

Honourable J. Byng, and Colonel Sir Henry Rawlinson (reading from right to left) were in a position to advance from a general line Gottenburg Road—Vaalbank—Heidelberg.

On the night of the 18th, these troops had reached a position marked by Standerton—Zamenkomst (on the Vaal)—Tafel Kop, from which line, after a halt of 24 hours to replenish supplies, a commencement was made of the right wheel which was to bring our columns, by the evening of the 22nd February, on to the Tafel Kop—Botha's Pass line of blockhouses.

As the wheel commenced, Colonel Nixon's Cavalry Brigade, issuing from Paardekop Station, made a thorough search of the Verzemelberg, on the left of, and in conjunction with, Sir Henry Rawlinson, and then came into the new alignment of columns ready for the further advance upon Harrismith.

In the meantime, the convergent movement of the southern columns towards the Wilge River was in full progress. On the night of the 13th February, our troops had been disposed upon a line, facing east, from Kroonspruit (south of Kroonstad) to Bronkhorstfontein (1125), a few miles to the west of Senekal, the columns standing in the following order from left to right:—Major-General Elliot's Division, the columns under Majors Holmes and Marshall, Colonel the Honourable R. T. Lawley's Cavalry Brigade, and Major Du Cane's column.

The advance commenced at dawn on the 14th, and by the evening of the 16th our columns had reached a position running from Lindley, by Kaffir Kop to Bethlehem, having made a complete sweep of the country lying between the Kroonstad—Lindley blockhouse line, which barred all avenues of escape to the north, and the Senekal—Bethlehem Road, which was strongly held for the occasion by the troops from the south, under Major-General C. Knox and Colonel Barker. A two days' halt, to replenish supplies, was necessary upon the Lindley—Bethlehem alignment, and General Elliot's Division then moved forward to the line of the Wilge River, the drifts over which, between Tafel Kop and Harrismith, were all carefully blocked by our troops by the evening of the 22nd February.

The last stage of the operations was thus reached. At dawn on the 23rd, a general advance to the south was commenced by all our columns, disposed at the termination of their right wheel along the Tafel Kop—Botha's Pass Road. This final movement to the Vanreenen's Pass—Eland's River Bridge blockhouses was timed to take 4 days. It was well carried out, productive of some severe fighting, and highly successful in its issue.

On the night of the 23rd, at the close of the first day's march, a most determined and partially successful attempt to break out to the north was made by De Wet, Steyn, and some 700 of their followers, who had been driven east by Major-General Elliot's advance to the Wilge River, into the net of our approaching columns. The attack was delivered under cover of darkness, at Langverwacht, 18 miles south of Vrede, the point where, at the moment, the right of Colonel Byng's column was in touch with Colonel Rimington's left. Here again, as on the occasion of his previous escape, De Wet adopted the plan of advancing under cover of a large mob of cattle, which were rapidly driven up by natives to the point where the rush through was to be attempted. This expedient met, it is true, with a part of the desired success, for there is little doubt that De Wet, Ex-President Steyn, and a number of their men thus managed to break out of the toils. As a whole, however, the Boer

force was very severely punished by the New Zealanders of Lieutenant-Colonel Garratt's column, who displayed great gallantry and resolution at the critical moment, in resisting, and in part repelling, the attack. The conduct of the New Zealanders upon this occasion reflects the highest credit upon all ranks of the contingent, and upon the Colony to which it belongs. Nothing could have been finer than the behaviour of the men. The whole of the Boer cattle and vehicles were captured, and 31 of the enemy, together with over 160 horses were killed at the point where the attempt to penetrate our line was made.

Our own casualties were also severe, 2 Officers and 18 men being killed, and 5 Officers and 33 men wounded, the large majority of whom belonged to the New Zealand Contingent.

Yet another attempt to break out was made on the night of the 26th, when Colonel Nixon successfully repulsed an attack by a large number of the enemy upon the line of the Cornelius River.

The sweep down to Harrismith was then completed, and at its close it was found that our captures comprised 778 prisoners of war, 25,000 cattle, 2,000 horses, 200 wagons, and 50,000 rounds of ammunition. About 50 Boers had also been killed in the several engagements which had taken place. The surrender to Colonel Sir Henry Rawlinson, of Commandant Truter and 650 men, accounted for the majority of the prisoners taken.

After a necessary halt of three days in the vicinity of Harrismith, our column again moved off to take up positions for a fresh series of operations, which are now already developing, but which are not as yet sufficiently advanced to enable me at this date to do more than make this passing reference.

In the early part of February, until required to take part in the operations just described, the troops under Major-General C. Knox and Colonel Barker continued their work of systematic clearance in the districts between the Bloemfontein—Ladybrand line of blockhouses and the Winburg—Senekal—Bethlehem Road.

On the 10th February, Colonel Lawley and Major Du Cane reported considerable captures of cattle, wagons, and supplies, in the Doornberg. Colonel Barker's troops at the same date were employed in searching the innumerable kloofs and caves on the western slopes of the Wittebergen.

This work was temporarily suspended when it became necessary to bring up all available troops to hold the line of road from Senekal to Bethlehem, during the progress of the sweep of columns from the railway to the Wilge River. With the termination, however, of this movement, Major-General C. Knox's troops were able to fall back once more to the south and resume their interrupted work.

Colonel Barker continued to co-operate in the main operations. Dropping into second line in rear of Major-General Elliot to watch for any stragglers and fugitives escaping to the west, he was able, in this position, to pick up 30 prisoners, 225 cattle, and 280 horses. He then moved into Lindley, and on the 25th February, again left that place, marching in the first instance to reinforce the Wilge line, and then in accordance with subsequent orders to Tygerkloof, between Bethlehem and Harrismith, preparatory to the further series of contemplated operations which are now in progress.

5. In the second week in February the columns under Colonel Rochfort were searching the Philipolis and Luckhoff districts for the commando under Nieuwhoudt, which had been reported to be hovering about north of the Orange River, and