



SUPPLEMENT  
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**T**HE following Despatch has been received from the General Officer Commanding, Natal and Transvaal, to the Secretary of State for War.

(Received 8th March, 1881.)

*Army Head-Quarters, Mount Prospect,  
Natal, February 1, 1881.*

SIR,  
1. I HAVE already, from time to time, forwarded to you all information that has reached me regarding the Boer outbreak, which, commencing with acts of resistance to the Civil Power, culminated in the Proclamation of the South African Republic on the 16th December, 1880, and the attack on the detachment of the 94th Regiment on the 20th of that month. I have also reported to you the measures taken to organize and concentrate a force with which to attempt the relief of the besieged garrisons of the Transvaal, and the re-establishment of Her Majesty's authority in that province.

2. On the 10th January, I left Maritzburg for Newcastle to personally supervise the formation and equipment of the columns collecting for this purpose under the command of Colonel Deane; and on the 19th and 20th the last detachments, consisting of drafts just landed from England, 2 field guns, manned by gunners from the Garrison Battery at Cape Town, and a Naval Detachment, kindly placed at my disposal by Commodore Richards, C.B., A.D.C., reached Newcastle.

3. The force then assembled at Newcastle consisted of—

2 guns N-5 R.A., properly horsed and equipped.

2 field guns, manned by a detachment, 10-7 R.A., Garrison Battery, and drawn partly by horses, partly by oxen.

2 7-pr. guns, drawn by mules, and manned by men of the 60th Rifles, under direction of Artillery non-commissioned officers.

1 mounted squadron, formed of details of King's Dragoon Guards, Army Service Corps, and men of the 58th and 60th Regiments.

Head-quarters and 5 Companies 58th Regiment.

Head-quarters and 5 Companies 60th Rifles.

A draft of 80 men of 2-21st Royal Scots Fusiliers.

A Naval Brigade of 120 men with 2 Gatlings and 3 rocket tubes.

A detachment Natal Mounted Police.

In all 1,146 infantry, 191 cavalry, 6 guns and 2 Gatlings.

4. The column thus formed was small in numbers, and somewhat heterogeneous in composition. But no further reinforcements could reach me for at least three weeks; and having regard to the effect of such delay on Pretoria, where the loyal population has had to take refuge in the camp, and is undergoing all the miseries of a close siege, and on Potchefstroom, where the garrison is scantily supplied, and can scarcely hold out much longer, I decided to move forward at once with the force at my disposal.

5. Regarding the Boer forces opposed to me, it was difficult to get reliable information. Captain Lambert, 2-21st Royal Scots Fusiliers, who had been for some time a prisoner at the Boer Head-quarters at Heidelberg, estimated their numbers at 16,000; and similar estimates were current in Natal and the Free State. From other, and what appeared to me more accurate information, however, I was inclined to estimate their forces at between 5,000 and 7,000, of whom about 2,000 were directly opposed to me on the border, under their Commandant-General P. J. Joubert. These numbers were necessarily liable to considerable fluctuation, as, day by day, fresh men arrived, or others went to their homes. The Boers were without artillery, but all mounted and armed, amply supplied with ammunition, and generally excellent shots.

6. From Newcastle three roads lead into the Transvaal—one to the right going to Utrecht (with a branch to Wakkerstroom), one in the centre to Wakkerstroom direct, and thence to Standerton or Lydenburg, and one on the left direct to Standerton, joining the Wakkerstroom-Standerton road at a place called Meek's. Utrecht lies to the east of and below the Drakensberg range and plateau; but the roads to Wakkerstroom and Standerton both cross this range at elevations of from 5,000 to 6,000 feet. The pass

where the direct Standerton road crosses the Drakensberg range is called the Laing's Neck, and lies within Natal territory, about 25 miles from Newcastle.

7. During my stay at Newcastle I learnt that the Boers had established their main camp at a point a little south of the Wakkerstroom-Standerton-road, and about six miles from the former place. From this point, centrally situated between the two roads crossing the Drakensberg, they could move at once to occupy either pass, according to the route that I might choose for my advance. Their patrols watched the fords on the Buffalo River, and a detached force usually occupied the Laing's Neck, whence parties were occasionally pushed to the vicinity of Newcastle.

8. As my objects were the dispersion of the Boer forces in the field, and the earliest possible relief of the garrisons of Standerton, Pretoria, and Potchefstroom, I selected the direct Standerton road for my advance, though in character, and in the defensive position it affords, this road compares unfavourably with that by Wakkerstroom.

