

NEARING BLOEMFONTEIN

Field Marshal Lord Roberts Has Again Turned the Boers' Position.

Circumventing the Enemy, He Now Occupies a Position Near the Capital.

Telegram from the Mayor of Mafeking, Intimates That the Population of That Town May Have Joined Colonel Plummer.

ANOTHER PAARDEBERG.

CAPE TOWN, March 9.—A despatch from Poplar Grove under yesterday's date says: The Boers retreated to Abraham's Kraal last night, where a strong command of Bloemfontein police interrupted their flight.

President Kruger was at Bloemfontein at noon yesterday, and it is reported that he pressed the engagement and urged the burghers to make a courageous defence of their country.

WITH OUR LADE.

MONTREAL, March 9.—The Star's special correspondent with the first Canadian contingent cables as follows: In camp with the Royal Canadian Regiment, Poplar Grove, on the march to Bloemfontein, South Africa, March 8.—The Canadians, with the Gordon Highlanders, the Cornwalls and the Shropshires, forming a part of the nineteenth brigade, took an active part in the engagement at Osofontein today.

The army advanced to Osofontein on the 6th. There the enemy were found to be in force, about six thousand men occupying trenches five miles in length along the kopjes south of the Modder river.

After a few hours of shelling by the British artillery the Boers evacuated their position. This evacuation was brought about by a flank movement by the British cavalry, supported by forty-two guns, which force had moved rapidly south and got between the Boers and their reinforcements.

The Shropshires, who occupied a position in advance of the Canadians along the left bank, charged a kopje held by the enemy and captured a gun. The fight was over before the Canadians had an opportunity to come into close action.

The health of the regiment has improved, and there are now few in the hospitals.

WAR SUMMARY.

LONDON, March 12.—Gen. Roberts' despatches referring to Saturday's fighting practically cover everything that has been received concerning the movements in the Orange Free State, but it is distinctly apparent that the complete story of the engagement has not been received.

The pursuing cavalry was unable to come up with them before they had made good their escape.

The Standard's correspondent, on the authority of Boer doctors, says that President Steyn last week met with a bad reception from the burghers. The correspondent points out that Gen. Tucker's taking Petrusburg out of the Boer retreat south.

cupled with the Boer rear guard, who were acting along a running front 12 miles long. The fight throughout was much involved. The Boers evacuated and re-occupied their positions, safely concealing their intentions and only withdrawing their guns a few minutes prior to their impending capture.

On Sunday morning the British found that the Boers, in spite of their stubborn resistance, had retreated, and marched unopposed to Aasvogel Kop, 25 miles from Bloemfontein as the crow flies. At Aasvogel a prisoner told the British that the siege of Mafeking had been raised, which is strange in view of the reports from both English and Boer sources, which pointed out that the place was in extreme peril.

Gen. Roberts is now expected to make thirty miles a day, which will be the maximum distance forward if the opposition is continued. The Standard's correspondent, on the authority of Boer doctors, says that President Steyn last week met with a bad reception from the burghers.

The Telegraph's correspondent, referring to the Poplar Grove engagement, says that if Gen. French's horses had not been done up, thousands of Boers might have been captured.

From other quarters there is not much definite intelligence. According to the Telegraph's correspondent at Petermaritzburg here seems to be considerable force of Boers still remaining in the vicinity of Ladysmith. A force under Col. Bethune crossed the Tugela River on Thursday and made a reconnaissance towards Helmpakaar.

The Telegraph's correspondent at Ladysmith says that the Boers are now in the vicinity of Ladysmith.

SEVERE FIGHTING.

DREIFONTEIN, Orange Free State, March 11, 6.35 a. m.—Broadwood's cavalry brigade, advancing on Bloemfontein, unexpectedly found the Boers in a strong position in the Driefontein kopjes yesterday. Gen. Kelly-Kenny's division arriving, severe fighting ensued. The Boers resisted stubbornly, but were driven from their centre position, leaving a number of dead and forty prisoners. The British force is moving forward today.

During the fighting, in which five regiments took part, with artillery, the Boers, though forced from their centre position, clung tenaciously to the other kopjes, shelling the British freely with three guns and two Vickers' machine-guns.

The British cavalry began to turn the Boer position, but night fell before the movement was completed. The Boers retired during the night.

DISBURG, WHICH COMES BY WAY OF GLOUCESTER AND FOURMANS MARQUEZ, UNDER FRIDAY'S DATE.

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LONDON, March 12, 4.45 a. m.—The war office message show a group of kopjes and a large water pan at Driefontein, a position which has apparently considerable defensive advantages. The Boers, who retreated from Abraham's Kraal, may have moved southwards or else a fresh force must have come from Bloemfontein or the Orange River.

The opposition met at Driefontein was somewhat unexpected, the opinion being that there would be no resistance to the British advance. Profiting by their experience, the Boers were prepared for a British flanking movement, but in extending their position in order to avoid being outflanked, they probably weakened their position, thus making it possible for the British infantry to carry this with a beyond charge.

The British casualties up to this date are as follows: Killed, 2,418; wounded, 8,747; died of disease, 1,029; missing, 3,483. Total, 15,677.

SPENSER WILKINSON'S REVIEW. LONDON, March 12.—Spenser Wilkinson in the Morning Post says: "With one hundred dead at Driefontein, the Boers must have had 500 killed. We may expect Lord Roberts to continue his march at the rate of about ten miles a day."

The news that Lord Kitchener has gone south shows that the rising in the Prieska district is troublesome; but it will be effectually suppressed.

We need not believe the Boer report that the great British successes, however, have been largely owing to Gen. Kitchener, whom he considers one of the cleverest strategists living and an absolute master of the conditions under which modern warfare is carried on.

A LIKELY PAIR.

