could not go down - he was done for. But some of his gallant troop were with him, and persuaded him that his old noble grey would take him down. It was enough to make a man dizzy to see the poor beasts going - one

‡ His correct rank was Sergeant.

† Taylor turned back at the Loteni, a bare twelve hours after setting out from Fort Nottingham.

slip, and horse and rider must have rolled over quite a thousand feet. On rising one of the ascents towards Giant's Castle, my poor horse, who had carried me many thousands of miles on volunteer duty, refused to obey the spur, and stood still, quite done up. Major Durnford came up at the time; I told him that I was killing my horse for the want of an off-saddle. He shouted to me that I ought to be ashamed of myself- an old soldier setting such an example to other men. This so enraged me, that I vowed I would not serve under such an officer again unless compelled by law.

We off-saddled at about 8 o'clock p.m. for about an hour; then returned to headquarters at Meshlynn at about 11.30. Thus ended one of the most extraordinary and worse-commanded patrols that it ever fell to my lot to be in.

Yours etc.,

W. Clark.

Maritzburg, Nov. 11th, 1873.

Chapter VIII

Major A. W. Durnford

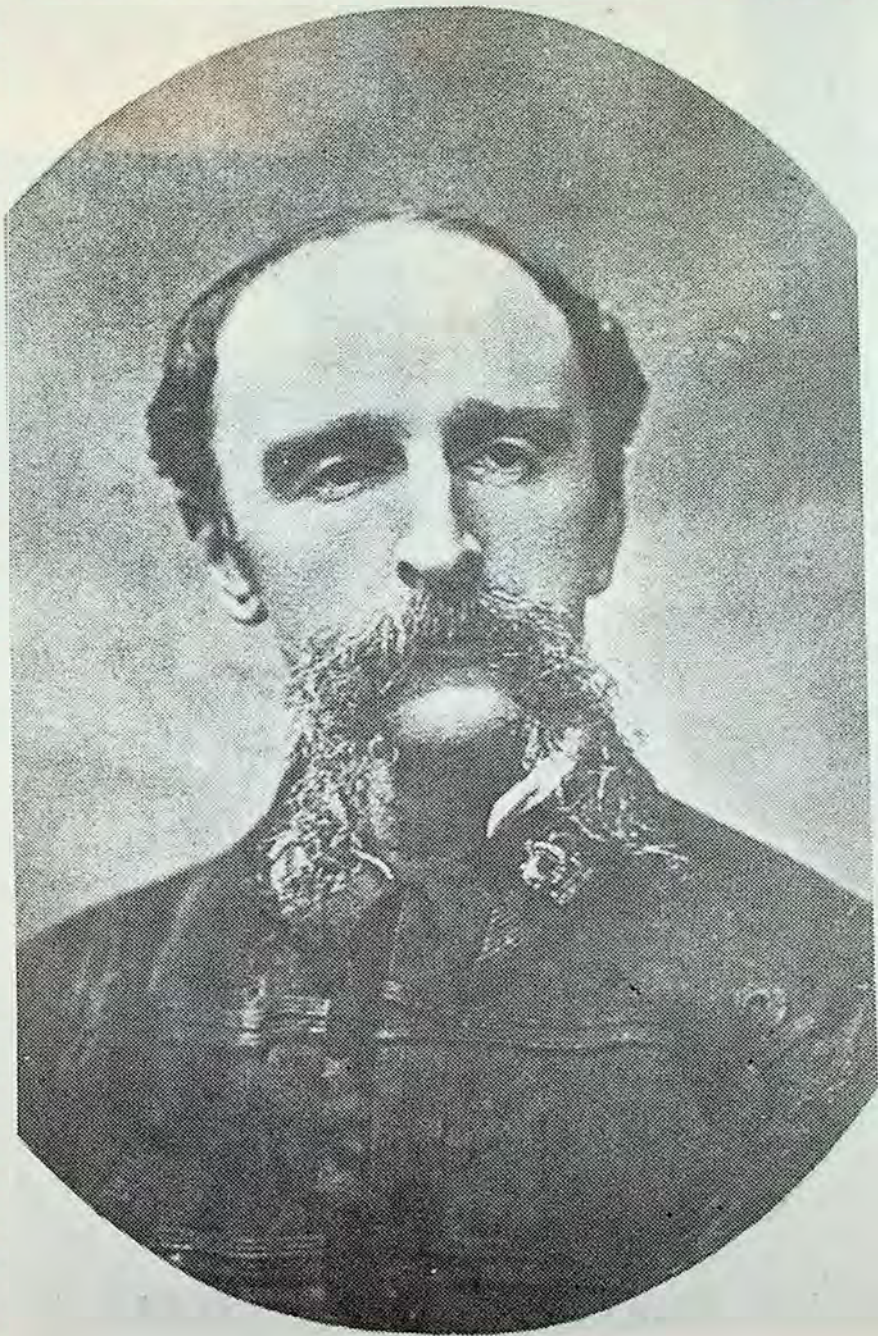
*As told to his brother
Lieut. Col. E. Durnford.*

Major Durnford was a Royal Engineer, Chief of Staff to Commandant Milles, at the time of the Langalibalele Rebellion. He had been born in Ireland on 24 May, 1830. At the age of 12 he went to Germany, where he lived with an uncle, completing his education and becoming an accomplished German scholar. In September 1846 he entered the Royal Military Academy as a gentleman cadet, and in June 1848 was commissioned as second lieutenant in the Corps of Royal Engineers. After a short term of service in Scotland, he went to Ceylon in October 1851. Three years later he married Frances Catherine Tranchell, youngest daughter of a Lieut. Colonel in the Ceylon Rifle Regiment. He then served in Malta and for a short period in Gibraltar, and in December 1871 he sailed for South Africa. He was posted first to King Williams Town with the rank of captain, promoted to Major in July 1872, and in May 1873, only a few short months before the Langalibalele Rebellion, was transferred to Natal. He was killed, fighting side by side with the Carbineers, at Isandhlwana, on January 20, 1879.

Major Durnford left no personal account of his part in the Rebellion, but he told the full story to his brother, Lieut.-Col. E. Durnford, and to Fanny Colenso, daughter of Bishop Colenso. Both these people committed this story to writing, Fanny Colenso publishing 'My Chief and I' in 1880, under the pseudonym 'Atherton Wylde', a biography of Durnford, and his brother, who published another biography in 1882, entitled 'A Soldier's Life and Work in South Africa'. We have taken this account from the latter book, (a few irrelevant passages have been left out).

In reading this account it must be remembered that Durnford was severely criticised by the colonists after the action at Bushman's River Pass, it being claimed that he was new to the country and had refused to take the advice of the colonists who knew the African and his ways. His brother states frankly in the Preface to his book that he had written it 'to vindicate the military reputation of a soldier who deserved well of his country'. It must therefore be regarded as a piece of special pleading, though valuable as originating from the commander himself. It should be compared carefully with the previous six accounts written by the Carbineers themselves.

In a poem published twenty years afterwards, entitled 'Stray memories of Natal and Zululand' Charles Barter summed up Durnford:



Major A. W. Durnford (1830-1879).



No photograph of Charles Davie Potterill exists, but his family erected this memorial to him in the Commercial Road Cemetery, Pietermaritzburg.

*'Durnford was there, the Engineer;
A man to those he trusted dear:
As eagle bold, with haughty crest,
Yet with deep feeling, though repress;
Cool and contemptuous in tone,
No counsel pleased him but his own:
Proud of his flag, a soldier born,
He held the Volunteers in scorn'*

*'And yet, on Isandhlwana's plain,
Between the slayers and the slain,
At head of a Colonial band
He made a last and desp'rate stand.
They fought and died, and, sooth to tell,
With those he scorned the hero fell.
They rest alike in honour's grave:
None can be braver than the brave!'*

On the evening of November 2nd Major Durnford was despatched from Fort Nottingham to take possession of the Bushman's River Pass, with a force consisting of 2 officers, 6 non-commissioned officers, and 47 troopers of the Natal and Karkloof Carbineers, 25 Basutos (mounted) and a native interpreter. They were to have been met and supported at the top of the Pass by a large native force under Mr. Allison. Special orders were given to Major Durnford that he was on no account to fire the first shot.

And now, for the first time, was made manifest that unhappy failure in the Intelligence Department which has played so large a part in all South African disasters since. None of those in command, not even the authority in all native matters at that time, Mr. Shepstone himself, knew anything of the country, or apparently had made enquiries from men likely to be familiar with it, except the Basuto chief Hlubi, who indeed knew the country well, and stated that the march from the camp to the head of the Bushman's River Pass could be made by mounted men within twenty-four hours. The Basutos, however, are better riders, and far more hardy and persevering than the untrained colonial volunteers. But no such ignorance of locality was acknowledged by the leaders of the expedition. Major Durnford who, at the time, had had no opportunity of obtaining that thorough personal knowledge of the whole country which he took pains to acquire a little later, was supplied with full, though, as it soon appeared, erroneous information by his superior officers, who depended upon a plan of the district which afterwards proved to be totally incorrect. Consequently, the distance from

Meshlynn to the Bushman's River Pass was miscalculated by two-thirds, and the difficulties of the way amazingly underrated.

(After describing how the Carbineers disregarded Major Durnford's order that each man should carry upon his own horse his rations and ammunition, and used pack horses instead, Lieut. Col. Durnford continues: -)

On they rode for some hours through the gloom, halting at about one o'clock for a short rest for man and beast. Then came the discovery that some of the pack horses, carrying provisions and the reserve ammunition, were not with them. They had apparently lagged behind, and those in charge of them, being unable to keep them up with the troop, had missed their way and were lost. A small party of Carbineers was sent back to look for them and bring them on, but the troop saw no more of their pack animals and provisions until their expedition to the Pass was over, and they returned to camp. Meanwhile Major Durnford divided his own three days' rations and the meat, rum and biscuits which he had provided for the Basuto guides, amongst his men, and pressed on again towards his post.

The route lay up the Drakensberg by a pass known as the "Giant's Castle", and then along the flat hill top†, so as to reach the Bushman's River Pass from above. But the approach to the Giant's Castle Pass lay through the wildest, most broken country imaginable, and the difficulties of the way often seemed well nigh insurmountable. Many of the men became exhausted and fell out, returning to camp; others might perhaps have done the like but for the example set them by Major Durnford, whose determination and fortitude on this trying day could hardly be surpassed.

During the day's march he met with a severe accident, being dragged backwards over a precipice by the horse which he was leading up some difficult incline, and which lost its footing and fell a considerable distance, strangely enough receiving no injury from the fall. His master, however, was not so fortunate; after striking the rocks several times, his fall was broken by a limb of a tree which caught him under the left arm, dislocating the shoulder, two ribs also being injured, and his face and head severely cut. Here was an end, apparently, to all the projects for reaching the Bushman's River Pass. But those who thought so, little knew the man they had to deal with. They dragged him up again, and set the dislocated shoulder as well as they could manage it, and in a little while all present were electrified by the remark, in a quiet, cheerful tone, from their prostrate and injured commander, 'I'm all right now, we must push on. Elijah' (addressing the native interpreter), 'where is my horse' 'Here it is, Inkos, close beside you,' was the answer. 'Then help me up', and presently he was mounted again, and ready to proceed.

† More correctly, "along the summit of the Drakensberg".

At about noon he halted with a dozen volunteers who had kept up with him and the Basutos, and they off-saddled at a small stream to await the arrival of the stragglers. From this place Major Durnford sent on six Basuto scouts, and these men did reach the Bushman's River Pass within the time their leader had specified, twenty-four hours, returning to the main body, twelve miles back, between eight and nine next morning. After a short rest, to refresh men and horses, he left Lieut. Parkinson with orders to collect and bring on in a body the stragglers and remaining pack horses, and pushed on again until, toward sunset, at the foot of the Giant's Castle Pass, utterly exhausted and faint with pain, he rested for a while. The main body of the troops halted a little way ahead, and bivouacked partly up the Pass†. But with Major Durnford were the Basutos, the interpreter, Elijah Kambula, and a young Englishman, Robert Erskine (a son of the Hon. Major Erskine, then Colonial Secretary), whose name will always be held in remembrance by all to whom Major Durnford was dear, for the sake of the affectionate care which he bestowed on him on that, the last night of his (young Erskine's) life. 'He tended me as my brother might have done,' said his commander afterwards, and he never forgot it.

The place in which they found themselves was wild in the extreme, the way up the Giant's Castle Pass having been well described as 'a gigantic staircase, all the steps of which were broken down,' and the ascent of which required efforts that tried the soundest lungs and strongest limbs. There was not even level ground enough to form a resting-place for the injured man; and his followers constructed such by laying a line of stones under a jutting rock, and packing the space thus enclosed with dry grass, pulled from the mountain side. Here they laid him, and after dictating orders for the guidance of those who had gone farther up the pass, which were duly signed by himself and delivered to the senior officer of volunteers, he fell asleep as the sun went down.

The scene which lay beneath was a strange and wonderful one, of which he often spoke in after times. From the elevation which he had reached the wild and broken country looked like the waves of the sea running mountains high, and petrified before they fell; and, bathed in the glow of the setting sun, seemed formed of some fantastic and translucent substance of many lovely hues. As the sun vanished and darkness crept over all, he wondered whether he should see it rise again, for he and his few men were alone, and the enemy could not be far off. But for the time being he could do no more. Except a little brandy, which young Erskine had obtained for him by climbing up to his comrades' bivouac, neither food nor drink had passed his lips since the previous night. He was utterly exhausted also by pain and fatigue, and for a few hours slept, unconscious of his surroundings.

† They actually bivouacked at the top of the Pass.

It was a bitterly cold night upon the mountains, and all must have suffered more or less. Some of the Carbineers described their adventures afterwards in the local papers, and related how glad they were to find coffee and bread in the knapsack of one amongst them, how they contrived to make a fire, and how welcome they found the hot coffee when made, during the frosty night. But of all this the little party with their injured leader below knew nothing at the time.

