

REVERSES THAT LED TO VICTORY.

Progress without a check occurs so seldom that it were wise not to expect it. No matter whether it be the individual striving for an object which he has set his heart upon attaining, or the business firm engaged in forcing its way to the foremost ranks of commerce, or the general who is leading an army into the enemy's territory to avenge or uphold the honour of his own country, all must expect checks and rebuffs, no matter how well they think they have hid their plans.

But to those who possess grit and go such checks serve only as stimulants to greater exertions. The fact that they are held stationary for a time stiffens their nerve and makes them more determined than ever to reach the goal. A reverse in no wise signifies defeat, for by its effect it really brings men nearer to ultimate victory, as they push forward with the grim determination that sweeps away every obstacle. History furnishes abundant proof that this is more especially applicable to Britons than to any other men on the face of the globe.

With us a check is a moral victory. Our enemies, who loudly expressed their opinion that we should soon be sneing for peace in consequence of the check to our advance in South Africa, have had this fully demonstrated to them by the magnificent response of Britons to the call to arms. But they ought not to have needed this proof. The history of our country is full of confirmations, and even the past fifty years will give us many brilliant examples. One of the most brilliant episodes of the siege of Sebastopol was the attack on the Redans, the British making the assault on the Great

Redan and the French operating against the Little Redan. The attack is usually called a successful one, although we were compelled to fall back after a very sanguinary encounter. But the Russians evidently understood that the check given to us would only stimulate us to a greater effort, and in the night they wisely abandoned the southern ports. This was an eloquent tribute to British tenacity.

The Indian Mutiny afforded several instances of reverses leading to victories, but we will confine our attention to one. Amongst the struggles in and around Cawnpore there was one on November 27th, when General Windham attacked the Gwalior rebels and was repulsed. The rebels took part of the city, and the prospects of the British force did not look very great, but the victory followed promptly. On the very next day Sir Colin Campbell arrived at Cawnpore, defeated the rebels with great slaughter and retook the city.

When we decided to punish the Zulus for raids upon the British territory and outrages upon surrounding peoples, including those of the Transvaal, the Boers were glad that they were annexed to a Power capable of crushing their hereditary foes.

We sent out a force inadequate for the purpose, and our advance was checked by the reverse at Isandula in January, 1879. Once more the effect was to ensure the better accomplishment of the task in hand. It served us, and we went at it with our innate bulldog tenacity. Reinforcements were promptly dispatched, and at Ulundi King Cetewayo learnt to his sorrow the exact signification of a "check" to Britain.

Our next example is peculiarly appropriate at the present time, inasmuch as it gave General Sir Frederick (now Lord) Roberts the opportunity of executing the remarkable exploit that made him famous, and it augurs well for the result of the campaign which he has just undertaken to conduct.

In July, 1880, the troops of the weak Shere Ali, who had been made Wali Caudahar by the British, revolted and joined the army of the rebel Ayoub Khan. General Burrows marched to Maiwand and with an inferior force made an attack on the strongly entrenched position occupied by the rebels, but after a desperate fight he was compelled to withdraw, our loss being heavy. A fortnight later Roberts left Cabul with a force half as numerous as Ayoub's, every man strong in the determination that the previous check should only be a step to victory.

On September 1 the two armies met and Ayoub was utterly routed, his camp and all his cannon falling into our hands.

El-Feh, in the Soudan, was the scene of a reverse on February 4th, 1884. Baker Pasha was leading a body of Egyptian troops against the rebels, and was completely defeated. Although this was not a British reverse, in the strict sense of the word, as the troops were Egyptian, yet it was a check to the re-conquest of the Soudan, in which the country was so much interested, and we took it to ourselves. The victory in this case followed closely on the heels of the check; on February 29th General Graham attacked the rebels with a British force of only one-third their number, and, after a desperate encounter, totally routed them. Our loss in killed was about thirty, whereas the enemy lost nearly two thousand.

In the early days of 1891, Manipur, a small, native state adjoining Assam and Burmah, gave us another example of a check, accompanied with brilliant heroism, and followed by complete victory. Mr Grimwood was ordered to push on from Assam to Manipur with a small force, in order to recognise the Regent, and remove the Senapati; they were unable to effect their object, and Mr Grimwood and others were treacherously murdered. After some fighting our men were compelled to

withdraw and march back to Lakkimpur, and, in the meantime, Lieut. Grant and eighty men marched from Burmah to Manipur, with the object of rendering assistance, but was too late. Grant had the whole of the Manipur army against him; he skillfully defended his position, and in the end the Manipurians fled before an advancing British contingent under General Graham. Manipur was deserted, but the natives gradually returned to their homes, while the Regent, the Senapati, and others were caught and tried for murder. Manipur is now governed by a Rajah appointed by Britain, and is subject to the British Government.

The tragedy of Khartoum in January, 1885, when the followers of the Mahdi rolled back the advance of civilisation and stopped the progress of the British arms, will be for ever memorable. It became clear that this was a case where the object to be attained must be reached slowly but steadily; the victory that must follow the check would not be gained by a quick dash, but by the exercise of that unswerving determination through years of work that is just as characteristic of our race as the brilliant charge and dashing exploit.

The work was begun, and for the greater part of the fifteen years that have nearly elapsed it has been in the care of the soldier who is now in South Africa as Chief of Staff to Lord Roberts. With a determination that nothing could upset, he has carried on that work step by step, and always getting nearer, until the time was ripe for the final blow. Then that final blow was struck, and the Soudan was conquered for Britain, Egypt and civilisation.

That we remain so calm under the check in progress in South Africa need cause no surprise, for we know that this will only lead to victory, as it always does. The British "never know when they are beaten," said Napoleon. The reason is plain—we never are beaten.



WAITING FOR PEARLS.