

To our intense relief, however, on nearing the Buffalo River the waving of hats was seen from the inside of a hastily erected entrenchment, and information soon reached me that the gallant garrison of this post, some 60 of the 2nd Battalion 24th Regiment, under Lieutenant Bromhead, and a few Volunteers and Departmental Officers, the whole under Lieutenant Chard, R.E., had for 12 hours made the most gallant resistance I have ever heard of against the determined attacks of some 3,000 Zulus, 370 of whose dead bodies surrounded the post.

The loss of the garrison was 13 killed and 9 wounded.

On reaching Rorke's Drift, I, for the first time, heard some particulars of the attack upon the Insalwana Camp, and am thus able to furnish the following narrative, the absolute accuracy of which, however, I cannot vouch for:—

Shortly before the arrival of Lieutenant-Colonel Durnford in camp with his 450 natives, information had reached Lieutenant-Colonel Pulleine from the left picquets that a number of Zulus had been seen on that flank.

On receiving this information, Lieutenant-Colonel Durnford asked Lieutenant-Colonel Pulleine to give him two companies of British Infantry, in order that he might move up the heights on the left and attack them. Lieutenant-Colonel Pulleine at once stated that his orders were to defend the camp, and that without a positive order he could not allow the companies to leave.

Lieutenant-Colonel Durnford then took his 450 natives up the heights, and went, so far as I can learn, about five miles from camp, when he found himself in front of a very large army of Zulus.

He at once sent back word to Lieutenant-Colonel Pulleine, and with his Mounted Basutos retired slowly before the Zulus, who advanced to attack him.

The Mounted Basutos, I hear from many quarters, behaved remarkably well, and delayed the advances of the enemy for a considerable time.

Their ammunition, however, began to run short, and they were, at last, obliged to retire quickly on the camp.

Being unable to find a fresh supply of ammunition, it appears they disbanded themselves and made the best of their way to the Buffalo, where they swam the river and recrossed into Natal, assisting, however, as far as they could, many of our fugitives from the camp to escape.

As regards the proceedings of the six companies of British Infantry, two guns, and two rocket tubes, the garrison of the camp, I can obtain but little information.

One company went off to the extreme left and has never been heard of since, and the other five, I understand, engaged the enemy about a mile to the left front of the camp, and made there a most stubborn and gallant resistance.

So long as they kept their faces to the enemy the Zulus were, I am told, quite unable to drive them back, and fell in heaps before the deadly fire poured into them.

An officer who visited this part of the field of battle on the following morning reported that the loss of the Zulus in killed could not be less than 2,000.

When, however, the Zulus got round the left flank of these brave men they appear to have lost their presence of mind, and to have retired hastily through the tents which had never been struck.

Immediately the whole Zulu force surrounded them, they were overpowered by numbers, and the camp was lost.

Those who were mounted, ran the gauntlet and some small portion managed to reach the river, which, however, at the point of crossing was deep and rapid.

Many were shot or assegaid, and many were swept away by the current, and it is presumed have been drowned.

Had the force in question but taken up a defensive position in the camp itself, and utilized there the materials for a hasty entrenchment which lay near to hand, I feel absolutely confident, that the whole Zulu army would not have been able to dislodge them.

It appears that the oxen were yoked to the wagons three hours before the attack took place, so that there was ample time to construct that wagon laager which the Dutch in former days understood so well.

Had, however, even the tents been struck and the British troops placed with their backs to the precipitous Insalwana Hill, I feel sure that they could have made a successful resistance.

Rumours reached me, however, that the troops were deceived by a simulated retreat, and in their eagerness to close with the enemy allowed themselves to be drawn away from their line of defence.

Our actual loss cannot as yet be correctly ascertained, but I fear that it cannot be less than 30 officers and about 500 non-commissioned officers, rank and file, belonging to the Imperial troops, and 21 officers and 70 non-commissioned officers, rank and file of the Colonial forces.

The effect of this disaster throughout the Colony has already shown itself, and the European colonists generally are in great alarm.

The result of this has been to produce a similar effect upon the native mind, and our Native Contingents are beginning to lose heavily by desertion.

This will, I trust, be checked with a firm hand by the Natal Government, as the natives were ordered out by their supreme chief, the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, and have no right to leave their corps until released by his order.

The fact remains, however, that the Natal native allies are no longer to be depended upon, and additional British reinforcements must be sent out if the operations against the Zulus are to be carried to a successful issue.

The country is far more difficult than I had been led to expect, and the labour of advancing with a long train of wagons is enormous.

It took seven days' hard work, by one half of No. 3 Column, to make the ten miles of road between Rorke's Drift and Insalwana Hill practicable, and even then had it rained hard I feel sure that the convoy could not have got on.

The line of communication is very much exposed, and would require a party of mounted men always patrolling, and fixed intrenched posts of infantry at intervals of about ten miles.

Under these circumstances I feel obliged to ask for the following reinforcements, viz.:—three British Infantry Regiments, two Cavalry Regiments, and one Company Royal Engineers.

The cavalry must be prepared to act as mounted infantry, and should have their swords fastened to their saddles, and their carbines slung, muzzle downwards, by a strap across the shoulder. The swords should, if possible, be somewhat shorter than the present regulation pattern.

At least 100 artillerymen, with farrier, shoeing smith, and collar maker, must be sent out at once