

that portion of the camp occupied by the Native Contingent. On my way I noticed a number of native infantry retreating in haste towards the camp, their officer endeavouring to prevent them but without effect. On looking round to that portion of the field to our right and rear I saw that the enemy was surrounding us. I rode up to Lieutenant-Colonel Durnford, who was near the right, and pointed this out to him. He requested me to take men to that part of the field and endeavour to hold the enemy in check; but while he was speaking, those men of the Native Contingent who had remained in action rushed past us in the utmost disorder, thus laying open the right and rear of the companies of 1st Battalion 24th Regiment on the left, and the enemy dashing forward in a most rapid manner poured in at this part of the line. In a moment all was disorder, and few of the men of 1st Battalion 24th Regiment had time to fix bayonets before the enemy was among them using their assegais with fearful effect. I heard officers calling to their men to be steady; but the retreat became in a few seconds general, and in a direction towards the road to Rorke's Drift. Before, however, we gained the neck near the Isandlana Hill the enemy had arrived on that portion of the field also, and the large circle he had now formed closed in on us. The only space which appeared opened was down a deep gully running to the south of the road into which we plunged in great confusion. The enemy followed us closely and kept up with us at first on both flanks, then on our right only, firing occasionally, but chiefly making use of the assegais. It was now about 1.30 P.M.; about this period two guns with which Major Smith and Lieutenant Curling, R.A., were returning with great difficulty, owing to the nature of the ground, and I understood were just a few seconds' late. Further on the ground passed over on our retreat would at any other time be looked upon as impracticable for horsemen to descend, and many losses occurred, owing to horses falling and the enemy coming up with the riders; about half a mile from the neck the retreat had to be carried on in nearly single file, and in this manner the Buffalo River was gained at a point about five miles below Rorke's Drift. In crossing this river many men and horses were carried away by the stream and lost their lives; after crossing the fire of the enemy was discontinued, pursuit, however, was still kept up, but with little effect, and apparently with the view of cutting us off from Rorke's Drift. The number of white men who crossed the river at this point was, as far as I could see, about 40. In addition to these, there were a great number of natives on foot and on horseback. White men of about 25 or 30 arrived at Helpmakaar between five and six P.M., when, with the assistance of other men joined there, a laager was formed with wagons round the stores. I estimate the strength of the enemy to have been about 15,000. Their losses must have been considerable towards the end of the engagement.

I have, &c.,
(Signed) E. ESSEX,
Captain, 75th Regiment,
Sub-Director of Transports.

B.

From Lieutenant Curling to Officer Commanding
No. 8.

Helpmakaar,
January 26, 1879.

SIR,
I HAVE the honour to forward the following

report of the circumstances attending the loss of two guns of N Brigade, 5th Battery Royal Artillery, at the action of Isandlana, on January 22. About 7.30 A.M. on that date, a large body of Zulus being seen on the hills to the left front of the camp, we were ordered to turn out at once, and were formed up in front of the 2nd Battalion 24th Regiment Camp, where we remained until eleven o'clock, when we returned to camp with orders to remain harnessed up and ready to turn out at a minute's notice. The Zulus did not come within range and we did not come into action. The infantry also remained in column of companies. Colonel Durnford arrived about ten A.M. with Basutos and the rocket battery; he left about eleven o'clock with these troops in the direction of the hills where we had seen the enemy. About twelve o'clock we were turned out, as heavy firing was heard in the direction of Colonel Durnford's force. Major Smith arrived as we were turning out and took command of the guns, we trotted up to a position about 400 yards beyond the left front of the Natal Contingent Camp, and came into action at once on a large body of the enemy about 3,400 yards off. The 1st Battalion 24th Regiment soon came up and extended in skirmishing order on both flanks and in line with us.

In about a quarter of an hour, Major Smith took away one gun to the right, as the enemy were appearing in large numbers in the direction of the Drift, in the stream in front of the camp.

The enemy advanced slowly, without halting; when they were 400 yards off, the 1st Battalion 24th Regiment advanced about 30 yards. We remained in the same position. Major Smith returned at this time with his gun, and came into action beside mine. The enemy advancing still, we began firing case, but almost immediately the infantry were ordered to retire. Before we could get away, the enemy were by the guns; and I saw one gunner stabbed as he was mounting on to an axle-tree box. The limber gunners did not mount, but ran after the guns. We went straight through the camp but found the enemy in possession. The gunners were all stabbed going through the camp with the exception of one or two. One of the two sergeants was also killed at this time. When we got on to the road to Rorke's Drift it was completely blocked up by Zulus. I was with Major Smith at this time, he told me he had been wounded in the arm. We saw Lieutenant Coghill, the A.D.C., and asked him if we could not rally some men and make a stand, he said he did not think it could be done. We crossed the road with the crowd, principally consisting of natives, men left in camp, and civilians, and went down a steep ravine leading towards the river.

The Zulus were in the middle of the crowd, stabbing the men as they ran. When we had gone about 400 yards, we came to a deep cut in which the guns stuck. There was, as far as I could see, only one gunner with them at this time, but they were covered with men of different corps clinging to them. The Zulus were in them almost at once, and the drivers pulled off their horses. I then left the guns. Shortly after this I again saw Lieutenant Coghill, who told me Colonel Puleine had been killed.

Near the river I saw Lieutenant Melville, 1st Battalion 24th Regiment, with a colour, the staff being broken.

I also saw Lieutenant Smith-Dorrien assisting a wounded man. During the action, cease firing was sounded twice.

I am, &c.
(Signed) H. T. CURLING,
Lieutenant R.A.