

# "LITTLE BOBS," THE HOPE OF BRITAIN

## Personality of the Military Leader Who Is Conducting the British Operations Against the Boers in South Africa.

### A SINCERE FRIEND OF TOMMY ATKINS

There is one man in whom the British army believes. That man is Lord Roberts of Kandahar, otherwise known as "General Bobs," "Bobs Bahadur" or simply "Bobs."

According to Tommy Atkins, you can take this same "General Bobs" and stand him on his head and spill a quart of lead out of him, so many years has he been accumulating battlefield souvenirs.

So sang Kipling of the idolized little field marshal. This is the man who is relied upon by the masses of the Britishers to retrieve the honor of England in South Africa. This is the man whom the English soldier worships next to his God.

When the London war office sent Lord Roberts to Africa, his escutcheon was a stainless one. Defeat was a word unknown in his vocabulary. His career had been marked by almost half a century of military successes. More than once he had upheld the honor of the empire when the psychological moment arrived. It was no wonder when "some one had blundered" that he suddenly became the man of the hour once more, and on him England hung all her hopes.

Lord Roberts is a sort of Irish terrier. His personality is an interesting one. He is a man who does things. In the army they call him "Chain Lightning." When he stepped ashore at Cape Town, General Buller was pounding away at the back door of the South African situation. "Bobs" sized up the matter in about two days. He saw that that back door was useless. There before him lay the way to the front door of Pretoria.

ways be the Wellington of your little Waterloo.

There is just one thing in all this earth that Lord Roberts is afraid of, and that is a cat. A black cat in particular he cannot abide. Such a feline, Sir Edwin Arnold has said, Roberts would go five miles to avoid.

The trait in the character of Roberts that lifts him head and shoulders above his military colleagues—many of whom

has on every occasion been marked. Wherever bullets were flying young Roberts was sure to be. He stood beside Neville Chamberlain when the latter's arm was shattered with grape shot, while a bullet lodged in the cap pouch of Roberts himself, making a severe bruise near the spine. Had it not been for the cap pouch he would have been killed.

But Roberts seems always to have borne a charmed life. In fact, before he was 25 years old he had five horses shot under him. Even when wounded he always quickly recovered from his injuries. At the siege of Namur he had a charger shot under him. At Delhi he had many thrilling escapes. On the march to Cawnpur as a staff officer with Greathead he repeatedly distinguished himself. In the action at Bolandshur he attached himself to the line, and while passing through a gateway, fighting as usual, in advance of the line, a sepoy deliberately took aim at him. Roberts escaped, but his horse fell under him.

Every one has heard of the relief of Lucknow. Speaking in his modest way of how his avenging column started

dent with characteristic modesty. "I took the flag of the Second Punjab Infantry, by Sir Colin Campbell's orders, and placed it on the messhouse to show Outram and Havelock where we were." That Roberts does not speak of the reckless bravery of thus revealing his position and drawing the fire of the enemy. "The enemy," wrote Roberts, "knocked the flagstaff down three times, breaking the pole once." But every time that the flag came down it was again stuck up by the intrepid Roberts. This was done each time amid a hail of bullets.

It is well worth while considering the estimate of Roberts by two men in very different conditions of life. "Roberts," once wrote Admiral Oliver Jones, "is as good as he is brave. He is one of those rare men who, to uncommon bravery and daring in the field and unflinching discharge of duty in the camp, adds the charm of cheerful and unaffected kindness and hospitality in the tent, and his acquaintance and friendship are high prizes to those who obtain them."

The other estimate is by Archibald Forbes, the veteran English war correspondent, and describes the Roberts of ten years ago: "Short and slight,

he is something over and above a soldier. With all his aggressive energy and bluff honesty and outspokenness, there is a touch of the Irish blarney about him—just enough to make him the ideal diplomat. Combined with the experience of the old soldier he has the sagacity of the statesman. This was demonstrated when, in 1858, Lord Roberts was taken from the command of the Madras army and given the post of commander in chief in India. That meant a good shaking up in Anglo-Indian military affairs, for no sooner did Roberts step into his new office than he set to work with his indomitable energy and absolute thoroughness to carry out a complete plan of army reform. Besides this, he did a thing even more valuable. He saw that the northwestern frontier of the Indian empire was at any time open to an invasion on the part of the soldiers of the Great White Bear. So he built a series of fortresses, a veritable chain of Gibralters, on this frontier, which if today are not impregnable, would at least render an invasion from the north a hopelessly arduous task.

