

River, marching west on Dundee, and arrived within striking distance of that place on the night of 19th October. Meanwhile the Free State forces west of Ladysmith contented themselves with occupying the country at the foot of the Drakensberg Range, without approaching within striking distance of Ladysmith, and, though the mounted patrols of both sides were constantly in touch, up to the evening of 19th October, nothing of importance took place in this direction.

6. On the morning of 20th October, at 3.20 A.M., the Mounted Infantry picquet, east of Dundee at the junction of the roads from Landmann's and Vants Drifts, was fired on and compelled to retire. Two companies, 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers, were sent out in support of it by Lieutenant-General Sir W. P. Symons, and at 4.30 A.M. a report was received that the enemy had halted and established themselves at Fort Jones. By 5 A.M. all Sir W. Symons' troops were under arms.

7. At 5.50 A.M. the enemy's guns opened fire from Talana Hill on our camp, at a range of 5,000 yards. Though well directed this fire had but little effect, as the shells, fired with percussion fuzes, buried themselves in the soft earth. Our guns at once returned the fire, but, finding the range too great, the 13th and 69th Field Batteries were moved, at 6 A.M., to a fresh position south of the town of Dundee, with the Mounted Infantry Company of the 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifles as escort. The 67th Field Battery and the 1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment were detailed to remain in and protect the camp. The 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the 1st Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers were sent through the town to Sand Spruit, the 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifles taking up a position under cover to the east of the town. These preliminary movements were completed by 6.30 A.M.

8. At 7.30 A.M. the Infantry advanced to a small patch of wood, about 1,000 yards beyond Sand Spruit. They moved, in extended order, over open level grass land, the 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers leading, followed in succession by the 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifles and the 1st Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers. Notwithstanding the open nature of the ground this movement was, owing to the accurate fire of our artillery, completed with but slight loss. Sir W. P. Symons' intention was to make a direct attack on the enemy's position under cover of the wood above mentioned, and of some buildings known as Smith's Farm.

9. At 8 A.M. the batteries were brought forward to a range of 2,300 yards, whence the 69th Battery opened fire on Talana Hill, and the 13th Battery on the hill (marked 4,700) south of the road which was also held by the enemy, the guns and escort being under fire from both hills. At the same time Sir W. P. Symons moved the Infantry through the wood to its front edge, on which a very accurate direct fire was opened from the top of Talana Hill, and also from a stone wall which extended half way up and along the side of that hill. The Infantry here were also exposed to an enfilading fire from the hill marked 4,700.

10. At 8.50 A.M. the Infantry Brigade were ordered to advance. The ground was open and intersected by nullahs, which running generally perpendicular to the enemy's position gave very little cover. At 9 A.M. Sir W. P. Symons ordered up his reserves, and advanced with them through the wood at 9.15 A.M. At 9.30 A.M. the Lieutenant-General was, I regret to report, mortally wounded in the stomach, and the

command devolved upon Brigadier-General Yule, who directed the 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers on the left, and the 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps on the right. The latter battalion reached the wall, to which two companies of the 1st Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers were also brought up, the other six companies being held in reserve. The 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers, however, less favoured by the ground were unable, for some time, to make any progress.

11. About 11.30 A.M., the enemy's guns were silenced, and the Artillery moved into a range of 1,400 yards and opened a very rapid fire on the ridge over the heads of our Infantry. This temporarily brought under the enemy's rifle fire, and enabled our infantry to push on. The ground in places was so steep and difficult that the men had to climb it on hands and knees, but by 1 A.M., the crest was reached, and the enemy, not waiting to come to close quarters, retired in the directions of Landmann's and Vants' drifts. Brigadier-General Yule then ordered the Artillery to the nek on the Dundee-Vants' drift road, on arrival at which point the retreating enemy was seen streaming away in clumps of 50 and 100 men, on which guns could have inflicted great loss. The enemy, however, displayed a white flag, although they do not appear to have had any intention of surrendering, and in consequence the Officer Commanding Royal Artillery refrained from firing.

12. Turning now to our Cavalry, the 18th Hussars received orders at 5.40 A.M. to get round the enemy's right flank and be ready to cut off his retreat. They were accompanied by a portion of the Mounted Infantry and a machine gun. Making a wide turning movement they gained the eastern side of Talana Hill. Here Lieutenant-Colonel Möller halted with one squadron, 18th Hussars, the machine gun and the Mounted Infantry, sending his other two squadrons further to the east. These two latter squadrons took part in the pursuit of the enemy, who retreated eastward, but Lieutenant-Colonel Möller and the troops with him appear, so far as can be ascertained, to have pursued in a northerly direction, to have come in contact with superior forces not previously engaged, and to have been surrounded and forced to surrender, while endeavouring to return to camp, round the north of the Impati Mountain.

13. The Boer force engaged in this action is computed at 4,000 men, of whom about 500 were killed or wounded. Three of their guns were left dismounted on Talana Hill, but there was no opportunity of bringing them away.

14. Our own losses were severe, amounting to 10 Officers and 81 Non-commissioned officers and men killed, 20 Officers and 165 Non-commissioned officers and men wounded, and 9 Officers and 211 Non-commissioned officers and men missing. The Divisional Staff suffered severely, Lieutenant-General Sir W. P. Symons, K.C.B., being mortally wounded, and both Colonel C. E. Beckett, C.B., A.A.G., and Major Hammersley, D.A.A.G., being severely wounded. Of the Brigade Staff, Lieutenant-Colonel John Sherston, D.S.O., Brigade Major, was killed, and Captain F. L. Adam, Scots Guards, Aide-de-Camp to Brigadier-General Yule, was severely wounded. Lieutenant-Colonel R. Gunning, commanding 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps, was killed within a few yards of the crest of the position.

15. Meanwhile, on 20th October, I had pushed a Cavalry reconnaissance to Elands Laagte, and had obtained definite information that a Boer