

10. While we were at Ladysmith, a force\* under Colonel Bethune had been holding Greytown and the line of the Tugela. This force I had directed to advance concurrently with our advance on Vermaak's Kraal, and we established connection with it at 11 o'clock. Colonel Bethune's arrangements had been very good. He had seized during the night, with his left, the hills which commanded the southern sides of the pass up which we had to approach. At 11.20 we advanced up the pass, the 3rd Mounted Brigade seizing each successive hilltop, and the 4th Infantry Brigade and the Corps Artillery moving by the road. Colonel Bethune advanced at the same time by the Pomeroy road, whilst the 2nd Infantry Brigade attacked the plateau from the nek of Uithoek Hill. The enemy, who had a force on the plateau, did not stand, but retired hastily, leaving a very long line of deep trenches unoccupied, and at about 1 o'clock we had gained the plateau, our loss being one man wounded. The enemy retired to the high ground immediately in front of Helpmakaar village, and there made a stand, bringing into action three guns. As soon as we could get our guns up the pass, the enemy's position was shelled from both flanks and the front by two 12-prs., 2nd Company, Western Division, Royal Garrison Artillery; three Vickers-Maxims; 4th Mountain Battery; and the 64th and 67th Batteries, Royal Field Artillery. The practice was very good, and we heard the next day that two of the enemy's guns were injured.

11. We were obliged to leave the plateau that evening, on account of want of water, and bivouac in the bottom of the pass, but it was held by detachments, and on the following morning the force again advanced. The enemy were found to have evacuated the extremely strong position they had been holding the night before, and the 3rd Mounted Brigade was at once directed to pursue.

12. They caught up the enemy's rearguard at Zwart Kop, at Spion Kop, and at Blesboklaagte, at the latter of which the enemy brought three guns into action, but at all three places they were forced from their strong positions by the fire of "A" Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, in front, and the Natal Carbineers, Composite Regiment, and South African Light Horse, one or the other of which invariably succeeded in working round their flank.

13. The day was a very hot one; the enemy, as they retired, set fire to the grass on both sides of the road, which made the march very difficult for the Cavalry and extremely trying for the Infantry.

I had ascertained that the enemy's transport had been sent to the rear during Saturday night, so considering we had nothing to gain by a further pursuit, and a risk of considerable loss if we attacked the difficult pass of Blesboklaagte with Cavalry alone, I directed Lord Dundonald to halt, and halted the Infantry about Beith.

14. On the 13th May some of the 5th Division had occupied the next ridge of hills north of the Indoda Mountain, and on the 14th others occupied Wessel's Nek. On the night of the 14th the troops bivouacked as follows:—3rd Mounted Brigade at Meyer's Farm, Bethune's Mounted Infantry at Kemp's Farm; Major Mackenzie, with an advanced squadron of Natal Carbineers, on the Plateau west of Fort Pine; the 2nd Bn. Devonshire Regiment at Beith, and the remainder of the 2nd Brigade and 2nd

Brigade Division, Royal Field Artillery, near Cronje's Farm; 4th Brigade Corps Ammunition and Supply Columns by Pieter's Farm. Orders were sent to the Supply Park at Waschbank to march, at once, on Beith, by Van Tonder's Pass, which the enemy had evacuated when they left Helpmakaar.

15. On the 15th May the whole force entered Dundee, and the right of the 5th Division advanced on Waschbank, encountering no opposition.

16. On the 16th May the Cavalry occupied Dannhauser and Glencoe, and the Supply Columns, which had refilled at Beith from the Supply Park, rejoined the Column.

17. On the 17th May, it having been ascertained that the enemy had evacuated the Biggarsberg, the 3rd Mounted Brigade, the 2nd Division, and Corps Artillery advanced to Dannhauser, and the Cavalry occupied Newcastle.

18. On the 18th May the whole force was concentrated at Newcastle. On the 19th May the Cavalry advanced on Laing's Nek, and the 4th Brigade to the Ingogo. Laing's Nek was found occupied in some force, and the troops were halted to give time for closing up the supply and the repair of the railway.

19. Thus, in 10 days, the whole of Natal north of Ladysmith, with the exception of Laing's Nek, had been cleared of the enemy. The behaviour of the troops throughout was excellent, and their marching very good.

The dispositions made by General Hamilton General Lord Dundonald, and Colonel Bethune, on the 13th, were most creditable to those Officers, and were, I think, the cause of our almost bloodless victory. Our total casualties were seven wounded. We captured 47 prisoners and several wagons, and a good many Natal rebels, in consequence of the operations, have returned to their allegiance, and this movement seems to be growing in strength.

20. I cannot close this report without referring to the excellent work done by the Telegraph Section, under Major Hawkins and Captain Kennedy, and by the Army Service Corps, under Colonel Stanley and Major Hunt, and to the good work done by General Hildyard and the 5th Division.

I have, &c.,  
REDVERS BULLER, General.

No. 7.

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

Army Head-quarters, South Africa,  
MY LORD, Pretoria, 9th July, 1900.

In continuation of my letter, No. C. in C./126/96, dated 3rd July, 1900, I have the honour to forward, for your Lordship's information, a despatch, No. Mil. Sec. 587, dated 4th June, 1900, from the General Officer Commanding in Natal, describing the operations of the force under his command from the 19th May to the 2nd June, and his interview with Assistant Commandant-General C. Botha on the latter date.

2. I append a copy of the telegraphic correspondence between Sir Redvers Buller and myself, regarding the points discussed at the interview.

I have, &c.,  
ROBERTS, Field-Marshal,  
Commanding-in-Chief, South Africa.

\* Five squadrons, Bethune's Mounted Infantry; one squadron, Umvoti Mounted Rifles; two 12-prs., Royal Garrison Artillery; two 7-prs., Natal Field Artillery; two Hotchkiss, Natal Field Artillery; six companies, Imperial Light Infantry.