Now, India swarms and teems with primitive Kinglets, who have more pride and arrogance to the square inch than any other stiff-necked heathens in this wide world. It was no easy matter to get along with these little handmade monarchs. Yet Roberts knew how to handle them, and handle them he did; suave when necessary, stern when sternness was needed and complainant when the occasion called for it. A thorough knowledge of Hindustanee has been a great help to him. This was not picked up in a day. To learn that most difficult tongue he shut himself up with the best native teachers he could secure and stuck to it until he

Roberts found himself threatened with a serious mutiny. The native troops were restive, and the English troops, as is always the case when Tommy is kept abroad overtime, had been grossly undisciplined and were in a general state of insubordination. One day a drunken, insolent soldier, "The 'non com,'" ordered the unfortunate lance corporal of the guardshouse to a file of men. One of these men refused to act as escort. He had in his pocket a bed next to the prisoner's, he protested, and they were old chums. The matter came before Lord Roberts. It may have been a terrible incident, but the situation apparently seemed to demand it. Roberts did not hesitate. A general court martial was ordered, and the taken out before the assembled general. Roberts was sentenced to be shot. He was taken to Calcutta and the assembled general, with his face near to the bare stone wall of the barracks, strange as general that today every Tommy Atkins in the imperial army would follow cheerfully into the jaws of the guillotine. Perhaps it is because Tommy knows that there is no general who because Roberts had his pay raised, or among the soldiers that he was not to be defeated if he wanted to be. Certainly before his arrival in Africa the career of the little British field marshal had been such as to afford warrant for that superstition.

But this is not Lord Roberts' first visit to South Africa. In 1881 the festivities in London to mark his return to England were cut short by the terrible dumdum. Roberts at once applied for the command of the South African army, but Gladstone sent out word that there was to be no more bloodshed. Roberts fumed and fretted and swore that disgrace to his flag, but with opportunity was carefully kept from him. He was appointed governor of Natal. It is true, but before he reached the Cape the existing Gladstone government had concluded peace arrangements with the Boers, and Roberts found himself in the land of the enemy with his hands tied. He was at once recalled, but he came back with a very heavy heart. The English government, to console him, gave him a baronetcy and a general's rank, but the belligerent little field marshal, it is said, never forgave the Grand Old Man for his treaty with Oom Paul.

### HIS INVOLUNTARY BATH.

A stout and elderly officer on board a British ironclad lying in the bay of Naples very much objected to the practice of sitting long at wine on guest nights or any other nights. He therefore made a point of escaping directly the queen's health had been honored. The ship was an old fashioned one with large gun ports on the main deck. When the guns are run in, as is the custom at evening quarters, the ports make nice, large, airy seats. Knowing that while the officers were at dinner no one would be likely to disturb him, the stout and elderly officer, wishing to enjoy the fresh evening air, as well as the lovely scenery of the bay of Naples, climbed into a gun port, and, with pipe in mouth and legs dangling over the side, did enjoy himself for some time. Of course, this proceeding was a breach of discipline. Now, though the wardroom officers were at dinner, the midshipmen were not. It was not long before the youngsters saw their chance for some fun. A council was held. Two boys got into a skiff and dropped under the stern to await events; two others seized the gun levers and hid behind the breech of the 12 inch gun—the muzzle was only a foot from the smoker's back. Another boy wriggled along the deck until he could reach the trigger; then, at a given signal by the ringleader, the levers were slipped, the gun ran down the slide, and before the smoker could look round seven tons' weight in motion caught him in the back and overboard he went. The skiff dashed alongside and picked him up. After this involuntary bath the smoker confined his smokes to the usual smoking place. Being in the main a kind hearted man, the story did not reach the captain's ears—at all events in an official manner. The midshipmen never mentioned it—oh, no, they never did!

### SHE THRASHED THE KAISER.

The German emperor has been soundly thrashed once and once only, and to his lasting chagrin, his assailant was a little girl. When he was a boy of 10, he and his brother Henry spent some months with their tutors at Cassel. The young prince soon attracted a crowd of playmates, among whom was a little French girl. One day the German children, superior in numbers, fell on the little French girl, the representative of a hated race, and, tying her to a tree, amused themselves by pelting her with pine cones and any harmless missile they could find. Each successful shot was emphasized by the cry, "Don't forget Sedan!" The only spectator of this cruel sport was a Hungarian girl, whose indignation at last broke bounds. Rushing at the ringleader, she rolled him on the ground and began to pummel him unmercifully, accompanied with her little fists with "That's for Sadowa!" At this juncture, however, the tutors appeared, and the prince was released. The sequel of this story is interesting. The gallant young Hungarian married and went to live in England. When the emperor last visited Britain, the lady told the story of this memorable fight to a member of his suit, who repeated it to his imperial master. "You don't mean to say that tiger of a girl is here?" he said. "I really must see her." They never met, however, and the emperor cannot efface the memory of "this one thrashing."



