

After this successful action the force marched into Bethal, having covered 60 miles in the previous forty-eight hours.

In connection with the attack upon Trigaardtsfontein, Colonel Allenby, who moved west on the 10th from Middelkraal to Onverwacht (478), was instrumental in intercepting some of the fugitives who, with part of the Boer convoy, were captured as they sought to elude the pursuit of General Hamilton's other troops.

After halting a day at Bethal, General Hamilton was about to return to Ermelo, when he heard that a number of the Boers who had escaped from Trigaardtsfontein were re-assembling under General P. Viljoen at Witkrans (55), twenty-five miles north-east of Bethal. He at once halted his column, and then, when darkness had set in, commenced another long night march, with the troops under Colonels Sir H. Rawlinson, Wing, and Williams. The intelligence of the enemy's whereabouts proved correct, and after a sharp gallop of several miles in the early dawn of the 13th, 70 Boers (including Field Cornets Badenhorst and Swanepool) were captured and 16 killed. During this engagement one of the two 15-pr. guns taken from Colonel Benson's force at Brakenlaagte was recovered, and it was ascertained that the other gun had been disabled by the enemy.

General Hamilton's troops moved into Ermelo on the evening of the 13th, after an extremely hard day's work.

On the same date as the enemy's laager at Witkrans was thus broken up, Colonel Mackenzie and Lieutenant-Colonel Fortescue, operating a few miles to the northward of that place, were also engaged with the enemy, of whom 3 were killed, and several prisoners, together with much stock, captured.

On the 19th December, General Hamilton again left Ermelo for Stoenkoolspruit (88), twenty-two miles east of Ermelo; Colonel Mackenzie marching simultaneously from Carolina upon Lake Banagher (181), twenty-two miles north-east of Ermelo.

To co-operate with this movement, General Plumer and Colonel Pulteney were also ordered to move up to the vicinity of Spitzkop (115), where they would be in a position to watch for any attempt on the part of the enemy to break away in a southerly or south-westerly direction. At dawn on the 23rd both these columns came up with a force of 500 Boers at Glenfillan (288), and after a short engagement captured 6 prisoners.

Advancing from Carolina, on the night of the 19th, Colonel Mackenzie made a long forced march to Lake Banagher, where he attacked, at daybreak, Barend Smit's commando in laager upon Schalk Meyer's farm, and inflicted upon the enemy a loss of 6 killed; 16 prisoners, 200 horses, and a quantity of ammunition were also taken. Colonel Mackenzie then moved west to Bothwell (140).

At the latter place he received information that a Boer convoy was leaving Klipstapel in a westerly direction. He accordingly started at 9 A.M., on December 21st, with all available mounted troops, and after a pursuit of 30 miles overtook and captured what turned out to be a convoy of Smit's commando, with 17 prisoners, 44 vehicles, and 2,000 cattle. Colonel Mackenzie subsequently returned to Carolina.

In the meantime, the troops under Major-General Bruce Hamilton had also met with some success. At dawn on the 23rd an attack was made upon Grobelaar's laager, at Maryvale (76), fifteen miles north of Amsterdam, but the dense morning mist favoured the escape of the Boers,

whose losses were limited for this reason to 4 killed and 11 captured. 700 cattle and a number of wagons were also captured.

From Maryvale, General Bruce Hamilton returned to Ermelo.

Another easterly movement was commenced on December 29th, from Ermelo and Carolina respectively, when General Hamilton again pushed out his troops to Maryvale, and effected the capture there, on January 1st, of 22 prisoners, 14 wagons, and 500 cattle.

Colonel Mackenzie marched at the same time to Holnek (41), and thence towards the border of Swaziland, to guard against any possible escape of the Boers to the north.

On the night of the 2nd of January, Major-General Bruce Hamilton, with columns under Lieutenant-Colonels Simpson and Scott, made a long march, by circuitous bridle paths, and followed up the tracks of the Pretoria commando, which was known to have left Amsterdam on the previous evening. These tracks led into some deep kloofs in the sides of the hills north-east of Amsterdam, where 49 prisoners (including General Erasmus and Mr. Custer, late J.P. of Amsterdam) were hemmed in and taken. Colonel Wing, who was also out on the same night, increased this total by a further capture of 20 prisoners and 5 wagons.

During the progress of the eastern movement here referred to, the columns under Brigadier-Generals Spens and Plumer and Lieutenant-Colonel Colville were disposed upon a general line, Beginderlyn-Rotterdam-Derby, to endeavour to intercept any bands which might try to escape from General Hamilton's troops towards the Elandsberg and the hilly country to the north of Wakkerstroom. Whilst watching this district, on the 3rd of January, a party of General Plumer's New Zealanders became hotly engaged with the enemy in the vicinity of Twyfelaar (8), when, despite the loss of the officer in command, who was wounded, and 20 of their numbers, they effected the capture of 300 cattle and a wagon load of ammunition.

Another severe encounter between the Boers and General Plumer's troops took place on the following day, when about 50 of our mounted troops, under Major Vallentin, who were following up the commando which had been engaged with the New Zealanders, were suddenly attacked by several hundreds of the enemy. The Boers advanced at a gallop with about 100 men in first line, and about 50 thrown back on each flank. The whole movement was covered by heavy fire from several hundred dismounted riflemen in the background. Severe hand-to-hand fighting ensued, in which, I regret to say, Major Vallentin and 18 of his men were killed, and 5 officers and 28 men wounded before the arrival of reinforcements under Colonel Pulteney compelled the enemy to retire. The Boers, who were led on this occasion by General C. Botha on the one flank, and General J. D. Opperman on the other, fell back northwards to Schimmelhoek (89) and Foxhill (241), leaving 9 dead and 3 wounded in our hands, amongst the former of whom was General Opperman, who held chief command over a group of commandoes as well as the personal leadership of the Swaziland commando.

Prior to this co-operation with General Hamilton, Brigadier-General Spens' column had been working in the vicinity of Morgenzon (62) between Standerton and Ermelo, in which neighbourhood, on the 19th of December, a portion of his mounted infantry had been severely handled by the enemy.