When the moon rose at about eleven o'clock, Major Durnford woke, and immediately ordered an advance. But the next three hours must have tried his fortitude to the utmost. His injuries had had time to stiffen, and to this day the men who were with him speak of his suffering and brave endurance as almost more than they could bear to witness. One who got the story direct from an eye-witness gives the following account of this ascent: - 'In consequence of his injuries the men who were with him took three hours to get him up a place which he ascended in fifteen minutes nine months later. At first it appears they carried him in a blanket, but after a while it became impossible to advance any farther in this manner, on account of the intense pain which this mode of progression inflicted upon his dislocated shoulder and shattered frame, as well as because the strength of the bearers was failing, owing to the excessive steepness of the Pass. None could have blamed him had he given up his purpose, and ordered himself to be conveyed back to camp. He got over the rest of the way on foot, by means of a blanket passed round his body, with two men holding onto either end, and slowly pulling forwards, whilst two others supported him from behind as well as they could. They were obliged to halt every two or three steps, and lay him down on the ground to give him rest, yet his spirit was undaunted to the last.

"His first order upon reaching the mountain top after this terrible ascent was to upsaddle the horses, but then he sank to the ground, utterly exhausted and overcome. Yet half-an-hour's rest was all that was necessary to restore his resolute spirit to the mastery, and when the horses were brought up to where he lay, he made his men lift him on to his gray Basuto horse, 'Chieftain', and at 4 a.m. led the advance himself, over a rough and broken country as energetically as if he had been in his usual state of health and strength.'

The force now numbered one officer, one sergeant, and thirty three of the Carbineers, carrying forty rounds of ammunition per man, and the Basutos, who did not all carry guns, and had very little ammunition. They reached the Pass at 6.30 a.m., the distance from the Giant's Castle Pass being estimated at about twelve miles.

On rounding a clump of rocks as they turned into the head of the Pass, some young men, apparently in charge of the cattle, large

herds of which had already come up the mountain, fled in all directions. One, however, pointed his gun at Major Durnford, who ordered his interpreter to have the gun taken from the man, and rode on. There may, perhaps, have been a hundred of these herdsmen at the most, about half of them armed with shooting weapons, which ranged from an Enfield rifle to a flint-lock gun without a flint, all muzzle-loaders. About a dozen of the men had horses, but they had dismounted, and their horses were grazing with the cattle.

Turning to the right round the clump of stones, Major Durnford found himself in the plateau, like a saucer, at the head of the Bushman's River Pass. On one side only the ground rises, to the height of a hill, i.e. on the side opposite to, or facing the point at which the Pass breaks through the rim of the said saucer. The sides of this saucer are all gentle slopes, and good riding-ground for cavalry, especially that on the left, as one faces the Pass; that on the right was sprinkled over with stones, but was quite practicable.

Major Durnford formed his men across the mouth of the Pass, with the Basutos and a few Carbineers on the flanks, so as to give a cross-fire down the Pass, the men being dismounted, and the horses permitted to graze, bits in mouth, and properly guarded. He now informed the force that his orders were imperative, not to fire the first shot, but to wait until the natives committed some open act of aggression, and that he should consider it his duty to shoot with his own hand anyone who disregarded this order. He also sent six of the Basutos to turn the cattle which had already come up and drive them down again; but, as their small store of provisions was now finished, and the Carbineers complained of hunger, he ordered the Basutos to kill with the assegai one of the cattle which was near. This they did without difficulty, and set to work to skin it. Major Durnford proposed to pay for this beast, so as to give the owners no cause of complaint, and this would seem to have been a just and reasonable proposition, since the people had as yet done nothing to merit the forfeiture of their cattle; but the suggestion was received with such marked disapprobation - Captain Barter assuring him that it was the custom amongst the natives to feed the Government forces wherever they went, and that an offer of payment would only be looked upon as a sign of weakness - that Major Durnford felt bound to waive his own opinion to the knowledge of the people and their habits professed by the 'old colonists'. The sequel proved that his own judgment was the right one: it was not the custom for Government forces to take cattle without payment, and its being done in this case was looked upon by the natives in the light of an attack.

An immense mass of cattle was now visible below, accompanied by armed natives, who, however, drew back precipitately when they saw the white men. Sitting down upon the nearest stone, Major Durnford then wrote upon a page of his pocket-book a short despatch to head-quarters, stating his circumstances, and asking for im-

support. He also wrote a note to Lieut. Parkinson, who had been left behind at the Giant's Castle Pass to collect the stragglers, ordering him to send on the ammunition at any cost, and food, and bidding him take care, as a few of Langalibalele's men were already up the mountain.

The six Basutos now returned, reporting that the people in charge of the cattle would not allow them to be driven back. So Major Durnford, leaving his pocket-book in charge of Captain Barter, remounted, and went with the interpreter to speak with and reassure the herdsmen, who were beginning to collect in knots. Calling for the chief man amongst them, and ordering him and his followers to sit down while he spoke, he told the leader to assemble his people, and to say to them that government required their chief, Langalibalele, to answer certain charges, but that his tribe, if they submitted, should be safe, with their wives, children and cattle, and that all loyal people should go to Estcourt to Mr Shepstone, Secretary for Native Affairs, and make their submission, when they would be safe. The interpreter was recognised as one of Mr Shepstone's attendants, and the chief man thanked Major Durnford in the name of the people, saying that they would all go down and tell his words to the tribe, who were not aware of the good intentions of government, and were afraid. The men with him were at this time quiet.

Returning to the head of the Pass, however, Major Durnford found that the other party of armed natives below, who, as before stated, had drawn back precipitately on first seeing the white men, were returning. There were not very many of them, but they appeared determined to get past the government force, and to make their escape over the mountain. They came up by twos and threes (on account of the difficulty of the ascent), pushing between the Carbineers and the Basutos on the right. Major Durnford ordered the Basuto chief, Hlubi, to send and deliver the Government message to these men, which he himself had given to those above.

Meanwhile, seeing that the natives, to whom he himself had spoken, were not preparing to descend, Major Durnford returned to them, and again told them to go down with their cattle. The chief man replied that they would indeed obey, but that they should prefer seeing him and his white men go down first, when they would all follow. Such an idea could not of course be entertained, and his decided refusal caused some excitement amongst the younger men, who began to gesticulate violently, one of them even brandishing his assegai close to Major Durnford's head. The offender was promptly knocked down by his own chief, who laid about him vigorously with a stick amongst the disorderly youths, and finally begged Major Durnford to leave them, as he could not answer for some of these young men, who were becoming unmanageable, and might do him some injury if he stayed there alone amongst them. As the man was apparently really exerting himself to carry out his wishes, and

might perhaps succeed best if left to manage it in his own way, Major Durnford quitted him, and returned to the head of the Pass to find that the government message delivered by Hlubi to those below had had no effect, and they were again coming up, two or three at a time, and trying to get past the guard which held the mouth of the Pass. They did, indeed, draw back on his ordering them to do so himself, but their obedience was for the moment only, and he now ordered the Basutos to force them back, which they did twice with some effect.

It was plain, however, that the natives already up were getting behind stones commanding the mouth of the Pass, and that by so doing they placed themselves in an advantageous position. Major Durnford asked the Basuto chief if he could depend upon his men, and on Hlubi's replying 'entirely', he turned the position of the natives by sending the Basutos to the rising ground on the one side, himself taking half the Carbineers to the other. The other half guarded the mouth of the Pass, while Captain Barter was directed to post six men across the entrance to the saucer-like plateau on the banks of one of the sources of the Orange River, thus completing the cordon of investment. All were now in a position that, had a shot been fired, the natives could have been swept down the Pass.

Many men were now coming up the Pass, and the situation of the volunteers was one better suited to trained soldiers, with nerve and discipline, than to untrained lads, as soon became apparent, for Major Durnford, who was with the men upon the hillside, was informed by Captain Barter (the senior officer of volunteers present) that the Carbineers, many of whom were very young men, could no longer be depended upon - they declared that they were surrounded, and would be massacred if retained in their present position. 'Do you mean to report to me officially that you cannot depend upon your men' enquired the commanding officer. The volunteer captain assented, and urged that they should be allowed to retire, saying that they might safely do so, as the natives would not fire unless attacked, and that Major Durnford would certainly not be justified in opening fire, as he (Captain Barter), being a member of the Executive Council of the Colony, was aware how anxiously His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor was that the Government forces should not fire the first shot.

Major Durnford rode to the head of the Pass, and found that the report just made to him, that many natives were coming up, was correct, and that they were pressing between the files of the Carbineers. On his ordering them back in person they again obeyed, but sullenly, and one remained until covered by the Major's pistol when he turned and retreated.

Matters now looked serious, for some of the Carbineers at the head of the Pass were audibly muttering that they were going to be murdered, etc., and discipline amongst them was evidently relaxed. Turning to these men, Major Durnford exclaimed, 'Will no one stand

by me, then' 'I will, Major,' replied Trooper Erskine (the same who had attended him during the previous night); 'I too,' 'and I', answered two others (Bond and Potterill). The unsteadiness and panic that seized upon the Carbineers was largely increased, if not caused, by the conduct of their drill-instructor (Sergeant Clark), who 'was specially selected to accompany the volunteers on account of his supposed experience arising from his long service in Her Majesty's regular forces - but he totally failed to carry out the object for which he was selected.'†

After this Major Durnford had no choice but to retire; he therefore drew in his outlying party, and gave the order to retire at a walk. Just before this order was given, trooper Erskine rode out from the ranks, and asked, 'Will you allow me, Sir, to ride down the Pass with Mr Bond to show these men that there is no cause to fear' but this was not allowed. It should also be borne in mind that those of the Karkloof troop who had been stationed upon the hillside were not present when Major Durnford asked who would stand by him, and had behaved well in all respects, although their Captain had officially reported that he could not depend upon them.

Major Durnford had decided to retire by alternate divisions to higher ground, from which he still hoped to keep command of the Pass, as he considered that, in the state of alarm to which the Carbineers appeared to be reduced, the only chance of saving them was to move them quietly, and in a body, so as to avoid, if possible, betraying their condition to the enemy. Having given the order, he rode to the right, accompanied by the interpreter.

He had advanced some little way, riding quietly so as to avoid exciting suspicion amongst the natives, when one of the Basutos, returning from the stream, looked up, and suddenly shouted to the interpreter, 'Tell the Inkos that the natives are going to fire at him'. A single shot followed, then one or two, the interpreter at the same time exclaiming, 'Ride, sir, for your life,' and Major Durnford, turning, saw the Carbineers disappearing at a gallop round the stony corner before mentioned. At the first shot they had swerved from the direct line, and, instead of returning the enemy's fire, had galloped off along the way by which they had come, and, as they passed the rocks which afforded cover for the natives at a short distance, the three last of them fell dead to the ground. Unhappily they proved to be the very three, Erskine, Bond and Potterill, who had previously offered to stand by their leader. Some of the Basutos followed in the same track, others took a lower path close to the stream.

The natives now began a heavy fire, directed partly at the main body, partly at Major Durnford and the interpreter. One of the Basutos near them, returning from drinking at the stream, was shot

† Sir Benjamin Pine, the Lieutenant-Governor, later characterised his conduct as "Shameful and mutinous".

dead at once†, the other, being somewhat in advance, joined his party before the enemy ran in, pursuing them and the Carbineers, and cutting off Major Durnford's retreat, while those behind him hurried on crying, 'Shoot down the Chief;' 'At the Inkos'. Elijah the interpreter had remained with his chief, but his horse was now wounded by an assegai and fell. Major Durnford pulled up, calling to the interpreter to mount behind him, but, while assisting him to do so, Elijah was shot through the head, and two of the enemy running in seized 'Chieftain's' bridle, one on either side. Their assegais flashed, one pierced the Major's already helpless left arm, the other struck him, though not deeply, in the side, but before they could strike again, he had drawn his revolver and laid them both dead on the spot.

Major Durnford, being now left alone, turned to follow the fugitives, but once more 'Chieftain's' advance was checked by a man who flashed his piece off in the horse's face, the bullet grazing his rider's cheek. 'Then', writes his master afterwards, 'Chieftain put back his ears, and rushed at him open-mouthed - you should have seen the fellow go down! And then my gallant beast followed the line of retreating heroes, reins loose on neck, over a fearful country, myself shooting right and left, all the time perfectly regardless of every thing except a burning desire to shoot my own cowards. As for the foe, poor things, they knew no better.' He was afterwards told that his cheeks had been required by the natives for the composition of some important medicine, and that a great fighting-man 'has that pleasing notoriety thrust upon him.' His conduct on this occasion certainly made a great impression upon the natives, for the story was reported amongst them thirty miles away, on the afternoon of the same day, that the troops had run away, leaving their chief behind, that he was the only man there, and had but one arm.

Major Durnford's left arm being helpless owing to the injuries received on the previous day, he had but one hand for pistol, reins, and all, nor could he have drawn his sword had he worn one. 'But I had no sword', he writes: 'its scabbard was so bent and battered (my father's sword) by the fall down the rocks the day before, that the weapon would not fit it; so I gave them to the Basutos to carry. The chief Hlubi carried my sword during the action; for I had only one arm that I could use, and that was required to guide my horse.' In the excitement of the moment he was quite unconscious of the severe wound which he had received in the left arm, and was only made aware of the fact by finding his hand full of warm blood, which had run down inside the sleeve of his patrol-jacket. That patrol-jacket was found afterwards to be pierced by assegais in so many places, that it seemed as though he must have borne a charmed life to have escaped as he did.

When Elijah fell, Major Durnford was the only living man of his

† This was Katana.

own party left upon the field. But, riding after the fugitives, he made desperate attempts to stop the flight, and induce his men to face the foe. At about 350 yards from the enemy, he passed several of the Carbineers, assisting a comrade to adjust his saddle on a fresh horse (Major Durnford's second charger), and 100 yards farther he came up with the Basutos, some of whom were off their horses lining the rocks. Their leader, Hlubi, had followed the volunteers, calling to them, 'Why do you leave your chief' and having already checked the retreat of his own men by shouting to them, 'Basutos! will you too run like girls' He now returned to his men, and Major Durnford ordered all those who had guns to line the rocks and open fire, which they did, to some extent checking the pursuit. He then rode on after the volunteers.

