



The London Gazette.

Published by Authority,

TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 1901.

Admiralty, March 9, 1901.

DESPATCHES, of which the accompanying are copies, have been received from Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Harris, K.C.M.G., Commander-in-Chief on the Cape of Good Hope Station, reporting proceedings of Naval Brigades in South Africa.

Enclosure to Letter No. 114 of 21st February, 1900, from the Commander-in-Chief on the Cape of Good Hope Station.

Naval Camp, Spearman's Hill,

SIR, February 8, 1900.

I HAVE the honour to report that an engagement commenced here on 5th February, the object being on that day to obtain possession of Vaal Krantz, a ridge on the northern side of the Tugela. It was partially successful, General Clery going half the range about 4 p.m.

The action commenced at 7 a.m. by a demonstration against Brackfontein by a part of General Warren's Division and the 2nd Brigade Division R.F.A. At the same time a bombardment was commenced by all guns on the enemy's trenches.

General Clery's Division and the 4th Brigade were formed on the eastern side of the river near No. 2 Pontoon, to give the enemy the notion that the crossing was about to be made from east to west, and that the real attack was to be on Brackfontein, and the passage to Ladysmith made by the road from Potgieter's Drift.

The Naval guns were disposed as follows:— One 4.7-inch on Spearman's Hill, and one about three-quarters of a mile to the right on Signal Hill; two 12-prs. with Lieutenant Burne on the plateau between this hill and the river; and six 12-prs. (Lieutenants Ogilvy, James, and Deas) on the top of Zwart Kop, an exceedingly steep hill 3 to 3½ miles to the eastward of Spearman's Hill.

There were also on Zwart Kop two 15-pr. R.A. guns and a mountain battery, the whole under the command of Colonel Nutt, R.A.

The bombardment continued for three hours before the enemy fired a single gun; they then commenced to shell General Warren's artillery, as it commenced to withdraw to cross the river from west to east by No. 2 Pontoon Bridge, and afterwards the infantry as they were coming back to the kopjes whence they started, near Potgieter's. The enemy continued to drop shell amongst them from two guns on the hill at north-east extreme of Spion Kop, and

also kept up a heavy rifle fire from trenches across the valley, and on Brackfontein. The shell fire was well directed, but did not appear to do very much damage, and many did not burst.

During this time a third pontoon bridge had been thrown across by the Engineers, near Mungo's Drift, by which part of General Clery's Division and artillery crossed, and, covered by the guns, the real attack, upon the Vaal Krantz ridge, commenced. By 4 o'clock our troops had possession of the south-eastern half.

Heavy firing on them, from guns on the hills beyond and with rifles, was kept up till after dark.

At daylight on the 6th, Lieutenant Burne's two guns were moved to a position at the east end of Zwart Kop, where there were also two 5-inch guns R.A.

The action recommenced at 5 a.m., the enemy opening from a 6-inch gun on the summit of a hill above Doorn Kloof. Soon after it commenced a shell from the right 4.7-inch (Lieutenant England) exploded some of their cartridges, but the gun was not put out of action. Our guns continued shelling trenches and gun positions all day. More troops crossed the river and pushed on to the right of Vaal Krantz.

The fighting continued till dark, and a heavy fire from Maxim-Nordenfelts and rifles was kept up on Vaal Krantz till some time afterwards. I hear a Maxim-Nordenfelt and some few prisoners were captured by us during the day.

Soon after daylight on the 7th the troops on kopjes, across the river, near Potgieter's Drift were withdrawn, and the fighting commenced again, the enemy shelling Vaal Krantz, and our guns shelling their positions all day. They also shelled Zwart Kop and our troops on the plain near the river.

During the night our troops were withdrawn from Vaal Krantz, and a general withdrawal of stores and troops to Spearman's commenced, which was continued to-day, Lieutenant Burne's two guns being placed on their old position on the plateau below us.

The six guns with Lieutenant Ogilvy, on Zwart Kop, are to be withdrawn to-night after dark, and go to Springfield. During the fighting several shells fell amongst the 12-prs., but no one was hurt. Lieutenant Ogilvy was