In a fortnight or two he had 50,000 men across the border of the Orange Free State, and the war suddenly entered upon a new phase. The tactics of this British field marshal are on land much what those of Nelson were on sea. He believes in going at an enemy hammer and tongs. He does not spare men when men must be paid for victory. Hit, hit as hard as you can, but hit at once; a good law, withal, but under certain circumstances, as we have seen in the present campaign, a law having its peculiar disadvantages at times. If Roberts has wanted to a field marshalship through blood, it must be remembered that one cannot fight battles from one's boyhood till one's sixty-eighth year and still have lily white hands. No living general has seen more warfare than has Lord Roberts. He was a lieutenant at 19. He has medals enough to armor an ironclad. He has enough honorary degrees to exhaust a type font. London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Bristol and many another British town have presented him with "the freedom of the city." Yet "Bobs" is the most modest of little men. He says his success is due to just two things—he knows how to move an army and how to feed a Tommy Atkins. These lessons he learned when he was a young and unknown man, eating out of his heart as an obscure junior officer in the quartermaster department of the Anglo-Indian army. But feed a soldier and move a soldier as you ought to, says Lord Roberts, and you will all-

are also his military enemies—is his incorruptibility. His bluff honesty has always made him the "bête noire" of the aristocratic pets of the war office. This trait honestly led him to oppose most bitterly the scheme of his superior, Lord Wolsey, for the reorganization of the imperial army on what was termed the short service system. Roberts struggled very long and strenuously for the long service system. He advocated merit as the means of promotion, and not birth or influence. This did not elicit the unbounded affection of Wolsey, who has always looked upon the little Irish general with a jealous eye. Energetic and untiring and aggressive as is "Little Bobs," he is as tender hearted at times as a girl. He never forgets the man of the rank and file. He always treats the native born with velvet handed consideration. In his family circle he is the gentlest of fathers and husbands. Meandering about Dublin on his bicycle, he is the most peaceful and quiet looking of citizens. Yet this is the man the hill tribes of Afghanistan called the "White Demon" and the sepoy mothers about Cawnpur still tell of to their babes when they weep in the night. Perhaps nothing will give a better idea of the man than the story of how he won the Victoria cross. It was in the sweltering core of the blood drenched Indian mutiny. There had been a short, sharp fight on the 23 of January, 1858, at a place called Khodagunj. The

after the two sepoys alone and came up with them just as they were about to enter a village. It was a foolhardy thing to do, but a standard is a standard. The young lieutenant did not draw rein until he had all but run down the two sepoys, the first of whom coolly aimed his musket and pulled the trigger in the audacious young artilleryist's face. The cap snapped and flew. It was a miracle, but a happy one. The next moment the standard bearer fell, eight inches of cold English steel through his right lung. The other sepoy turned and fled. Young Roberts, for Roberts it was, seized the precious standard as it was falling from the dying man's hand. For this great display of personal courage Lieutenant Frederick Steg Roberts received the coveted Victoria cross, that precious little bit of metal which is given only for deeds of valor on the battlefield. But this was not the only occasion on which Roberts displayed dash and fearlessness during the great mutiny. So often did he distinguish himself that Hope Grant wrote that his "gallantry

out from Cawnpur. Roberts has written of one little incident in that long and toilsome march: "I was sent by Sir Hope Grant to select the ground for a new camp. While we were waiting and talking to what appeared to be pilgrims, we were shot at, and on looking round saw a considerable number of the enemy between us and our force." It was no slight predicament, though Roberts speaks of it as a mere bagatelle. They had to cut their way back to their own lines, and in crossing a stream Roberts' horse was wounded and fell. In the fall the young officer was wounded in the hand by his own sword, but succeeded in making his escape. In the advance from the Alumbagh to Dilkoosha Roberts reconnoitered the road and had the honor of leading the army to the relief of the beleaguered garrison at Dilkoosha. It was a foreboding day. It was here, in what is now known as the messhouse incident, that Roberts again distinguished himself and surpassed all his previous cool feats of bravery. He himself tells of the inci-

