

in this important matter coincided with my own, and we decided that the first thing to be done was to form a properly organized Transport Department.

On the 26th January I received intelligence of Sir Redvers Buller's withdrawal from Spion Kop to Potgieter's Drift. The second attempt to relieve Ladysmith having failed, it has become imperatively necessary to give early effect to the policy indicated above. With this object I am collecting as large a force as possible to the north of the Orange River Railway Station, with a view of joining the troops under Lord Methuen's command, and proceeding, in the first instance, to relieve Kimberley. The Column, including Cavalry and Mounted Infantry, will number 35,000 men, with about 100 guns. On the relief of Kimberley being accomplished, I propose to leave a moderate garrison at that place, and with the remainder of the force, to move eastward for the purpose of threatening Bloemfontein and seizing some point on the railway between that place and Springfontein. This operation will, I trust, cause the Boers to reduce the force which they have concentrated round Ladysmith, and enable our garrison there to be relieved before the end of February.

In order to carry out the concentration north of the Orange River, I shall have to make use of the whole of the 6th and 7th Divisions, and am obliged to postpone the reinforcement of Lieutenant-General Gatacre's force, although it is barely sufficient effectively to control a civil population which contains many disturbing elements, or to regain possession of the territory which the enemy has invaded. I am compelled also to withdraw the greater part of the force under Lieutenant-General Kelly-Kenny from Naanwpoort and its neighbourhood, in spite of the importance of restoring railway communication between Middleburg and Stormberg. The arrival of 15 additional battalions* of the Line and Militia will place matters on a better footing, but in view of the possibility that the third attempt to relieve Ladysmith may fail, the deadlock in Natal which will follow, and its probable effect on the South African population, I have reluctantly arrived at the conclusion that more troops are needed for the active prosecution of the war.

On the 28th January I applied for another Infantry Division and Cavalry Brigade from home. The Cavalry Brigade has been placed under orders for field service, but the despatch of the Infantry Division has I am informed been suspended for the present. If, as I hope, the relief of Ladysmith can be effected, at any rate as soon as the enemy's attention has been distracted by offensive operations on our part in the Orange Free State, the transfer of an Infantry Division from Natal to Cape Colony may perhaps become feasible. On this point, however, I shall be better able to offer an opinion when the result of the further operations in Natal is known.

It might appear at first sight that the force in this country is equal to the military requirements of the situation, but the difficulties of carrying on war in South Africa do not appear to be sufficiently appreciated by the British public. In an enemy's country, we should know exactly how we stood; but out here, we have not only to defeat the enemy on the northern frontier, but to maintain law and order within the Colonial limits. Ostensibly,

* The Line battalions will not arrive until the middle of March.

the Dependency is loyal, and no doubt a large number of its inhabitants are sincerely attached to the British rule and strongly opposed to Boer domination. On the other hand, a considerable section would prefer a Republican form of government, and influenced by ties of blood and association, side with the Orange Free State and Transvaal. Even the public service at the Cape is not free from men whose sympathies with the enemy may lead them to divulge secrets and give valuable assistance to the Boer leaders in other ways.

I append tabular statements showing the strength of the troops in the Cape Colony and Natal respectively on the 31st January, 1900. The numbers as regards Natal are only approximate, as no recent returns are available.

I have, &c.,

ROBERTS, Field-Marshal,
Commanding-in-Chief,
South Africa.

Enclosure 1.

Effective Fighting Strength of Force in Natal on 31st January, 1900. (Approximate only.)

At Ladysmith.

Cavalry—4 regiments; total 1,200.
Artillery—6 batteries Royal Field Artillery, 36 guns; total 36 guns and 1,080 men.
Infantry—11 battalions, total 7,500*.

Between the Tugela River and Durban.

Cavalry—2½ regiments, total 1,100.
Artillery—
1 battery, Royal Horse Artillery, 6 guns,
7½ batteries, Royal Field Artillery, 44 guns,
1 mounted battery, 6 guns,
1 howitzer battery, 6 guns; total 62 guns,
1,800 men.

Infantry—
5½ brigades, 16,500,
Other than above, 800; total 17,300.

Colonial troops—
Field Artillery, 22 guns; total 22 guns,
550 men.

Mounted, 1,500,
Dismounted, 800; total 2,300.
Infantry Volunteers, 2,000.

Grand total, 34,830 men and 120 guns.

To above may be added—

Royal Engineers, 1,100.
Army Service and other departmental corps, 1,472.
Sick.—Number unknown.
Men at depôts, and otherwise employed.—
Number unknown.

Effective Fighting Strength of Force in Cape Colony on 31st January, 1900.

Cavalry—8½ regiments; total 4,196.

Artillery—
8 batteries, Royal Horse Artillery, 48 guns.
12 batteries, Royal Field Artillery, 72 guns.
2 howitzer batteries, 12 guns.
2 siege companies, 12 guns.†
1 siege company, 6 guns.‡
Total 150 guns and 4,500 men.

Mounted Infantry; total 3,050.

Infantry—
1st Brigade, 3,754.
3rd „ 3,121.
9th „ 2,754.
13th „ 2,885.
14th „ 3,322.
15th „ 3,601.
Other than above, 14,372.§

* Including 7th and 8th Brigades.

† 8—6-inch howitzers; 4—4·7-inch guns.

‡ 5-inch B.L. guns.

§ Including Royal Canadian Regiment, 925 strong.