

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-