

movement to the north in support of General Kitchener, but the unfinished state of a line of blockhouses from Wakkerstroom to Piet Retief, which was commenced on the 1st October by the 2nd Bn. Scots Guards and 2nd Bn. West Yorkshire Regiment, under Brigadier-General Bullock, renders it unlikely now that any large bodies of the enemy can be cut off before they escape into the Ermelo District.

It is disappointing that we were unable to gain the full advantage which this futile effort of the Boer leaders might have afforded us of striking them when concentrated, but the country in which these operations took place, at all times difficult, was rendered almost impassable by the heavy rains which continued, with one short interval of four or five days, throughout their progress and which finally forced the enemy to abandon his wagons in order to effect his escape.

Operations in the Eastern Transvaal.

3. Upon the departure of Lieut.-General Sir Bindon Blood for India, Brigadier-General Reeves assumed temporary command in the Eastern Transvaal, where the columns under Colonels Park and Benson have continued their operations north and south of the railway.

Colonel Benson, who had reached Witbank Station on 6th September, marched thence along the railway line to Middelburg. He again left Middelburg on the 10th, in a south-easterly direction, having located a party of Boers at Pullen's Hope (213), and, after a long march, on an extremely dark night, was successful in surprising and capturing 33 prisoners, with 73 horses, 515 cattle, 4 wagons, 4 carts, and a quantity of ammunition. Colonel Benson then joined his convoy and baggage, from Middelburg, at Eikeboom (218), and the following day marched to Blesbokspruit (219), from which point he passed through the valley of the Klein Olifant to Weltevreden (151). Here, on the 14th, he was informed that a band of the enemy had spent the previous night at Tweefontein (496). He accordingly started on a night march, taking with him two squadrons of the 2nd Scottish Horse, and the 19th Bn. Mounted Infantry, and, early on the 15th, took 10 Boers and 250 head of cattle, the remainder of the enemy making good their escape.

On the 16th September Colonel Benson moved on to Carolina, and the following day again left that place, having heard of a gathering of Boers at Busby (206), on the Umpilusi River, some distance to the south-east. After a 40-mile march he reached his objective, and, just as the early morning mist was lifting, charged down upon two laagers at Middeldrift (191) and Busby (206), in which he secured 54 prisoners, 48 vehicles, 1,700 head of cattle, and 242 horses. Amongst the prisoners, most of whom belong to the Carolina Commando, were P. M. Botha, late Landdrost of Pretoria, and Commandant Nieuwoudt.

Colonel Benson then returned, by Lake Chrissie, to Carolina, and, on the 28th September, moved on westward into the Bethal District, capturing 12 prisoners on the following day in the vicinity of Monson's Store, to the west of the Klein Olifant. On the 1st October, when at Kranspoort (264) he received intelligence which pointed to the presence of 100 Boers at Weltevreden (179), on the Olifant's River. He started the same evening to try to overtake this band, but found, on arrival at his destination, that they had already trekked away on the previous afternoon. Their tracks were, however, carefully followed by Colonel Benson's men, who came up with the enemy at Driefontein

(285), and captured 7 prisoners, 30 horses, 12 mules, and some cattle. The remainder of the Boers fled north, hotly pursued by our troops, who covered over 50 miles in 19 hours in the course of the chase.

The westward movement was then continued, Kaallaagte (326) being reached on the 4th September, since which date Colonel Benson has operated near Bethal.

There is no doubt that the Boers in this part of the country have been so constantly alarmed and harassed by the frequent night raids made by our troops that they have for the time become thoroughly demoralised. They seldom spend two nights in one place, shift camp daily, and saddle up regularly at 3 a.m. in readiness for flight. This is highly creditable to our men, but it naturally adds to the difficulty experienced in making any substantial captures.

Colonel Park, who had arrived near Bankfontein (234), north-east of Middelburg on the 8th September, marched into the latter town on the 11th to refit his column.

On the 16th he again left Middelburg for Machadodorp, intending to operate in the vicinity of Schoeman's Kloof before returning to Lydenburg. A number of Boers had congregated in the Badfontein Valley, but, as Colonel Park approached, they dispersed and cleared away in the direction of Ohrigstad and Pilgrim's Rest. Colonel Park accordingly moved on to Lydenburg, and thence followed up the retiring enemy towards Kruger's Post, where at dawn, on 2nd October, he was successful in capturing 13 prisoners, 8 rifles, 3 wagons, some cattle and dynamite.

On the following day, Colonel Park took with him six companies of Mounted Infantry and two companies of the Manchester Regiment, and made a thorough search of all the farms between Kruger's Post and Ohrigstad. Four armed burghers were taken in this district, and large quantities of supplies, forage, and ammunition were collected and destroyed. Colonel Park then moved back towards Kruger's Post. His return march, however, was not unmolested, for at Rustplaats (15) he was attacked by a very considerable force which had apparently come from the east, under General Viljoen. Fighting went on for some hours, and the Boers then withdrew, Colonel Park continuing his way back to camp.

On the 7th October, Colonel Park surprised and attacked a party of Boers upon a farm at Rosenkrans (144). The men escaped, but 40,000 rounds of Mauser ammunition, three wagons, and a quantity of mealies were left in our hands. Colonel Park then moved south to the Spekboom River.

The railway traffic to the east has been little interrupted during the last few weeks, but on 16th September an attack was made upon Belfast by a Boer commando, 100 strong, under Commandant Grobelaar, with the evident intention of obtaining supplies. The attack was easily repulsed, one man only of the garrison being wounded, but many Boer bullets fell in the refugee camp, where one woman was killed, and two children wounded.

A general advance has been made in the Eastern Transvaal of the Constabulary posts which ran from Eerste Fabriken, through Springs and Heidelberg, to the Vaal River. This line has now been gradually pushed forward during the month by Colonel Pilkington, South African Constabulary, to the line Wilge River Station—Greylingstad, and the junction of Kalk Spruit with the Vaal, an alteration of position which has enabled us to enclose and clear a much