

**THE GREEN HORSE
IN LADYSMITH**

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The Green Horse in Ladysmith by St. John Gore

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ST. JOHN GORE

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EDITED BY
LIEUT.-COLONEL ST. JOHN GORE

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PREFACE

IN July, 1899, the 5th Dragoon Guards were at Sialkote in the Punjab, under the command of Colonel R. S. S. Baden-Powell. This gallant officer had gone home to England on four months' leave shortly before to enjoy a well-earned rest; however, he had not been long in England when I received a letter from him saying that he was going out to South Africa. They say a nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse, and when we heard *that*, we thought it possible that interesting developments might shortly follow.

Accordingly, the regiment was not altogether taken by surprise when it received its welcome orders, on September 8, 1899, to hold itself in readiness to embark for South Africa.

There was little to be done, except sharpening swords and lances, in which our good friends the 18th Bengal Lancers—experts in all such matters—lent us their invaluable and willing assistance.

At this time I also paid a flying visit of a few weeks to England, and was fortunate enough to be permitted to travel direct from England to Durban,

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Preface

and to rejoin my regiment there. In this I was indeed fortunate, as had I proceeded to India first, I should probably have been detained there with the two squadrons suspected of being infected with glanders, and so have missed being present at the battle of Elandslaagte.

In keeping the records of the regiment during the siege, I was influenced by thinking how interesting it would be for us were a record of the doings of our predecessors in the regiment during the Crimean War now in existence.

I have recently heard that such a record actually *was* made by Major-General Temple Godman, who was serving in the 5th Dragoon Guards at that time, but most unfortunately it was burnt in a fire that occurred at Scutari.

In writing down my daily self-imposed task, I have perhaps not strictly confined myself to precise official language, and have ventured to think that incidents outside the sphere of purely military operations may be recalled with pleasure and amusement by my comrades in the Green Horse in future years.

The writers of the history of this war, when sufficient time has elapsed to allow all its events to be fairly viewed in their true proportions, will tell in stately language of the movements of masses of men, and sum up in some sonorous sentence a fact, to accomplish which individual men have toiled and fought and bled.

Preface

We smaller fry, who by God's grace have lived in the midst of, and been an integral part of, the larger whole, know and have seen with our eyes those little things which go to build up the whole. Wherefore, my dear comrades to whom I write, you will sometimes find set forth in these solemn records, cheek by jowl with a simple account of your acts of bravery, a mention of what you *had* (or perhaps did *not* have) for dinner!

With a view to presenting the point of view of others beside myself, who may have still more intimate knowledge of the details, I have asked some officers and non-commissioned officers to favour me with an account of what came under their *actual observation* during the battle of Elandslaagte. I must here express to them all my sincere thanks for the kind way in which they have responded, and I shall give their accounts of that successful day, side by side with my own much less graphic narrative, exactly as they wrote them.

It is to me most instructive and interesting to note how difficult it is for officers and men in a subordinate position to gather and realize what is really going on, and even what they themselves are doing. Captain Watson, in his account of the day, sets this forth plainly, and I have followed his account of the "manœuvres," as they appeared to him at the time, with amused bewilderment! The writers of the different accounts all saw what happened from slightly different standpoints, and I have learnt many facts

Preface

from reading their accounts of which I was in complete ignorance before, although I had such excellent facilities for seeing everything.

The most important thing that I have learnt is that the Boers fired a great deal at our men. As I have said elsewhere—not being delayed by the donga (or small ravine) spoken of in these accounts—I got a good distance in front of the line during the charge. For this reason perhaps I did not *see* much of the Boers' shooting. I suppose I must have assumed that the firing (of which there certainly was plenty) was that of my own people behind me. The first Boer whom I overtook certainly tried to turn round in his saddle and fire his Mauser rifle at me; however, an alteration in the course I was shaping brought me up on his *right* rear.

The description given by Sergeant Savage is so graphic, and contains so many facts, new even to myself, that I give it at length, feeling sure it will be read with interest.

Captain Reynolds must have had a marvellous escape. I remember the "hospital" incident of which he speaks, and a man rushing out of it to us saying, "For God's sake don't shoot!" I was thinking at the time, "Where are the enemy's GUNS?" and *dreading* that the Boers might be taking them away in the dark without my seeing them go! I need not have troubled my head; our gallant infantry had seen to *them*! But this was not known to me at the time, and anxiety about them prevented my

Preface

noticing much that I otherwise should have taken in. I heard a scuffle, and shooting close at hand.

Sergeant Taylor saw the fight from another point of view—with the guns.

Lieutenant Norwood has also given me an account of what he saw. He and Lieutenant Panchaud (an officer of the Calcutta Light Horse who was attached to us, and did most excellent service throughout) were out all night, and I was very much relieved to see them turn up smiling, with their batch of prisoners, at dawn next morning.

I am glad to say that Lieutenant Norwood has since been awarded the Victoria Cross which he earned so gallantly on the 31st October.

There are two more 5th Dragoon Guards men whose names do not appear in these records: they were employed elsewhere.

One is Baden-Powell, who saved Mafeking for England.

The other is Edwards: he commanded the Imperial Light Horse at Gun Hill, again at Wagon Hill, and went finally to help to relieve Mafeking.

When the stress of war came on the country, the regiment was able to supply two such men for the public service.

ST. JOHN GORE.

INGOGO,
5th September, 1900.

Preface

POSTSCRIPT.—The indulgence of the reader must be craved for the shortcomings in the following pages, as continued absence in South Africa prevents my being able to attend to revisions and necessary alterations.

I must here embrace this opportunity of expressing my great indebtedness to Mr. Montrose Cloete for his kindness in undertaking the troublesome task of arranging for their production.

ST. JOHN GORE.

VOLKSRUST,
12th December, 1900.