

them to communicate with ex-President Steyn. They at once proceeded, via Pretoria, to Kroonstad, whence messages were sent out to Mr. Steyn, with the result that a meeting of the different Boer leaders at Klerksdorp has been arranged.

A combined movement was now organized, in which the column under Lieutenant-Colonel Wing, which was employed in escorting a convoy into Bethal from the south, was to be associated, with the troops under Colonel Park and Lieutenant-Colonel Williams from Onverwacht (478), in a sweep down to the Standerton—Waterval railway line.

Accordingly, on the 23rd March, Colonel Park and Lieutenant-Colonel Williams moved to Vlak-spruit (30) and Sterkfontein (241) (a few miles to the south-west of Bethal), and there came into touch with Colonel Wing, who had brought his convoy into Bethal on the previous day.

On the 24th, the contemplated movement was carried out, Colonel Wing pushing out his left flank to keep touch with the Ermelo—Standerton blockhouse line. Colonel Park and Lieutenant-Colonel Williams moved rapidly south and reached the railway line the same evening, bringing their troops into Vlaklaagte Station and Standerton respectively, but Colonel Wing, on the left flank, was rather delayed, and completed his march on to a point on the blockhouse line to the north-east of Standerton. The results obtained by this movement were disappointing, only seven prisoners, 31 horses, and a few wagons being brought in.

On the 29th March the columns under Lieutenant-Colonel Williams, Colonel Park and Lieutenant-Colonel Wing again moved north to take up a position facing east, from Schurvekop (348) (on the Olifants River), through Bethal, to Roodekrans (61), with a view to sweeping the country towards Ermelo. On reaching the new alignment, Lieutenant-Colonel Williams was on the left, Colonel Park in the centre, and Lieutenant-Colonel Wing on the right. This movement on Ermelo was completed on 4th April, when it was found that one Boer had been killed, and three prisoners, 196 horses, 139 cattle, 12 wagons, and seven carts had been captured. A Maxim gun carriage and Colt carriage had also been found hidden in a spruit about Witbank (247), just to the south of Bethal. Since this date, Colonel Park and Lieutenant-Colonel Wing have been operating in the direction of Lake Curissie, whilst Lieutenant-Colonel Williams moved on Carolina, which he reached on 7th April.

In the district to the east of Springs, the Brigade, hitherto commanded by Brigadier-General Gilbert Hamilton, which was broken up on the departure of the 5th Dragoon Guards for India, has been replaced by Lieutenant-Colonel Lawley's Brigade from the Orange River Colony. This force has already had some sharp fighting. Moving, in the first instance, through Heidelberg to Springs, it again left the latter place on 29th March for Boschmanskop (about 20 miles east of Springs), where Lieutenant-Colonel Lawley received information of a Boer gathering, which induced him to continue his march by night to Strehlo (289). He reached Strehlo at dawn on the 30th, and there learnt, from the only two prisoners taken, that the enemy were assembled at Rietfontein (6 H).

He accordingly returned to Boschmanskop to rest his horses, intending to start for Rietfontein on the morning of 1st April. At 1 A.M., on that date, he detached Lieutenant-Colonel Fanshawe, with three squadrons of the Queen's Bays and 30 National Scouts, to make a detour round

to Rolspruit, preparatory to co-operating with his own main advance from Boschmanskop.

The night was very dark and misty, but at 3.15 A.M. Lieutenant-Colonel Fanshawe surrounded a farm at which several Boers and a number of horses were captured. From these prisoners Lieutenant-Colonel Fanshawe learnt that a body of the enemy were hidden in a hollow close at hand, and he accordingly proceeded to try to surround them. Almost immediately, however, he was received by a very heavy fire, and realizing that he was in presence of superior numbers, ordered a gradual retirement upon Leeuwkop. Close fighting then went on for several hours; the Bays, who were skilfully handled, retired steadily by alternate squadrons, whilst the Boers followed, pressing the withdrawal with the greatest determination and persistence. On approaching Leeuwkop, it was found to be in the hands of the enemy, and Lieutenant-Colonel Fanshawe had to change the direction of his retirement, going round the hill to a ridge still further to the west, where he received the timely support of the 7th Hussars and Lieutenant-Colonel Lawley's guns. With the arrival of these reinforcements the Boers fell back quickly in an easterly direction. In this affair, although the Bays were capably handled, and displayed steadiness and gallantry in face of superior numbers, their losses were, I regret to say, heavy. Two squadron leaders and 10 non-commissioned officers and men were killed, and five officers and 59 men were wounded. The National Scouts also had one man killed and two wounded. The Boers were reported, upon good authority, to have had at least 12 men killed and 40 wounded.

After this engagement Colonel Lawley remained at Boschmanskop for several days to cover the establishment of a Constabulary post, and he then returned to Springs to refit his column.

3. General Beyers left Malispoot (501) (20 miles south-east of Pietersburg), in the Northern Transvaal, on the 13th March, and moved to the Spelonken. In this district he proceeded to invest Fort Edward, a small fortified post near the village of Louis Trichardt, cutting off its water supply and placing the little garrison of 50 men in a somewhat precarious position. News of this attack was brought into Pietersburg on the morning of the 21st March, and Colonel Harrison, the Commandant, at once sent out a force of 200 mounted men and 300 infantry, under Lieutenant-Colonel Denny, Northamptonshire Regiment, to relieve the beleaguered garrison.

This column reached Dwars River on the following day, but Colonel Denny's further advance was opposed on several successive positions, and on the 24th he fell back on Dwars River without having effected his purpose.

Lieutenant-Colonel Colenbrander's column was therefore brought up from Krugersdorp by rail to Pietersburg, and on the 27th March this force was able to move out from the latter place to effect the relief of the fort. On the 28th, Colonel Colenbrander undertook a long night march from Dwars River, which terminated at daybreak on the 29th in the complete surprise of the enemy, who fled in an easterly direction with a loss of three killed and four captured.

Colonel Colenbrander pursued the enemy for some distance and then returned, by Dwars River, to Pietersburg, to refit before following up Beyers to Pylkop, where he has now been located.

4. Further details of the reverse to our troops at Tweebosch on 7th March have now reached me.