

this, as on other occasions, the troops behaved in a most gallant manner, and I cordially support Brigadier-General Broadwood's recommendations on behalf of the Officers, non-commissioned officers and men whose names he has brought to notice.

I have, &c.,

ROBERTS, Field-Marshal,
Commanding-in-Chief,
South Africa.

From Brigadier-General Broadwood to the
Military Secretary to the Field-Marshal,
Commanding-in-Chief, South Africa.

Bloemspruit,

Sir, 20th April, 1900.

I HAVE the honour to submit the following report for the information of the Field-Marshal upon the withdrawal from Thabanchu and action at Sannah's Post on the 30th and 31st March, 1900:—

1. At 11 A.M. on 30th March, 1900, while camped at Thabanchu in command of the force marginally noted,* I received a report from the outposts that a large force of Boers was moving rapidly on the town along the road from Ladybrand. I reinforced the outposts in that direction by one squadron of Cavalry and 300 Mounted Infantry; immediately afterwards reports were brought in by natives that another hostile force was working round my left or north flank. I occupied a position in that direction with three squadrons, and wired to the Chief of the Staff that, if the latter report was confirmed, I should be compelled to retire on Sannah's Post, where I should be in open country and within supporting distance of Bloemfontein. I told the Officer Commanding the two companies of Mounted Infantry at Sannah's Post that I should probably retire on him, and that I wished him specially to reconnoitre to his north.

2. At 3 P.M. the enemy attacked the nek, 6 miles east of the town. I ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Alderson to send an escort with my baggage to Israel's Poort some 3 miles distant, where I intended to bivouac. Soon afterwards I received corroborative intelligence of a movement round my left. I then sent an order that the retirement was to be continued to Sannah's Post, a distance of about 24 miles from where my outposts were engaged. I wired to the Chief of the Staff that I was retiring on Sannah's Post.

3. At dark the enemy withdrew from the attack on the nek, and by 9 P.M. I had withdrawn my troops from their positions, and was retiring on Sannah's Post, which we reached at 3.30 A.M., the baggage having arrived there at 11 P.M. My intention was to await orders or reinforcements at that point, as it commanded the Waterworks.

4. Soon after daylight on the 31st March, the Officer Commanding Sannah's Post detachment reported that his patrol towards Waterval Drift reported that my north flank was clear, but that his patrols were being fired on from the kopjes east of the Modder River. Almost immediately afterwards a heavy shell fire from the latter direction was opened on the bivouac at a range to which my Horse Batteries could not reply. At the same time it was reported to me that about 300 Boers

could be seen galloping on the north bank of the river in the direction of Boesman's Kop, a steep hill on the road by which reinforcements would arrive from Bloemfontein, and on which a detachment of Mounted Infantry was stationed. I ordered the force to retire out of shell fire, and directed Roberts's Horse and "U" Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, to reinforce the post at Boesman's Kop, on which point I proposed to withdraw my force.

One regiment of Mounted Infantry I detailed to act as rear-guard, and one company of Mounted Infantry to reinforce the patrol sent out by the Officer Commanding at Sannah's Post towards Waterval Drift.

5. The regiment of Mounted Infantry (Roberts's Horse), ordered to Boesman's Kop, and the Battery ("U" Battery, Royal Horse Artillery), moved off on opposite sides of the baggage column, which was clearing rapidly out of the shell fire, and, before they had cleared, the column came on to a deep spruit, about 2,000 yards west of the bivouac. This spruit was occupied by about 600 of the enemy, who seized five guns of the battery and the convoy, and opened a heavy fire on Roberts's Horse and on the main body of Cavalry which was following; these retired out of fire. "Q" Battery, owing to its losses in the retirement, was compelled to come into action within 1,200 yards of the spruit, and the Durham Light Infantry Company of Mounted Infantry, which was acting as right flank guard to the retirement, promptly occupied a position on the right and left flank of the battery; this checked any intention the enemy had of advancing from the spruit.

6. I had remained with the rear-guard, thinking it the most threatened point. Proceeding to the scene of the disaster, I found that the enemy were extending up the spruit and over the ridge west of it. I ordered the Household Cavalry Regiment to occupy a point higher up the spruit, and to work down it, one company Mounted Infantry to work along the ridge on the Household Cavalry's left, and the 10th Hussars to swing round the left of this company and operate against the rear of the enemy in the spruit. As soon as the movement was under weigh I relieved the Household Cavalry by two companies of the Burma Mounted Infantry, and ordered the former to join in the movement of the 10th Hussars.

7. I did not consider it possible for Major Hornby to move his battery under the heavy fire, but ordered him to retire as soon as the turning movement should have had the effect of checking this fire, and to then move round the pivot formed by the Mounted Infantry in the spruit, on Boesman's Kop. I ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Alderson with the remainder of his brigade to hold the enemy, who were pressing vigorously across the river, sufficiently long to cover the retirement of the battery, and to follow its retirement. The whole of this operation was carried out with perfect steadiness by all concerned, the action of "Q" Battery, the company of Durham Light Infantry, and of Lieutenant-Colonel Pilcher's regiment of Mounted Infantry being specially worthy of notice. By 11.15 A.M. the force was clear, with the loss of seven guns, and of the whole of the convoy, two guns of "Q" Battery having to be abandoned owing to the loss of horses.

8. Lieutenant-Colonel Martyr's Brigade of Mounted Infantry had meanwhile arrived at Boesman's Kop, one regiment, Lieutenant-

* "Q" Battery, Royal Horse Artillery; "U" Battery, Royal Horse Artillery; Household Cavalry, 160 sabres; 10th Hussars, 160 sabres; Alderson's Mounted Infantry, 800 rifles.