9. Two days were occupied in completing the equipment of the force, and a heavy day's rain on the 22nd having made the roads almost impassable, I was compelled to defer my advance till the 24th, on which day the column made a short march, halting a few miles outside Newcastle.

10. On the 25th, the column, which was accompanied by a heavy convoy of supplies, crossed the deep and difficult valley of the Imbazane River, the convoy defiling under cover of positions held by infantry and artillery. On the 26th the Valley of the Ingogo was similarly crossed, and the troops encamped on a commanding ridge, between three and four miles from the Laing's Neck Pass. No opposition was offered to the march, though Boer patrols were occasionally visible; but the Laing's Neck was seen to be occupied in force.

11. Heavy rain and mist prevented any movement on the 27th, but on the morning of the 28th I moved out with the force detailed below, leaving the laager, which had been strengthened with redoubts constructed round it, garrisoned by the detachment of the 2-21st Royal Scots Fusiliers, a company of the 3-60th Rifles, a detachment of the Naval Brigade, and details of the various corps—in all 260 men, under Captain Whitton, 2-21st Royal Scots Fusiliers.

Royal Artillery, 4 officers, 6 guns.

Mounted Troops, 6 officers, 113 men.

Natal Mounted Police, 3 officers, 63 men.

58th Regiment, 15 officers, 479 men.

60th Regiment, 13 officers, 321 men.

Naval Brigade, 4 officers, 84 men.

2-21st Regiment, 1 officer 6 men.

Army Medical Department and Army Hospital Corps, 4 officers, 26 men.

Column Staff, 2 officers.

12. The pass over the Laing's Neck lies about the centre of a rough semicircle of hills, six miles in length, culminating towards the west (our left), in a lofty square-topped mountain, named the Majuba, with precipitous sides and deep wooded ravines, and ended on the east by the Buffalo River running through a deep and rugged gorge. The road skirts the foot of the Majuba Mountain till it rises the Laing's Neck Ridge in the re-entering bend of this semicircle. It is thus commanded along the greater part of its length by the mountain spurs on its left, and where it crosses the neck by the hills on both sides. The ground within the semicircle is an undulating grassy plateau, broken by a few deep ravines.

13. From the Laing's Neck the ground rises on the west in a series of ridges and shoulders, furrowed with deep wooded ravines, to the Majuba Mountain. To the east the ground rises steeply about 400 yards to a table hill, having a length of 1,000 yards, and a command over the plains below of about 600 feet, and then falls in a number of spurs and ridges to the deep valley of the Buffalo River. This Table Hill is the key of the position, and against its outer (eastern) end I directed my attack.

14. Leaving the main road about half-a-mile to our left, and crossing a deep valley immediately under our camp, the column moved towards the enemy's position along an open ridge out of shot of the hills, and formed up on a rise directly opposite, and from 2,800 to 2,500 yards distant from the table hill above-mentioned, the guns in the centre, the 60th Rifles, Naval Brigade, and Natal Mounted Police on the left, the 58th Regiment and Mounted Squadron on the right.

15. From near the eastern end of the Table Hill a spur runs forward in a southerly direction, falling steeply, almost to the level of the ground occupied by us, and then rising again, with easy and open slopes, to an isolated conical hill 1,500 yards distant from the Table Hill, and overlooking our right at about the same distance. This hill was occupied by a picket of the enemy, probably 100 to 200 strong. Had the force at my disposal been sufficient I would have commenced by taking this hill with my Infantry; but to have done so would have entailed a wide turning movement, and would have too much extended my small force. I determined, therefore, to attack the spur directly, covering the attack with artillery fire, and protecting the right or exposed flank of the Infantry with the Mounted Corps. The face of the spur was very steep but hidden from view or fire, except from the slopes of the isolated hill already mentioned.

16. At half-past nine o'clock I commenced the action by shelling different parts of the enemy's position, and pushing forward a company of the 60th Rifles and the Naval Brigade, with their rockets, into some enclosed ground on the road, about 1,200 yards from the Neck. From this point the Naval Brigade sent rockets with good effect on the Neck, and among the Boer reserves and horses collected behind. A sharp fire was soon opened on this force from the wooded kloof beyond the road, but as the men were well posted under cover of a stone wall our casualties here were few.

17. When this force had become engaged, the 58th Regiment, under Major Hingeston, moved forward to attack the spur, covered on their right by the Mounted Squadron under Major Brownlow, King's Dragoon Guards, and by the fire of the Artillery, which was now concentrated on this part of the enemy's position. Colonel Deane, Commanding the Natal Field Force, personally led this attack.

