

baggage, which was following behind, he decided, after verifying the report, to fall back at once to De Jager's Drift, thus covering Dundee.

Major Gough had galloped into a well-arranged ambush. Believing that he was in presence of only 300 Boers he had pressed forward boldly to seize a ridge which appeared to command their position. The enemy, however, numbered fully 1,000, and whilst checking Major Gough in front, they rapidly overwhelmed his right flank and assailed his guns from the rear. There was a short sharp fight at close quarters, in which our men displayed much gallantry, and then completely outnumbered and surrounded, the whole of Major Gough's small force was captured.\* It is due to Major Gough to state that he has commanded in the field for the past two years under every condition, and with unvarying success, and I should be sorry to mark a solitary error of judgment in any way that might militate against the future utility of this gallant Officer.

Lieut.-Colonel Stewart in falling back when he did showed great judgment and a sound appreciation of the situation in a position of considerable difficulty.

Commandant-General Louis Botha, General C. Botha, and Commandants Opperman, Britz, and Henderson were all reported to have been present in the engagement, and it was quite evident that Dundee was momentarily menaced by a commando of considerable strength.

The troops placed at General Lyttelton's disposal were now rapidly concentrated on the threatened point. On the 18th of September Colonel Allenby's column reached Dundee, and by the 25th of the month General Lyttelton, who already held the line of the Buffalo in strength, had assembled two mobile forces at Dundee under command of Major-Generals Clements and Bruce Hamilton respectively.

A third force under Major-General Walter Kitchener moved out to Utrecht. It consisted of the column under Lieut.-Colonel Garratt, which had followed the enemy into that district from Wakkerstroom, and the troops under Major-General W. Kitchener and Colonel Campbell who had arrived at Volksrust on the 23rd September at the conclusion of their operations in the vicinity of Ermelo.

In the meantime the Boers who had halted for some days at Bloed River Poort after their success against Major Gough, were reported to be moving into the salient angle of the Vryheid District which projects southwards into Zululand between Nqutu and Ndawande. Hostile patrols were seen to the east of Vant's and Rorke's Drifts, and it became apparent that our occupation of the line of the Buffalo had compelled the enemy to seek access to Natal by a wider detour to the south. This led him towards our fortified posts of Itala and Fort Prospect on the Zululand border, a few miles to the north-west of Melmoth, and to meet it General Lyttelton pushed out the force under Major-General Bruce Hamilton from Vant's and Rorke's Drifts in a south-easterly direction. The garrison of Itala consisted of 2 guns of the 69th Battery, Royal Field Artillery, and 300 men of the 5th Division Mounted Infantry, all under the command of Captain (local Major, and now Major and Brevet Lieut.-Colonel) A. J. Chapman, Royal Dublin Fusiliers. The attack on this post, which was conducted by Commandant-General Louis Botha and other leaders, at the head of some 1,500 men, was a most determined one. Com-

mencing at 3 a.m. on the 26th September, it was pressed almost without intermission for 19 hours, when the enemy, repulsed on all sides, withdrew under cover of dusk in an easterly and north-easterly direction. That on Fort Prospect was made by a detached Boer force about 500 strong. This post was held by 85 men of the 5th Division Mounted Infantry and 51 men of the Durham Artillery Militia, all under the command of Captain C. A. Rowley, 2nd Bn. Dorsetshire Regiment, and the attack on it was easily repulsed. The successful defence of these two places reflects the greatest credit on Major Chapman and Captain Rowley, and all ranks of the small garrisons under their respective commands.

On the 27th September the Boer commandos being fully occupied in burying their dead and collecting and tending their wounded, showed no signs of aggression, and early on the 28th, the columns under Major-General Bruce Hamilton, which had been directed on Itala, as soon as the southward movement of the enemy was confirmed, arrived at that place. They were at once interposed between the enemy, who had fallen back on their approach towards Babanango and Retief's Rust, and the Tugela, and communication with Melmoth was opened up. General Lyttelton's plans for clearing the country of the Boers, and if possible, intercepting them, had in the meantime been developed. On hearing that they had committed themselves to a southward movement towards Zululand, he arranged that while Major-General Bruce Hamilton headed them off in the direction of Itala and Melmoth, General Clements should take them in flank through Nqutu, and Major-General Walter Kitchener should move from Utrecht by the Schurveberg and Vryheid upon their rear and endeavour to block the possible avenues of escape to the north.

On the 29th September, General Kitchener reached Vryheid, and on the 30th General Clements was reported to be at Vant's Drift on the Buffalo River. On the 2nd October, General Kitchener arrived at Geluk (234) whence he pushed on a portion of his advanced troops to Toovernaar's Rust (518); Major-General Bruce Hamilton was then in touch with the enemy in the neighbourhood of Retief's Rust, and General Clements moving on from Vant's Drift in the direction of Nqutu. On the same day Major-General Kitchener was engaged with 300 of the enemy near Pondwana Mountain. On the 4th October General Bruce Hamilton advanced north by Entonjaneni, on Inhlazaty, in communication on his left with General Clements, whose columns were directed from Nqutu upon Kromellenbog (289). The enemy's main body on this date was reported to be close to Ntabankulu with General Kitchener still to the north of it in the vicinity of Uitzicht (176). As our columns pushed on the Boers continued their retreat north to Boschoek (156), Kromellenbog (303), and Leeuwnek (15), where they were held for a time by Major-General W. Kitchener, but on the night of the 5th October the Boers were successful in breaking through to the north. Abandoning their baggage and wagons they moved rapidly round General Kitchener's left flank from Boschoek (156), to Smaldeel (575), retreating thence with all speed over the Pivaan River, past Paul Pietersburg, in the direction of Piet Retief and the Slangapies Berg. General Kitchener followed at once in close pursuit by Waterval (310), to Nooitgedacht (246), and Bellevue (600), where he engaged a rearguard, which in a strong position covered the flight of the main body. Our columns continue their

\* 2 guns 69th Battery, Royal Field Artillery; three companies Mounted Infantry.