

force than could be spared, and the troops employed there being by this time required elsewhere, the Cavalry and Infantry Brigades were ordered to return to the Modder River camp, which they did on the 8th without molestation, the Boers having previously fallen back from the position.

I will now briefly describe the operations for the relief of Kimberley, the troops selected for this purpose being detailed in the annexed return.

On the 11th February the Cavalry Division, under Lieutenant-General French, with seven batteries of Horse Artillery and three Field batteries, proceeded from Modder River camp direct to Ramdam, the 7th Infantry Division, under Lieutenant-General Tucker, proceeding to the same point from the railway stations of Enslin and Graspan. On the 12th February I moved to Ramdam; the Cavalry Division marched to the Riet River, occupied with slight opposition the Dekiel and Waterval Drifts, and reconnoitred across the river; the 7th Division proceeded to the Dekiel Drift; and the 6th Division, under Lieutenant-General Kelly-Kenny, which had moved by rail to Enslin and Graspan, replaced the 7th at Ramdam. On the 13th February the Cavalry Division advanced to the Modder River, seizing the Rondavel and Klip Drifts, while the 6th Division moved from Ramdam to the Waterval Drift on the Riet River. The 9th Division, under Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Colville, proceeded on this day to Ramdam, while the 7th Division was occupied in getting supply wagons across the Dekiel Drift, where I established my head-quarters. On the 14th February the Cavalry Division reconnoitred to the north of the Modder River; the 6th Division moved down the Riet River from the Waterval to the Wegdraai Drift; the 7th Division from the Dekiel Drift to the Waterval Drift, and the 9th Division from Ramdam to the Waterval Drift. My head-quarters were at the Waterval Drift.

For some time previous to this, I had been moving troops to the east of the Orange River station, in order to attract the enemy's attention to that quarter, and, if possible to give rise to the idea that my intention was to make for Bloemfontein, via Fauresmith.

A considerable force of Cavalry and Mounted Infantry was collected at Zoutpan's Drift, under the command of Colonel Hannay, and that Officer was ordered to proceed on the 11th February towards the Riet River, to act in conjunction with the Cavalry Division. Near Wolve Kraal Colonel Hannay came in contact with the Boers, who held the hills on his right flank. He handled his troops with ability, and while he contained the enemy with a portion of his force, he pushed his baggage and main body through to Ramdam.

Late in the evening of the 14th February, the 6th Division marched to Rondavel Drift, on the Modder, and the 7th Division to the Wegdraai Drift, on the Riet. On this date troops from the 6th Division entered Jacobsdal, and found it deserted by the enemy, though the houses were still occupied by their women and children. The troops were fired on when returning to camp, and a further encounter took place on a stronger detachment being sent out to drive off the Boers. This detachment fell back before nightfall with the loss of eight killed and wounded. On the 15th February I proceeded from the Waterval Drift to Wegdraai, accompanied by the 9th Division.

During the day of the 14th I informed Lieutenant-General Kelly-Kenny how essential it was that he should join hands with Lieutenant-General French, in order to free the Cavalry for a further advance, and notwithstanding the long and fatiguing march of the previous day, the 6th Division pushed on that night across the veldt, and reached Klip Drift before day break on the 15th February.

Being thus free to act, Lieutenant-General French at 9.30 A.M. proceeded on his journey towards Kimberley. The enemy's suspicions had by this time been aroused, and they had been able to occupy two lines of kopjes, a few miles north of the Modder River, and through which the road to Kimberley *via* Abons Dam and Olifantsfontein runs. Bringing a fire to bear upon these kopjes by the Brigade Divisions of Horse Artillery, under command of Lieutenant-Colonels Eustace and Rochfort, and escorted by the 1st Cavalry Brigade under Colonel Porter, Lieutenant-General French, with the 2nd and 3rd Brigades under Brigadier-Generals Broadwood and Gordon, and the Brigade Division Horse Artillery under Colonel Davidson, galloped through the defile in extended order until he reached some low hills from which he was able to cover the advance of the rear troops. Casualties—1 Officer (Lieutenant A. E. Hesketh, 16th Lancers) killed, and 20 of all ranks wounded.

At Kimberley, the inhabitants were found to be in good health and spirits. On the 16th the 6th Division marched to Klip Drift and was opposed by the enemy, who were driven off with loss. The 9th Division joined the 7th at Wegdraai, 200 Mounted Infantry under Colonel Ridley being left behind at Waterval to escort a supply column of ox wagons thence to Wegdraai. Shortly after the departure of the 9th Division from Waterval, a Boer force with several guns, which must have come up during the night, attacked Colonel Ridley's detachment, and did a good deal of injury to the oxen and wagons of the supply column. On hearing of this, I sent back a reinforcement, consisting of one Field battery, one battalion, and 300 Mounted Infantry at 10 A.M., and subsequently despatched a second battery and battalion, on the arrival of which the enemy disappeared.

The native ox drivers had, however, taken to flight, so that it was impossible to inspan the ox teams. The wagons contained a quantity of supplies of groceries for the troops and of grain for animals, and I felt that to abandon them meant a considerable loss to the stores on which we had to depend. In view, however, of the absolute necessity of pushing on the advance, and realising, as I did, that to leave troops at Waterval Drift until such time as the convoy could again be set in motion would weaken my force and probably cause it to be delayed, I decided to abandon the supplies, wagons, and oxen, and to order the troops to withdraw to Wegdraai Drift during the night, which operation was carried out unmolested by the enemy.

At 11 A.M. on this day, I directed Major-General Wavell's Brigade, of the 7th Division, to occupy Jacobsdal, which was done with very slight opposition. The officers and men who had been wounded and taken prisoners the previous day were found in the hospital at this place, as well as several other wounded men, both British and Boer. All had been taken the greatest care of by the German Ambulance.

On the 16th February I moved my head-