18. The Mounted Squadron moving on the right of the Infantry, gradually drew up the slope of the isolated hill on our right, and coming under fire of the Boers on the hill, faced the hill and charged. This charge was splendidly led by Major Brownlow, who, with Troop Sergeant-Major Lunny, King's Dragoon Guards, was first on the ridge. Major Brownlow's horse was shot under him, as was that of his subaltern, Lieutenant Lermite, 21st Royal Scots Fusiliers, and Sergeant-Major Lunny was instantly killed, but Major Brownlow shot the Boer leader with his revolver, and continued to lead his men, who now crowned the ridge. Could he have been promptly sup-

ported, the hill was won, for the Boers had already begun to retire, and many had run to their horses. But the fire was still heavy, and the hill was steep, while many of the horses of the mounted troops were quite untrained to fire. The support troop was checked; the leading troop, fatigued and broken by the charge, with its leaders all down, could not push on, and the whole gave way down the hill.

19. Meanwhile the 58th Regiment had begun to climb the steep ascent of the spur, when the Boers on the isolated hill having repulsed the Cavalry attack, moved down the ridge and opened fire on the right rear of the Infantry now exposed, the enemy on the Table Hill at the same time collecting to resist them at the brow of the hill. The 58th now pushed on eagerly, forming a few men to the right flank to return the enemy's fire. But the climb was a very trying one, and when the men got near the top they were too fatigued and breathless for a charge, while the fire from the ridge behind continued to tell heavily, and the Boers on the brow shot down on the men as they struggled up. The officers led nobly, and Colonel Deane, with splendid gallantry, tried to carry the hill by a rush. His horse was shot, but he extricated himself, and dashing forward on foot, fell, riddled with bullets, 10 yards in front of the foremost man. Major Poole, D.A.Q.M.G., who joined him in the charge, with Lieutenant Inman, 60th Rifles, his orderly officer, and Lieutenant Elwes, Grenadier Guards, my A.D.C., were killed close by him, and Major Hingeston, commanding the 58th Regiment, and all the mounted officers of the regiment, were shot down or dismounted. The men continued to hold their ground unflinchingly for some time, but the ground was too unfavourable and the fire too severe, and ultimately the regiment was compelled to retire, covered for some time by the fire of two companies posted under direction of Major Essex, 75th Regiment, Column Staff Officer, behind a slight ledge. Part of the 60th pushed forward to cover the retirement, and the 58th, which had fallen back leisurely, without haste or confusion, reformed at the foot of the hill, and marched back into position in as good order and with as erect and soldierly bearing as when it marched out.

20. The main attack having failed, it became necessary to withdraw the advanced parties on the left. This was done without loss, though the Boers began to show in increasing number on that flank, and the force was re-formed on its ground. I remained on this ground for some time, partly to cover the removal of the wounded, and partly in the hopes that the enemy might attempt to follow up his success. But as the Boer Commander would not allow me to send succour to the wounded on the hill so long as I maintained my advanced position, I withdrew slowly to camp in the afternoon. All the wounded, and the bodies of the dead officers, were brought into camp that evening; and the dead were buried under a flag of truce, some of them that evening and the remainder the next day.

21. I send herewith a list of casualties,\* which, I regret to say, are very heavy. I have especially to deplore the death of Colonel Deane, Commanding Natal Field Force, in whom this force has suffered an irreparable loss. His experienced knowledge of all staff and regimental work, and his unremitting attention to every detail having for its object the comfort, the efficiency, and the security of the men under his command, coupled with his charm of manner, had made him alike

beloved and looked up to by all serving with him, and his death was in keeping with his character as a chivalrous gentleman and officer.

22. I have also deeply to deplore the loss of Major Poole, R.A., D.A.A.G., Lieutenant Elwes, Grenadier Guards, my A.D.C., and Lieutenant Inman, 60th Rifles, Orderly Officer to Colonel Deane, who all fell with Colonel Deane, in his determined effort to carry the hill. Major Poole was an able and most promising staff officer, and had been of the greatest service since he joined my staff, while I have suffered a heavy personal loss in the death of my A.D.C., Lieutenant Elwes.

