

was to act in the direction of Bethlehem in conjunction with the troops under Clements. Clements, whose head-quarters were at Senekal, was to be reinforced* and to proceed to Bethlehem, being joined on the march by Paget's column. The combined movement from Lindley and Senekal was to begin on 28th July.

Lieutenant-General Sir L. Rundle was instructed to occupy the line from Winburg through Trommel to Ficksburg with 1,000 mounted troops. As soon as the combined force under Clements had arrived north of Bethlehem he was to garrison that place and subsequently to operate against Harrismith. The force at Rundle's disposal consisted of the balance of the Colonial Division—namely, about 1,200 mounted men, two battalions of Imperial Yeomanry, three Field batteries, and seven Infantry battalions.

7. Leaving Pretoria on the 19th June, Ian Hamilton's column occupied Heidelberg on the 23rd. The enemy vacated the town, and were pursued for some distance by our Cavalry. The Boksburg Commando was completely broken up, 60 Boers laying down their arms and the remainder dispersing in different directions. During the Cavalry pursuit, Lieutenant-General Ian Hamilton unfortunately broke his collarbone and had to return to Pretoria. I accordingly placed Lieutenant-General Sir A. Hunter in command of the column, which he joined on the 25th June. On the 27th, the column left Heidelberg, and crossing the Vaal at Villiersdorp, reached Frankfort on the 1st July. Two days later Hunter was joined there by the troops from Heilbron under Macdonald. On the 4th July, the force marched south towards Reitz, from which place, on the approach of the British troops, 800 prisoners belonging to the Irish Battalion of the Imperial Yeomanry and the 4th Battalion Derbyshire Regiment were despatched by the Boers across the Natal frontier, and proceeded to Ladysmith. The Officers, however, were not liberated, but sent to Nooitgedacht, on the Delagoa Bay railway. Bruce Hamilton was left at Reitz with the 21st Brigade, two Field Batteries, and the 7th Corps of Mounted Infantry, with orders to send back a convoy of empty wagons to bring on fresh supplies from Heilbron under escort of one battery and one battalion. Hunter reached Bethlehem on the 10th July, where he received orders placing Rundle's Division and Clements's column under his command. On the 11th July, the 3rd Cavalry Brigade was sent back to Heilbron, viâ Reitz, the country south of Bethlehem being so hilly that the presence of two Cavalry Brigades seemed unnecessary; and, on the 14th, Bruce Hamilton's Brigade rejoined Hunter at Bethlehem.

8. On reaching Bethlehem, Hunter found that it had been occupied on 7th July, after two days' fighting, by the force under Clements and Paget. The combined movements of troops under the latter Officers, and under Rundle, had been carried out as directed. On the 26th June, Clements ordered his mounted troops, with two field guns, to attack a Boer laager at Rietfontein, 7 miles north of Senekal. The enemy were dispersed and the laager destroyed, our casualties being three killed and 23 wounded. The same day Paget engaged the enemy near Lindley, while they were endeavouring to in-

* 1,000 mounted men from the 8th and Colonial Divisions, 400 mounted men from Bloemfontein, one Field battery, two 5-inch guns, 2nd Bn. Bedfordshire Regiment, 1st Bn. Royal Irish Regiment, 2nd Bn. Worcestershire Regiment, and 2nd Bn. Wiltshire Regiment.

tercept a convoy of supplies. The Boers were driven off with a loss on our side of 10 men killed and four Officers and 50 men wounded. On 2nd July, Clements and Paget joined hands and began their advance on Bethlehem, the enemy, under C. De Wet, falling back in a south-easterly direction. On the 3rd July, Paget drove the Boers from a strong position which they were holding across his line of march, and bivouacked 15 miles north-west of Bethlehem. On approaching the town on the evening of the 5th July, Clements, who, as senior Officer, was in command of the two columns, found C. De Wet occupying the hills to the south. The next morning Bethlehem was summoned to surrender, and, on this demand being refused, Paget moved to the north-west with the object of turning the enemy's left, while Clements's troops operated on their right flank. On the morning of the 7th, a general assault was made, and by noon the place was in our hands and the Boers were in full retreat to the north-east. On this occasion, the 1st Battalion Royal Irish Regiment specially distinguished itself, capturing a gun of the 77th Battery, Royal Field Artillery, which had been lost at Stormberg. The good service rendered by the 38th Battery, Royal Field Artillery, and the City Imperial Volunteers Battery has also been brought to notice by Major-General Paget.

9. On being driven from Bethlehem, the enemy—estimated at about 7,000 strong, with 20 guns—retired through the hills into the Brandwater Basin, around which they occupied positions of great natural strength at Naauwpoort, Retief's, and Slabbert's Neks, Witnek and Commando Nek. These, at the time, were believed to be the only points of ingress into, or egress from, the Basin; but it was afterwards found that there was another route available through Golden Gate in Harrismith direction. The disposition of the investing force, on the 11th July, was as follows:—The 8th and Colonial Divisions, under Rundle, were echeloned along the line from Ficksburg to Biddulphsberg, their duty being to watch Witnek and Commando Nek, and to prevent the enemy from breaking out to the south-west. Clements's Brigade, awaiting supplies from Senekal, was at Biddulphsberg; while at, or near Bethlehem were the 2nd Cavalry Brigade under Broadwood, the 2nd Brigade of Mounted Infantry under Ridley, the Highland Brigade under Macdonald, the 20th Brigade under Paget, and the 21st Brigade under Bruce Hamilton. On the 15th July, the 2nd Cavalry Brigade and the 20th Infantry Brigade were sent out along the road to Senekal, with the object of heading back the enemy if they should attempt to break out in that direction, but during the night a Boer force under C. De Wet, consisting of about 1,500 men and six guns, and accompanied by Mr. Steyn, succeeded in escaping through Slabbert's Nek, and rapidly moved off towards Lindley. On the 16th Broadwood's Cavalry, with 800 Mounted Infantry under Ridley, were ordered to pursue De Wet, and Clements was directed to relieve Rundle's troops in front of Witnek. On the 20th and 21st, Bruce Hamilton, with the Cameron Highlanders, a corps of Mounted Infantry, and the 82nd Battery, Royal Field Artillery, attacked the enemy holding Spitzkop, a hill 9 miles south-east of Bethlehem, and succeeded in occupying it. Drawing his cordon tighter, Hunter, on 22nd July, moved the Highland Brigade, the 5th and 76th Batteries, Royal Field Artillery, Lovat's Scouts, and Rimington's