

the enemy, whilst with Colonel Colvin's Column he struck across to Runnymede on the Basuto border. On the 15th, the force reassembled at Wepener, where General Plumer learnt from prisoners that the commandos which had retired north before Sir John Jervis, were local men, and that Krutzinger had once more doubled back to the Elandsberg. He accordingly sent Colonel Colvin in the latter direction to co-operate with Colonel Thorneycroft, whilst he himself, with Sir John Jervis's Column, moved back towards Smithfield by the right bank of the Caledon.

On the 19th September, some of Sir John Jervis's mounted men, under Captain Knight of the Buffs, had a sharp skirmish at Wessel's Rust, 8 miles north-west of Bastard's Drift, an affair in which we captured eight prisoners, including Adjutants Brand and Joubert.

On the same day Colonel Thorneycroft, relieved by General Hart of the task of watching the line of the Orange River, had moved up to Rocklands with Colonel Minchin's Column, thereby setting free Lord Basing to fill the gap between Smithfield and the railway, and Colonel Sir H. Rawlinsou had advanced from Aliwal to Beestekraal and Willemsfontein to enable General Hart to devote his entire attention to the line of the river east of Klaarwater Drift.

Colonel Thorneycroft, ascertaining that Krutzinger had moved on the 17th from the Elandsberg to Tilly, 10 miles north-east of Vecht Kop, despatched Major Copeman's Column in that direction on the night of the 18th, and himself prepared to follow through Dorcum with Colonel Minchin's troops.

On the 22nd September a party of New Zealanders, under Major Tucker, belonging to Lieut.-Colonel Colvin's Column, was engaged on the Elandsberg with 150 Boers under Field-Cornets Hugo and Bothma, both of whom, with several other prisoners, were captured.

The effect of these operations was to press some of the enemy's bands toward the Thabanchu line, where their presence had not been taken into account by the Commandant of the section. On the 19th September, a small force, consisting of some 160 mounted men and two guns of "U" Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, which had been detached without any authority or sufficiently important object by the Officer Commanding at the Bloemfontein Waterworks, was surrounded and captured at Vlakfontein, 18 miles south-west of Sannah's Post, by a Boer commando under Commandants Coetzee and Ackermann.

On receipt of this news General Plumer was ordered to move north rapidly on Wepener, where he arrived on 26th September, and Colonel Rochfort, who had succeeded to the temporary command of Major-General Bruce Hamilton's force when the latter was transferred to Natal, was directed to push his columns across the railway line from the west with the object of hemming in the enemy against the Thabanchu line.

Daily skirmishes occurred with one or other of the columns, and at daybreak on the 29th, Colonel Lowry Cole surprised a Boer laager under Commandant Dreyer and Field-Cornet Van Vuuren, capturing both these leaders and other prisoners.

In conjunction with these operations General Plumer despatched 200 New Zealanders under Major Andrews from Wepener to hold Mokari Drift on the Caledon. This party reached the drift on the 27, just in time to anticipate some 300 to 400 Boers who were about to cross the river to the south-east. In some sharp fighting which followed, the enemy, who were driven

westward, left six dead and seven wounded on the field. The same evening General Plumer joined Major Andrews at Mokari, and the whole force then moved south by Commissie Bridge to Rouxville, without being further engaged. After two days' halt General Plumer received orders to march to the railway at Springfontein.

As previously mentioned Colonel Thorneycroft moved east from the Rouxville District on the 18th and 19th September, and passing through Cornna on the 20th, successfully attacked a Boer force at Vaunedikking's Vallei the same evening.

At the end of September Major Damant's column was withdrawn and brought by rail to Heilbron, to assist Colonel Wilson in covering the Heilbron-Frankfort line of blockhouses.

Colonel Sir Henry Rawlinsou's troops were also withdrawn to Burgherdorp, and moved thence by rail to the Transvaal for operations near Heidelberg which have already been described.

To each of the columns now left on the east of the main line of railway an area was assigned with a centre from which to work. The columns thus placed are able to deal with any small bands coming within their reach, and three or four can easily combine against any more formidable gathering of the enemy. In this manner the whole district is being rapidly brought under control.

In the south-western portion of the Orange River Colony the situation has improved in a very marked degree. Only a few small scattered parties remain in this district and the work of systematic clearance has been so thoroughly carried out by the troops under Major-General Bruce Hamilton that as already shown it was found possible to withdraw, first the columns under Lieutenant-Colonels Byng and Dawkins to the Vredefort District, and then Major Damant's to Heilbron, whilst the remainder, now directed by Colonel Rochfort, were transferred to the more disturbed area on the east of the railway. Colonel Henry's column continues to operate in this district.

#### Cape Colony.

11 After passing the Orange River on the night of the 3rd September, Commandant Smuts moved into the Jamestown-Dordrecht district where he was engaged on the 12th of the month by Colonel Monro. On the same night Smuts eluded our pursuing columns, and, passing over the Sterkstroom-Indwe line of railway at Halseston Station, moved rapidly by Putter's Kraal in the direction of Tarkastad. He was followed south by Colonel Gorrings, Lieut.-Colonel Doran, and the 17th Lancers, whilst Colonel Scobell's column moved to Cradock to try to intercept him from the west.

On the 17th September, Smuts's Commando arrived at Modderfontein, 18 miles north-west of Tarkastad, where the Boers made a most determined attack upon a squadron of the 17th Lancers, under Major Sandeman, posted to close all egress to the south. The enemy being dressed in khaki were taken for our own troops, and got to close quarters with the advantage of ground before the mistake was discovered. Thus taken at a great disadvantage our men offered a most gallant resistance, and worthily maintained the traditions of their regiment. The losses of the squadron were very severe, 3 Officers and 20 men being killed, and 2 Officers and 30 men wounded. The Boers, who had evidently made the attack in order to elude the close pursuit to which they were subjected, also suffered heavily, before the approach of another squadron of the