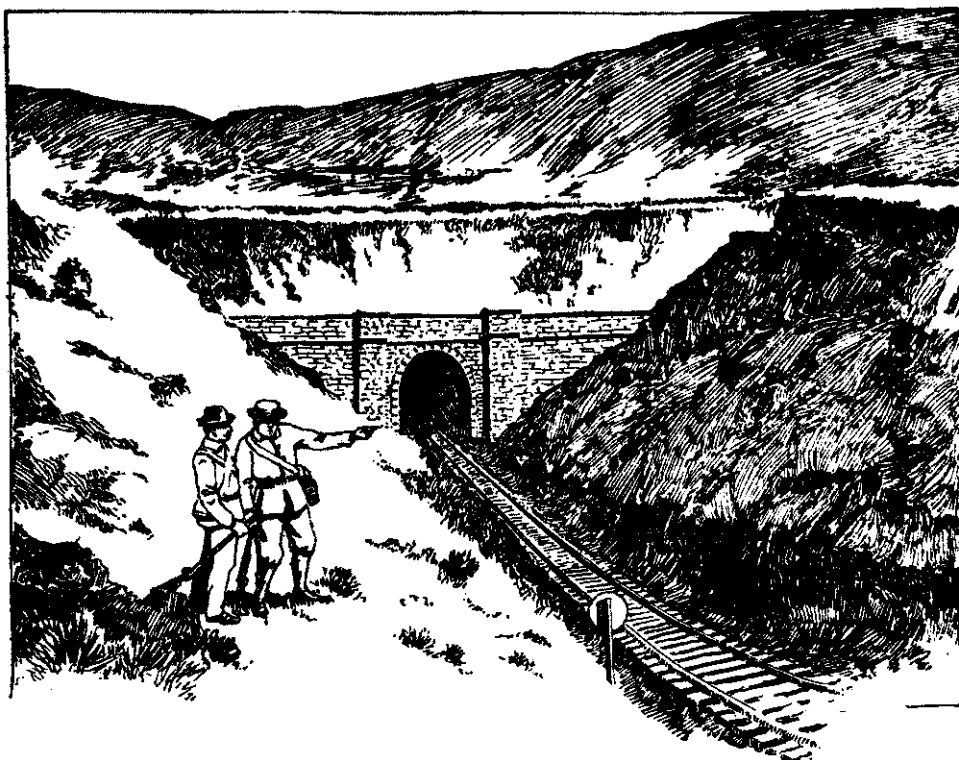


The Story of the Last War with the Boers.

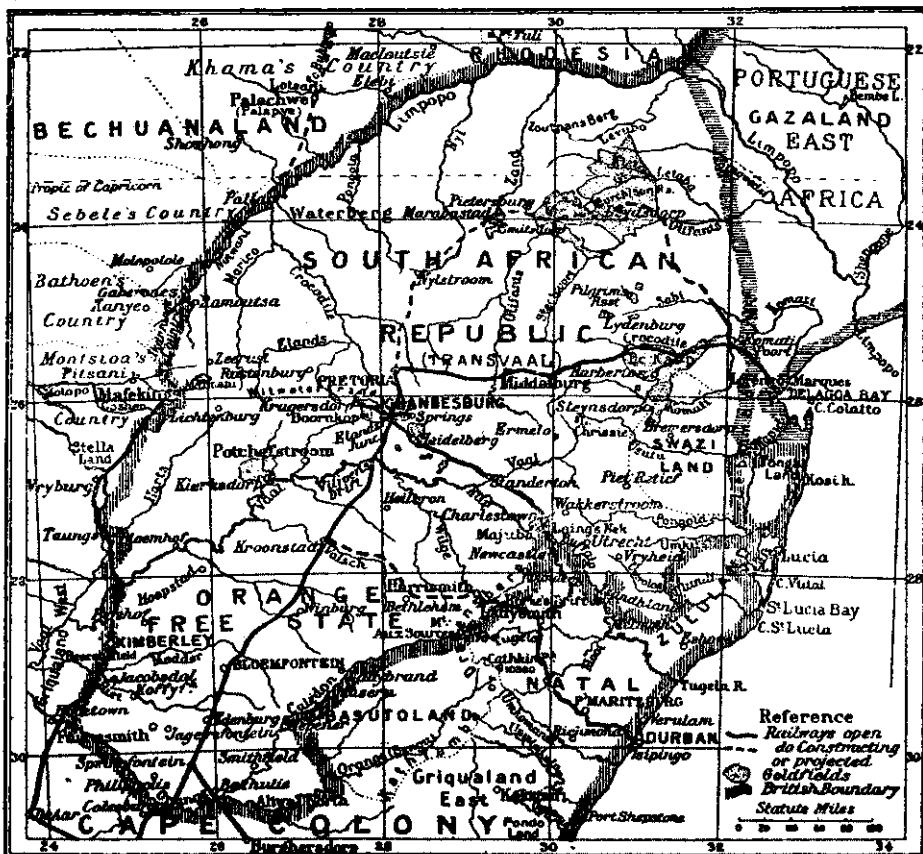
MAJUBA HILL AND LAING'S NEK.

