

Guides, in front of Retief's Nek, this force being joined the next morning by the 1st Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment and the 31st Battery, Royal Field Artillery. On the 23rd, the heights commanding the nek were seized by the Black Watch and Highland Light Infantry, our casualties being one Officer and 11 men killed, and six Officers and 68 men wounded. The same day Clements effected a junction between his own troops and those under Paget 2 miles north of Slabbert's Nek. Holding the enemy in front with the 1st Battalion Munster Fusiliers, he gained a footing on the high ground to the right of the nek by a turning movement executed by the 1st Battalion Royal Irish Regiment, the 2nd Battalion Wiltshire Regiment, and Brabant's Horse. Early on the 24th, the Boers vacated Retief's Nek, and Hunter pushed through the pass into the valley beyond, while Clements occupied Slabbert's Nek and sent his mounted troops and artillery in pursuit of the retreating enemy. Rundle was now directed to move towards Fouriesburg, and, on the 25th, Macdonald and Bruce Hamilton's blocked the exits from the Brandwater Basin at Naauwpoort Nek and Golden Gate. The same day, Hunter advanced, with Clements's and Paget's troops, in the direction of Fouriesburg, on which place the enemy had retired. On entering the town, on the 26th July, he found it already occupied by a portion of Rundle's Division, headed by Driscoll's Scouts, who had made a forced march of 25 miles from Commando Nek. Macdonald, in the meantime, had blocked Naauwpoort Nek and Golden Gate, towards which the Boers had fallen back, and, on the 28th, Hunter followed the enemy with Clements's and Paget's Brigades, and the available troops of the 8th Division. On the 29th, General Prinsloo asked for a four days' armistice, and, this request being refused, agreed to surrender unconditionally the following morning. On the 30th July, Prinsloo and Crowther, with the Ficksburg and Ladybrand Commandoes, 879 strong, surrendered, other commandoes coming in later. General Olivier, with his commando, managed, however, to escape during the night through Golden Gate, though he and his men had been included by Commandant-General Prinsloo in the unconditional surrender of the Boer force. The total number of prisoners taken was 4,140, with three guns, two of which belonged to "U" Battery, Royal Horse Artillery. Over 4,000 horses and ponies, a large number of rifles, and over a million rounds of small-arm ammunition also fell into our hands.

10. On the surrender of Prinsloo's force, Hunter directed Macdonald to march on the 1st August to Harrismith in pursuit of Olivier with 700 mounted troops, four battalions, two 5-inch guns, and 16 field guns. He reached Harrismith unopposed on the 4th August, and the next day was joined there by two squadrons of the 5th Lancers from Besters and one of the 13th Hussars from Ladysmith. Railway communication was opened between Harrismith and Natal, the line having only been slightly damaged. As it had been ascertained that Olivier had moved northwards through Vrede, and Macdonald's troops were wanted elsewhere, I ordered them to be relieved by nine companies of Imperial Yeomanry, Driscoll's Scouts, seven battalions, and 14 field guns from the 8th Division, under Rundle, who also provided garrisons for Senekal, Bethlehem, Fouriesburg, Ladybrand, and Thabanchu. Rundle reached Harrismith on the 6th August, Macdonald leaving on

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the same day to rejoin Hunter at Bethlehem. Meanwhile, Paget's and Bruce Hamilton's Brigades had marched as escort of the Boer prisoners to Winburg, and Clements's Brigade had been ordered to Kroonstad.

11. I have already mentioned that C. De Wet's commando, which was accompanied by ex-President Steyn, had managed to break through Hunter's cordon during the night of the 15th July, and had been followed up by a mounted force 2,300 strong, with two batteries of Horse Artillery, under Broadwood, in the direction of Lindley. To protect his baggage, Broadwood took the 1st Battalion Derbyshire Regiment and two field guns from the escort of a convoy which he met on the road between Lindley and Bethlehem. The 3rd Cavalry Brigade had reached Heilbron on the 15th July. There Brigadier-General Gordon, who commanded it, was ordered to Pretoria to replace Colonel Porter, who had broken his collar-bone. In command of the 1st Cavalry Brigade, and was succeeded by Lieutenant-Colonel Little. On the 16th, the brigade left Heilbron for Kroonstad, and the next day I ordered it to march as rapidly as possible towards Lindley and join Broadwood's column. On the morning of the 19th, Little came into touch with a portion of De Wet's commando near Lindley, and in the afternoon Broadwood attacked the enemy's rearguard, the action continuing until dusk. The commando then broke up into two parties, both of which, owing to the superior mobility of the Boers, contrived to get away during the night. One of these parties reached the railway on the night of the 21st July, and captured a supply train 20 miles north of Kroonstad. The commando afterwards reunited to the west of Roodeval Station. Broadwood, after joining hands with Little on the 21st July, crossed the railway in pursuit, and three days later found De Wet holding a strong position in the hills east of Reitzburg. Not strong enough to attack the enemy, he held on to Vrededorf and awaited the arrival of infantry reinforcements.

12. While the operations described above were taking place in the Orange River Colony, the Boers had been displaying considerable activity north of the Vaal, and along the railway in the vicinity of Kroonstad. Botha's force retreated towards Middelburg on the 13th June, and Baden-Powell from Zeerust occupied Rustenburg on the 14th, a small column being sent the following day from Pretoria to meet him and repair the telegraph line between the two places. On the 14th June, our post on the railway at Zand River was attacked by 800 Boers with three guns, but Major-General Knox, Commanding at Kroonstad, promptly sent out reinforcements, and the enemy were driven off with some loss. On the 18th June, Hunter, who had been advancing eastward through Potchefstroom, reoccupied Krugersdorp with his mounted troops under Mahon, and one battery of Horse Artillery, being joined the next day by Hart's Infantry Brigade and a Field Battery. On the 21st June, Baden-Powell reported that 3,000 rifles had been handed in at Rustenburg, and that the district was quiet, a small commando, under Field-Cornet Duplessis, having retired north-eastward. The same day Hunter was ordered to proceed from Krugersdorp to Heideberg with troops under Hart and Mahon, Barton's Brigade, which was then holding Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom, moving on to Krugersdorp. A Field battery and two battalions of the latter brigade, the 2nd Battalion