

threatening the railway line, that the railway bridge at Standerton had been blown up, and would take 10 days to repair, and that he must collect supplies before advancing further. On the 30th June, Clery, with the 4th Brigade, left Standerton for Greylingstad, and, after meeting with some opposition, occupied that place on the 2nd July. On the 4th July, he reached Vlakkfontein and met Hart at Zuikerbosch Spruit, relieving the detachment from the Heidelberg garrison which was guarding the railway at that point. This day the line from Natal was opened up to Greylingstad. On the 10th July, the Boers destroyed a railway bridge at Grootspuit, 6 miles east of Greylingstad, and broke up the line. Clery was, therefore, recalled from Vlakkfontein, and Hart reoccupied Zuikerbosch Spruit. On the 12th, the South African Light Horse drove off a Boer commando moving upon Vlakklaagte Station, while Clery moved to Witpoort. Dundonald, scouting 5 miles north of Clery, captured the camp of the party which had injured the Grootspuit Bridge. Clery returned to Vaal Station for supplies on the 15th July, and thence marched to Leeuwspruit, 10 miles north of Standerton, with the intention of visiting Bethel. In view, however, of the possibility that C. De Wet, with the commando which had broken through Hunter's cordon, might endeavour to cross the Vaal opposite Heilbron, and thus effect a junction with Botha's forces, I directed the column to return to Greylingstad. Clery reached Greylingstad on the 24th July. The same and the following days Hildyard engaged the Lydenburg Commando near Amersfort, on which occasion the 13th and 69th Batteries, Royal Field Artillery, the 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps, and the 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders, distinguished themselves, especially the Volunteer Company of the latter battalion. The enemy retired northward, having suffered considerable loss.

On the 22nd July, the Boers made a determined attack on the post at Zuikerbosch Spruit, 13 miles east of Heidelberg. This post was held by two companies of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 110 men of the Royal Engineers, and 10 men of the Imperial Yeomanry, under Major English of the first-named regiment. Hart proceeded at once with reinforcements from Heidelberg, but before he arrived the enemy had been beaten off, great credit for the achievement being due to Major English and his small party.

On the 26th July, the railway to Heidelberg was open, communication between Johannesburg and Natal being thus restored; and, on the 28th, Major-General Cooper, with the 3rd Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps and the 1st Battalion Rifle Brigade, took over the command at Heidelberg from Major-General Hart, the latter proceeding by rail to Rhenoster with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, and a wing of the Somersetshire Light Infantry. Sir Redvers Buller was then ordered to concentrate a Cavalry brigade, 1,000 Mounted Infantry, and an Infantry Division, at Standerton, and to move as early as possible on Amersfort, and thence through Ermelo to Carolina, with a view to his co-operating with the advance from Middelburg along the Delagoa Bay Railway. He moved to Paardekop on the 2nd August, and reached Amersfort on the 7th, meeting with some slight opposition on the march. He crossed the Biet Spruit on the Ermelo Road on the 9th, and occupied Ermelo unopposed two days later, the enemy having retreated to

Lake Chrissie. On the 12th, Clery reported that a Field-Cornet and 182 burghers had surrendered at Waterval Bridge and handed in their arms. On the 14th, Buller's mounted troops entered Carolina and Twyfelaar, his Infantry being at Kraspan, 10 miles south of Carolina, and the Boers having fallen back on the Komati River. The next day Sir Redvers Buller established his head-quarters at Twyfelaar, where he awaited the arrival of supplies and the completion of the arrangements for an eastward advance.

28. And here I will ask your Lordship to revert to the operations against De Wet, whose commando towards the end of July was occupying the hills in the neighbourhood of Reitzburg. The enemy's position was being watched by the 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Brigades and Ridley's Mounted Infantry, but it was too strong to be attacked by mounted troops alone. Hart, with one and a half battalions, arrived at Rhenoster on the 30th July, and proceeded to Kopje Alleen, 25 miles north of Kroonstad, where he was joined on the 3rd August by Major-General C. E. Knox* from Kroonstad. Broadwood, who was holding the line from Wilgebosch Drift through Wonderheuvel and Leeuwspruit to Vredefort, had with him the 1st Battalion Derbyshire Regiment and Hart's Infantry force, and was subsequently strengthened by the 2nd Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers from Bloemfontein, and the Canadian Regiment from Springs. The Colonial Division was also transferred from Rundle's command on the 27th July, and, marching through Kroonstad, proceeded on the 5th August to Winkledrift on the Rhenoster with orders to watch the principal drifts down stream. Lord Kitchener left Pretoria on the 4th August in order to assume command of the troops surrounding De Wet south of the Vaal, and arrived the next day at Wonderheuvel. At this date the military situation was as follows:—De Wet was hemmed in on the south by the Cavalry Brigades, the Colonial Division, Ridley's Mounted Infantry, and two Infantry columns under Hart and Knox. North of the Vaal Lord Methuen was in position near Potchefstroom to head De Wet back if he crossed the river, with Smith-Dorrien in support at Frederickstad. Methuen's force consisted of 750 Imperial Yeomanry, the 2nd Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment, and 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers, with one Field battery, two howitzers, and two pompoms. Smith-Dorrien had under his command 250 Mounted Infantry, the 2nd Battalion Shropshire Light Infantry, the 1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders, the City Imperial Volunteers, and one Field battery. I had hoped with so strong a force, distributed in the manner which I have indicated, De Wet would have found escape impossible. But the country round Reitzburg is extremely difficult, and the hills on both sides of the river furnish an effective screen to the movements of a mobile column. On the 7th August, it was reported that De Wet had succeeded in crossing the Vaal during the preceding night by De Wet's Drift, and that he was marching rapidly northward. On the 8th and 9th, Methuen engaged his rearguard, having been joined on the latter day by the Colonial Division, which had crossed by Scandinavia Drift. The 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Brigades were at Lindeque Drift on the 9th, with Ridley's Mounted Infantry on the north

* 1st Bn. Oxfordshire Light Infantry, 3rd Bn. Royal Scots, one Field battery, two pompoms, and 250 Infantry.