About a mile in advance, on the crest of a hill, Troopers Fannin, Speirs, Household and Raw rallied to his call, and showed front to the enemy; one of them saying, 'It is of no use, sir, for us to stay here: look at those men!' indicating the remainder of the force, the foremost of whom were now more than a mile in advance. The panic continued such, that Major Durnford was unable to hold any position on the mountain, nor could he once form a line of fire, except in the cases already mentioned, although the enemy's fire was not heavy, and their ammunition appeared soon exhausted. He writes, 'When I had got my **white** command at last together, after a fourteen-mile gallop, I abused them until I choked with tears, and I'm not a bit ashamed of it. Had it not been for my gallant little band of Basutos, all would have been cut off; but **they** rallied after the first panic, and covered the retreat.'†

Lieutenant Parkinson, with the pack-horses and about a dozen stragglers, was met at the head of the Giant's Castle Pass, and here again, had it been possible, Major Durnford would have made a stand until he could be reinforced. But the demoralisation of the force was so complete that this could not be done.‡ The men went helter-skelter down the Pass, their rear still being covered by the Basutos. When at last he gave up the vain attempt to rally his white command, - for his strength, severely tried by all he had gone through, was failing fast, and his voice was gone through shouting, - he turned his horse, and rode back alone through the Basutos towards the Pass, resolved at all events to sell his own life dearly amongst the foe. The Basutos at first, as one of them afterwards said, 'thought he might have dropped something, and wanted to find it.' - their own natural hardihood making his return in that case seem nothing surprising to them. But, when they saw that he was riding back straight to the Pass alone, they became alarmed, and some of them who had followed galloped up beside him, and,

† This was indignantly denied by the Carbineers.

‡ All other reports say that it was the Carbineers, and not Durnford, who wanted to make a stand at the head of the Hlatimba Pass.

although he made no reply to their questions, they knew by the expression of his face that he was going back to die. Faithful and obedient followers as they had hitherto proved themselves, they now took the law into their own hands, and, seizing his horse's bridle, they brought him back.

He was by this time reduced to an almost fainting condition from loss of blood added to his previous injuries. In riding down the Giant's Castle Pass, he would have fallen from his horse had he not been held upon it; and assisted by several of the Carbineers, who, as he wrote himself officially, showed themselves most solicitous for his safety, and without whose assistance, and that of the Basutos he could never have reached the camp. The pursuit was continued down the Giant's Castle Pass by four natives only, one of whom was shot by an ambush of six Basutos†, who took possession of his rifle, and also of a number of water-worn pebbles which he had used instead of bullets.

Near the foot of the Pass a mounted messenger was met, bearing despatches from head-quarters, to the effect that Captain Boyes and a detachment of infantry, with a few mounted men, were advancing in support. But the messenger could give no idea of where he was. Thinking it probable that, encouraged by the flight of the white men, the whole tribe would pursue, and, being familiar with the ground, would endeavour to cut his party off in some of the deep valleys, Major Durnford altered the line of retreat from that of the advance of the previous night, and would permit no halt until dusk. They up-saddled in an hour's time, and reached the camp at Moshlynn by 1 a.m., utterly exhausted, men and horses.

Although Major Durnford left no personal account of the action, beyond what he told his brother and Fanny Colenso, he left one letter, written immediately after the engagement, which, in its very incoherency, is most revealing where his state of mind, consequent on shock, exhaustion and awareness of his personal responsibility, is concerned. His official report on the disaster, written to Commandant Milles, is also worth recording, and we give both documents.

Popham's Farm, Nov. 5, 1873, 1.30 a.m.

I have just arrived here with the remains of my command. Man and horse so exhausted as to be unable to march before at least twelve hours.

I seized the Bushman's Pass 6.30 a.m. on the morning of the 4th instant (Tuesday) after a march over a country so bad that it is almost impracticable for mounted men. There were many cattle on the mountain and about 100 armed men, countless herds filling up

† Again not quite correct. It was Trooper Tainton who shot the man.

the ascent to the Pass. I then rode with only my interpreter towards these men (This refers to a group of about 50 men, who had collected together after the first alarm at our appearance), nearly all well armed with good Enfields and carbines, telling them they were at liberty to take their cattle down the mountain again, and further explaining that all men loyal to Government would be allowed to leave the rebel territory and be safe. A chief said they were thankful, but that the young men were excited. During this time men were coming up the Pass, refusing to be stopped by my small force until probably some 200 were present, when, being informed by the Officer commanding Volunteers that he **could not depend on his men** (undecipherable) in hope of saving their lives (undecipherable) which I felt at the time, but there was nothing else to be done. There was no support, not one friendly native being seen. At this moment, as I was about returning by alternate divisions, a shot was fired by the natives, followed by two or three, at which a panic seized the volunteers and they fled, leaving myself and interpreter behind. He was killed at my side, and with great difficulty I escaped. The panic was such that I have been unable to hold any position in the mountains. The force would listen to nothing, not even to cover their retreat. Not once could I form a line of fire. The small party of Basutos, after the first panic, behaved well and covered our flight. I regret to report the loss of two (this should have been 3) troopers and my interpreter, also three horses. I met on my road a messenger from whom I learnt that Captain Boyes had advanced to my support with a few men. I fear he will tomorrow be in the enemy's country. He must be supported **at once** by natives, who must **march at once** or he will be cut off. None of the Basutos with me would go to him. I offered 20 pounds a man, but none would go.

Call up every man of the regulars, and every volunteer of the country of all arms, for today must be avenged at once, else the whole country will be up. I am so exhausted that I cannot ride on at once, but come on with wagons at daylight, shall ride to you as soon as I can procure a horse, my own being done up.

Langalibalele's line of flight either into the Bergor on the border of the St. Johns. He might be cut off on his line of retreat for the St. John's River if you had men enough, and at least 3,000 Kafirs with Europeans, but I imagine all his people will be up the mountain tonight.

They called for the army to come up when engaged with us, which shows the majority were near. The Pass seems fairly easy, cattle two abreast came up. It could have been well held by my force, had I been enabled to fire the first shot, but that could not be done, I had no news of what was going on.

(Signed) A. W. DURNFORD
Major R. E.

The official report, written nine days after the engagement, is as follows:

**Camp near Holmes' farm,
Under the Braken Berge (sic)
13th Nov., 1873.**

Having reached the Bushman's Pass at 6 a.m., on the 4th November, with 1 officer, 1 Sergt. and 33 Rank and File of the Carabineers and a few Basutos, I at once formed them across the mouth of the Pass, the natives in charge of cattle already on the mountain flying in every direction. Possibly there may have been 100 at the outside, about half of whom were armed with shooting weapons. Having posted my Party, I went with my Interpreter to re-assure the Natives - calling for the Chief Man. I told him to assemble his People, and say, that Government required their Chief Langelebulele to answer certain charges - that his people who submitted to Government should be safe, with their wives, children and cattle - That all loyal people should go to Estcourt, where Mr Shepstone, Minister for Native Affairs, was, and make submission and they should be safe - My Interpreter was recognised as one of Mr Shepstone's Attendants, and the Chief thanked me in the name of the people, saying they would all go down and tell my words to the Tribe, who were not aware of the good intentions of Government and were afraid.

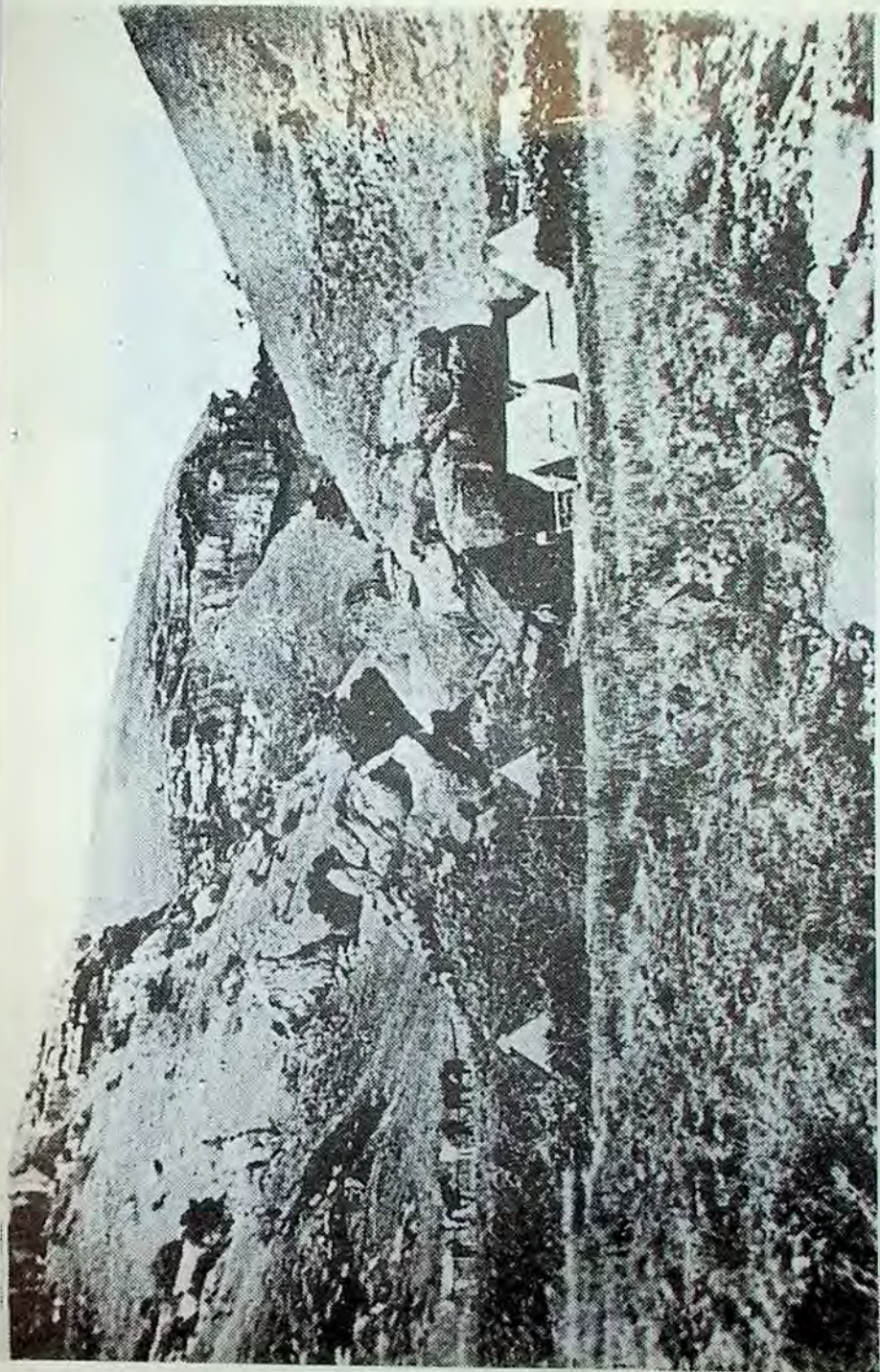
I told them to take their Cattle and go down. The Chief said they would but begged me to leave them, as he could not answer for the young men who were excited and might injure me. I left him, exerting himself, so far as I could judge, carrying out my wishes. Seeing that the Natives were getting behind stones commanding the mouth of the pass, I turned the position by sending my small party of Basutos on the one side, I taking half of the Carabineers the other, the other half guarding the mouth of the Pass. All were then in such position that had a shot been fired, I could have stopped the Natives down the Pass. Their gestures were menacing, but no open act of hostility was committed.

About this time I was informed that many men were coming up the Pass and on reaching the spot, found it was the case. On ordering them back, they obeyed sullenly. Matters now looked serious and I was informed by the Senior Officer of Volunteers present that the Carabineers, many of whom were very young men, could not be depended upon. They said they were surrounded and would be massacred. I have reason to believe that this panic was created by their Drill Instructor, an old soldier of the late Cape Corps, up to whom they naturally looked. Upon this, as the only chance of safety, and in hope of saving men's lives, although perfectly aware that it was a fatal line of policy, I drew in my outlying party, and gave the order to retire. There was nothing else to be done. I had no support.

As I was about to retire by alternate Divisions, the first shot was fired by the Natives, followed by 2 or 3, when seized with panic the Carabineers fled, followed by the Basutos. My interpreter and 3 Volunteers were killed. There were probably 200 Natives present at the time the first shot was fired. The firing was never heavy, and their ammunition soon became exhausted. The orders I received were 'not to fire the first shot'. I obeyed.

The above is written at the request of His Excellency the Lieut. Governor of Natal, and is forwarded to the Commandant for submission.

A. W. Durnford.
Major Royal Engineers.



A scarce early photograph of 1874 showing Durnford's camp at Giant's Castle, when he was engaged in blocking the passes. A relic remains of this encampment on a rock inscribed with the numerals "75". This represents the 75th Regiment, Royal Engineers.



Edwin Bond (1850-1873).

Chapter IX

The Bushman's Pass Affair

Court of Enquiry

Proceedings of a Military Court of Enquiry held at Government House, Pietermaritzburg, Natal, on the 23rd November, 1874, by order of His Excellency the Lieutenant-General commanding the Forces in South Africa, dated Cape Town, October 19th, 1874, for the purpose of investigating the circumstances under which a portion of the Natal and Karkloof Carbineers retired from the Bushman's Pass in November, 1873.

(As in the last chapter, both here and in Chapter X there are unimportant omissions. These are rendered necessary, partly to give continuity to the narrative, and partly because the source material is, in places, illegible)

The Court having met pursuant to order, proceeded to examine the following witnesses.

WILLIAM CLARK, late Drill Instructor to the Natal and Karkloof Volunteers, appears before the Court.

I proceeded with the troops in question, and performed duty as a troop sergeant.

When the orders for the day were given out, I paid particular attention to the fitting up of the men, but on account of an order not being given that the troop would be divided, the consequence was that part of the troop (the Natal troop) had to march without rations, which was not found out till the following morning. We marched off at 8 o'clock in the evening of the 2nd November, 1873.

I accompanied that portion of the troop, under the command of Major Durnford, Captain Barter and Lieut. Parkinson being the troop officers. We marched off in files right in front towards Popham's farm, Meshlynn, the pack horses following in the rear. No rear guard was formed by that troop. During the night, in marching by files, we soon began to straggle, the pack horses were lost, but afterwards turned up.

About 2 o'clock in the morning of 3rd November we offsaddled about two miles from Meshlynn for about an hour-and-a-half or two

hours, when we saddled up and proceeded on again towards the Giant's Castle Pass, and ascended the Game Pass on to the top of the ridge. After arriving at the top we went to the right, marched to the ridge overlooking the source of the Umkomaas. Major Durnford halted the troop there, but did not off-saddle.