23. Of the conduct of the 58th Regiment during this trying day I cannot speak in too high terms. Major Hingeston, commanding the regiment, was mortally wounded; Captain Lovegrove, second in command, severely wounded; Lieutenants Dolphin and Baillie killed; Lieutenant O'Donel wounded; the Sergeant-Major and most of the Colour-Sergeants killed or wounded; but to the last the men were perfectly in hand, cheerful, and ready to fight on. They only fell back when further fighting was hopeless and the order given to retire, and then moved down the hill leisurely, not a man running to save himself from the heavy fire which followed them down. The perfect order and soldierly bearing of the remains of the regiment, as they marched back into position under command of Lieutenant Jopp, deservedly called forth the admiration of all who witnessed it.

24. I have already reported the gallant charge made by the Mounted Squadron under Major Brownlow, and I would now express my very high sense of the services rendered by that officer. With only a small number of dismounted Dragoons, Army Service Corps, and volunteers from infantry regiments, at his command, and great difficulty in obtaining horses and equipment, he has, with indefatigable industry and zeal succeeded in creating a most serviceable mounted force with which he has admirably performed the scouting and other cavalry duties of the column. In the charge his conduct was conspicuous, and his escape wonderful. Associated with him, alike in organising and training this force and in the charge, his Sergeant-Major, Troop Sergeant-Major Lunny, King's Dragoon Guards, died beside him as they crested the hill together in sight of the whole force, and no man ever died more gallantly.

25. Of the conduct of the force generally I can speak in terms of the highest praise. From Lieutenant-Colonel Ashburnham, commanding 3-60th Rifles, Commander Romilly, commanding Naval Brigade, Major Dartnell, commanding Natal Mounted Police, and Captain Greer and Lieutenant Parsons, R.A., I have received constant support and assistance. The 60th Rifles were not closely engaged in the action of the 28th, but skirmished steadily and well, and covered the withdrawal of the 58th. The Artillery was well served, though from the nature of the ground, and the cover it afforded the Boers, the fire was not very effective. Much credit is due to Captain Greer and Lieutenant Parsons for the efficiency of my Artillery force, seeing that there were originally only two guns properly manned and equipped in the country, the other four having been equipped and horsed locally, and manned partly by Artillerymen from a Garrison Brigade, and partly by volunteers from the 60th Rifles. The Naval Brigade threw their rockets well, and covered the left flank of the force in action. The Natal Mounted Police, a remarkably fine body of men, though not directly engaged on the 28th, rendered most valuable

\* Casualties already published.

service in scouting and protecting the march of the column on its road from Newcastle.

26. The Rev. G. M. St. M. Ritchie, Chaplain to the Forces, was with me through the engagement; and I am much indebted to him for his indefatigable zeal in rendering aid to the wounded, assisting at the collection and burial of the dead, and giving help wherever help was most needed.

27. Surgeon-Major Babington was in charge of the Field Hospital, and laboured zealously and untiringly to meet the heavy calls made upon him and his Medical Staff.\* The ambulances were formed close in rear of the position taken up, and were soon crowded with wounded; but through the great exertions of Surgeon-Major Babington and his assistants, with ready help from the transport and the regiments, the wounded were all cared for and brought into camp before night.

28. I cannot speak too highly of the manner in which the Commissariat duties of the force have been carried on under the direction of Assistant Commissary-General Elmes, the Senior Commissariat Officer. Although the difficulties connected with the provisioning and transport of the force have been considerable, they have always been surmounted by his indefatigable energy and resource, and the troops have throughout been well provided for.

29. Lieutenant Brotherton, R.E., with his small detachment, has rendered valuable assistance in improving roads and drifts, and laying out and directing the construction of entrenchments.

30. Major Essex, Staff Officer of the column, has done excellent service throughout, his experience gained in the Zulu war being especially valuable. He was with Colonel Deane in the attack on the hill, where his horse was killed under him, and distinguished himself by his courage and coolness, remaining to the last, and directing the companies that covered the retirement of the 58th Regiment.

31. Captain MacGregor, R.E., my Assistant Military Secretary, has been of invaluable assistance to me from the beginning of these operations, and has shown himself to possess, in an eminent degree, all the most valuable qualities of a Staff Officer.

32. To Commodore Richards, C.B., A.D.C., who was present at the engagement, I am deeply indebted, not only for the material assistance afforded me by the Naval Brigade, but for ready help and hearty co-operation in everything concerned with the disembarkation and equipment of the forces assembling in Natal.

33. The behaviour of the men on the line of march, in camp, and before the enemy, has been all that could be desired, and deserves special mention. The amount of crime has been almost *nil*, and, on the day that the column marched against the enemy, there were only two men sick in hospital.

