

From General Sir Redvers Buller to the Secretary  
of State for War.

*Frere Camp,*

*December 12, 1899.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to forward you the enclosed Despatches from Lieutenant-General Lord Methuen, on the operations at Belmont and Enslin.

I have, &c.,

REDVERS BULLER,

General.

Enclosure 1.

Despatch from Lieutenant-General Lord Methuen as to engagement at Belmont, 23rd November, 1899.

SIR,

*Enslin, November 26, 1899.*

ON the morning of 22nd I reconnoitred so far as possible the extensive and very strong position held by from 2,000 to 2,500 Boers, lately strengthened from Mafeking. I could not leave this force on my flank. I enclose sketch by Major Reade, and sketch by Lieutenant-Colonel Verner.\* The evening of 22nd we had an artillery duel between our guns and the enemy's large gun. We fired well; they aimed well, but had bad fuzes. We had two wounded, they six killed and wounded.

My orders for the 28th were:—At 3 A.M. Guards Brigade to advance from small white house near railway on Gun Kopje, supported by battery on right, plus Naval Brigade; 9th Brigade on west side of Table Mountain; at same hour, bearing already taken, supported by battery on left, 9th Lancers, two squadrons, one company Mounted Infantry, marching north of Belmont Station, keeping one to two miles on left flank and advanced; Rimington's Guides, one squadron Lancers, one company Mounted Infantry from Witte Putt to east of Sugar Loaf; one company Mounted Infantry on right of Naval Brigade, protecting right; the force having got over open ground should arrive at daybreak on enemy; 9th Brigade having secured Table Mountain to swing round left and keep on high ground, and then advance east to west on A†; Guards Brigade conform, being pivot; then Guards advance on east edge of Mount Blanc, guns clearing entire advance with shrapnel; Cavalry to get round rear of enemy, securing horses and laager.

The force marched off silently and correctly; I proceeded to a position in rear of the centre of two brigades. Major-General Sir H. Colville shows the Grenadiers lost direction, and I found myself committed to a frontal attack; sent orders to 9th Brigade to conform to Guards, and having gained first ridge to wait until the guns shrapnelled second line of height. During this assault Lieutenant Fryer was killed leading his men gallantly. The attack was a complete surprise, for they did not know I had moved from Witte Putt to Belmont, and expected an attack in three or four days. It was perfectly timed, and had the Brigadiers allowed daylight to appear before I reached the foot of the position my losses would have been doubled. Lieutenant-Colonel Crabbe was leading with conspicuous courage when he and Lieutenant Blundell were shot by a wounded Boer—the latter Officer has since died. It is not possible to distinguish any officer in khaki, now all badges have been removed, to say nothing of the difficulty of sending a message, the Aides-de-Camp having to bound from boulder to boulder, endeavouring at the same time to keep under cover. I therefore gave the Grenadiers the direction. This was

\* Not printed.

† On plan; not printed.

4.30 A.M., when musketry fire had been opened from the advanced kopjes, and the troops instinctively moved towards the enemy's position. The Scots Guards carried out their instructions to the letter, and gained the heights at the point of the bayonet. The battalion then advanced to the hill east of Mount Blanc, swinging round the left, and advancing up the narrow end. The greatest credit is due to Colonel Paget for the manner in which he carried out his orders, and for the intelligent handling of his battalion when left to his own resources. I note with pleasure the valuable services rendered by Lieutenant-Colonel Pulteney, and the courage displayed by Lieutenant Bulkeley and by Lieutenant Alexander. The 9th Brigade had taken a correct bearing, Lieutenant Festing leading, a duty he performed admirably, and I regret he was wounded. Touch was maintained with Guards. A heavy fire was pouring in from enemy's sangars west of Table Mountain. The Northumberland Fusiliers were ordered to hold their ground whilst the Northhamptons were pushed on to some high ground on the right to bring a flanking fire on the sangars. This movement had the desired effect of causing the enemy to quit their defensive position. The line then rapidly advanced on Table Mountain, and occupied it after some slight resistance. At 4.30 A.M. the left battery shelled some Boers enfilading our line from our work by Table Mountain and drove them back. Immediately afterwards the first line of kopjes was crowned by Infantry, at 4.30 the batteries were ordered forward to support the Infantry advance; ten minutes later the Commanding Officer, 9th Brigade, was ordered to slacken his advance until the Boer position had been shelled. It was hard work for this support to come forward because the horses have not recovered five weeks' sea voyage. At 5.45 1st Battalion Coldstreams, being annoyed by heavy firing at 800 yards from Mount Blanc swung their left round, and carried this steep high hill in a brilliant manner, and with slight loss. 1st Battalion Scots Guards now joined the right of the 9th Brigade and continued advance.

I ordered the second line, the 9th Brigade, Yorkshire Light Infantry, and two companies Mounted Infantry, to conform to Guards. Now that the enemy's position was clearly seen, it was clear the original plan of giving the 9th Brigade the lion's share of the day's work was over, nor would it probably have been less costly. The 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards attacked the ridge south-west of Mount Blanc. Colonel Codrington handled his battalion coolly and well. Captain Feilding, Lieutenant the Honourable C. Douglas-Pennant and Lieutenant Price Jones merit praise for coolness and good company leading. The 2nd Battalion Coldstreams were well handled, Major the Honourable A. Henniker's services proving of great value; Major Shute is honourably mentioned. At 5.50 the right battery had shelled some heights to the east of Mount Blanc, and 9th Brigade found itself under a heavy fire from a high ridge south of Table Mountain; the Northhamptons and part of Northumberland Fusiliers went forward and held this ridge. At this time Major-General Fetherstonhaugh, to the deep regret of all ranks, was wounded; I cannot exaggerate his loss to myself. Colonel Money took over the command, and the party on the ridge suffered from a distant, but severe, cross fire. The enemy was finally dislodged at the point of the bayonet. A coward's trick now occurred. A white flag was displayed, and when within 50 yards our men ceased firing, and whilst the flag was flying a shot was fired by