Major Durnford called me on one side and told me to look at that country which had been represented to him as a flat. It was a fearfully rugged looking country, and I did not think it possible to get the horses through. If he did, the horses would not be fit for much if required for work on the other side. Major Durnford then told me of the different positions and points of attack, and that he must be at the other side of the Bushman's Pass to meet Captain Allison with the native force under his command. Major Durnford then spoke to the troop and ordered the men to load, and said they might have to attack, that no man was to fire without his order, and that he would give the order himself.

We then began descending the first ridge towards the Giant's Castle Pass. The road was that bad that I never saw horses go over such places. I soon found out that numbers of horses and men would not be able to go through. We struggled on for two or three hours in very open order. One man was taken very sick and was obliged to give up. Major Durnford had not told off any rear guard, was himself pushing on in front with the Basutos. The Sergeant-Major† of the troop, when he saw the sick man, thought it best to stop with him, and kept two or three other men with him. The remainder of the men of the troop were still struggling on for many hours, and soon became very straggling, some being four or five miles from the head of the column, and some of the pack horses fell with their packs.

Towards the afternoon of the 3rd the men began to ascend the Giant's Pass, and by sundown some of the men got to the top. On my way up the same afternoon, I saw Captain Barter very much fatigued and completely done for. I persuaded him to rest under a rock near some water, and left two men with him, and would go on to the top and look after the troop myself. On my way up I missed Major Durnford, and I heard afterwards that he had fallen and fainted.

I went on to the top of the Giant's Pass, found the troop had off-saddled about a mile from the top. There were some Basutos with the troop, who had lighted fires. On my arrival I consulted with the senior Sergeant of the troop what was best to do. He said I was to do what I thought best, but I had only about twenty-seven men then, every officer was tired out and remained in the pass or down at the sources of it. I ordered the men to "saddle up" and retire back to the mouth of the pass, and off-saddled. It was then getting dark, linked horses, and placed sentries.

† This was Sergeant-Major Taylor.

I had no sooner done that than a Kafir spy came in from Bushman's Pass and reported that Langalibalele's tribe were crossing over the mountain. The men no sooner heard it than they wished to saddle up and go after them. I said no, it would never do to leave their comrades behind in the place they were, and that I could not let them go till I heard from Major Durnford.

Trooper Erskine volunteered to take the message (that the tribe were crossing) to Major Durnford.

The men were soon asleep in their saddles, and about half-past two o'clock on the morning of 4th Major Durnford came up to the top. I reported what I had done; he thanked me, and said I could not have done better, but to saddle up at once. I pointed out to him that there were a number of stragglers down the mountain, that the ammunition was not up. I also pointed to his own low condition, he appearing not able to stand - that I had no other officer up. He said "Saddle up, I will go on if I have only two men." I gave his order to the troop "to saddle up". I fell the troop in, when I found that I had thirty-two men, and also that Captain Barter had arrived up.

About 6.30 a.m. we reached the Bushman's Pass. Major Durnford was in front. I was left with a few men (just before we got to the Pass) behind until beckoned by the Basutos to come on.

I trotted up round to the Pass, where I saw Major Durnford, who ordered me to extend the troop opposite to the mouth of the Pass and within a few yards of it, which brought the troop in the position of looking down the Pass. He ordered us to dismount. He then went back to the rear talking with his interpreter to some of Langalibalele's Kafirs. He shortly returned to me again, and told me to have a good look out that the Kafirs did not come up the Pass. He gave me his field glass. I suggested to him that we should get into position on the rocks to the right of the Pass. He said "No," let the Basutos line the top, the troop to remain where it was, and for me to have a good look out. The men were standing at ease.

I sent word to Major Durnford by Trooper Household, that the Kafirs were fast turning up. I received no reply to this message. He came to me shortly afterwards, and I pointed out to him that the Kafirs were coming up. Major Durnford then said we might kill a bullock, but the Basutos were to do it. It was done. I believe some of the men (troopers) ate the meat raw. I saw some of the Basutos hacking at the bullock.

The Kafirs were still fast coming up, and commenced to occupy the line of rocks right and left of the Pass. This was also pointed out again to Major Durnford. He went again amongst the Kafirs to talk to them.

While he was there, the interpreter came to me, and said that the Kafirs would fight, and for God's sake do something as that Man won't†. At that time the Kafirs, who numbered some 200 men, were

† By "that man" he meant Durnford.

in good position round us, jeering and challenging the men, and were very excited. Some of the men of the troop said to me to go to Captain Barter, who was in the rear some seventy yards off, and ask him to go to Major Durnford, and ask him if he was going to sit in his saddle and be killed. I went and rode within twenty yards of where Captain Barter was standing, and shouted out to him that the men wanted him to go and ask Major Durnford if he was going to let them sit in their saddles and get their throats cut. Captain Barter went towards Major Durnford, but I do not know what he said. I returned to the troop. Major Durnford then said they had better throw themselves down the pass through the Kafirs into Natal. The men said no and that it was better to retire by the way they came. He then said, "Well, we will retire." He gave the word "fours right". Then came the order "form half sections" and at that moment, as they were forming half sections, a shot was fired, and almost at the same moment a volley was fired.

The troop then broke into a trot. I saw that no officer was in front with the troop, and I did my best to get to the head of it, and I believe should have done so but that a horse cannoned against me and threw me nearly out of my seat. When the first shot was fired I was with the rear section of fours on the left of it. After recovering my seat I made a struggle to get to the front, but could not on account of the nature of the ground until the troop had gone some distance, when I succeeded in getting in front of a part of it. We were still in range of fire.

In front of us was a slight ridge behind which I endeavoured to rally the men. A good portion of the troop did pause, but the others went on with the retirement. I shouted to them to open out and turn upon the enemy. Just at that moment some of the troop called my attention to the Kafirs, who were making the attempt to cut us off. Before I could consider what steps to take, some of the men called out "Where are the officers, what are they doing?". After proceeding some distance, the troop gradually broke into a walk.

During the early part of the retirement a dropping fire from the enemy was kept up, which wounded several of the horses, causing a momentary stop in order to shift the saddle on to fresh horses. One trooper whose horse was shot made his way on foot, and was the first at the Giant's Pass with some Basutos. The trooper's name was Jaffray. The troop continued its retreat, and I saw no officer attempt to rally them. I never saw Captain Barter from the time we commenced the retirement until we arrived at the Giant's Pass, a period of about three hours.

We arrived at the Giant's Pass just as the pack horses and Lieut. Parkinson and the remainder of the casualties got to the top. Major Durnford was then asked by the men if he was going to make a stand. He answered "No, get down off this cursed mountain as soon as you can".

During our retirement down the Pass, Lieut. Parkinson was



The summit of the Langalibalele Pass looking down into Natal. The picture was taken in May 1963, by Mr. H. G. Symons, on the occasion of the dedication of the new aluminium cross.

leading, and wished to off-saddle, and as Major Durnford was a long way in the rear at this time he gave the order to off-saddle. Major Durnford then came up and enquired who gave the order. Lieut. Parkinson replied that he did, upon which Major Durnford ordered us to up-saddle and continue the retirement, as he (Lieut. Parkinson) had no right to give the order, as he (Major Durnford) was the Commanding Officer.

On the following morning I went to Captain Barter and told him I did not like Major Durnford's conduct to me the day before, and that I should retire home, as I was not compelled to remain; I was not a sworn in volunteer. I did go home then.

Captain Barter's evidence was lengthy and voluminous, and we only give a few excerpts from it - Editors.

Witness, Captain Charles Barter, Karkloof Corps, appears before the Court.

I was Captain of the Karkloop Corps of Carbineers. On Sunday evening of 2nd November, 1873, after dinner at Mess at Fort Nottingham. Colonel Milles called me into his tent, with the Governor and several others, and directed me to have my men, and a certain number of the other corps†, and to be in the saddle with my pack horses ready provision and ammunition which I had been previously ordered to get in readiness, by 7.30 a.m. By the time named the men were ready; we started up a narrow path where we could not go two abreast, with the pack horses in the rear, in charge of two or three troopers, Colonel Durnford and I in front. *****

. About 2 a.m. November 4th 1873‡, Sergeant Clark called me and said that Major Durnford had reached the top, and that we were able to saddle up at once, and we were in the saddle by 2.45 a.m. We then rode on towards the Bushman's River Pass. As we got near the ground became more difficult, and the line became rather irregular. Colonel Durnford told me I was to bring up the men in good form, so as to present a good front to the enemy, and to bring them up sharp, and he went on with two or three of my best mounted men at a very good pace for the ground. **

*. Arrived at the head of the Pass the first thing I saw was a black mass moving towards us from our left rear and I said there comes the advance guard of Allison's Kafirs. *****

*. As soon as the men we saw neared us Colonel Durnford had some consultation with Elijah Kambule, and told me who they were, and that he was going to parley with them. I dissuaded him very strongly, and when he insisted on going I begged to be allowed to accompany him, or to take a few men as escort. He said it would only irritate them, and he preferred going alone. He gave me his note

† The Pietermaritzburg Troop.

‡ They are now at the top of the Hlatimba Pass.

book, which I was unable to get into my pocket, and put it down on a stone, together with my greatcoat. This parley went on for some time. At last some of the men, and Sergeant Clark among them, directed my attention to evident signs of excitement among the men with whom Major Durnford was talking, and said they did not consider his position a safe one, and that some of us should go up and help him. He was only 200 or 300 yards off. I was unwilling to take up many men after the orders I had received, so I took up Trooper Bucknall and rode as near as I thought it advisable without interfering. Very soon after we got up there the parley broke up, and Colonel Durnford rode back to the mouth of the Pass, and told me he fully believed they would have pulled him off his horse, but that the old men had restrained the young ones for a time. *****

*****. The men then remonstrated with me as to the position in which they were placed, and begged me to speak to him (Colonel Durnford), but I refused. Colonel Durnford then took a certain number of men, and after some hesitation told me to come with him, drew his pistol, and rode up the side of the hill where the Kafirs had been. They retreated and went across up the other side. All of a sudden he told me to turn back and go down to the other men. I rode down and found some six or seven men who had retired some 200 yards towards the first rise, and they said it was useless to stop in the Pass, as in the first place men were evidently coming up from some other quarter, and in the second place they were not allowed to fire. If it lasted much longer, they would be completely surrounded. Some of the others then joined us, and I was urged by some of my best men to request Major Durnford, if he could not open fire at once, to retire to some better position, where we could wait for the other men coming up with the remainder of the ammunition and provisions. Each man had forty rounds of ammunition about him.

I then decided that it would be my duty to represent to Colonel Durnford the necessity for retiring from the position. I accordingly went to him and told him the substance of what my men had said to me. I added that the men were dispirited by their long period of inaction, under threatening circumstances owing to the extreme physical exhaustion which must press heavily on some of the troop who were very young men. Colonel Durnford retorted by asking me if I meant to say I couldn't trust my men. I replied that I could trust them perfectly, morally, but that I thought that the longer we stayed the greater would be the risk of defeat in case hostilities were opened by the other side. I think I should wish to add that I had the most perfect confidence in my men, and I had no reason to doubt them, and that I should never have ventured to tender my advice to Colonel Durnford had not the suggestion proceeded from some of the older men of my corps, in whom I, and the Captain who had preceded me, had every reason to place the utmost confidence.

The next thing that I can remember was that Colonel Durnford ordered the corps to be formed up in front of him. His first words were: 'Gentlemen, I am sorry to inform you that your Captain informs me that he cannot place confidence in you'. I gave an indignant denial, in a loud voice, at the moment, but so far as I have heard both the assertion and denial seemed to have been heard by few, if any, in the excitement of the moment. Colonel Durnford then gave me the order to move off, and I gave the word 'fours right'. The men moved off steadily at a walk in fours, Sergt. Varty being the leading man of the troop. I let them pass by, and within a moment or two I heard a single shot, then a few more, and then a sharp rattle of musketry. Then the men, who had commenced forming into single file, galloped on into the fire, taking the only direction they knew, that by which they had come. I rode on at a steady canter having a slow horse, and I followed round the edge of the left of the stony hill above me.

The first thing that I saw distinctly in rounding one of the corners of the hill, was a man falling head foremost without throwing up his hands to save himself. I felt certain that he was shot dead. I galloped onto where he lay. I pulled up for a second to see if he was wounded or dead. Saw him laying (*sic*) perfectly motionless and knew that it was Erskine. At the moment I heard a voice saying "Nanse Inkosi tabula," which means "There's the Chief shot," This was also heard by my after-rider, who was riding my second horse, and was shot through the thigh. Upon that I stuck spurs in my horse, and went on looking up towards the hill. I could see nothing but little puffs of smoke. I came to a stony gully with a lot of water, and jumped over it. The next thing I saw was a horse rolling over with his rider. I was then at full speed and shot by him. Directly after I heard Colonel Durnford's voice at my elbow saying, "Captain Barter, for God's sake rally your troop". I halted at once, and so did several men. There was a small knot of men galloping about 200 yards in our front away from the Pass. I shrieked at them, and sent a man down to call them back. The messenger returned but **none** of the men did. In the meantime Varty had been assisted to mount, and we were all together. Where Colonel Durnford tried to rally us was out of the immediate fire of the enemy, although a hot fire was kept up from the rear. Colonel Durnford then moved without making any remark.

The retreat from this time was a mere dispirited quiet walking retreat, without any effort having been made to stop them, with the exception of the before-mentioned order from Colonel Durnford, 'For God's sake rally your troop.' I never received or heard a single attempt being made to rally the men. We were very unwilling to go down the Pass, and were anxious to be formed at the head of it, but Colonel Durnford said no, he must get them out of the mountain. We then dismounted and got down the Giant's Pass. At the bottom of the Pass, just as it came into the river, I heard Colonel Durnford as if extremely affected, make a strong appeal to the men to recover on a future occasion what he seemed to feel the loss of honour. He burst into tears, and spoke with great emotion, but I felt the extreme

pain that he's been suffering, and the fatigue which he'd undergone, was sufficient to account for this. We then crossed the 'Umkomaas River' under the guidance of Trooper Fannin, K.K.C., and followed the course of the river downwards.

We conclude with the evidence of Lieutenant Parkinson:

Mr Edwin Parkinson, late Lieutenant of the Karkloof Carbineers, states: I was senior Lieutenant of the Karkloof Carbineers in Captain Barter's Troop, and left Fort Nottingham on Sunday evening, the 2nd November, 1873, at about 8 o'clock. During the first part of our march we lost our pack horses, the whole of them between Fort Nottingham and Meshlynn. We crossed over the Game Pass, and descended into the valley of the Umkomaas (just about a mile off this valley. Major Durnford gave the men some two bottles of rum to divide amongst them), from which we commenced the ascent, to the foot of the Giant's Pass, and several of the men knocked up, six or eight, all belonging to the town troop of Carbineers. This was about sundown on the evening of the 3rd November, 1873. I was ordered by Colonel Durnford, in writing, to remain behind and collect the stragglers and the pack horses, which I did, and advanced to the foot of the Pass, where I remained all night as we were all so done up.

