

the garrison would have to deal with any large bodies of Zulus.

As it is, it is highly probable, I suppose, that Cetywayo may make a supreme effort to drive us out and bring the bulk of his army this way. I trust he may do so and he will find it a very hard nut to crack indeed. We have got all the distances measured and this afternoon a table of ranges will be issued to the troops. If we have time the distances will all be cut on the hills which slope our way, and the cuttings filled in with white clay, which we get out of the ditches, so as to make the figures visible.

As regards our immediate future, I am of opinion, and I trust you will forgive me giving it frankly that, a convoy of wagons not exceeding 20 in number and all with good spans of 20 oxen, and none with larger loads than 4000 lbs. should be sent us, as soon as you can get an escort together, equal to a battalion of 600 or 700.

The wagons to contain nothing but food for men and a little more ammunition, especially for guns and rockets, which we want and would not be much good to the Zulus if it fell into their hands. The escort would not require tents, and could carry two days' provisions on their persons, which would save something. I would ask to have the two Companies Buffs, now at the Lower Drift, sent up, and with the return wagons I would send back the three companies and Head-quarters 99th, half the company Royal Engineers, the Native Pioneers, the odds and ends of Volunteers, Native Contingent, and drivers and leaders still here. In fact the latter have signified their intention to bolt the first opportunity. If the escort reported the road pretty clear, I would also suggest sending back the sick and wounded, who are fit to travel, and some of the trek oxen which I should be very glad to get rid of. The drivers and leaders could take charge of them.

I most respectfully hope you will remember that I am only giving my opinion. I am ready to reduce the garrison to any limits you may choose to order, and to take my chance with the remainder, but having pretty well studied our position, I hope from every point of view, I do not think (unless we see no chance of being attacked by a very large body of the enemy) that it would be prudent just yet to reduce the garrison beyond the limits I have suggested.

In making the above suggestions, I have studied to reduce the number of mouths, and to retain, at the same time, all the fighting men I could. It will be better too, to keep units, i.e., battalions together. The Natal Pioneers will be useful in repairing roads between this and the Tugela and the half company Royal Engineers will be necessary, should any intermediate station be fixed upon as a fortified post. I know of no place as I have already told you. The Inyone dries up in winter generally, and what water remains is brackish. Perhaps our camping ground on the left bank of the Umsindusi might do. The water is beautiful, but it is commanded, as I think I also told you, from the high ground towards the Amatakula, only in that direction, however, so perhaps the Engineers might manage to defile it. The locality as regards the distance between Ekowe

and the Tugela would be a very convenient one, I am speaking of places on the road, but I remember none adjacent to it. A few hundred men could cut down the bush along the road for several hundred yards on either side between the Inyone and Umsindusi, but I do not know whether it would not be too big a job to attempt to do so, about the Amatakula and Inyazune. It would be a grand thing if it could be done. I think any escort coming up will have to look about them very carefully nearly every where between the Umsindusi and the high ground on this side of the Inyazune. On some places the bush is pretty thick; a few mounted scouts with the convoy would be of great use.

As regards the composition of a column, I have come to the conclusion that, although mounted men, if the horses could be fed in this country, would be of immense value, yet, considering that all their forage has to be carried, their utility is much lessened by the fact of the column being materially increased in length by the additional transport.

The Native Contingent, too, are of little or no use, unless all the men have firearms; when, perhaps, they would be as dangerous to friends as foes; and the officers and non-commissioned officers can speak Kaffir.

In the 2nd Regiment, scarcely one could do so, and I could never get anything done I wanted. The men were always grumbling at doing fatigue work, notwithstanding that they saw the soldiers working alongside them, and said they were enlisted to fight, and not to work. Yet, when they had the chance, they did not do over well.

We should be very glad of a newspaper or two giving an account of No. 3 Column. About what number of Zulus did poor Durnford's party kill before they were overpowered and slaughtered? Did the two guns fall into the hands of the Zulus? Did the plucky company of the 2nd Battalion 24th at Rorke's Drift (I suppose it was guarding the Depot) beat off the 2,500 Zulus whom they fought for twelve hours? How very foolish of poor Durnford's detachment to scatter about so far from the camps. Has any raid been made on Natal? The men here are very savage at the thoughts of so many of their wounded comrades being butchered, for, of course, as all were found dead, the wounded must have been murdered.

We are all still in very good health, and the work will not be so hard now I hope, as all the heavy work of the entrenchments is completed. 37 on the sick report to-day, two of the Buffs rather bad with the diarrhoea, one of them, Oakley, the married man whose name I sent the other day, is not so well, he had only fever then. Wounded doing very well.

We had some rain last night and the night before a very heavy thunderstorm. To-day it has been exceedingly hot.

I am going to send this letter off to-night. The messengers say the road is thoroughly watched, but I cannot hear of any large force of Zulus being between us and the Tugela.

Sincerely and respectfully yours,  
(Signed) C. K. PEARSON.