

12th September a party of Boers belonging to the Commando which had attacked Ladybrand appeared near Brandfort, with their intention of damaging the railway. Kelly-Kenny reinforced the posts between Bloemfontein and Smaldeel, and communicated with MacDonald, who the next morning crossed to the south of the Vet River on the road from Winburg to Bloemfontein, and engaged the enemy 8 miles west of Tafel Kop, driving them across the river and pursuing them to the north of the Winburg—Smaldeel railway. The Boers retired in great confusion, seven prisoners, 31 wagons, 270 trek oxen, and a large quantity of supplies, ammunition and dynamite falling into our hands. Lovat's Scouts especially distinguished themselves during the pursuit.

On the 18th September, Rundle attacked a party of Boers near Bronkhorstspruit, 20 miles west of Senekal, capturing one gun and 30 wagons, while C. Knox successfully engaged the enemy at Klompie Doorns between Senekal and Kroonstad.

44. It may be here mentioned that, in view of De Wet's return from the Transvaal to the district between Heilbron and Reitzburg, and the possibility of his collecting a fresh commando in that direction, I thought it desirable to concentrate a strong mounted force at Kroonstad and on the Rhenoster River. The Colonial Division, which had been attached to Lord Methuen's column during the pursuit of De Wet, was accordingly ordered to march from Zeerust to Elandsfontein, via Krugersdorp. It left Zeerust on the 25th August, being joined by the 3rd Cavalry Brigade under Colonel Little. The same day Colonel Little was wounded near Jacobsdal, and the command of the combined force devolved on Colonel Dalgety. Between Zeerust and Krugersdorp considerable opposition was met with, the casualties in the Colonial Division being 10 men killed and five Officers and 20 men wounded; and in the 3rd Cavalry Brigade one man killed, and one Officer and six men wounded. On reaching Elandsfontein, the Colonial Division proceeded on the 14th September to Rhenoster, a portion of it through Heidelberg, and the remainder along the railway. The 3rd Cavalry Brigade, under Colonel Porter, who by this time had replaced Colonel Little, was railed to Kroonstad; while De Lisle's Corps of Mounted Infantry was withdrawn from Clements's column and moved by rail on the 17th September to Rhenoster, where it was joined by 250 men of Kitchener's Horse from Kroonstad.

45. The Boers broke up in small parties from the hills near Doornberg without giving our troops any further chance of attacking them, and as it seemed likely that they would reassemble in the Heilbron and Frankfort districts, Hunter made a fresh disposition of the four columns under his command. On the 22nd September he ordered the force under MacDonald to march to Kaalfontein, on the Valsch River. Bruce Hamilton and Boyes were to converge on Lindley from Senekal and Bethlehem; and Campbell, who had returned to the latter place, was directed to proceed to the vicinity of Reitz. These movements were completed by the 25th September.

46. On the 29th September, the quietude of the Orange River Colony was disturbed by a small party of Boers, probably numbering less than 200, and without guns, who moved upon Wepener. About 30 or 40 of the enemy entered the town at 6 A.M. upon that date, and caused a considerable amount of panic amongst

the inhabitants. Major Wright, the District commissioner, was also forced to withdraw together with his police into Basutoland. The Boers are reported to have treated the residents with civility, but they helped themselves liberally to money from the bank, and also commandeered clothing and supplies to a considerable extent. The occurrence was unfortunate, but it has not hitherto been found possible to garrison every place which it might be advantageous to occupy, with troops. As soon as I heard of this raid I issued orders for Ladybrand, Wepener, and Dewetsdorp to be occupied by detachments from the Highland Brigade, which had been sent down by rail from Kroonstad to Bloemfontein.

47. On the 30th September, Hildyard held Wakkerstroom and Utrecht, 150 of the commando from the latter place having surrendered.

I am, &c.,

ROBERTS, Field-Marshal.

No. 9.

From Field-Marshal Lord Roberts to the Secretary of State for War.

Head-quarters of the Army in South Africa,  
Johannesburg, 15th November, 1900.  
(Despatched 3rd January, 1901.)

SIR,

In continuation of my despatch, dated 10th October, 1900, I have the honour to submit, for the information of Her Majesty's Government, an account of the military operations in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal, from the 4th October to the present date.

2. With the occupation of Komati Poort, and the dispersal of Commandant General Louis Botha's army, the organised resistance of the two Republics may be said to have ceased, but there still remained much for the Army in South Africa to do before the country could be said to be completely conquered. Certain Boer leaders, notably De Wet, Delarey, and others of lesser importance had, and have still to be dealt with, and the guerilla warfare carried on by them put a stop to.

3. To meet this state of affairs the Army had to be broken up into smaller columns than had hitherto been found advantageous, and the mobility of each column had to be increased. Great difficulty was, however, experienced in carrying out these necessary changes, owing to the time having arrived for the withdrawal of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, the Royal Canadian Regiment, the three batteries of Canadian Artillery, and the greater part of the first contingents furnished by Australia, New Zealand, and Tasmania, and allowing the members of the several South African corps to return to their homes and employments after having been embodied for twelve months.

It was impossible to disregard the urgent reasons given by our Colonial comrades for not being able to remain longer at the seat of war. They had done admirable service and shown themselves well fitted to take their places by the side of Her Majesty's Regular troops, and I witnessed their departure with deep regret, not only on account of their many soldierly qualities, but because it materially impaired the mobility and efficiency of the Army in South Africa for the time being, a very critical time, too, until indeed a fresh body of Mounted Infantry could be formed from the nearest available Line battalions, and the several South African local corps could be again recruited up to their original strength.