The next morning at daybreak we continued the ascent of the Pass, and reached the summit at 8.30 a.m., but the remainder of the men and packhorses did not reach until 11.30. Just before I was going to continue the advance to join Colonel Durnford, I heard two shots fired just before the pack horses had got up, and I sent down assistance to get the pack horses up. In the meantime I saddled up and when the last packhorse arrived, we were ready to start. Just as we commenced marching, I saw a body of natives coming over the ridge about half-a-mile off. I halted the men, and rode back myself to see who the natives were. When about 200 yards off, I found they were Basutos returning from the Bushman's River Pass, and heard from them that the Volunteers had retired in a different direction round the hill.

Continuing the advance and ordering the Basutos to follow me, I proposed joining Major Durnford and the main body. I saw a Volunteer on foot returning from the Bushman's River Pass. I heard from the Basutos that there had been some firing, and that several white men were killed. I then gave orders that the pack horses should retire to the head of the Pass, and placed Private Household there to take charge of them. I found all the Volunteers there, and Major Durnford also. I reported my arrival to him with a number of men that I had with me - the pack-horses, ammunition and provisions, and Major Durnford did not seem to take any notice the first time I reported to him, but the second time he replied, 'I am sorry to see you here'. He appeared to be very much exhausted, and scarcely able to sit on his horse. I asked him again, 'Shall we make a stand here,' as the men were all anxious to do so, and he said, 'No,

no; go down, go down,' and we commenced the descent. 'There were no orders or instructions given. I remained until the last, seeing everything off first. Seeing a couple of natives following the track the Basutos had taken, I ordered a few Basutos to remain behind to endeavour to shoot them. Some little distance down the Pass, I met a Volunteer going up again - Private Taynton - and he said he'd left his haversack a little above where I was. I told him to make haste, as there were two Kafirs coming towards the Pass. I then went down the Pass myself. I overtook the troop, who were about a mile ahead of me. I returned to look for Taynton, and heard some shots fired, and saw him in the Pass with some Basutos, and, seeing he was safe, came on. After continuing the descent for some time, I found the men were straggling very much, and some of our packs on the horses had fallen over the krantzes.

Then I pushed on, and endeavoured to get to the head of the column, so as to halt them, and let them get more together again. I passed both Major Durnford and Capt. Barter, as they were sitting near the river. I did not speak to either of them, they both seemed so much exhausted. On reaching the head of the column, I found men and horses so done up, I ordered a halt and off-saddled, as it would take at least half an hour for the men to come up. Soon after Major Durnford rode up and asked who gave the order to off-saddle. I replied, 'I have given the order', and the reason why, and he spoke pretty strongly, and told me to understand he was commanding officer, and that I had no right to off-saddle without receiving instructions from him. We up-saddled at once, and continued the march. We reached the 'Game Pass' about 8 p.m. on the 4th and reached Mehslynn at 1.30 a.m.

One of the documents handed in to the Court was a letter written by Major Durnford to Lieut. Col. Milles, Officer Commanding Field Force, Natal, and dated 12th November, 1873. It reads as follows:-

Camp, near Holmes' Farm.

Sir,

I have been so much engaged since the affair at the Bushman's Pass on the 4th instant, that I have been unable to bring to your notice the good conduct that came under my immediate observation of a few of the troopers of the force then under my command, who, after they had recovered from the first shock of panic, behaved well.

On Trooper Varty's horse being killed, Trooper Speirs stood by him, covering with his rifle the enemy at about 150 yards distance, whilst his comrade adjusted the saddle on a horse which had lost its rider. About 200 yards on this horse, being wounded, failed, and my second charger, caught by Trooper Jackson, was brought back to Trooper Varty by Trooper Fannin, who stood by him whilst he shifted his saddle from the wounded horse.

Troopers Fannin, Speirs, Household, and J. Raw, rallied to my call, and shewed front to the enemy. It would be improper did I not further mention the solicitude for my safety shown by many of the force during the retreat. Suffering from the effects of a slight wound and a bad fall, I should never have returned, had it not been for the assistance I received.

(Signed)

A. W. DURNFORD.

Major, R. E.

Another interesting document handed in to the Court was a letter, dated 4th November 1873, from Captain Allison to Lieut. Col. Milles. It reads as follows:-

Foot of Ridge, Champagne Castle.

Tuesday, 4th Nov. 1873, 11 a.m.

Sir,

In accordance with your instructions I yesterday morning made an attempt to reach the top of the Drakensberg, by a supposed pass at this point, in order to open up a communication with the force holding Bushman's Pass.

I find there is no pass at or near Champagne Castle. I had a guide who is well acquainted with the country, and marched the men from daylight to sundown in vain attempts to find an opening.

(Signed) ALBERT B. ALLISON,

Commanding Zikali's Tribe.

(The judgment of the court, given on December 12, 1874, was to the effect that the Carbineers were guilty of a disorganized and precipitate retreat, with , however, mitigating circumstances. - Editors.)

Chapter X

The Amahlubi

So far our accounts of the action at the head of Bushman's River Pass have all been told through the eyes of the Carbineers and of their Commander, Major Durnford. We now turn to the amaHlubi's, and tell the story from their point of view. Our accounts come from the trial record of Langalibalele and his men, and we give the evidence of seven of the amaHlubi tribesmen before the Court which sat during the month of February 1874.

The amaHlubi, with their numerous clans and sub-clans, was one of the largest Bantu tribes in South Africa, belonging to the eMbo Nguni group. Closely allied to the Zulus, they did not speak pure Zulu, but a dialect of it. They arrived in Northern Natal, as far as we know, round about 1200 A.D., coming down from the north as part of the Bantu invasion from the plains of Central Africa. They settled in the area of the present Utrecht, on the left bank of the Buffalo River.

Their subsequent history was a chequered one. In 1818 they were attacked by Matiwane, chief of the amaNqwane tribe, and broken up. The bulk of the tribe fled westwards into the Drakensberg, but a small remnant remained behind in their ancestral home. Those that fled into the Drakensberg were later pursued by the qamaNqwane and again driven out, some into the Eastern Free State, from where they trekked into the present Lesotho, and some south-west, into Pondoland, where their descendents still live.

Those that remained behind on the left bank of the Buffalo, lived peacefully there until 1848, when, under their chief Langalibalele, they were attacked by the Zulu King Mpande, and driven out, first into Klip River County, and then into the area north of Giant's Castle, as we have told in the Prologue.

Our first account comes from Mahlatini, an Insizwa of the tribe:-

Mahlatini, duly cautioned, states: I am the son of Jozana. The first thing I noticed was that the country was in confusion, and Langalibalele was running away. I proceeded to drive the cattle belonging to our section of the tribe. I and three others drove our cattle. My brother Nonkohlo being sick was not present. We were two days under the Pass.

After some of our cattle had got out at the top of the Pass, the white force came: a portion of our cattle were then going up, and had not reached the top when the Government force came and stopped those at the top. We saw the force at the top, or head of the Pass,

and running along the side of the cattle got up by a Pass on the left of the Bushman's River Pass. We then sat on the rocks. There were five of us, viz. Magangana, my brother, Mgebisa, and Jijiza, sons of Umgogco, Myaiza and myself. We saw Mabuhle† speaking to the white men.

While we were sitting there a few Basutos came, and ordered us to return down the Pass. One of them threatened me by pointing his gun at me, and I threatened him in return. Another Basuto called out to this one, "You must not do that. Has it not been ordered by the Government that there is to be no firing?". The Basuto then desisted, and we went back and sat on the rocks again. The Basutos then went back to the white people. Our Impi, or armed force, was sitting on the rocks. This was the force with the cattle.

I then saw the white people were moving as if to go away. Then I heard a shot fired from behind a little hill. I heard two shots, and then a great many shots followed immediately. Everyone fired. I did not see who fired all these shots, or whether they were fired exclusively by our people, but when I got up I found that two white men and two horses had fallen, and after I came in sight the other white man fell‡. A little further on I saw the two Basutos who had fallen. Seeing the white force was running away, we then went back to bring up our cattle, leaving the force at the Pass.

One of the horses which had fallen was bay-coloured, with a white foot, but I do not know whether it had more than one white foot. The other was a brownish bay horse. I did not see the horse of the other white man who was running on foot‡. I saw this man followed by three of our people. As one of them overtook the Englishman he was shot by him through the body. They grappled, and both fell dead, and the other two, on coming up, finished him. I did not examine his body, and do not know whether the white man was wounded before he was so followed. The men who pursued him did not fire, and I suppose they finished him off with their assegais, but I did not see it. When I saw the bodies, their clothes were still on, and nothing had been done to them.

I saw the beast which was killed on the top of the hill, and I saw the Basutos skinning it. It looked to me like a cow, but I did not go near the carcase, nor speak to the Basutos who were skinning it.

I had a gun and three assegais, but I did not fire off my gun, because, when I came in view, the white force was galloping away in the distance.

We commenced ascending the Pass before it was light, and the first cattle got up soon after sunrise. The way we managed was this; we drove up the first cattle, and then waited midway to receive the others as they came up.

I heard from Mabuhle, and Jantje, the son of Silele, that they

† Mabuhle was the Commander of Langalibalele's forces.

‡ This was Potterill.

had fired the first shots, and each had killed his man. The man who killed the third Englishman was, as I have described, killed in doing so. Puluzimata is the name of the man who killed the tall Basuto, Elijah. I heard that Elijah was the son of Job. I do not know the name of the man who killed the other Basuto.

I do not know the reason for this movement. I am only a young man.

Latyinga was the name of the man who was killed on our side. It was Mabuhle who gave the orders for the force to fire. The first shot was fired by Mabuhle, Jantje fired the next, and each of these killed a white man. When the white men started to go back they went slowly, then Mabuhle gave the order to fire, and fired the first shot, Jantje fired the second shot, and the Europeans went off at full gallop. I myself did not follow them very far, but I saw what I have described as to the death of the third white man.

Four of our people followed the retreating force. They were Hlanzi, son of Magouzi, Umhashi, son of Mabudaza, Zitshozi, son of Ngatyana, who was killed, and another whose name I do not know. I do not know what happened to these four, except that I heard afterwards that one of them had been killed. I do not know what happened in this retreat towards the Giant's Castle Pass. The four were those who followed the white men. A large number of our men followed the white force for some distance, but they soon returned. They were all on foot.

We now give portions of the evidence of Mgebisa:-

Mgebisa, duly cautioned, states: I am the son of Umgcogco. As we were going up the Pass, Mahlatini got up first. Before we got to the top, we heard the firing of guns, and when we got up, we found people had been killed by the shots we had heard. White men, Basutos, and our own people had been killed. We drove on the cattle, and, though we did not go close, we saw the bodies as we went past. And so we went on.

As we were getting up the Pass, I heard a call from above for the army to come up, and those who were with me went up in obedience to the order. I went up too, but as I was a long way down, and the Pass was very crowded with cattle, I did not get up when the others did. When I got up, I only saw the bodies of the three white men and two Basutos. The bodies of two of the white men were not far ahead of the Pass, the other was a little distance off, under a rise. You could see all three bodies after passing the first two. I only saw one Basuto who was said to be the son of Job. When I saw them, the Englishmen were perfectly white, and could not, therefore, at that time, have had their clothes on. The Basuto had no clothes on. I did not go near enough to see if the bodies had been injured. We black

people do not go near dead bodies if we can avoid it. Only those who had killed the men would do so.

I was not at the head of the Pass when the firing took place. The order from the top was for the force to go up and leave the cattle. When I got to the top, the white men had all run away. Mabuhle told me that they had been contending for the ownership of a cow which had been killed, and which I saw dead at the top of the Pass. After we had passed the bodies, Mabuhle and Umzwilikazi joined us on their return from the pursuit of the retreating white men, and told us what had happened. Mabuhle further told me he had killed one man, that the son of Silele had killed another, and that the man who had killed the third white man had been himself killed. I do not know the name of the third. He said Puluzamati had killed one of the Basutos, but I don't know who killed the other. One of the Basutos was said to be the son of Job. I do not know where the doctor Mkinimdane was.

At a subsequent hearing, Mgebisa amplified his statement, as follows:-

I drove the cattle up the mountain. As I was doing so I heard an alarm from the top to the effect that the Pass was occupied by a force, and I saw the cattle turning back. Mahlatini had gone up before me. I heard the order that the impi was to go up, and I went up, following after Mahlatini. Just as I had nearly reached the top I heard guns firing, and when I got up the white force had left. I saw a dead beast, and as I went further saw to my left the bodies of two white men. I saw the body of a third a little further on, also the body of the Basuto, who was killed, below the white men. When I had gone a little further on I met Mabuhle returning to the head of the Pass. I asked him how it was there had been fighting, and he said they had found that the white force had killed one of the cattle. He said one of the Basutos had fired first, and that had brought on the firing. He further told me that he had killed one of the white men, that Jantje, the son of Selile, had killed another, that Latyinga, the son of Tulisa, had killed a third, and that Puluzamati had killed the Basuto. I had a gun, but it was not of much use.

Our next witness is Kabangobe, alias Klaas:-

I lived opposite the Magistrate's house at Bushman's River, and started, with the women and cattle belonging to me, on the day the Secretary for Native Affairs reached Estcourt. That night I slept at Mavuka's kraals, the next day I reached Maqobodo's kraals, and slept at his kraal under Table Mountain†, on the next day I passed on to the Ntabatabeni kraal, and slept there. I there looked for a cave for myself and the women, and sent the cattle over the mountain. The cattle went up on Tuesday, and were taken up by my two

† Ntabamhlope Mountain.

brothers, Bangizwe, and Dulela. They ascended the Pass sometime during Tuesday.

When we ascended the Pass, the first thing we saw was a cow, half skinned, lying on the top. A little further on we saw Mabuhle and Umzwilikazi, who remained to see all the cattle up the Pass. Mabuhle and Umzwilikazi told us that there had been an action the day before, and that three white, and two black men had been killed. I saw the bodies. I did not see the third, that was out of sight of the spot where I was standing. I was armed with a gun and assegais.

