

stance, except that I think it would be much more satisfactory to the public if they were to do as is done in England, when the Secretary or Under Secretary for War communicates to the public information which has been sent to him by the general in command. I think it would be possible for the Minister of Militia and Defence to communicate daily whatever information he receives officially, and that would be satisfactory to the people of Canada, who are so deeply interested in knowing as early as possible the official news from South Africa from the fact that so many of our young men are engaged in that unhappy conflict.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. I may add to what I have already said, that, so far as cablegrams are concerned, they are at once given to the press, so that, really, before the meeting of parliament each day, communication has already been made to the press, and the cablegrams are posted up on the bulletins in the city. So far as this report from Col. Otter is concerned, which I have here, it is a report of considerable length, and I think it would be more convenient, rather than reading it to the House, to, at once, have it published in all the newspapers of the country.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER (Cape Breton). Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with my hon. friend (Mr. Borden). He has the report in his hands and he certainly should pursue the course that is invariably pursued in the British House of Commons. The minister reads telegrams of that kind at once to the House. The first persons to be taken into the confidence of the government are the members of parliament who are here. I do not propose that the report should be held over and kept from the press for a single hour, but, when parliament is assembled, there can be no objection to a statement made on such an important subject being communicated at once, and I am quite certain, that, however anxious we are to get on with the business, we will all be ready to listen to the report which the hon. gentleman has received.

Mr. TYRWHITT. Would the hon. minister kindly inform the House at what time the report was received this morning?

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. So far as I know the report was received this morning.

Mr. TYRWHITT. Yes, but at what time?

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. I do not know. I was not aware that the report had been received until half an hour ago.

Mr. WALLACE. Will the hon. minister read the report?

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. The report is as follows:

(From the Officer Commanding 2nd Battalion Royal Canadian Regiment, to the Chief Staff Officer of Militia, Canada.)

Paardeberg Drift, Feb. 26, 1900.

Sir,—I have the honour to report upon the part taken by the battalion under my command in the engagement at Paardeberg on the 18th instant.

The battalion arrived near Paardeberg Drift, with the 19th Brigade, at 6 a.m. of the 18th instant, having formed the rear guard of the brigade in its march during the night from Klip Drift, a distance of twenty-one miles.

Within half an hour of the arrival of the battalion orders were received to be ready to parade at 7 a.m., and at 7.20 a.m. the battalion moved out to support the artillery, about a mile away; the men in the meantime had had a biscuit and a cup of tea.

Hardly had the battalion reached the place designated than it was ordered to move to the drift and cross the river.

This was done, and the crossing began at about 8.30 a.m. The current ran nine miles an hour, while the water was sufficiently deep to reach up to the men's arm-pits—two crossings were used, about fifty yards apart, over one of which a rope was stretched, by which the men passed across, holding on to it, and at the other the men passed over in fours with linked arms.

The companies as they crossed were pushed forward, and at 9.30 a.m., 'A' and 'C' companies were in the firing line at about 500 yards from the enemy, who occupied the woods along the near edge of the river, but were totally hidden from view; they also occupied a series of dongas enfilading our left flank, but this was not discovered until towards afternoon, when they disclosed themselves, although they were quietly 'sniping' from that direction all day. 'D' and 'E' companies formed the support, while as 'B,' 'F,' 'G' and 'H' came up they formed the reserve.

The remainder of the brigade was disposed of as under, the D. of C. L. I. on our right, the Gordons and Shrops L. I. on our left, in the order named, but on the other side of the hill on our left and behind the artillery. The battalion, however, was practically alone, and during the whole day received no orders or instructions from any one, until about 4 p.m., as noted later on.

In addition to the 19th Brigade, the 3rd (Highland) Brigade was engaged on the south side of the river, besides artillery and mounted infantry.

Firing began at about 9.30 a.m. from the enemy's right and continued along their front towards the centre.

The advance of the battalion took place over perfectly open ground somewhat undulating, and with no cover save the inequalities of the ground, and a few ant-hills.

The firing line attained a position from the enemy varying from 400 yards on the right to 800 yards on the left, where it remained until late in the afternoon. After the establishment of the firing line, the enemy's fire was for some time very severe, and Capt. Arnold, who at the time was doing most excellent service, was mortally wounded, and many others hit. During this time three or four men in the reserve were wounded at a distance of over 1,600 yards.