

The guns now advanced two or three times, when they halted and awaited the advance of the Infantry Brigade and the battery of smooth-bore guns. It was observed that large bodies of foot-men and mounted men were making towards us from the Maiwand direction, and on the guns opening on them, large numbers of foot-men streamed away along our right flank. The position now of the Cavalry Brigade was as follows:—two guns, R. H. A., on the right, supported by 130 sabres of the 3rd Light Cavalry, under Major A. P. Currie, who, with Captain M. Mayne, also watched the right flank, and two guns E.-B., R. H. A., under Lieutenant Maclaime, on the extreme left, supported by a troop, 3rd Sind Horse; and in rear, echelloned outside the guns, but with left thrown back, was a troop of the 3rd Light Cavalry under Lieutenant J. H. E. Reid, formed thus to watch a large body of the enemy's cavalry, who had formed with the evident intention of turning our left flank.

A number of cavalry, regular and irregular, were now seen moving along on our left flank towards the baggage and the rear; with which were Colonel Malcolmson, C.B., and Lieutenant Geoghegan, the former with 96 sabres, 3rd Sind Horse, and the latter with 50 sabres, 3rd Light Cavalry. Their cavalry had now completely enveloped our flank, and were threatening the rear. Fifty sabres of the Sind Horse, under Lieutenant Smith, who had originally been detached as right flanking party, joined and were now placed to watch the left flank.

Our guns opened fire about 10.50, and for half-an-hour no reply was made by the artillery of the enemy. However, about 11.15, the enemy replied and opened from their batteries with a well-directed fire. It will be observed that the necessities of the situation precluded my forming any reserve cavalry which could be kept out of range of the artillery, the whole available force amounting to 460 sabres, and these were fully occupied as above detailed. The configuration of the ground about was a level plain, which rendered it quite impossible to get any cover either for the guns or cavalry, which were exposed thus for three hours to a raking, well-directed, and concentrated fire from five batteries.

4. Firing in the direction of the rear now told that our rear was engaged. The action had proceeded some little time, when more masses of cavalry appeared on our left flank, and, to meet this movement, I placed all the cavalry that could be spared on the left flank. As the enemy, however, did not appear anxious to close with us, at my request General Burrows sent two smooth-bore guns, under Captain Slade, to this flank, who opened a well-directed fire on the masses assembled. After this the two guns under Captain Slade were moved to their former position in the front. Several demonstrations were now made from this flank by my cavalry against the enemy's cavalry, who kept firing at long ranges at us, but they only retired firing. Our men were, however, ordered every now and then to fire dismounted.

It was about this time (12.30) that the enemy succeeded in establishing a battery towards our right flank. During all this time, and till about 2 o'clock, our cavalry were losing heavily in horses and men, although I did all I could, by changing position and moving them, opening out, &c., to lessen the effect of the artillery fire.

5. Nothing could have been steadier or finer than the conduct of all ranks of the cavalry during the very severe and trying artillery cannonade to which they were exposed for about three hours, playing a passive part as escorts to the guns, and protecting the flanks from the

enemy's cavalry, which literally swarmed round our left flank.

The guns of the E.-B., R. H. A. under their officers, and those of the smooth-bore battery under Captain Slade, were most admirably and steadily served, and nothing could equal, and certainly never excel, the gallant, cool and collected bearing of officers and men during the action.

6. At about 2.20 o'clock, it was evident that the immense superiority of the enemy in numbers had begun to tell with effect, for not only had the enemy swarmed round us on the left flank, and the artillery were plying us with a well-directed and destructive fire, not only from the front, but from a flank, but the ghazis, who had led the van of the enemy's attack from the first, were advancing in overwhelming numbers in spite of our artillery and infantry fire, and were supported by a long line of infantry a short distance behind, and threatened to outflank the infantry. Captain Slade had withdrawn some of the guns and had moved to the rear.* About 2.30, I now perceive the infantry were in a confused state, falling back, and as their fire was slackening, I ordered the cavalry to form line, and by a charge stem the rush of ghazis on the infantry; but I bitterly regret to have to record that, although I was most ably seconded by the officers, only portions of the 3rd Light Cavalry and 3rd Sind Horse formed up, and we charged, but the men bearing away to the right and rear, the charge was not delivered home, and was of but little effect.

All subsequent attempts made at this time by myself and the officers to induce the men to rally and face the enemy failed.

The men seemed totally demoralised by the combined effects of the very heavy artillery fire which had, during the action, killed and wounded 149 of the horses, and about 14 per cent. of the men engaged in the front, the retreating infantry and the swarms of ghazis that†

There was now nothing left but to fall back on the rear guard, which had advanced a short way towards us, but it was not till we reached the four guns, Royal Horse Artillery, brought out of action by Captain Slade, that the men, through the exertions of the officers, staff and myself, were formed up facing the enemy. Here I halted, but could see no sign of any formed body of infantry retiring; but a long stream of scattered infantry could be seen stretching away for about two miles on our right as we stood facing the enemy.‡ I, however, sent my orderly officer, Lieutenant Monteith, to see if he could rally any stragglers, or see any officers, but after some little time, he returned with the report that the men he had met were quite disorganised and out of hand, and were making to the rear.

In the meantime, it was reported that General Burrows was amongst the slain.

I was determined, if possible, to save the guns, &c.

7. The enemy's guns had now got the range again, and commenced playing on us. Captain Slade with his guns now retired, and I covered the retreat with the cavalry, § Captain Slade two or three times coming into action, and firing one or a couple of rounds. A large number of cavalry were to be seen on our left flank, about a mile off, making evidently for our rear.

8. After proceeding some distance, the enemy's guns ceased playing on us, and I then threw out a troop of the Sind Horse to cover the retreat, which was well and ably conducted by Lieutenant Monteith.

* To bring up more ammunition

† Sic in original.

‡ No cavalry came near me. I was in the rear of the retreating infantry with three or four other officers. G.B.

§ I saw no cavalry between myself and the column of baggage. There may have been a few irregular horsemen. G.B.