The evidence of another tribesman, Nquola, went as follows:-

When the disturbance arose I had just returned from the Diamond Fields with my two brothers, Demana and Maqala. We each had a gun. On the day I arrived the cattle of my kraal left to go up the mountain. I took a day to collect my things, and the day after started with the women and children. We took the women and children into some rocks in the upper part of the Bushman's River. On Thursday I started with Mashumi, son of Umsipula, to go after the cattle, when we had gone a short distance we overtook Kabangobe, alias Klaas. On the top of the Pass we found a dead cow, half skinned. A little further on we saw some people, and went up to them. These were Mabuhle and Umzwilikazi.

When we reached them they at once boasted a great deal of what they had done, saying we had not been there. They told us they had had a fight, and driven the enemy away, that they had killed three white men, and two natives, while on their side they had only lost two, and one of these was not yet dead, though they were afraid he would die.

We now give the first portion of Umwana's evidence:-

Umwana, duly cautioned states: I am the son of Mgcogco. I started with Mgebisa, from my home, with the cattle. The first night I slept abreast of Table Mountain, the second night near the Drakensberg, and the third night close under the Pass.

The next morning Mahlatini and Mgebisa took up the first part of our cattle. We followed with the rest some distance behind. When we had gone some distance up the Pass, we saw the cattle at the top turning back, and an order was given that the cattle were not to be driven on, as there was a force at the top of the Pass.

Then an order came that all the armed men were to go to the top. I was behind. I went up with the others. I had a gun and one assegai. When I got up to the top the fight was over, and people had been killed on both sides. I saw the dead bodies of three white men, two Basutos, and two of our people. I did not see the body of the

third man killed on our side. I found all the bodies had been stripped, and that our force was sitting down at the Pass. No one was near the corpses when I saw them. I heard from Mabuhle and Umzwilikazi the particulars of what had happened. Afterwards we all returned down the Pass, and brought up the cattle, and the things we were carrying. When we took up the cattle, and passed by the bodies, they were still lying in the position in which we had seen them before. I saw that three horses had also been killed.

Umyovu's evidence was extensive and important. It went as follows:-

A relative of mine, named Pangweni, who was crippled in consequence of an injury received from a horse, desired me to go up the mountain with his cattle. I had no cattle of my own, and I had only lived among the Amahlubi tribe during one year, having gone there from the Amaswazi country. The cattle had started on the previous day, and I followed. When we reached the Bushman's River Pass we observed that the cattle, which had reached the top, or nearly so, were being turned back. We had come up to a large body of men who were eating a beast they had killed some way up the Pass.

While we were there some one said that a force was above. This was looked upon as impossible, but ultimately we ourselves saw that a white force was there. We saw their white caps. Presently a messenger came, but I forget his name, saying he had been sent by Mabuhle to order all the force to come up, and telling us that the Government force was up there. We also heard that the force, instead of making an attack, was merely talking, desiring the people already up there to go back.

Our party then started; many of them were mounted, and led their horses up the Pass. I went up also, and as we neared the top, and when perhaps one-half the number of those who had been eating beef had reached the top, and the other half were still ascending, I heard firing. I was with the advanced party, and saw the Government forces retreating. They seemed to me to be firing with their guns over their shoulders. They were pursued a considerable distance. I also saw those that had been killed.

Soon after this the Amahlubi force returned singing its war song, and when they reached the place where the bodies, which had already been stripped, lay, Mkinindane, the doctor, wanted to know where all the goods belonging to the slain were, and desired that they should be brought together. The things were then collected and placed in a heap; the force formed a circle, and danced around them. There was a great contention for the honour of having killed the different persons who were killed, and the contention grew very strong.

After this the doctor, Mkinindane, ordered a beast to be killed, in order that fitting medicine should be given to a force which had been engaged in putting people to death. As that was about to be

done, we, who belonged to the Imfishlweni portion of the tribe, were ordered to go along the crest of the mountain to see where Captain Allison's force would come up, and as we did not see it we returned.

Two† of the Amahlubi force followed very closely after the Government detachment; one of them was shot in the neighbourhood of the Giant's Castle, but the other one returned. I saw that one of the bodies of the white men had been mutilated; a finger and other parts of the body had been removed. This was done by the doctor, Mkinindane. On the bodies of the other two white men I saw a great number of wounds, but I did not examine them closely, so as to observe whether any parts of their bodies had been removed‡.

Langalibalele was very near at hand when this happened§, and I heard several remarks made as to what a narrow escape he had had, as he had just left, after seeing the cattle come up the Pass, when the white force came in sight. I was on foot, and carried assegais.

We end with a brief extract from the evidence of Umkambi:-

Umkambi states: I went up the mountain with Langalibalele on horseback. Langalibalele rode, and I rode, but he walked up the steepest part of the mountain. The first night after crossing the mountain we slept at the red rocks, and on the third day we heard that an action had taken place. When this report was made to Langalibalele, he said, 'Why have these young men done this; I know I have done wrong in not answering the summons to appear, but why have they fired upon the white men'. It was reported that Jantje, the son of Selile, Mabuhle, Maohla, the son of Luhoho, and Puluzimati had each killed one of the Government force. The son of Tulisa was killed by the man he killed.

It is a pity that neither Mabuhle nor Jantje, son of Selile, gave evidence at the trial. Mabuhle was captured during the final rounding up of the tribe, outside Leribe, but that night he slipped his handcuffs and escaped. Jantje was killed in the engagement outside Leribe that preceded the final surrender of the tribe.

† Umyovu was wrong here. Four of the Amahlubi followed the Carbineers to the Hlatimba Pass.

‡ To avoid misunderstanding it should be mentioned that the mutilation of the bodies was not an act of savagery but based on the belief that the dead, thus killed in battle, must be cut open so that the killer's body would not swell likewise. See evidence of M'Bobo, alias Sibanyana, in the proceedings of the Enquiry, p. 93. The witchdoctor's acts were, of course, differently motivated.

§ All the other witnesses maintain that Langalibalele was well beyond the Pass and some distance into Lesotho when the action took place, only hearing of the fight several days later, but it is quite possible that Umyovu is right, as the bulk of the tribe would be eager to 'cover' their chief and free him from blame. It will be noted that Umyovu was not an amaHlubi, but had come from Swaziland.

Chapter XI

John Alexander Vanderplank

*We close with a rather charming letter written to his 'Mama' by the youngest Carbineer who took part in the expedition, the schoolboy John Alexander Vanderplank. This letter was written on his saddle in a tent. He was the eldest son of the well-known early Natal Settler, John Vanderplank, who introduced the Black Wattle, *Acacia mearnsii*, to Natal, from seeds he had obtained from his brother, Charles, in Australia. He planted these seeds on a tract of land given to him by the Voortrekkers for services rendered against Dingaan's impis, and he called his farm 'Camperdown' after the Naval Battle of 1797. He had allowed his son, a schoolboy of 16, to take part in the expedition, so as to win his spurs. (The Hilton College Guards, a mounted corps, who were also drilled by Sgt. Clark, unsuccessfully volunteered for active service in the Langalibalele affair). John did not actually take part in the engagement. He was one of the men who remained behind at the top of the Hlatimba Pass with Lieutenant Parkinson, but he stayed manfully in the ranks all through that terrible march through the valley of the Loteni and up the Hlatimba Pass, when many an older man gave up. A polite schoolboy, he refers to his tent mates as 'Mr.'. In later life young John participated in the 1879 Zulu War in charge of native levies after Isandhlwana. In 1886 he married and farmed on land inherited from his father near Camperdown and at Foxhill, near Pietermaritzburg. He is credited with founding the village of Underberg, where he died at the age of 81. In his prime he was Natal's foremost walker in walking races.*

Novr. 6, 1873,
Popham's,
Giant's Castle,
Drakensberg.

Dear Mama,

I suppose if I don't write to you now you will think I was one of the unlucky fellows who were killed, and set up a howl till I do! So I will tell you 'about us'.

On Sunday night at 8 o'clock we had to strike tents and got ordered off for a long march. We travelled all night. Off saddled for an hour and a half, and all next morning we were climbing tremendous hills. One of them knocked up some of our men; my old moke fell right over on his back, and nearly went down again.

On the top we off-saddled for half an hour, and Major Durnford and 32 volunteers went to the top of the Pass that night; but my horse being tired (tres las) I stopped behind with the rest, and we slept in the open.

At daylight we went up to the top, and we were four or five hours getting up where we rested for $\frac{1}{4}$ of an hour.

When we started again we saw some kaffirs on the hill and we were ordered to load; but they turned out to be our own running away with Carbineers from Langalibalele who had surrounded them with five or six hundred men and shot Mr. Potrol, Teddy Bond and Chincy† Erskine, and three kaffirs. (One of the kaffirs was our interpreter, such a nice fellow.)

Charlie Raw's horse was shot through the hips; but it went right down and Mr Fannin cut the bullet out afterwards. Mr. Varty who is in the tent now talking about it had his horse shot and he got on to Erskine's. When that fell he got on to another.

But the mail is going and I must go!

So I remain yours,
JOHN VANDERPLANK.

Note: For 'Potrol' read Potterill.

† Nickname of Erskine, pronounced 'chinney'.

Chapter XII

Selected Passages from Natal's part in the Langalibalele Rebellion

by Sir William Beaumont

Although not an eye-witness in the actual engagement, as Private Secretary to His Excellency the Governor, Sir Benjamin Pine, Sir William Beaumont accompanied Sir Benjamin to Fort Nottingham, and took a prominent part in the aftermath of the affair. He personally attended the burial of those who had been killed during the engagement. He also witnessed the trial of Langalibalele at Government House, Pietermaritzburg, and attended the later debate in the House of Lords (incidentally finding himself sitting next to Mr Charles Barter).

Early in 1873 the then Lieut-Governor of Natal, Sir Anthony Musgrave, left the Colony and Lieut-Colonel Milles, of my Regiment, the 75th Stirlingshire, was appointed Administrator, to await the arrival of the Lieut-Governor elect, Sir Benjamin Pine.

Sir Benjamin Pine arrived in the SS Basuto, on July 16th, and I was sent to meet him, subsequently becoming his private secretary.

Mr (afterward Sir) Theophilus Shepstone was the Secretary for Native Affairs.

Previous to the arrival of Sir Benjamin Pine a considerable section of the Langalibalele (or Amahlubi) tribe, then living on location lands in the Weenen Division near the Bushman's River, became possessed of firearms. They obtained these in lieu of wages by working at the Kimberley Diamond Mines on the Vaal River. Strengthened by these arms the Chief and his people became very truculent, defying the Magistrate, Mr Macfarlane, when called upon to deliver up the arms for registration. On one occasion they beat and stripped the Magistrate's messenger, conduct which, calling for severe treatment, caused some anxiety to the Government.

Mr Shepstone had ascertained that there was an understanding between the Zulu Chief, Cetewayo, and the Chief Langalibalele - who was reputed to be one of Cetewayo's official rain-makers - that

if Langalibalele rebelled against the Natal Government and involved it in difficulties Cetewayo was to come to his assistance and raid the Colony.

Knowing of this conspiracy the Government had hesitated to take action against Langalibalele; and the matter, it was agreed, was to be left in abeyance until Governor Pine's arrival.

On the arrival of Lieut-Governor Pine, Mr Shepstone placed all the facts before him and suggested a course of action, as follows: - Cetewayo's loyalty was to be won over by the Natal Government recognising him as the de jure as well as the de facto successor to Mpanda; and if this could be accomplished, it was considered that the Colony could safely deal with the Chief Langalibalele.

To this proposal Sir Benjamin agreed and steps were at once taken to carry it into effect.

Langalibalele was summoned to appear before the Government but he made excuses and did not do so. Moreover, it was stated that he had assaulted the Government Messenger. It was decided at once to take military measures against the Chief and his tribe.

On October 29th, 1873, Colonel Milles submitted a plan of campaign to the Lieutenant-Governor, who approved of the same; and on October 30th, a start was made for the Chief's location and the Berg.

The Expeditionary Force was made up as follows: - Imperial Troops, 133 men of the 75th Regiment, under Colonel Milles, and two six-pounder guns, under Lieutenant Clark, R.A.; 40 Maritzburg Carbineers and 30 Karkloof Carbineers, under Captain Barter; The Richmond Rifles, with 100 Natives, under Captain Hawkins, R.M.; The Weenen Yeoman Cavalry and the Burgher Force, under Mr Macfarlane, R.M. There were also about 5,000 loyal natives assisting. The main body, under Colonel Milles, with Major Durnford as his Chief of the Staff, left Maritzburg on October 30th, for Fort Nottingham. Captain Hawkins and his party were to make for the Berg southward. Captain Lucas and his contingent, together with Captain Allison and Natives, were to move towards the sources of the Little Tugela and Bushman Rivers.

Mr Macfarlane and his men (except the Weenen Yeomen Cavalry, who were to remain at Estcourt) were to move towards Fort Nottingham.

The Lieutenant-Governor, accompanied by myself as private secretary, with an escort of four Natal Carbineers, under Corporal G. Shepstone, left Maritzburg on October 31st. We rode and had a mule wagon following us with camp requirements, etc.

We joined the camp at Fort Nottingham and moved on with it to Meshlynn. On our arrival there we learned that Major Durnford with a party of the Carbineers under Captain Barter, and a party of Basuto guides, had started by a circuitous route for Bushman's Pass, riding through the night. Captain Boyes (75th Regiment), with 30 men and 300 Natives, had gone towards Giant's Castle. Mr

Woodroffe (late R.N.) was with this party. It was here Mr Wheelwright joined us as official interpreter to the Lieutenant-Governor; he joined the staff and shared my tent, as did also the Rev. Mr Smith of Estcourt †.

On November 4th the camp was moved on 15 miles to Holmes's farm; and that day, at midnight, six of the Carbineers, who had gone out with Major Durnford, returned to the camp and reported that they had reached the Pass on Tuesday morning and taken up a position commanding the head of the Pass, which was packed with cattle. 'Men and cattle pushed past us,' said the report, 'and we could not stop them, as our orders were not to fire the first shot. The Natives swarmed up on all sides, and about 200 got above us on some commanding ground. All were armed with Enfield rifles; they jeered at us and used threats. Meanwhile, Major Durnford, with his Native interpreter Elijah, was trying to appease the Natives on the slope facing the Pass. The Carbineers thought they had better retire to a better position, and, just as they were doing so, a shot was fired by a Native, and our men, seeing they were surrounded, were seized with panic and dashed back through the Natives along the way they came up, being fired on and followed by the Natives. Their retreat was partially covered by the cool fire of the Basuto guides. Three men were killed - Robert Erskine, Edwin Bond and Charles Pottrell. Major Durnford's bridle was seized by two Natives, but notwithstanding his dislocated arm, he shot both men and managed to escape. Interpreter Elijah Kambula and two other Natives were killed.'

