

4. At this particular period the scattered bodies of Boers became more than usually active. Commandant-General Botha, who had relinquished his command, ostensibly on account of ill-health, after his burghers were defeated at Bergendal, resumed his position, and was joined by Ex-President Steyn, who has been indefatigable in his efforts to encourage his countrymen and the Transvaalers to maintain the struggle by deceiving them with false accounts of success on their part, and defeat on ours.

5. The presence of Botha and Steyn in the Waterberg District necessitated our taking action in that direction, and during the first two weeks of October, Major-General Paget's mobile columns\* were employed clearing the country from the Pretoria—Bronkhurst Spruit railway, as far north as a line joining Pienaar's Railway Station with the junction of the Wilge and Olifants rivers. This was accomplished with very little fighting. Paget's troops captured 150 prisoners, 200 rifles, 50 wagons, and 12,000 sheep, and the Boers retired into the bush veldt to the north-east.

During the latter half of the month Paget's columns† traversed the country to the west of Pretoria—Pietersburg line, with the two-fold object of clearing the country of scattered bands of the enemy, and of preventing Louis Botha from moving west of the Megaliesberg and Pilandsberg. In these operations Pagot, in conjunction with the troops in the Rustenburg valley, was successful, Louis Botha's force did not get beyond Ramakok's Kraal (307), just west of the junction of the Apies and Crocodile rivers, though he himself was reported to have accompanied Steyn in his journey south as far as Steenbokfontein (570), about 45 miles west of Rustenburg. Our efforts were then directed towards preventing ex-President Steyn from returning south to rejoin De Wet, but in this we were not successful. He evaded our columns with a small following, and succeeded in joining De Wet, being present, as mentioned later, at the commencement of the engagement near Bothaville on the 6th November.

Paget's force reached Rustenburg on the 31st October, and on the 1st November he had an engagement to the south-west of Magato Pass, when Plumer's mounted troops drove the Boers from two strong positions over some difficult country. The Yorkshire and Warwickshire Yeomanry, under Colonel Howard, carried one position by assault, and the 3rd Imperial Bushmen, under Major Vials, turned another position, which caused the enemy to retreat precipitately. Unfortunately rain had made the roads too heavy for the infantry and heavy guns to arrive in time to take part in the engagement. Our casualties were one man killed and two wounded. The enemy's losses are unknown, but six prisoners were left in our hands.

6. In the Western Transvaal the mobile columns, under Lieutenant-General Lord Methuen, performed good work, clearing the country between Rustenburg and Zeerust. Leaving Rustenburg in two columns on the 9th and 10th October, Methuen reached Zeerust on the 20th after a very trying march through broken country covered with dense bush, and having captured on the way a large number of wagons and

prisoners. Delarey was on his flank during the whole march, but refused to fight. On the 16th October Methuen surprised Lemmer, who retired with some casualties, leaving two dead Boers on the ground. Methuen's casualties during this march were six men killed and ten wounded.

7. On the 24th October, Methuen's column from Buffelshoek (284) was joined by Douglas's Brigade from Zeerust and engaged the Boer commandos, about 600 strong, under Lemmer, near Kaffir Kraal (214). These commandos were dispersed, leaving six dead and four wounded on the field, while many wounded Boers were seen to be carried off. The Yeomanry, under Lord Erroll, on this occasion showed great dash, and we succeeded in capturing 28 prisoners, 180,000 rounds of ammunition, 21 wagons with supplies, and a quantity of live stock. Our casualties were six men severely wounded, two slightly, and one man missing.

8. Large as the force appears to be in South Africa, it has proved all too small for the duties it has been required to perform, and I have not found it practicable to occupy in sufficient strength the many places it would have been advantageous to have held. Every garrison thus isolated not only reduces the power and mobility of the several columns in the field, but necessitates the withdrawal of these columns from other important duties to periodically escort convoys of supplies for its use. Lately, however, since it has not been necessary to have such large columns in the field, I have been able to do more in this way, and, on the 26th October, I arranged for the permanent occupation of Zeerust, much to the satisfaction of the majority of the inhabitants of the Marica district, whose sympathies are more British than Dutch. Methuen was accordingly directed to leave at Zeerust four companies of Infantry, 100 mounted men, and two guns, the whole to be securely entrenched and provisioned for 60 days; and to place himself with the remainder of his force (except Douglas's Brigade) west of Ottoshoop to prevent Botha from moving to the west of the Mafeking-Kimberley railway, as there were very persistent rumours that his intention was to invade the Keuhardt district in the hope of obtaining recruits, supplies, and horses from the disloyal inhabitants of Cape Colony. I ordered Douglas's Brigade\* to Klerksdorp, partly in view of reoccupying that place, and partly to assist in some operations I had directed Lieut.-General French to undertake in the valley of the Vaal. Douglas marched to Mababstad on the 1st November, and on the 11th he reached Ventersdorp after a 27 miles' march across a waterless desert from Tafelkop, arriving at Klerksdorp on the 16th. After leaving Zeerust, Douglas was frequently engaged. His own casualties were few, while he succeeded in capturing 29 prisoners, 4,700 head of cattle, 11,200 sheep, 90 horses and mules, 133 wagons and carts, and large quantities of supplies.

9. Further to the south and west, in the country extending from Modder River to Vryburg and Schweizer Reneke, the operations were entrusted to Major-General Settle, who left Christiana on the 13th October with 600 mounted men, 10 guns, and 1,350 Infantry. He occupied Bloemhof on the 14th, having captured 1,000 head of cattle, 12,000 sheep, and 80 horses

\* Paget's Command.—Flumer's force, 1st Bn. West Riding Regiment, two companies 1st Bn. Royal Munster Fusiliers, two 5-inch guns, City Imperial Volunteers Battery.

† Paget's command.—Plumer's force, the Scots Guards, four companies 1st Bn. Royal Munster Fusiliers, two 5-inch guns, 7th Battery, Royal Field Artillery; section 38th Battery, Royal Field Artillery.

\* It consisted of Grey's Mounted Brigade (strength—68 Officers, 704 other ranks), two sections 88th Battery, Royal Field Artillery; four pom-poms, head-quarters and two companies 1st Bn. Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, 2nd Bn. Northamptonshire Regiment.