

10.15 a.m. the Yeomanry had seized a hillock 4,000 yards north of the enemy's position, and three-quarters of an hour later the attack was developed. In the centre the 3rd South African Infantry advanced on a front of about 1,700 yards, the Yeomanry (less one squadron) and two armoured cars operated on the right flank with orders to pursue the moment the enemy should break; on the left was the remaining squadron with two more armoured cars. The 1st South African Infantry and two armoured cars formed the general reserve.

As the attack developed the enemy opened a fairly heavy fire with rifles and machine guns, and two or three field guns distributed their fire over the field. The 3rd South African Infantry moved forward with admirable steadiness. Then, acting exactly as on previous occasions, the enemy's infantry moving very rapidly, attempted an outflanking movement against General Lukin's left. This was met by a company from the reserve sent up in echelon behind the threatened flank, and the counter-attack at once faded away.

As soon as the danger was over General Lukin, acting with admirable promptitude, withdrew his squadron from his left flank and sent it to strengthen his main pursuing force on his right, and there is little doubt that this quick decision did much to ensure the success of the subsequent operations. As the firing line was now within 500 yards of the position, General Lukin threw into the fight the greater portion of his reserves, including his last two armoured cars, and at the same time sent a staff officer to warn Colonel Souter, of the Dorset Yeomanry, to be ready for his opportunity. In the face of this vigorous action the enemy was compelled to evacuate his position, and, in exact accordance with the plans, the fight was taken up by the cavalry. The rest of the story may be told in the words of Colonel Souter's report:—

"About 1 p.m. I received a message from the G.O.C. saying that he wished me to pursue and to cut off the enemy, if possible. It was my intention to let the enemy get clear of the sandhills, where there might have been wire or trenches, and then to attack him in the open. I therefore pursued on a line parallel to, and about 1,000 yards west of, the line of retreat, attacking with dismounted fire wherever the horses wanted an easy. About 2 p.m. I saw for the first time the whole retreating force extend for about a mile with a depth of 300 to 400 yards. In front were the camels and baggage, escorted by irregulars, with their proper fighting force (Muhafizia) and maxims forming their rear and flank guard. I decided to attack mounted. About 3 p.m. I dismounted for the last time to give my horses a breather and to make a careful examination of the ground over which I was about to move. By this time the Dorset Regiment was complete, and as the Squadron of the Bucks. Yeomanry had gone on ahead and could not be found, I attacked with Dorsets alone. The attack was made in two lines, the horses galloping steadily, and well in hand. Three maxims were brought into action against us, but the men were splendidly led by their squadron and troop leaders, and their behaviour was admirable. About 50 yards from the posi-

tion I gave the order to charge, and with one yell the Dorsets hurled themselves upon the enemy, who immediately broke. In the middle of the enemy's lines my horse was killed under me, and, by a curious chance, his dying strides brought me to the ground within a few yards of the Senussi General, Gaafer Pasha."

At this moment Colonel Souter was alone, except for Lieutenant Blaksley and Yeoman Brown, both of the Dorset Yeomanry, who had also had their horses shot under them. Around them about 50 fit or lightly wounded enemy, and the situation was distinctly threatening until the arrival of the machine gun section decided the issue. Gaafer Pasha and his staff were then escorted from the field to a place of safety.

For this happy result great credit is due to Colonel Souter, whose resolution and coolness stood him in great stead at a very critical moment. His name has already been submitted to Your Lordship for reward.

Colonel Souter adds—

"It is difficult accurately to express the effect of this cavalry charge on the enemy. Throughout the day he had fought with extreme boldness, but when the horses got into him he had only one thought, and that was to get away."

The losses in this remarkable exploit were severe, but they were justified by both the moral and material result achieved. One squadron was deprived of all its leaders, two being killed and two having their horses killed under them. Without their officers' control the men carried on too far, and it was this squadron that suffered most of the casualties. The enemy's losses were also heavy, and it is most improbable that anything would have induced them to stand up to well-handled cavalry again.

This action on the 26th completed the first stage of General Peyton's advance on Sollum, for Barrani was occupied without further opposition on the 28th February. The next stage was to bring up the remainder of his force and to put sufficient stores into Barrani to enable the advance to be continued. This was a naval operation. For various reasons the advance had been begun some days earlier than I had intended or than the Navy had been led to expect. The Australian Train, which had worked splendidly, was required for duty elsewhere, and, although 2,000 transport camels had been provided, we were still dependent upon the supply ships. Fortunately, these had been provided and stocked in ample time, and Captain Burmester, R.N., and Commander Eyres Monsell were, in fact, able to put supplies into Barrani about a week earlier than the date originally given to them.

The remainder of the South African Infantry Brigade and the second Mounted Brigade, together with the two sections of the Hong Kong and Singapore Mountain Battery, were accordingly brought from Mersa Matruh, and the whole force was assembled at Barrani by the 8th March.

After their defeat at Agagia on the 26th February the enemy retreated westwards towards Sollum, and the Egyptian Bedouin (Aulad Ali) began to desert him in large numbers and to appeal to General Peyton for pardon. A number of prominent Sheikhs came into his camp, but the necessity of push-