square, however, of shoulder, and of a distinctly military carriage, his whole aspect denoted alertness and a wiry endurance. He had the air of quiet command one sometimes discerns in men who have seen much service when as yet they have not attained high leadership. His face was almost ascetic in its attenuation, hollow temples indented and narrow, the lofty forehead that rose above the keen, quick eyes; the lower section of the face was long, gaunt and hollow, ending in a chin every line and contour of which betokened force of resolution. Since Forbes drew this pen picture a change has crept over the little Indian fighter. Less strenuous home life, success in his long delayed "leadership" and some final consciousness of power and appreciation have caused the old soldier's face to lose its attenuation. A touch of the portliness of Anglican old age has filled out the hollow temples, reddened just a trifle the shortness of the nervous little figure. But great as Roberts is as a fighter,

could converse easily with the humblest dhooly bearer in his lines. In fact, this strange little man likes nothing better than putting on plain clothes and going unrecognized among his men, passing the time of day with them, finding out their likes and dislikes and ascertaining just how they are treated by their officers. This consideration for the man of the rank and file is one of the secrets of why Tommy Atkins regards "Bobs" as a demigod. Men have a weakness for a general who will not sit down to his dinner in his mess tent until he knows his hungry men are being fed. Roberts' attitude toward his men is revealed in an appreciation of General Ulysses S. Grant which the British general once penned: "General Grant's unwearied consideration for his men deserves the highest praise. It is undoubtedly true that when an important object was to be gained he was not sparing of their lives, but he never wasted them needlessly, and the arrangements for the well being of his troops were so carefully thought out that they never wanted for supplies. His sick and wounded were his constant care, although their necessities were never allowed to stand in the way of vigorous action." Grant's care about supplies must have particularly appealed to Lord Roberts, for the great part of his early military career was passed in mastering the details of departmental administration. The knowledge which he gained in this work in his early years has proved a great source of strength to him in his later operations in the field. Like Lord Kitchener, he is primarily an organizer and an administrator. It was no easy thing in those early days to look after the affairs of an Indian army. And behind the velvet glove had always lurked the iron hand. Twenty-two years ago, for instance,

The Mauser bullet makes a clean perforation of bone and muscle. Soldiers shot through both cheek bones have lost the sense of smell and taste, but are otherwise quite well. Most of the wounds are in the hands and arms. A stuttering British soldier was cured of his impediment by a Mauser bullet passing through his throat. This hap-

pened recently in a fight with the Boers. Of every 103 shots which strike some soldier 43 will lodge in the legs, 23 shots will lodge in the arms, 22 strike between neck and waist, 1 in the neck and 11 shots some part of the soldiers' heads. A small contingent of Boers has realized the uselessness of merely tearing

up a section of railway and throwing the rails into a stream—the usual Boer method of destroying a line. What they now do is to heat the center of a section to a white heat and carry the rail by its two cool ends to the nearest telegraph pole, round which they twist it in such a way that it is absolutely impossible to use it again for railway purposes. All armies are liable to night scares,

which at times almost amount to a panic. On one occasion a British regiment in India, marching over the ghats on its return from maneuvers at Chinchwad, was thrown into temporary confusion by the bolting of a couple of pack oxen laden with cooking pots. Several thousand copies of William T. Stead's pamphlet, "Shall I Slay My Brother Boer?" have been distributed

among the British troops in South Africa. As the slaying has largely been done by the other side, however, the soldiers fail to see the force of Mr. Stead's arguments. Although the Transvaal is 1,000 miles nearer the equator, the temperature averages much lower than at Cape Town. Lord Archibald Campbell, who has designed a reversible cloth for the kilts

of the highland regiments, with the tartan on one side and the plain neutral tint on the other, has always been a great champion of the highland dress. Two years ago the Boers had in their pay 15 German officers, 40 French and 40 Russians. The Bible Society of England gave 35,000 copies of the New Testament and the Psalter to South African troops. Among Lord Methuen's decorations is

a medal conferred upon him for having gallantly jumped into a Prussian canal and rescued a would-be suicide. It was conferred on him when military attaché at Berlin by the emperor in person at a state ball in Berlin. The German war authorities have duplicates of all the bridges in France. If, in case of war, any of these bridges were destroyed, they could be replaced in six hours.