

its receipt, the General Officer Commanding would have known whether his instructions had been duly received by the Officer Commanding at Penhoek.

5. It is stated that, when directed to retire, a large portion of the 2nd Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers and of the 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Rifles remained behind, and were eventually made prisoners. No explanation of this incident is furnished by Lieutenant-General Gatacre, but, presumably, it must be ascribed to the men being exhausted by their long march, and, consequently, unable to fall back with sufficient rapidity under a hostile fire.

6. The conduct of the Officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, brought to notice by the General Officer Commanding, seems deserving of acknowledgment, especially that of Band-Sergeant J. Stone, 2nd Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers, whose services are detailed in the accompanying memorandum, dated 26th January, 1900.

I have, &c.

ROBERTS, Field-Marshal,
Commanding-in-Chief, South Africa.

P.S.—Since writing the above, I have heard by telegraph from Sir Redvers Buller that the original Despatch has at last reached him. To avoid delay, I forward the duplicate.

Sterkstroom,

SIR, *January 19, 1900.*

IN continuation of my telegram, No. 1578c, I have the honour to submit a duplicate Despatch on the action of Stormberg on the 10th December, 1899.

The original despatch was posted to the Chief of Staff, Natal, with appendices in original. No copy was retained, but the accompanying report is, in substance, identical with that sent to General Buller.

I have, &c.,

W. GATACRE, Lieutenant-General,
Commanding 3rd Division.

The Chief of the Staff, Cape Town.

DESPATCH.

The Engagement at Stormberg on 10th December, 1899.

On the 9th December, 1899, the following moved from Putters Kraal to Moltano:—

BY TRAIN.—Divisional Staff; Royal Artillery Staff with 74th and 77th Batteries, Royal Field Artillery; Staff, Royal Engineers, and 12th Company, Royal Engineers; 2nd Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers; head-quarters and four companies, 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Rifles; three companies, 1st Battalion Royal Scots (of which one company was left at Bushman's Hoek, and two companies remained at Moltano); Royal Army Medical Corps field hospital and bearer company. At Bushman's Hoek the remaining four companies of the Royal Irish Rifles were picked up.

BY ROAD.—Two companies Mounted Infantry and 42 Cape Mounted Police, also from Bushman's Hoek one company Royal Berkshire Mounted Infantry.

160 Brabant's Horse and 235 Cape Mounted Rifles with four 2.5-inch guns and one Maxim should have marched from Penhoek, but did not arrive at Moltano owing to the failure of the telegraph clerk to transmit the message handed to him at midnight on the 8th.

On detraining at Moltano the following force marched on Stormberg at about 9 P.M.:—

Staff—Lieutenant-General Gatacre; Captain Hare, Aide-de-Camp; Captain Little, Aide-de-

Camp; Lieutenant McNeill, Aide-de-Camp; Colonel Allen, Assistant Adjutant-General; Major Sladen, Assistant Provost-Marshal; Captain Cox, Signalling Officer; Lieutenant-Colonel Edge, Principal Medical Officer; Major Twiss, Royal Army Medical Corps. Infantry in front, Royal Irish Rifles leading, followed by 74th Field Battery, Cape Mounted Police, Dewar's Mounted Infantry, 77th Field Battery, Royal Berkshire Mounted Infantry, vehicles and field hospital, escorted by 12th Company, Royal Engineers. Guides were provided by the Cape Mounted Police.

The force marched with the usual halts for about 8 miles by moonlight, and halted near Roberts' farm at about 12.30 A.M. on the morning of 10th December.

The chief guide now reported that we were within $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles of the enemy's position, and after a rest of about $\frac{3}{4}$ hour we marched off again in the dark.

It was soon found that the guide had gone wrong, and instead of a march of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the position, the force marched till 3.45 A.M., and found itself, after a long detour, not at the point which I wished to reach.

The place to which the column was led was a strong position occupied by the enemy, who opened fire on the head of the column. Three companies of the Royal Irish Rifles formed to the left and occupied a kopje; the remainder of this battalion and the Northumberland Fusiliers advanced up a steep hill against the enemy's position.

The Artillery was ordered forward to the kopje occupied by the three companies, Royal Irish Rifles, and in crossing a nullah one of the guns unfortunately stuck, and was temporarily abandoned. The team was subsequently shot down, and it was impossible to get the gun away. The two batteries took up positions, one on, and the other immediately west of the kopje.

The mounted infantry endeavoured to turn the Boer right, but fell back on the kopje occupied by the three companies, Royal Irish Rifles. After about half an hour the Officer Commanding 2nd Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers, finding his position untenable, gave the order to retire across the open to a ridge beyond, but a large proportion of his men, and also of the Royal Irish Rifles, remained behind and were eventually taken prisoners. The Officer Commanding Royal Irish Rifles and his second in command were severely wounded early in action.

The Artillery, who experienced great difficulty in coming into action owing to the difficulties of the ground, covered his retirement. The two batteries again retired to the south-east to a position on the neck of a ridge where they remained in action for a considerable time (over an hour), and covered the retirement of the Royal Irish Rifles and the Mounted Infantry. The enemy now brought a big gun into action, which made excellent practice, and was never silenced. Fortunately, the large majority of the shells only burst on impact or not at all. At about 6 A.M. mounted bodies of the enemy were observed trying to get round both our flanks, and the batteries, facing east and west, drove them back with a few well-placed shells.

A retirement on Moltano was now commenced; the Royal Artillery, Mounted Infantry, and Cape Mounted Police covering the Infantry. During the retirement across a ravine a gun got stuck in a quicksand and had to be abandoned. The retirement continued to Moltano, a distance of some nine or ten miles along the direct road, the