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BATTLE OF RENSBURG (Hobkirk's Farm "Pink Hill"), 12 February 1900

Account by a Boer prisoner to a correspondent of the The Daily Mail of the trap into which the 2nd/Worcesters had fallen and the attempted rescue of them by the Australians under Major Eddy, at Hobkirk's Farm, near Colesberg, 12th February 1900.

I saw a long row of their dead and wounded laid out on the slope of a farmhouse that evening - they were all young men, fine big fellows. I could have cried to look at them so cold and still. They had been so brave in the morning, so strong, but in the evening a few hours later they were dead, and we had not hated them nor they us.

It was a cruel fight. We had ambushed a lot of the British troops - the Worcesters, I think they called them. They could neither advance nor retire; we had them penned in like sheep, and our field cornet, van Leyden, was beseeching them to throw down their rifles to save being slaughtered, for they had no chance. Just then we saw about a hundred Australians come bounding over the rock in the gully behind us. There were two great big men in front cheering them on.

We turned and gave them a volley, but it did not stop them. They rushed over everything, firing as they came, not wildley, but with the quick sharp upward jerk to the shoulder, the rapid sight then the shot. They knocked over a lot of our men, but we had a splendid position. They had to expose themselves in order to get to us, and we shot them as they came at us. They were rushing to the rescue of the English. It was splendid but it was madness.

On they came and we lay behind the boulders, and our rifles snapped and snapped again at pistol range but we did not stop those wild men until they charged right into a little basin which was fringed around all its edges by rocks covered with bushes. Our men lay there as thick as locusts, and the Australians were fairly trapped. They were far worse off than the Worcesters up high in the ravine.

Our field cornet gave the order to cease firing and called on them to throw down their rifles or die. Then one of the big officers -- a great rough-looking man, with a voice like a bull, roared out "forward Australia! no surrender!" These were the last words he ever uttered for a man on my right put a bullet clean between his eyes and he fell forward dead. We found later that his name was Major Eddy, of the Victorian Rifles. He was as brave as a lion but a Mauser bullet will stop the bravest. His men dashed at the rocks like wolves; it was awful to see them. They smashed at our heads with clubbed rifles or thrust their rifles up against us through the rocks and fired. One after another their leaders fell. The second big man went down early, but he was not killed.

He was shot through the groin, but not dangerously. His name was Captain McInerney.

There was another one, a little man named Lieutenant Roberts; he was shot through the heart. Some of the others I forget. The men would not throw down their rifles; they fought like furies. One man I saw climbed right on to the rocky ledge where big Jan Aldrecht was stationed. Just as he got there a bullet took him and he staggered and dropped his rifle. Big Jan jumped forward to catch him before he toppled over the ledge, but the Australian struck Jan in the mouth with his clenched fist and [he] fell over into the ravine below and was killed.

We killed and wounded an awful lot of them, but some got away; they fought their way out. I saw a long row of their dead and wounded laid out on the slope of a farmhouse that evening - they were all young men, fine big fellows. I could have cried to look at them so cold and still. They had been so brave in the morning, so strong, but in the evening a few hours later they were dead, and we had not hated them nor they us.

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