On receipt of this intelligence, the whole camp prepared to march, and we returned to Meshlynn. On arrival at Meshlynn we found Major Durnford and the rest of his party already there. They were much exhausted, having had little to eat and 22 hours in the saddle. They narrated their experiences.

Led by the Basuto Guides, they reached the Pass by a circuitous route, travelling over Kaffir paths or cattle tracks along which were many huge boulders, over or round which they had to get the best way they could. Many horses fell, and Major Durnford's fell down a small precipice and left him with a dislocated arm. On their return journey some lost their horses and effects and some were wounded.

Notwithstanding his exhausted state Major Durnford urged that a small party be sent in search of Captain Boyes, of whom he had heard nothing since he left the camp to make for Giant's Castle Pass. This was done, Major Durnford taking out a party of 46 Infantry, 4 Artillerymen and 30 Basuto Guides. The latter were armed with 'Terry' carbines. We heard that Shepstone was in front of Table Mountain (Tabamhlope); that Lucas was somewhere at the bottom of the Champagne Castle Pass; Major Allison at the top of another pass and Hawkins about 15 miles south of Giant's Castle. Under

† The Rev. George Smith was later to achieve fame at the Battle of Rorke's Drift in January 1879, where he gained the name of "Ammunition Smith" for the part he played in the Battle.

directions from the Colonel, I wrote to Hawkins, Macfarlane and Lucas telling them to concentrate at Meshlyn as soon as possible. On reconsideration fresh orders were issued - Hawkins and Macfarlane were to try and join Durnford; Lucas to push on to Allison and secure the Champagne Castle Pass and work along the Berg. Subsequently we learned that there was no pass at Champagne Castle, and that it was quite impossible to work along the Berg. Letters I had dispatched had not reached their addresses. **The fact was we had not an elementary knowledge of the topography of the Berg and its foothills.** A letter was received from Mr Hawkins telling us that he was at the sources of the Umkomanzi River and suggesting that he should go over the Berg there and try to intercept Langalibelele, who was reported to be making for the sources of the St. John's River. Hawkins had with him the Richmond Rifles and 500 Natives. We asked him to communicate with Adam Kok, of Griqualand East, and with Mr Orpen, the Chief Magistrate of Kaffraria asking them to move forces to intercept Langalibelele. Meantime Major Durnford and Captain Boyes had returned to the camp. The camp was now moved back to Holmes's farm, and Major Durnford and G. Shepstone left for Maritzburg to collect material of all sorts and muskets for the Natives. These were escorted to the camp by Captain Scoones and 12 Maritzburg Rifles.

A conference of leaders was called by the Lieut-Governor, to consider what steps should be taken next. Mr Macfarlane, Captain Lucas, Major Durnford, Colonel Milles, Colonel Lloyd and Captain Allison attended the Conference. It was decided:-

1. To send a party under Major Durnford to re-open the Bushman's Pass, to bury the dead and to block up the Pass.
2. Thereafter, to send a flying column under Captain Allison over the Berg, in pursuit of the enemy. Captain Allison was to have a few picked European Volunteers and 1,500 Natives, who were to be rewarded out of captured cattle.
3. Captain Hawkins was to lead a flying column of Richmond Volunteers and 700 Natives to join forces in Griqualand with the Cape Mounted Police, under Grant, and the Griquas under Adam Kok.
4. Proclamations were to be issued outlawing the Langalibalele and the Putuli Tribes, and martial law proclaimed in both locations.
5. Letters were to be sent to the magistrates and chiefs of the adjoining States, asking them to render any assistance they could. The Governor informed the Legislative Council of these proceedings.

There was considerable discontent at this time amongst both Whites and Blacks. With the incessant rains, camping out was anything but comfortable, and it appeared as if nothing was being done - that in fact, the business was over - so all were longing to return to their homes. So it was decided that the Natal Carbineers and the Weenen Burgher Force were to be disbanded, those volunteering to remain being attached to the Karkloof Corps.

Reliable Native Forces were posted at the passes leading over the Berg.

On November 17th, Major Durnford started for the Bushman's

Pass, having with him a company of the 75th, under Lieutenant Trower, the Basuto Guides and a contingent of Natives. The Reverend Mr Smith from Estcourt, and I accompanied the party. The Reverend Mr Smith was to perform the burial service if the bodies of those who had been killed were recovered, and I was to act as the representative of H. E. the Lieutenant-Governor. Others went in a private capacity - Dr Gordon, Mr Cowley, Captain Macleod, Mr Fairleigh (afterwards Senior Inspector of the N.M.P.)

After going 12 miles, we camped at the head of a beautiful valley. I acted as Quartermaster, and we soon had tents pitched and all accommodated. It was raining and cold, so a strong tot of rum (overproof!) was served out to all and sundry - a most amusing proceeding as the tot had to be drunk off neat on the spot by each man - it was a bit too strong for most!

We started next day at 4.30 a.m. and reached the top of a spur running down from Bushman's Pass. Here we halted and pitched camp. The Basutos were sent on up to the pass to reconnoitre, being supported by some of Teteleku's men, under Corporal George Shepstone.

After an hour's rest Major Durnford followed them, leaving me in charge of the camp with instructions to push up the pass if I heard any firing. At 4 p.m. I received a note from Durnford telling me that all was clear, that the dead had been found, and that I was to go up at once with 25 men of the 75th, leaving Lieutenant Trevor in charge of the camp. I was also to try and bring up some firewood. I got my 25 men and a few Natives to carry firewood and we started up the Pass.

The men were in heavy marching order, but went up the Pass like buck. We reached the top in 65 minutes, finding Shepstone and the Basuto Guides under the shelter of the rocks. Natives had been posted in different places and scouts sent out. By this time it was dark and drizzling. We (Basutos and all) squatted round a miserable apology for a fire; a goat was killed and presently a leg was handed round for each to cut off a piece and cook it on the fire. I carefully turned over my piece until I thought it was sufficiently cooked and when I put it in my mouth it was a cinder. The men did not get their dinner till 9 p.m. and they tried to sleep under the shelter of the rocks.

The Major, The Reverend Mr Smith, Cowley, Dr. Gordon and I had two small patrol tents, which we placed together and lay under with our legs sticking out. My pillow was my revolver and a tin of tobacco. But it was so cold, the ground so uneven and one's position so cramped that none of us slept.

We were up at daylight. Major Durnford gave us an account of what had happened and explained everything on the spot. I was sent off to fetch the bodies of the three Volunteers - Bond, Potterell and Erskine. For this purpose, I took four men with a stretcher improvised out of a waterproof sheet. The bodies were lying in a vlei nearby, just skin and bone; they had been cut open and one of Potterell's hands had been cut off. However we got the bodies safely to

where the men had dug a grave. The Native bodies were brought up by Natives and a separate grave was dug for them. The 25 of the 75th formed the funeral party under my command, the parson read the burial service and we fired three volleys into the air. The graves were filled in and large cairns of stones built above them.

The scouts came in saying they had seen no one though they had gone nine miles. The trail led towards the sources of the Orange River. All then descended the Pass, down a very tortuous and slippery path and with difficulty. Camp being reached tents were struck and we commenced our return. The line of march was along the top of the spur and then down a tremendous incline to the valley below. I was in charge of the pack-ponies, which carried most unwieldy packs on their backs. I can never forget the way those poor animals slithered about, often falling over and rolling, pack and all, some way down the side. Those that did so had of course to be recovered and set going again.

When all had reached the bottom and were having a bit of a rest a letter was received from the Colonel saying that Putili people were to be disarmed and that it was necessary to hold the Pass. So there was nothing for it but to march back! How the men and ponies struggled up that hill again I do not know, for here the Reverend Mr Smith and I left the party to return to Headquarters, having respectively carried out the missions entrusted to us.

I visited Estcourt with Major Durnford, and the day after (December 7th) we selected a site for a laager, which was subsequently built and became the police fort. It is there to-day.

Finally, on about December the 13th, Langalibalele surrendered with his sons, and some of his tribe, 7,000 head of cattle and 216 horses, to the Basuto Chief, Molappo, who had with him a large force of mounted Basutos.

Langalibalele was handed over by Molappo to the British resident, Mr Griffiths, and by him to Captain Allison. Captain Allison, after negotiations, obtained 5,000 head of cattle and the horses, the balance being retained by Mr Griffiths to compensate the Basutos.

Allison commenced his return journey to Natal with the Chief and about 47 prisoners and the cattle and horses on Dec. 21. They travelled via Olivier Hoek and reached Maritzburg on Jan. 14.

Public opinion was almost unanimous in its approval of all that Sir Benjamin Pine had done, only the Bishop of Natal and a few others dissenting. The Legislative Council passed resolutions thanking the Governor, the High Commissioner at the Cape and the various forces, military and colonial, who had assisted in the operations. Bills were passed dealing with the location lands and with the trial and disposal of prisoners, and a Bill was introduced for the formation of a Mounted Police Force (the command of which was subsequently given to Major Dartnell). The 86th Regiment

returned to the Cape.

The Lieut. -Governor decided to try Langalibalele himself, in his capacity of Supreme Chief, under Native Law, with assessors. The Court was composed of the Lieut. -Governor as President, with members of the Executive and Provincial Councils, three Magistrates and six Native Chiefs as assessors. The Executive Council was represented by Major Erskine (Colonial Secretary), Mr (afterwards Sir) Michael Gallway (Attorney General), Mr Ayliff (Colonial Treasurer), Mr Shepstone (Secretary for Native Affairs); the Legislative Council by Mr Polkinghorn, M.L.C., and Mr Barter, M.L.C. Other members were Colonel Miles (Military Commander), Messrs. Bird, Patterson, and Hawkins (Magistrates), and the Native chiefs Hemubumu, Tetelku, and Nondisa and three others. Mr John Shepstone (magistrate) acted as prosecutor, and Mr T. Bennett (magistrate) as interpreter. The court assembled on Jan. 16 in a marquee which was pitched in the Government House grounds, with a guard of the 75th Regiment over the prisoners. Langalibalele was charged with sedition and rebellion. An attempt was made to get Mr Escombe to take up the defence of the prisoner, but under the conditions imposed, he declined to act. The trial lasted about 10 days. The chief was found guilty and sentenced to banishment to Robben Island, where he eventually went.

The trial of Langalibalele by the Governor as Supreme Chief and under Native Law was a bold and unusual proceeding. It proved to be a mistake which led to the Governor's downfall.

The Bishop of Natal was very active in making the Government and people of England know what had occurred, and the matter of the trial came up for discussion in the House of Lords. I happened to be in England at the time, and I was present on the occasion by the good offices of Lord Carnarvon, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. By a curious coincidence, I found myself sitting next to Captain Barter, who had taken so prominent a part in the expedition and at the trial.

I was particularly struck by the accuracy with which Lord Carnarvon had mastered the details of the whole affair, and the able manner in which he tried to defend the Governor. But the slashing indictment delivered by Lord Selborne (the father of the late High Commissioner of South Africa) was irresistible. He made absolute ridicule of the whole trial proceedings. The Governor was recalled, and Sir Garnet Wolseley was sent out with a brilliant staff to revise the Law and the Constitution.

Notes

Robert Henry Erskine

Robert Henry Erskine was the son of Major Erskine, Colonial Secretary at the time and a former regimental commander of the Carbineers. He was born in 1846 in India, and was a great-grandson of the well-known Lord Chancellor, under Pitt. As a boy he grew up in Pietermaritzburg, and was educated under William Calder at the infant Pietermaritzburg High School, later Maritzburg College. At the time of his death he was a rising advocate in the Supreme Court. Twenty-seven years of age, he was one of the men who found the early ride from the top of Game Pass particularly exhausting. Sgt. Button, it will be remembered, found him at the top of the climb out of the Loteni valley, stretched out on the grass, 'looking miserably tired'. And yet he never thought of himself, and gave himself completely and utterly to others. In spite of his own weariness, it was Erskine who twice, in the ensuing night, climbed down to his commanding officer in Hlatimba Pass with brandy and other comforts. He was the first to stand by Durnford at Bushman's River Pass, and the first to fall. Throughout he displayed those very qualities of courage and compassion for others that have made the Natal Carbineers the fine regiment they are to-day. He was the first Carbineer ever to fall in action.

Charles Davie Potterill

Charles Davie Potterill, 22 years of age when he died, was younger than Erskine. He was the son of John and Mary Potterill, who had emigrated to Natal in the *Minerva*, in 1850. The ship was wrecked below the Bluff on the night of the 45th July, 1850, and the father lost all his possessions in the wreck. Charles Davie was born in 1851: no photograph of him is known to exist. The family were allotted 60 acres of land under the Byrne emigration scheme, but like so many others, they failed to take it up. Instead, they came to Pietermaritzburg, and lived in Chapel Street on a site now occupied by Odell Estates. The father made his living as a builder, and it is reasonably certain that Charles helped his father in the trade. His personality comes down as a young man popular with his mates, cheerful, and full of fun. He was a member of the Pietermaritzburg Carbineer Troop. His father was particularly fond of this boy, and we have already seen how, when Langalibalele was brought in as a prisoner to trial, John Potterill was so emotionally

upset that he tried to attack Langalibalele and had to be forcibly restrained by friends. Although the boy was buried at the top of the Pass, a tombstone in the Commercial Road cemetery records his death and supplies a verse of condolence. We give a photograph of this tombstone on page .

Edwin Bond

Edwin Bond was possibly the son of Thomas Bond who arrived on the Hebrides, and settled in Pietermaritzburg as a tailor, later a miller. Edwin Bond when buried on 19th November 1873, was entered in St. Matthew's Church, Estcourt burial register as aged 23.

Suggestions for further reading.

