

completely successful, and resulted in the capture of 42 prisoners of war, including Major Wolmarans, Captain Wolmarans, and Lieutenant Malan, all of the Staats Artillerie, together with a considerable amount of ammunition and camp equipment.

On learning from Colonel Wing, when he marched back into Ermelo on the evening of the 11th, that he was satisfied that there were other parties of Boers still lurking in the vicinity of Boschmanskrantz (263), General Hamilton, who had contemplated a raid in an entirely different direction, decided to pay a second surprise visit to that neighbourhood. He was not without hopes, which were not disappointed, that the enemy would have returned to their old haunts, trusting to the improbability of two raids in the same direction on successive nights. Unfortunately, one of the enemy's picquets at an outlying farmhouse gave the alarm, and the majority of the Boers who had bivouacked near Kaffirstad (176) were able to effect their escape in time. A pursuit of the flying burghers was maintained for about 7 miles on the morning of the 12th. Fresh horses and a good start gave the advantage to the enemy, but our men and animals, though much exhausted by the efforts of the long preceding march, were successful in riding down and capturing 32 prisoners, 43 horses, 18 vehicles, and a number of mules and cattle.

At the conclusion of this expedition General Bruce Hamilton returned to Ermelo, and on the 18th January again set out for the east, making a night expedition to Witbank (272), 5 miles north of Spitzkop (115), where 27 prisoners were secured, despite the difficulties of a long and trying march conducted in incessant rain.

By yet another dash from Ermelo, on the night of the 24th, 12 more prisoners were captured about Boschmansfontein (204) and Boschmanspoort (428).

The most gratifying success, however, was achieved by General Bruce Hamilton at daybreak on the 26th January. On the preceding night his troops, composed of picked men and horses drawn from the columns under General Spens, Colonels Allenby, Mackenzie, and Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart, were suddenly directed on Tafel Kop, 10 miles north-west of Ermelo. Here fresh tracks of Boers were picked up and most skilfully followed by Colonel Wools Sampson and his Intelligence Staff. After some distance the tracks branched into two, and it was decided to follow up both trails. The force was accordingly divided, and after proceeding some distance, the party which General Bruce Hamilton had himself accompanied, came suddenly upon a large laager at Nelspan (34). Our men at once charged, and the Boers fled in all directions, pursued for many miles amid torrents of rain.

One of our parties of Mounted Infantry under Major Pratt, Durham Light Infantry, drove a dozen Boers on to the Ermelo—Standerton blockhouse line, 8 miles distant, where they were obliged to surrender. Other bands were also overtaken and captured, and at the end of the chase it was found that six Boers had been killed, two wounded, and that 82 unwounded prisoners, a large number of rifles, horses and stock had fallen into our hands. Among the prisoners were Field-Cornet De Villiers, Captain De Jager, Staats Artillerie, and Mr. De Jager, formerly member of First Volksraad. After this successful enterprise General Hamilton moved back to Ermelo, his troops having covered 52 miles in 24 hours.

Since the 31st January, General Bruce Hamilton has been operating in the neighbour-

hood of Amsterdam, where he has made a few additional prisoners and is now on his way back to Ermelo.

There is little doubt that the spirit of the Boers in this district is greatly broken. Their *morale* is much affected by the continual night surprises to which they have been subjected, and their reluctance to meet our troops, or even to bivouac for a night within 40 miles of them, now adds greatly to the difficulty of getting to close quarters.

To the south of General Bruce Hamilton's main operations, the columns under Brigadier-General Plumer, Colonel Pulteney and Lieutenant-Colonel Colville have continued to operate in the area enclosed by the border of Swaziland, the Wakkerstroom—Piet Retief line of blockhouses, and the upper reaches of the Vaal River. The principal rôle assigned to these columns has been that of barring all exit to the south, and thus keeping the enemy within the grasp of General Bruce Hamilton's troops.

The most important capture effected by this force acting under General Plumer was accomplished at daybreak on 25th January, when 24 prisoners surrounded by detachments from Castro's Nek, Wakkerstroom and the Swaziland Border, were hemmed in and taken in the kloofs between Spitzkop (79) and Castro's Nek. On the same occasion 30 additional burghers were also forced up against the Piet Retief—Wakkerstroom blockhouse line, where they were secured by Lieutenant-Colonel Fry, West Yorkshire Regiment.

Colonel C. Mackenzie has similarly maintained his position to the north of General Bruce Hamilton, echeloned generally forward towards Lake Ch'issie, to guard the northern avenues of escape leading across the Delagoa railway, and to watch for a possible attempt at junction between the Boer forces under Generals Botha and B. Viljoen. The latter leader, however, until the date of his capture near Lydenburg, showed no disposition to move south, or to reach out a hand to General Botha in his difficulties. He and his men remained north of the railway where he was cleverly captured on the night of the 25th January, at a farm between Boschoek and Kruger's Post, by a detachment of the Royal Irish Regiment under Major Orr.

North of the Delagoa railway, operations during the month have again been entrusted to Colonel Park and Lieutenant-Colonel Urnston, whose work has been greatly impeded, and indeed almost stopped, by incessant rain and mist. Their two columns left Belfast on the night of the 15th January, moving into the country between Dullstroom and the Crocodile River, where only a few isolated Boers were seen during the occasional lifts of the fog.

On the 21st January, however, 300 of the enemy were encountered, and a partial engagement took place, under great difficulties of weather, in which the Boers had six casualties.

On the 24th, Colonels Park and Urnston were again engaged with the enemy, estimated at 600 strong, under Commandants Muller and Trichardt, who were found near Houtenbek (191), and driven into the hills south of Roos Senekal.

The Boer Government were reported to have been with this force when the action commenced, but fled, it appears, when the first shot was fired, into the broken country to the north of Roos Senekal.

Our troops subsequently returned to Lydenburg, where they arrived on 29th January, and on the 31st Lieutenant-Colonel Urnston marched south to Machadodorp, escorting General B. Viljoen and other prisoners to the railway.