LONDON, March 12.—A despatch to the Telegraph from Vienna says that reports from the Austrian military attache accompanying Lord Roberts contain a warm tribute to Gen. Roberts' brilliancy. The attache is of the opinion that the great British successes, however, have been largely owing to Gen. Kitchener, whom he considers one of the cleverest strategists living and an absolute master of the conditions under which modern warfare is carried on.

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BRITISH CASUALTIES.

LONDON, March 11.—A despatch from Driefontein to the war office from Lord Roberts, dated March 11, 9.55 a. m., says: "I cannot get the precise number of casualties before the march, but will communicate it as soon as possible. The Boers suffered heavily, 402 of their dead being left on the ground. We captured twenty prisoners."

Among the killed are: Captain Justice of the Buffs, Captain Lomax of the Welsh regiment, and Mr. McKearnie, a retired Indian civilian attached to Kitchener's Horse.

Among the wounded are: Buffs, Col. Hichens; Lieut. Ronald; Lieut. Torkington, Popo, Wimberley; Essex regiment—Capt. Broadwood; "Meid Artillery—Lieut. Devenish; "Medical Corps—Major Waite, Lieut. Borne.

Australian Artillery—Col. Umpey, abdomen, dangerous."

ROBERTS' DESPATCH TO THE WAR OFFICE.

LONDON, March 11.—A despatch from Driefontein to the war office from Lord Roberts, dated March 11, 7.15 a. m., says: "The enemy opposed us throughout yesterday's march, and from their intimate knowledge of the country gave us considerable trouble. Owing, however, to the admirable conduct of the troops, the enemy were unable to prevent us reaching our destination. The bulk of the fighting fell on Gen. Kelly-Kenny's division, two battalions of which, the Welsh and Essex, turned the Boers out of two strong positions at the point of the bayonet."

REBELS LAYING DOWN THEIR ARMS.

CAPE TOWN, March 11.—News from Lady Grey, Herschel and Alival North show that the rebels are laying down their arms in large numbers, and that the Boers all along the border are in serious straits. The rebels are leaving to fight in the Free State. British rule has been restored at Lady Grey, where a big fight is reported to have occurred, many rebels being killed.

It is reported that thousands of rebels contemplate surrendering to Gen. Buller.

TO SUPPRESS THE REBELLION.

CARNARVON, Cape Colony, March 10.—News from Victoria West to organize various columns for the purpose of suppressing the rebellion, which is spreading in this district. Minor fighting has occurred in several directions.

FIGHTING NEAR HELMPAKAAR.

DURBAN, March 11.—The Natal Mercury has the following despatch from Greytown, dated today: "A force composed of Bethune's mounted infantry, Umvoti mounted rifles and the Natal police, with three machine-guns, under Col. Bethune, reached Pomeroy Thursday, March 8. The following morning the Boer pickets opened fire. A general engagement soon ensued, the Boers using pompons and two big guns. There was heavy fighting on both sides. Col. Bethune, seeing the impossibility of dislodging the Boers without artillery, retired south of the Tugela with one man wounded. The Boer loss is said to be considerable."

THE ORDER CREATED A SENSATION.

LONDON, March 12.—The Durban correspondent of the Daily News says: "On March 1 an order was issued from Pretoria to field cornets to make an immediate return of all the women and children in the Johannesburg district, with particulars as to whether each family would possess means of transport in case of sudden removal. The order created a sensation."

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gade pushed south, finding the enemy's position to be of great strength. The sixth division (Kelly-Kenny's) arrived at 1.30. The thirteenth brigade, led by the Buffs, and the 15th brigade, headed by the Welsh battalion, proceeded to clear the kopjes, under a hot bewildering fire. The Boers succeeded in doubling on the British, when they withdrew from the eastern and southern western kopjes near the main ridge. The artillery made magnificent practice, though the British guns were out-ranged by two Elswick 12 pounders.

The ninth division (the Guards) arrived at four o'clock, but was too late to take part in the fighting. Many of the enemy fled north. It is reported that they lost their Maxim-Vickers guns. The engagement was marked by many acts of bravery, especially by the men supplying the troops with ammunition, which ran short owing to the fact that the troops, having to march thirteen miles to reach the scene, were relieved of 50 rounds of ammunition each. The storming of Alexander Kopje by the Welsh battalion was fine work. The men showed great skill in securing cover while their advance was being supported by the heavy artillery. The men were almost invisible unless they were actually moving. Finally, upon nearing the top of the hill, they fixed their bayonets and with a yell and a rush they cleared the summit of the enemy, the Boers barely escaping under heavy fire. The enemy lost many horses and left a number of dead and several wounded behind them. The incident was small as regards the number of troops employed, but it was very creditable to the British. Gen. Roberts expressed great satisfaction with the conduct of the men. The mobility of the Boers in moving their guns was more remarkable than ever.

The New South Wales Mounted Infantry gallantly but unsuccessfully attempted to capture a gun. Later reports state that the Boers have entirely disappeared, but an engagement today is not unlikely. Notwithstanding the strong Boer positions in the kopjes, it is probable that they will not be able to prevent the British advance.

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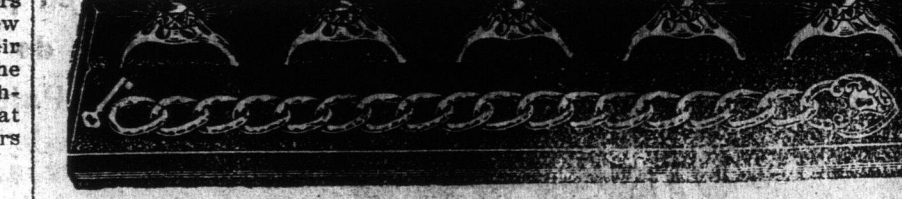
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