

Our Foreign Letter.

A NURSE'S NOTES ON THE SIEGE.

KIMBERLEY, Oct. 15th, 1899.



THIS is a day of terror for Kimberley. The sun is boiling hot, and we sallied forth as usual to our work, after a week of rumours and alarms about

the approach of the Boers. However, this morning, when in a house with a sick woman, the alarms, sirens blown from the mines, were sounded, and at the same time it was announced to all householders that the Boers had cut off our water supply at Modder River, cut the telegraph wires, and torn up the rails, so that we were cut off from all communications all round; the road to the other side, to Mafeking, having been cut off before. Martial law was declared at once, red flags flying from the conning tower erected on the mine shafts, dynamite removed in waggon loads, the outside people brought in, and an attack feared; altogether it was a very trying day. We were ordered to be ready for the front, the men went out, and the Boers did not come nearer than Riverton and Spytfontein, about one and a-half or two hours from us. Proclamations were issued by the commanding officer, Colonel Kekewich, imploring all to be loyal, and saying the town was in a state of siege, and that all spies and traitors would be shot. Our water supply is only turned on from 9 to 11 a.m. daily. There is enough in the reservoir to last six weeks, and then it can be had by pumping from the mines. Stores have gone up in price, condensed milk 1s. per tin, butter 3s. 6d., eggs 3s. to 4s. a dozen, &c. There are stores enough in Kimberley for some weeks. We can get none in, and no letters or wires out.

Sunday, 29th.—We are still in the same plight, no communication for the public and the army despatches go only by despatch riders. The enemy keeps us lively by appearing on all sides, and then disappearing with more forces. The first fight with Kimberley took place on Tuesday the 24th, about 6 miles away. The Boers tried to get to the Intermediate where our water works are. Our men went out and faced them, and we lost 3 men and 19 wounded. I saw some of it through glasses from the top of the station, and saw them all return and the armour train and others. The Boers retreated, their commander Botha killed, and we had his despatches, but they were not much good. On the 27th several hundred were seen on the other side, our men went out, and they again retreated. Now they have re-appeared again at Klipdam 100, to 300 strong. We have not enough men to spare to face them on all sides and to protect the town unless we are relieved. I would love to help to polish them off. There are so many of their spies in Kimberley we cannot go out of the town now without permits. It is enclosed, and we have to have permits to be out after 9 p.m. All have to be in their houses between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. The town is now a dead town, no life, station shut up, shops only open a few hours, all the men in the town guard. The Colonel has ordered all provisions to come down in price, and they are now down

to what they were before, or nearly so. In a short time we shall have no fresh meat, there being only a few live stock left. The Boers took those all round outside. Now we have to have a good deal of tinned foods and meat. However it is a novel experience, and one that we may never come across again. There is little chance of our getting to the wounded in earnest unless we have a big fight here. The hospital is kept as empty as possible to receive the soldiers, and the staff there, so far, is enough. One of our nurses was married, and had gone to Riverton for the honeymoon, was there when the Dutch entered on the 15th, and told them they belonged to the Free State. They managed to escape about ten days after, and had to walk miles, lost their things, etc. Poor girl!

Sunday, Nov. 5th.—Here we are still prisoners, but holding out in spite of daily alarms for all to keep to their houses, threats from the enemy that the town is to be shelled, etc. Every day a sortie goes out, one or two get killed or wounded, the enemy is driven back to re-appear in a bigger number. They are almost round us, and yesterday Commandant Cronje sent a message to the Colonel commanding here that if he did not surrender in forty-eight hours they—the enemy—would shell the town. They constantly send this sort of message. This afternoon the alarm went at 4 p.m. that the enemy were looting cattle, and had fired the veldt, and blown up some dynamite. I saw it from the house-top. I believe the Colonel has sent to General Buller in Cape Town saying we are in extreme danger, but the enemy are all up the route from Orange River. The rails are up, so they cannot get here quickly. We are all getting so sick of this, and long for anything, even the shells of the enemy. We have no butter now, it is all gone; very little fresh meat, no milk, and only brown bread. Those who want good living find it hard.

Sunday, 12th.—Here we are just the same—shut in. The enemy now daily try to shell the town, and so far very little damage done. One woman and one horse killed, a locust wounded, and a mosquito found dead, also a cooking pot smashed. I was walking along the road not far from some debris heaps when the shells were falling, one fell a few yards from me and buried itself in the debris, then another fell in the road close by me. I have a piece of a shell the enemy fired from their side. It is rather funny to see the faces of some of the people, how frightened they are. The shells fall now well into the town, through and into some houses. The booming of the guns is like near thunder. They are generally silenced by a few of our shots.

Wednesday 15th.—The shells are going about since 4 a.m. like thunder, and the wind is blowing hard. I got up because they made the house-top rattle.

Sunday 19th.—This is a hot day, and now a great hailstorm is raging, stones the size of pigeon's eggs falling. I have been picking them up and eating them. Yesterday I went to the Reservoir Fort and Camp, to see where the Boers fire chiefly from. I had been looking at them through the glass, and just remarked to one of the officers that they had not started to-day, when bang went the enemy's gun right over our heads. We got behind the fort and it went over and buried itself in the dirt of the veldt. They went on and we got off behind the sandbags after being under a sharp fire from the enemy. I have a piece of the shell that first went over us. They say we have between 8,000 and 12,000 Boers round us, they fire from three sides. They have stolen 700 head of cattle

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