1. **The Dorp and the Veld; or Six Months in Natal,**
by Charles Barter. Although published in 1852, and therefore not dealing with the Langalibalele Rebellion, it gives some idea of Barter's character and personality.
2. **History of Natal,**
by Dr. E. H. Brookes and C. and B. Webb, publ. 1965. Chapter XI deals briefly with the Rebellion, and gives a clear picture of the political circumstances of the time.
3. **Natal Memories,**
by Barbara Buchanan. Chapter XIX gives a good account of the ride of the Carbineers and the action at the head of the Pass, as told by D. T. Household, one of the Karkloof Carbineers.
4. **My Chief and I,**
by 'Atherton Wylde', pseudonym of Frances Colenso. This is a biography of Major Durnford by the daughter of Bishop Colenso. It gives a first-rate account of the ride and of the fight, as seen by Major Durnford.
5. **Langalibalele and the Amahlabi Tribe,**
by J. W. Colenso. While dealing briefly with the ride and the fight, it is chiefly concerned with the misfortunes of Langalibalele and his tribe, especially after the disaster.
6. **South African Journal,**
by John Sheddon Dobie, ed. A. F. Hattersley. Though it does not deal directly with the Langalibalele Rebellion, Dobie left Natal in 1866), it gives a good picture of life in Natal, particularly the midlands, immediately prior to the Rebellion. Dobie visited Langalibalele in the early 1860s.
7. **A Soldier's Life and Work in South Africa,**
by Lieut.-Col. E. Durnford. This is a Memoir of Major Durnford, written by his brother. Like **My Chief and I**, it gives the story from Durnford's point of view, and was written as a defence of his brother in the face of the bitter criticism of Major Durnford by the colonists after the disaster.

- 8. Washing of the Spears,**
by D. R. Morris. The book deals chiefly with Isandhlwana and the Zulu War of 1879, but a clear account is given of the Langalibalele affair, and of the relationship between Major Durnford and the Colenso family, particularly Fanny (Frances).
- 9. Colenso Letters from Natal,**
by W. Rees. The edited letters of Frances and Harriet Colenso. Particularly useful as giving the point of view opposite to the prevailing colonial attitude. Opinions expressed by the two Colenso sisters are sometimes inclined to be bitterly partisan.
- 10. Englishman's Inn,**
by C. F. Shuter. Chapter XII deals fully and comprehensively with the events leading up to the disaster, the ride and the action at the head of the Pass, and with the political consequences.
- 11. The Natal Carbineers,**
by Rev. John Stalker. Written in 1912, the book is a history of the Natal Carbineers up to that date. Chapter VII (based largely on Charles Barter's account) deals with the Langalibalele Rebellion.
- 12. Carbineer,**
by A.F. Hattersley, also a history of the Carbineers, up to 1950. Chapter II deals with the Langalibalele Rebellion.
- 13. Diary, James J. Hodson.**
Hodson was one of the Carbineers who took part in the Rebellion. The Diary deals only very briefly (a few lines) with the ride and the action at the head of the Pass. It is chiefly valuable in its account of the pursuit of Langalibalele across Lesotho, and of the mopping-up operations after the Rebellion in the Langalibalele and Putini Locations, operations which occasioned considerable criticism at the time.
- 14. Jaffray Papers, Diary.**
Jaffray was another of the Carbineers whose horse was shot under him during the engagement at the head of the Pass. The Diary (in the possession of Mr. P. R. Barnes, Giant's Castle) gives a fairly clear account of the ride, but breaks off just before the order to retire was given.

15. Parliamentary Papers re Kaffir Outbreak in Natal, 1873-4.

A collection of letters and official papers dealing with the outbreak. Of great value to the research worker. (Ref. C-1025, 1864, XLV; C-1121, 1875, LII). See Natal Society Library (Reference Section).

16. Natal's Part in the Langalibalele Rebellion,

by Sir William Beaumont. We have only quoted briefly from the account by Sir William Beaumont, who was private Secretary to Sir Benjamin Pine. He accompanied the expedition to Fort Nottingham, and later ascended to the head of Bushman's River (Langalibalele) Pass for the burial of the dead. The account deals clearly and succinctly with events from the beginning of 1873 - Cetewayo's Coronation, the expedition against Langalibalele, and subsequent mop-up operations.

17. The Kaffir Revolt in Natal in the year 1873, publ. Keith & Co.

The Government was heavily criticised after the Rebellion, and the Lieut.-Governor, Sir Benjamin Pine, was actually recalled. This publication gives the Government's side of the controversy, and is a useful counter-balance to the fulminations of Bishop Colenso and his family. It includes the trial record of Langalibalele and his tribesmen.

18. 'Barrier of Spears',

by R. O. Pearse. Chapters XX, XXI, XXII and Appendix I deal fully with the events leading up to the Rebellion, the ride of the Carbineers, the engagement at the head of the Pass, and the political repercussions.

19. There are a number of useful Theses well-worth consulting by the serious research-worker. Chief of these are:-

(a) **The Langalibalele Rebellion and its Consequences,**
by W. R. Guest. One of the best and most useful.

(b) **The Matyana Affair,**
by E. D. Leandy de Bufanos. Although this 'Affair' took place in 1858, 15 years before the Rebellion, it is essential to study it if Langalibalele's recalcitrance prior to his rebellion is to be fully understood.

(c) **A Figure of Controversy : the first Bishop of Natal,**
by H. K. H. McCallum. Deals fully with the various controversies centring around Bishop Colenso.

(d) **Colonel Anthony William Durnford in the History of Natal and Zululand,**

by J. St. C. Man (Major Durnford was promoted to colonel immediately after the Langalibalele Rebellion).

(e) **The Langalibalele Rising,**

by B. C. Janse van Rensburg. Useful, though inclined to be a little superficial in places.

(f) **The Shepstones in South Africa,**

by R. E. Gordon. This, and the next thesis, are chiefly useful for an understanding of the political overtones of the period.

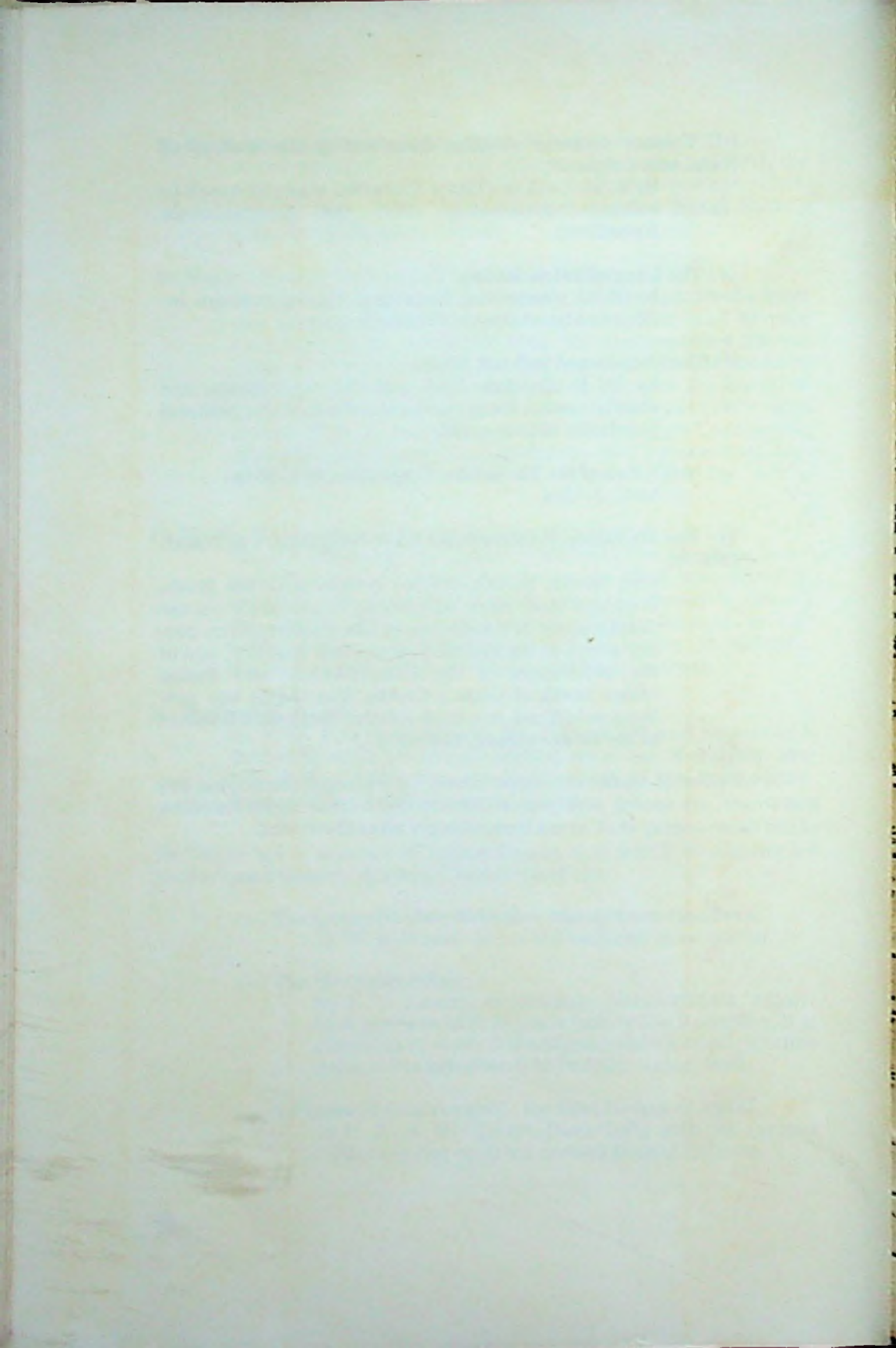
(g) **In the Era of Sir Theophilus Shepstone, K.C.M.G.,**

by C. J. Uys.

(h) **The Mountain Bushmen and their Neighbours in Natal, 1840-70,**

This thesis, though dealing mainly with the Bushmen and their raids into Natal, is useful for an understanding of conditions in the Drakensberg border areas in the middle years of last century, and of the settlement of the Langalibalele and Putini tribes north of Giant's Castle. The thesis has now been published, in a book entitled **Bushman Raiders of the Drakensberg, 1840-1870.**

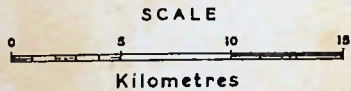
A number of books not listed above, on Bishop Colenso, his life and times, are useful, and even necessary, for a clear understanding of the controversy that arose immediately after the rising.



LANGALIBALELE REBELLION

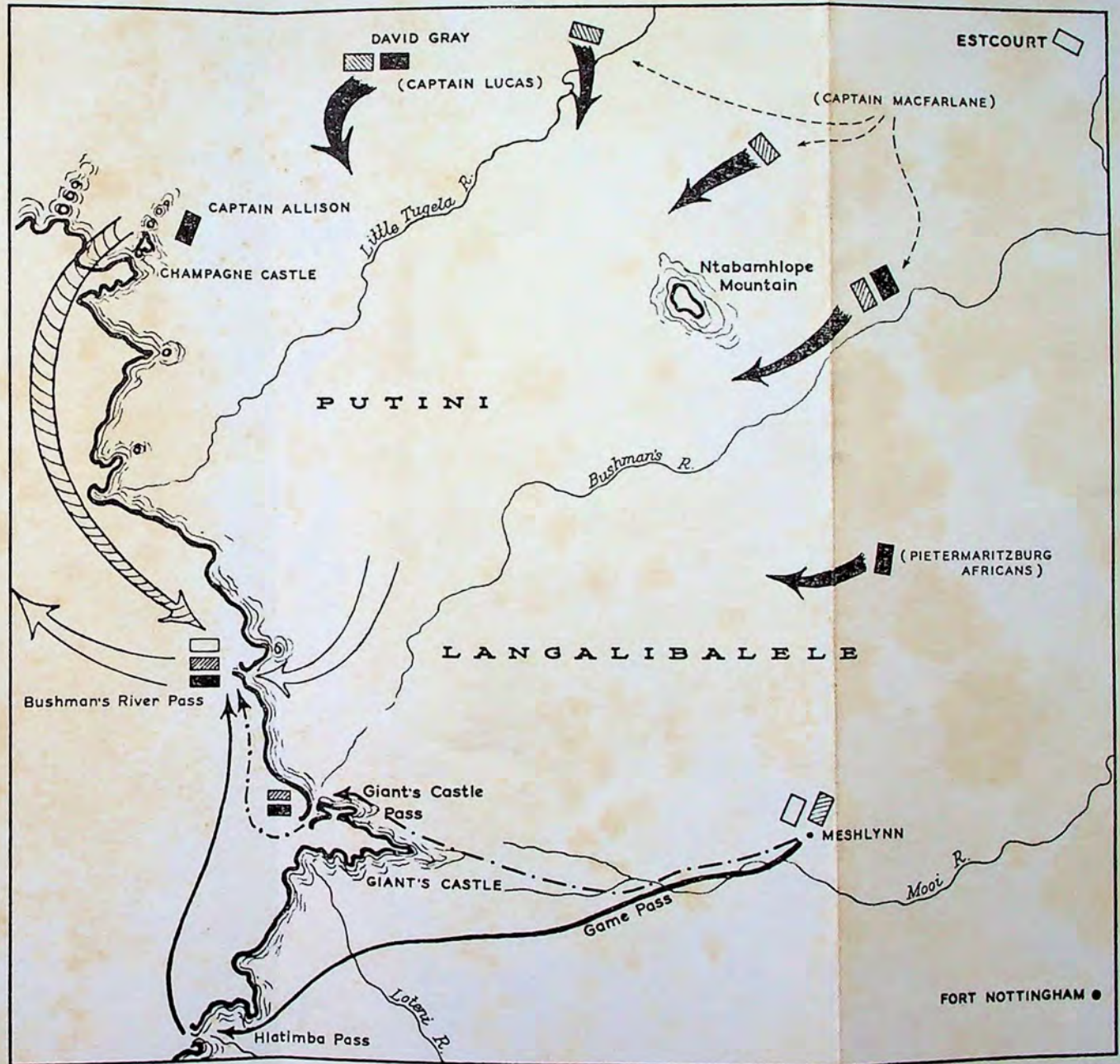
PLAN OF OPERATIONS

Based on map enclosed in
Sir Benjamin Pine's despatch of
13-11-1873 to Earl of Kimberley



- Regulars
- Volunteer Regiments
- African Levies

- Government forces
- Langalibalele
- Allison's intended route
- Route as planned for Carbineers
- Actual route taken by Carbineers



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