

admirable care. At this threat at least 100 more of the Boers took to flight in many small parties, the remainder endeavoured to check the Mounted Infantry advance. When one half the position was made good, a final exodus was made by the enemy and 21 last remaining Boers surrendered. The Mounted Infantry suffered no casualties. This operation was most skilfully and boldly carried out by Captain De Lisle. It has been conclusively ascertained that on this day the enemy lost upwards of 90 killed and wounded, our casualties being 6 killed and 15 wounded.

On the 5th, the enemy's position was shelled by our Artillery and a position known as Grasse Hill was carefully reconnoitred with a view to gaining possession of it the next day. Its possession would give the town of Colesberg into our hands.

I regret to say that during this reconnaissance my Aide-de-Camp, Lieutenant Sir John Milbanke, Bart., 10th Hussars, was severely wounded.

I had frequently discussed the possibility of capturing Grasse Hill with the late Colonel Watson, and with him had several times carefully reconnoitred it. He was always very confident that when his other four companies joined him he could carry out this operation with his own regiment which occupied the part of our position opposite the north-west corner of the Colesberg position, and was therefore within 1,000 yards of Grasse Hill. His four companies had joined him on the previous day.

On the evening of the 5th, in reply to a message I got from Colonel Watson, I told him I would give him a free hand to rush this position at night if he saw a favourable chance, but that he was to inform me and all troops in his neighbourhood of his intention to do so.

I heard no more, but left Rensburg at 2 A.M. and reached the Colesberg position shortly before dawn. At dawn we heard sharp musketry fire in the direction of Grasse Hill.

I directed Colonel Eustace to get his guns into position to assist the attack which I thought Colonel Watson must be making. The Artillery got into action at once against the Grasse Hill defences, but in a few minutes I received news that nearly 300 men of the Suffolk Regiment had returned to camp (having received an order from "someone" to retire), which belonged to a force of four companies which Colonel Watson had led against Grasse Hill at 12.30 on the previous night. It was further reported to me by Major Cubitt, the second in command, who had remained in camp, that about 120 Officers and men were killed, wounded, and prisoners in the enemy's hands.

It subsequently transpired that (so far as it was possible to glean any reliable account) Colonel Watson made complete and adequate arrangements to insure success, which he would, so far as I have been able to prove, have attained, although with some loss, had the majority of his men not been seized with panic and retired.

Colonel Watson was a most gallant and capable Officer, and I deeply deplore his loss.

It appears that the Officers all behaved with the utmost bravery, and that a gallant stand was made by the men who remained with them.

It had been my intention for some days to recommence operations against the enemy's left flank, but the necessity for rest to horses and men was imperative. I left here early on Sunday morning (7th instant), with a squadron of the Royal Horse Guards, under Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Fenwick, to reconnoitre a position with

available water facilities, some ten miles to the north-east.

On examining the hills running out from the eastern face of the enemy's position, they appeared to me to offer great advantages for holding as a pivot round which to reach the enemy's rear—cut him off—and take his western defences in reverse.

Hoping to find water amongst these hills, I posted the squadron in a good defensive position, with orders to retire on any sign of attack. My reconnaissance showed that there was none near, and that therefore the hills could not be held as a permanent post. But I found an excellent position about two miles further east, at a farm called Slingersfontein. The enemy had endeavoured to prevent an approach to his position by long-range rifle fire, but I saw that there was nothing there to prevent the squadron (which was some way south of us) holding on.

Shortly afterwards the fire of artillery was opened, and the squadron was seen to be retreating. This was accomplished with but very slight loss, and I regret to say Captain Ricardo and four troopers were taken prisoners by the enemy. This officer's horse had been shot, and he was taken by one of his men, and together they fell into the enemy's hands. The squadron also inflicted some loss upon the enemy.

The reconnaissance was of value, inasmuch as it enabled me to find a good position on that flank.

Occupation of Slingersfontein, 9th January.

I have throughout these operations endeavoured to preserve the horses as much as possible, and I considered that rest till the 9th was of paramount importance. On that day I moved out with the force named in the margin,* under command of Colonel Porter, 6th Dragoon Guards, and occupied the position at Slingersfontein. When the force was established there, their equipment was sent to them. I left Colonel Porter with orders to reconnoitre well to the north and east.

After inspecting the camps and positions on our left, I went in the evening to bivouac at Slingersfontein, to carry on operations on the 11th.

Action of Slingersfontein, 11th January, 1900.

On the previous day, Colonel Porter had reported that the enemy had apparently received stray reinforcements from the direction of Norval's Pont, and that he (enemy) had occupied the northern end of Slingers Ridge, and a hill running east of it (thus covering the railway). Colonel Porter had moved out his force, and prevented a movement further south.

I moved out from Slingersfontein at 5 A.M., on the 11th instant, with Colonel Porter's force. The object was to thoroughly reconnoitre the enemy's disposition and strength, whilst Major Hunter-Weston, Royal Engineers, with a detachment of Cavalry was to endeavour to reach the railway by passing round our right flank, and destroy the telegraph wire.

The guns were brought into action in a good position. The Carabiniers and New Zealand Mounted Rifles occupied the enemy in front, whilst the Household Cavalry gained a good position on his left flank.

The enemy was for a time driven back, and I hoped to turn him out, but very strong reinforcements began to reach him from Norval's Pont, and as it was not my object to become seriously engaged on the offensive, I ordered a retirement,

* 4 guns, Royal Horse Artillery, 3 squadrons 5th Dragoons, New South Wales Lancers, New Zealand Mounted Rifles.