

and Barkly West districts; the second party of crack shots, under Commandant-General De Villiers, from the country about Campbell and Griquatown, to steal into the garden and attack the Yeomanry and Artillery; and a third party, under Ventner, composed of men from the country about Postmasberg, who were to take possession of the western ridge and fire into the kraals and Artillery.

7. Their scheme, so far as I can ascertain, was as follows:—

No. 1 party was to go direct upon the Infantry and take possession of the farm house where I and my Staff were, and the firing of No. 1 party was to be the signal for a simultaneous attack on the Yeomanry from the gardens, and on the kraals and Artillery from No. 3 party, the rebels being quite satisfied that the attack would be successful. No. 3 party took possession of some old diamond diggings on the crest of the hill, about 200 yards from our picquet, where they could fire upon the kraals and upon our Infantry at a range of about 1,700 yards.

8. I was up that morning at reveillé, making up a good fire, as the thermometer was below freezing; and some minutes before 6 A.M., heavy firing commenced from the east upon our headquarters and the Duke of Edinburgh's Own Volunteer Rifles' camp. The Duke of Edinburgh's Own Volunteer Rifles were all on the alert, and at once moved out two companies in the direction of the firing. I stopped one company to act as reserve, and the fourth company went off to hold our front and north. Some of the enemy crept up through the bush to within 250 yards of my head-quarters, which could not be prevented in this very thick bush by any number of picquets, and were driven back by the Maxim Gun Detachment and the two companies, under Captain Twycross, moving out to meet them. These two companies drove the enemy right back to the eastern ridge and thence, in an easterly direction, right away over the bushy plain. This took about half an hour, and the fire from this quarter was over about 6.30 A.M., but while it lasted it was exceedingly heavy and well directed, the equipment of the Duke of Edinburgh's Own Volunteer Rifles being smashed to pieces by the bullets in all directions. A portion of this party, some of the rebels have informed me, were stationed at long ranges with instructions simply to fire into the kraals and camp.

9. After placing a company of the Duke of Edinburgh's Own Volunteer Rifles in readiness in reserve, I mounted and went across with my Staff close to the main farmhouse to see that the Yeomanry were on the alert and the Artillery were getting ready to come into action whenever it was necessary, for it was still dark and it was impossible to conjecture the exact point where the fire was coming from. Major F. Heath, C.S.O., and my two Aides-de-Camp were with me, and in returning across the open space when it was almost daylight we were subjected to an exceedingly heavy fire, which was directed with such precision that I came to the conclusion that it must be at very short ranges; it proved to be less than 400 yards. Both Major Kelly, A.D.C., and Lieutenant Paton, A.D.C., were wounded, and Major Heath had his horse shot under him.

10. It was now daylight, and I dismounted to direct the fire of the reserve company, Duke of Edinburgh's Own Volunteer Rifles, who were now under a very hot fire from the south-west, and, just as I arrived, Colonel Spence, who had sat up to give a direction, was mortally wounded.

I now saw some of our troops moving out to the south-west hill to support their picquets, and being sure that part of the fire came from the continuation of the ridge to their left, I directed the Duke of Edinburgh's Own Volunteer Rifles to fire at the ridge at 2,000 yards so as to keep down the enemy's fire and support our advance.

11. I had felt certain on coming across the open that it would be quite impossible we could be followed with such accuracy by bullets, if the range was more than 500 yards, and now I found with the Duke of Edinburgh's Own Volunteer Rifles, that whenever any movement was made by a superior Officer, there were at once a shower of bullets all round him, making me feel certain that the hot fire upon us for the most part must be from the gardens at about 600 yards. Several men of the Duke of Edinburgh's Own Volunteer Rifles also told me that they saw flashes of firing from the garden, and although I knew that we had men in the garden, and had seen some of the south-east picquets retiring into the garden, I made sure that it must be occupied by a large number of Boers, and directed the reserve company to fire on to it at a range of 500 yards, and I then went on to a kraal near the head-quarters where the Maxim gun was, and ordered the fire of all the Infantry there and of the Maxim gun to be directed on it, and to be distributed along the nearer edges of it. After about ten minutes I collected half of Captain Simkin's company together and directed him to charge the gardens by a route I pointed out, but while doing so the enemy were seen to be running away from the gardens. The Artillery came into action beyond the gardens, and in a few minutes the whole attack was over. Throughout this part of the action the Duke of Edinburgh's Own Volunteer Rifles acted with all the steadiness of well-seasoned troops.

12. No. 2 party, who went to the garden, appear to have arrived there in the early morning, and their numbers, as given to me by a considerable number of Boers from different parts, was 56, out of which they say only four returned unwounded. Many of these were known to be among the noted shots of Griqualand West, many of whom were killed; they were under Commandant De Villiers, who is stated to have threatened that he would shoot any man who attempted to retire from the gardens; they were mostly men who knew the farm intimately, which alone accounts for their being able to occupy and line the edge of the garden without being seen, as men of the Yeomanry were constantly in and out of the garden during the night, where there was a latrine, and a Yeomanry guard in the kraal, and a sentry walking between the garden and the blockhouse at the northern end of the garden. It seems probable that they effected the entry of the garden unheard during the noise made by the convoy coming in.

13. They appear to have commenced their fire from this garden at about 6 A.M.; they commenced their fire upon a kraal where the Colt gun was with a party of Yeomanry, and upon some of Paget's Horse who were exposed on the left. Two or three of their men got into the blockhouse, but the Artillery and a great part of the Yeomanry were quite secure in their bivouacs from fire from the garden; subsequently they fired on a party of the Yeomanry under Colonel Crawley moving out to the ridge towards the west to support the picquet at that point, while another party in the gardens fired on anybody moving on the open space between the gardens and upon the reserve company of the Duke of Edinburgh's Own Volunteer Rifles in position near their camp.