With this issue of the "Graphic" we publish three pictures which cannot fail to be of peculiar interest to our readers in view of the state of affairs in South Africa. The large double-page engraving represents the historic fight on Majuba Hill, and the other two the battle at Laing's Nek and an attack on a British convoy near Pretoria. These pictures were first published in the "Pictorial World," and the sole right to publish them in New Zealand was subsequently purchased by the "Graphic." We propose to give some account of the incidents which they depict, but before doing so a few remarks on the events that led up to them will be instructive.

It was in 1876 that the Transvaal, till then recognised as an independent state, was at war with the Basutos and failed to conquer them. The Boers were altogether in a bad plight, the Republic being practically bankrupt and the treasury empty. This being the case the British Government decided that in the interests of the country itself and of British territory in the neighbourhood it would be best to annex the Transvaal. Accordingly on the 12th of April, 1877, this was done, and at the time it was believed that the step met with the approval of the great bulk of the Boers. It soon became apparent, however, that there was a much stronger feeling against annexation than England's advisers had supposed. In September a meeting of Boer delegates was held at Heidelberg, and resolutions in favour of independence passed. Less than a month later fifty armed Boers rode into Middleburg and demanded ammunition from the stores. At the close of 1879 there was a great Boer Convention at Wandersfontein, at which representatives of the Orange Free State were present. The meet-



LAING'S NEK RAILWAY TUNNEL, IN NATAL.



MAP OF THE TRANSCAAL AND ADJACENT STATES.

ing announced their intention to proclaim their independence on the 12th of the following April, decided on the convocation of their Volksraad for the 16th of the same month and nominated their president.

It was not till a year later that hostilities actually commenced at Brunker's Spruit. In describing the engagement there and the subsequent fights we shall quote largely from Grant's "Recent British Battles on Land and Sea." On the 20th December, 1880, Lieutenant-Colonel R. Philip Anstruther of the 94th with the headquarter companies, band and colours of that regiment, about 250 strong, was escorting a convoy from Lydenberg to Pretoria, a distance of 200 miles, when there occurred an attack on his soldiers. The Colonel, with Conductor Everton, was riding in advance of his column, when near the Spruit he suddenly came upon a body of 150 mounted Boers drawn up on the road. The British force was halted and a Boer emissary advanced with a flag of truce and a sealed letter. The letter was an intimation that the Republic had been declared at Heidelberg and that if the colonel advanced beyond the Spruit it would be taken as a declaration of war. The Colonel refused to retire and then firing commenced. It only lasted some twenty minutes. The Boers who had all the advantage of position, being hidden behind rocks and trees, poured in a withering fire on the exposed troops and in the first ten minutes all the officers were hit. The surprise was so complete, and the British force so entirely at a disadvantage, that to continue the fight would have been madness. Accordingly, after 120 had fallen, killed or wounded, the remainder surrendered. Only one dead and five wounded were seen on the Boer side, for the fire of the 94th did not take effect, nor did they seem to find the range. All the time the flag of truce was flying the Boers kept advancing, and had the officers and non-commissioned officers "spotted," and upon the first volley the latter fell at once. When the Colonel fell mortally wounded he ordered them to