

94 horses, 60 mules, 750 cattle, and a number of vehicles. Amongst the prisoners were Captain Muller, Orange Free State Artillery; Captain Villiers, and Field-Cornet J. Wessels, the latter mortally wounded. Five Boers were killed and eight were wounded in this engagement.

Everything was now ready for the sweep to the west, and by the 5th February our columns moving rapidly north again from the different points where supplies had been replenished, had formed a continuous line of mounted men, constituting practically a moveable chain of outposts, which extended along the west bank of Liebenberg's Vlei from Frankfort as far south as Fanny's Home and thence to Kaffir Kop.

Colonel Sir H. Rawlinson's men were on the right, flanked along the Frankfort—Heilbron line of blockhouses by troops under Lieutenant-Colonels Wilson (Kitchener's Fighting Scouts) and Keir, Royal Artillery, and thence, in order from right to left, the columns under Colonel Byng, Colonel Rimington, Colonel De Lisle and Major Faushawe. From the south, Majors Marshall and Holmes, temporarily detached from General C. Knox's command, moved up to the Lindley—Kroonstad line to join on to General Elliot's left and connect it, as the sweep progressed, with the Kroonstad railway line. This latter, between Kroonstad and Wolvehoek, had been considerably strengthened for the occasion by the distribution along it of the 2nd Battalion Seaforth Highlanders and four armoured trains in addition to its normal garrisons, whilst the Wolvehoek—Heilbron branch line had been similarly reinforced by the 2nd Battalion Leinster Regiment and three armoured trains. At Wolvehoek itself the 28th Battalion Mounted Infantry was placed at the disposal of Brigadier-General Cunningham, in readiness to pursue any parties of the enemy which might be driven across the railway.

At dawn, on the 6th, the whole mounted force advanced west from Liebenberg's Vlei, carefully maintaining touch, and at night held a line from Holland, on the Heilbron—Frankfort blockhouse line, to Doornkloof, on the Kroonstad—Lindley chain of blockhouses. During the night the whole of the line was held by entrenched outposts, 50 yards apart, fires were lit in advance to give an idea of a double position, and men were pushed along the flanking blockhouse lines to watch for any attempts to break through.

At daybreak on the following morning our troops made a further general advance to the Heilbron—Kroonstad road, and the left moving up joined at Amerika Siding, on to the Kroonstad—Wolvehoek blockhouse line. During the night similar arrangements were made to those of the previous one, and every Officer and man in the force remained on outpost duty. Many attempts were made to break through, the picquets were constantly attacked, and firing almost continuous along the whole line as the Boers sought to escape. One party made a most determined attempt to break out over the Heilbron line of blockhouses, being repulsed with a loss of 10 killed and several wounded.

Despite our precautions, however, De Wet unfortunately escaped with a number of his followers. On the 6th he was in the enclosure, but at once realizing his position he ordered his men to disperse and seek safety as best they could. He himself, with some men and a large herd of cattle, made for the Kroonstad—Lindley blockhouse line, and at 1 A.M. on the morning of the 7th, in intense darkness, rushed the cattle at the fence, and broke his way through mixed up with them, with a loss of three men, 25 horses, and a number of the cattle killed.

The effect of the operations, however, was very considerable. At dawn on the 8th February our line closed into the railway and completed the movement, when it was found that the total loss sustained by the Boers in killed, wounded, and prisoners amounted to 285. Large numbers of their tired horses were picked up, and a considerable quantity of cattle were driven in to the line. Of the prisoners, many were taken in the bed of the Rhenoster River, where they were discovered hiding in its thick patches of reed, carefully divested of the many compromising articles of khaki uniform which were lying upon the banks.

The blow has, I believe, been a serious one to the enemy, and will, for a time at any rate, disturb the calculations of De Wet, who has frequently of late attempted concentrations of his men with an alleged intention of once more trying to gain Cape Colony.

In the north of Orange River Colony, columns under Lieutenant-Colonels Keir and Wilson, together with Damant's Horse, have acted vigorously, whenever opportunity offered, against the enemy's bands, under Commandants Alberts and Ross, which continue to frequent the valley of the Vaal to the north of Frankfort.

The troops under Major-General C. Knox and Lieutenant-Colonel Barker have been employed in effecting a systematic clearance of the fertile districts, situated between the Winburg—Senekal—Bethlehem road and the border of Basutoland, which have hitherto yielded to the enemy an almost inexhaustible supply of food stuffs and forage.

In the first week of February Colonel Ternan, who was supported by Colonel Barker's troops, was detached by General C. Knox to the east to search the western slopes of the Wittebergen, where a considerable number of Boers, who are unable to enter the Brandwater Basin, owing to the presence there of Major-General B. Campbell's column, are reported to have taken refuge.

At Winburg a Brigade has been formed under Lieutenant-Colonel Hon. R. T. Lawley, which consist of the 2nd Dragoon Guards and the 7th Hussars. It will co-operate for the present with the troops under Major-General C. Knox and Colonel Barker, and has already moved out to the Doornberg, together with Major Du Cane's column, which has been brought into the same area from Edenburg.

6. No active operations have taken place during the past month in the districts to the east of the main railway, and to the south of the Bloemfontein—Ladybrand blockhouse line. In this area there is now only one small band of Boers under the command of Commandant Brand.

To the west of the railway, Colonel Rochfort's columns have been engaged from time to time with the commandoes under Commandants Nieuwhoudt and Pretorius, who succeeded, as previously reported, in breaking back into this district. About the middle of January the former of these leaders made a sudden dash to the west of the Orange River—Kimberley railway, but, being hotly pursued by our troops abandoned his project whatever it may have been, and returned almost as quickly as he had left them to his favourite and familiar resorts between the Modder and Reit Rivers.

On the 26th January, Major Driscoll, whose column had called at Petrusburg to obtain supplies, there learned that on the previous evening Nieuwhoudt's commando had been seen in the vicinity of Makauw's Drift on the Modder. He at once started in pursuit, and, crossing at the drift, came up with the Boer force which was in movement on the Boshof road, about