

have been released by the eventual capture of the laager.

A kopje to the south-east of the position, commanding the Boer entrenchments, and the whole course of the stream from the Paardeberg Drift upwards, was captured during the afternoon of the 18th, but retaken by the enemy after nightfall, owing to the Mounted Infantry who held it having gone down to the river to water their horses.

On the evening of this day I directed the Brigade of Guards to march from their camp at Modder along the north bank of the river to Klip Drift. I also ordered the 14th Brigade of the 7th Division, under Major-General Sir Herbert Chermside, to proceed from Jacobsdal to the Paardeberg camp, distant about 30 miles, which was reached on the evening of the 19th.

Leaving Jacobsdal at 4 A.M. on the 19th, I reached Paardeberg at 10 A.M. When I arrived on the scene I learnt that an armistice of 24 hours had been granted to General Cronje, who had asked for it on the plea that he desired to bury his dead. This armistice I immediately revoked, and ordered a vigorous bombardment of the enemy's position. General Cronje knew, as we knew, that considerable reinforcements were hastening to his assistance from Natal and from the south, and his request was obviously only an expedient to gain time.

I found the troops in camp were much exhausted by their previous marching and fighting, and I therefore decided not to make a second assault on the laager, the capture of which by a "coup-de-main" would have entailed a further loss of life, which did not appear to me to be warranted by the military exigencies of the situation. During the morning of the 20th February the kopje on the south-east, which I have already mentioned, was recaptured, the enemy abandoning their defences on being threatened in rear by the Cavalry and Mounted Infantry. In the afternoon the Boer laager and the entrenchments surrounding it were bombarded for several hours with Naval guns, 5-inch howitzers and field guns, much damage being done to the enemy's wagons, trek oxen, and horses. On the 21st and 22nd the bombardment was continued, and trenches were gradually pushed forward on both flanks of the river, but chiefly on the north, in view of an eventual assault, should such an alternative be forced upon me.

After his force had been surrounded, Cronje contrived to open heliographic communication with Bloemfontein, and doubtless asked for assistance, as reinforcements began to come up in scattered parties of varying strength from the east and south-east. Each commando was composed of men belonging to different districts, some of them having been withdrawn from Ladysmith and others from the northern frontier of the Cape Colony. On the morning of the 23rd February the 1st Battalion Yorkshire Regiment engaged one of these parties, about 2,000 strong, at the eastern end of the position south of the river, and drove off the enemy with heavy loss, losing themselves 3 Officers and 17 men wounded. Later in the day the 2nd Battalion of the Buffs, which had come up in support of the Yorkshire Regiment, captured 80 Boer prisoners. Similar parties of the enemy appeared in other directions, but were beaten back without difficulty by our troops. After being repulsed the Boers seem in most cases to have dispersed, whether to their homes or to join other commandoes: it is impossible to say.

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On this day a balloon reconnaissance was made of the Boer laager and entrenchments, which showed that much injury had been done to the enemy's wagons and stores by shell fire. On the 24th February 40 more prisoners were taken and a considerable number of Natives came in from the enemy's camp both on this day and on the previous days, having managed to escape during the night time. The services of these Kaffir refugees are being utilised to look after trek oxen and slaughter cattle, about 800 of which were captured in the vicinity of the Boer laager. Our casualties from the 19th to the 24th February inclusive, were as follows:—

Officers—wounded, 12.

Men—killed, 9; wounded, 102; missing, 8

Nothing calling for special notice occurred on the 25th February, except that heavy rain caused the Modder River to rise over 3 feet, and thus delayed the movement of convoys from and to the advanced base at the Modder Station as well as from and to Kimberley, where a supplementary Commissariat Depot had been established. I may here mention that the railway to Kimberley was re-opened on the 18th, and that Lord Methuen established his headquarters there on the same day.

Early on the 26th four 6-inch howitzers arrived at this camp from Modder, and the Boer laager was again shelled during the afternoon.

At 3 A.M. on the 27th the Royal Canadian Regiment, and No. 7 Company, Royal Engineers, commanded respectively by Lieutenant-Colonel W. D. Otter and Lieutenant-Colonel W. F. Kincaid, supported by the 1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders, advanced under a heavy rifle fire to within 80 yards of the enemy's defences, and succeeded in entrenching themselves, with the loss of 2 Officers wounded, 7 men killed, and 27 wounded. A gallant deed, creditable to all who took part in it.

At 6 A.M. I received a letter from General P. A. Cronje, making an unconditional surrender, and throwing himself and his troops on Her Majesty's clemency. The following is a translation:—

"Head-quarter Laager,

"Modder River,

"27th February, 1900.

"Honoured Sir.

"Herewith I have the honour to inform you that the Council of War, which was held here last evening, resolved to surrender unconditionally with the forces here, being compelled to do so under existing circumstances. They therefore throw themselves on the clemency of Her Britannic Majesty.

"As a sign of surrender a white flag will be hoisted from 6 A.M. to-day. The Council of War requests that you will give immediate orders for all further hostilities to be stopped, in order that more loss of life may be prevented.

"I have, &c.,

"(Signed) P. A. CRONJE,

"General.

"To Field Marshal Lord Roberts.

"P.S.—Messrs. G. R. Keizer, my secretary, and H. C. Penzhorn, are authorized to arrange all details with your Lordship."

Cronje was received by me in camp at 8 A.M., and he with the other prisoners, numbering 3,919 men, exclusive of 150 wounded, were despatched in the afternoon to Capé Town.

In addition to the prisoners' rifles and a large quantity of Mauser ammunition, three 7.5