34. Among many gallant deeds performed during the action, I would wish especially to mention the following:—

Lieutenant Hill, 58th Regiment, as the regiment was retiring, passed Lieutenant Baillie, badly wounded, and tried to bring him out on his horse. While so trying, Lieutenant Baillie was hit again, and killed. Lieutenant Hill then brought another man out of action on his horse, and immediately returned to the hill to aid the wounded, under fire, remaining there till taken prisoner, but afterwards released by the Boers.

\* Surgeons E. King and J. McGann, A.M.D., and Surgeon E. E. Mahon, R.N., Her Majesty's ship "Flora," distinguished themselves by their attention to the wounded under fire.

Sergeant-Major Murray, 58th Regiment, though severely wounded, refused to go to the rear, but remained with a few men to the last to cover the retirement of the regiment, and was again hit.

Private J. Doegen, King's Dragoon Guards, servant to Major Brownlow, was charging with the troop when Major Brownlow's horse was shot. Seeing Major Brownlow dismounted and among the Boers, he rode up, and, though himself severely wounded, dismounted and wished Major Brownlow to take his horse, receiving another wound while trying to get him to take it.

Private Godfrey and Band-boy Martin, 58th Regiment, remained with Major Hingeston and Captain Lovegrove respectively, when these officers were wounded, and, notwithstanding the heavy fire, refused to leave them till they had been carried down the hill and taken to the ambulance.

35. Of the numbers of the Boers, and their losses, it is difficult to form any reliable estimate. Judging, however, by the numbers who actually showed at the points attacked, and by information obtained from various sources, I should put their number at about 2,000. Considering the excellent cover under which they mostly fought, I cannot suppose that their losses were heavy.

36. I must do my adversaries the justice to say that they fought with great courage and determination. A good deal of the fighting was at short ranges of 20 to 100 yards, and the Boers showed no fear of our troops but rather advanced to meet them. I have also to acknowledge the courtesy shown by some of their leaders in giving facilities for the care and removal of the wounded.

I shall hold this camp until I receive reinforcements sufficient to enable me to renew the attack. The Indian reinforcements are already in the country, and will reach me in about a fortnight's time; and Brigadier-General Sir Evelyn Wood, and the reinforcements from home, may be expected a fortnight later.

I am unable to send a sketch of the ground with this report, as Major Peole, D.A.A.G., who was making the sketch, was killed, and his papers lost.

I have, &c.,

G. POMEROY COLLEY, Major-General,  
Commanding the Forces, Natal and Transvaal.

#### Inclosure 1.

Strength of Column leaving Camp, 28th  
January, 1881.

Column Staff—2 field officers. Total officers 2.  
Royal Artillery—1 captain, 3 subalterns. Total  
4. 2 sergeants, 3 corporals, 1 trumpeter, 66  
privates. Total 72. Total officers and men 76.  
6 guns.

Mounted Squadron—1 field officer, 1 captain,  
4 subalterns. Total 6. 12 sergeants, 14 corporals,  
2 trumpeters, 85 privates. Total 113. Total  
officers and men 119. 130 horses.

Natal Mounted Police.—1 field officer, 1 captain,  
1 subaltern. Total 3. 3 sergeants, 5 corporals,  
2 trumpeters, 53 privates. Total 63. Total  
officers and men 66. 66 horses.

2-21st Regiment—1 subaltern. Total 1. 6  
privates. Total 6. Total officers and men 7.

58th Regiment—1 field officer, 1 captain, 12  
subalterns, 1 staff. Total 15. 28 sergeants, 25  
corporals, 12 drummers, 414 privates. Total  
479. Total officers and men 494.

3-60th Rifles—1 field officer, 2 captains, 9 sub-  
alterns, 1 staff. Total 13. 18 sergeants, 13 cor-  
porals, 10 drummers, 280 privates. Total 321.  
Total officers and men 334.

A. H. C. and A. M. D.—1 field officer, 2 captains, 1 subaltern (hospital dresser). Total 4.  
2 sergeants, 1 corporal, 17 privates. Total 20.  
Total officers and men 24.

Naval Brigade—1 field officer, 3 captains. Total 4. 7 sergeants, 5 corporals, 72 privates. Total 84. Total officers and men 84. 3 guns (rocket tubes).

Head-Quarters Staff—2 field officers, 1 captain, 1 subaltern. Total officers 4.

Totals—10 field officers, 12 captains, 32 subalterns, 2 staff. Total 56. 72 sergeants, 66 corporals, 27 drummers and trumpeters, 993 privates. Total 1,158. Total officers and men 1,218. 196 horses. 9 guns.



