

October were: killed, four Officers and 13 men; wounded, seven Officers and 67 men; missing, one man.

On the 30th October, French left Heidelberg for Pretoria, moving *via* Springs.

25. The departure of French's troops encouraged the enemy to again threaten the railway between Belfast and Machadodorp, and towards the end of October a considerable number of them were reported to be south of Van Wyk's Vlei (96), consequently Major-General Smith-Dorrien, Commanding at Belfast, started off on the evening of the 1st November with the object of attacking the Boers at Van Wyk's Vlei and at Witkloof, where a second laager was reported. Smith-Dorrien's force moved in two columns, one commanded by himself, the other by Lieut.-Colonel Spens, The King's Shropshire Light Infantry. Not far from Belfast a violent storm with a cold driving rain set in, but as the columns were operating in support of each other, and moving several miles apart neither could turn back. By 7 a.m. both columns had reached Van Wyk's Vlei, and there, owing to the continued inclemency of the weather and exhaustion of the troops, Smith-Dorrien wisely decided to abandon the attack on Witkloof, and to retrace his steps to Belfast. As soon as the retirement was begun the Boers followed up the column with most unusual boldness, in fact one Boer was killed within 50 yards of our Infantry. A steady rearguard action had to be fought the whole way back to Belfast, which was reached at 3 p.m. The Infantry had covered 28 miles in 20 hours under the most trying conditions. Our casualties were: killed, one Officer and one man; wounded, two Officers and 12 men; missing, one man.

26. On the 6th November, Smith-Dorrien decided to make another attempt to carry out his original project. Leaving Belfast at 3.30 a.m., he marched towards Witkloof and Lelienfontein, at both of which places the Boers were known to have camps. By 7.40 a.m., he was in touch with the Boers at Eersteling, and steadily forced them back across Van Wyk's Vlei. The enemy then took up a strong position along the Komati River, extending from Witkloof to Lelienfontein. Here they made a determined stand, and it was not till 4 p.m. that a wide turning movement brought the 1st Bn. Suffolk Regiment and the Royal Canadian Dragoons on the Boers' flank and forced them to withdraw across the river towards Carolina. Smith-Dorrien camped for the night at Lelienfontein. His casualties for this day were six men killed and 20 wounded, mostly belonging to the Shropshire Light Infantry, whose conduct was much praised.

27. On the following day Smith-Dorrien started to march in an easterly direction. Observing this, several hundred Boers at once galloped back to seize their position of the previous day, but were forestalled by Lieut.-Colonel Evans and the Royal Canadian Dragoons, with a section of the 84th Battery, Royal Field Artillery, who by going at full speed for two miles succeeded in seizing the key of the position, and in holding about 300 of the enemy in the bed of the river, while the 5-inch guns did good execution among masses of the Boers in the open. As it now became evident that the enemy had received large reinforcements after the engagement of the previous day, Smith-Dorrien directed Lieut.-Colonel Spens, Commanding the Advanced Guard, to secure the high ground near Van Wyk's Vlei, which was done by the 5th Lancers, Colonel Lessard, with the Royal Canadian Dragoons and a section

of the Royal Canadian Artillery, under Lieutenant Morrison, with great gallantry covered the rear of the force against the enemy's close attack. About 2 p.m. some 200 Boers suddenly charged our rearguard, and, without dismounting, fired wildly, coming to within 70 yards of the dismounted Dragoons. Not succeeding in this attempt on our rear-guard, the Boers then threatened us on both flanks in large numbers; our guns, however, were so ably handled that they prevented their coming to close quarters and caused them to retire. Our casualties in this engagement were two killed and 12 wounded. The Boers suffered very heavy losses, amongst the killed being Commandant H. Prinsloo and General Fourie, and amongst the wounded General John Grobelaar. Smith-Dorrien halted for the night at Blyvooruitzicht, and returned to Belfast on the morning of the 8th of November.

28. On the 31st October, Major-General Walter Kitchener, Commanding at Lydenburg, moved out columns from that place and from Witklip (26) and after capturing Commandant Shoeman's laager in the Steenkampsberg at dawn, pushed on and shelled Schalk Burgher's laager at Rooikrantz. The difficult nature of the country, however, made further advance in that direction impracticable, and the columns returned to Lydenburg. Our casualties were five men wounded. The enemy is known to have had five men killed, and some rifles and a quantity of ammunition, with one prisoner, fell into our hands. Kitchener, hearing that Van de Beer's commando operating to the east of Lydenberg had been reinforced, decided to disperse this body of the enemy. On the night of the 7th November, he proceeded against it with a mounted column under Captain Chetwode, 19th Hussars, which succeeded in passing through the Boer outposts. Then, while the Mounted Infantry of the 1st Bn. Manchester Regiment engaged three of the picquets, the Cavalry charged and sabred many of the enemy as they fled in the moonlight.

Kitchener specially mentions the excellent manner in which the Mounted Infantry engaged the Boers, who opened fire upon the Hussars from no less than three directions while they were charging over exceedingly difficult ground.

At daylight on the 8th November the second column, consisting of Infantry and Artillery, under Major Callwell, Royal Garrison Artillery, joined the mounted troops. The whole force then continued the pursuit, and drove the enemy from ridge to ridge, until the summit of the Berg was reached. Our casualties were only one man killed and two wounded. The Boers lost heavily and fled, evidently panic-stricken.

29. While these various movements were being carried out in the Transvaal, Lieut.-General Sir Leslie Rundle was busy in the north-east corner of the Orange River Colony, and, on the 12th October, he moved from Vrede with 300 mounted men, five guns, and two battalions of Infantry, and engaged a small force of the enemy which had collected in that neighbourhood. He drove them back for about 10 miles, with a loss to us of seven wounded.

30. Leaving 100 Imperial Yeomanry, a section of Artillery, and the 1st Bn. Leinster Regiment to hold Vrede, Rundle moved on to Reitz, arriving there on the 19th October. Placing a garrison at Reitz of similar strength to that left at Vrede, he, on the 20th October, proceeded to Bethlehem, which he entered the next day. On our approach Bethlehem was evacuated by the Boers who, under Commandant Prinsloo, had re-occupied the town on the 1st October; our