

border of Swaziland. General Plumer and Colonel Pulteney were at Brereton on the 30th of November in readiness to march further to the north, but this they found, for the moment, impossible, owing to the flooded state of the rivers and spruits.

Feeling the effects of this concentration, which promised to encircle and hem them in against the Eastern Transvaal Frontier, the Boers commenced a series of more or less successful efforts to break back into the country between our columns and the South African Constabulary posts, whilst some small parties made north over the Delagoa line of railway.

On the night of the 3rd of December, General Bruce Hamilton, aware that a force of the enemy had worked round his right flank in a south-westerly direction, probably between his troops and those of General Spens, made a long and very successful night march, with portions of General Spens' and Colonel Sir H. Rawlinson's columns, in pursuit to Oshoek (33), twenty miles south-west of Ermelo. At dawn on the 4th, he surprised a scattered laager and captured 93 prisoners, 116 horses, 26 wagons, 29 cape carts, besides a quantity of ammunition, telegraph and signalling apparatus. General Bruce Hamilton brings to my notice the excellent work done by Colonel Woolls-Sampson, his intelligence officer, upon this occasion in locating the enemy and guiding the force to its objective, and ascribes great credit to the 8th Battalion Mounted Infantry, who displayed both dash and enterprise in closing with the enemy and preventing their escape.

General Bruce Hamilton returned to Ermelo on the 5th of December.

On the same night as this descent upon Oshoek, Colonel E. Williams, at Smutsog (143), between Ermelo and Carolina, discovered a Boer commando of about 500 men under P. Viljoen, Prinsloo, and Erasmus, who were trying to escape westwards in the direction of Knapdaar (58). He at once pursued to Weltevreden (179), and found the enemy in position commanding the passages over the Olifant's River, which a slight engagement showed was too strongly held for attack by his small force. Colonel Williams therefore drew off and returned to Smutsog, having killed 5 Boers and captured 12 prisoners, 8 wagons, 3,500 rounds of ammunition, and some stock in the course of his westerly pursuit.

At dawn on the 7th of December, Colonel Sir H. Rawlinson's troops, after a night march from Ermelo, took 3 prisoners at Hamelfontein Farm, and on the same night Colonel C. Mackenzie, moving out from Carolina upon Krantz Kloof and Waterval (97) against a Boer force which he drove in the direction of the Komati Valley, took 16 prisoners, 38 horses, 32 mules, 4 wagons, and a large herd of cattle.

General Bruce Hamilton's operations are still in progress. To the east of him are a number of Boers under General Louis Botha, who are evidently in dread, and certainly in danger, of being enclosed against the border of Swaziland, whilst to the west, between our troops and the Constabulary posts, are the parties who have evaded our columns during the eastward move.

A small column, under Lieutenant-Colonel Urnston, composed of men taken temporarily from the eastern line of communications, has been formed during the past month at Middelburg. It has been employed in patrolling the left flank of the Constabulary posts, and watching for attempts to cross the railway to the north, and has now been sent out from Groot Olifant's Station to support the Constabulary

posts in case of attack by the Boers now between them and our columns.

The success of any of these bands in piercing the Constabulary line would make their position even more isolated than before, so that their temporary escape from General Hamilton's columns has but placed them in a situation of added danger and difficulty. Moreover, there are good hopes that General Bruce Hamilton, who is fully informed of their whereabouts, will be able to account for them before long.

To the north of the Delagoa Railway, Colonel Park has continued to operate in the Lydenburg district, where it is necessary to keep a small force in observation of General Viljoen, who has, for the time at least, left Pilgrim's Rest and transferred his headquarters to the vicinity of Dullstroom.

In the Northern Transvaal, the columns under Lieutenant-Colonels Dawkins and Colenbrander have continued their operations during the past month. The former of these returned to Pienaar's River Station from the east on the 13th November, bringing in 24 prisoners. Colonel Colenbrander's force, after a very successful march from the Mafeking—Rhodesia railway, reached Warmbaths on the 19th of the month. His total captures in the various skirmishes en route were 54 prisoners of war, chiefly of Beyers' commando, including Field Cornets Ross and Louw, and Adjutant Pretorius, 28 wagons, 35 horses, and a large amount of stock.

Soon after reaching Pienaar's River, Colonel Dawkins marched north to Nylstroom to protect the railway, which was momentarily threatened in that neighbourhood by a body of local Boers, and on the 23rd he left Nylstroom for the Rooiberg to co-operate with Colonel Colenbrander, who moved simultaneously in the same direction from Warmbaths.

The two columns met on the 27th at Hartbeestfontein (1786), preparatory to making an attack upon Badenhorst's commando, then reported to be at Sterkfontein (1590). The operations commenced at dusk that day, when 200 of Kitchener's Fighting Scouts pushed out through Zand River's Poort, whilst the remainder of the mounted troops moved by Rietvlei (1814) and Langkloof (333). For the next two days the enemy, falling rapidly back, were successful in eluding our troops. The pursuit was not relaxed, and, on the 29th Colonel Colenbrander, with half of Kitchener's Fighting Scouts, pressed on ahead of the remainder of the column upon Badenhorst's tracks, and following them closely till the morning of December 3rd, Colonel Colenbrander, after a long and exhausting chase, through an almost waterless region, came suddenly upon the enemy, and captured 15 prisoners with all the wagons of the commando. Badenhorst himself with 60 fugitive followers escaped being taken by scattering in the dense bush which fringes the Poer Zyn Loop River.

The remainder of Kitchener's Fighting Scouts who, near Sterkfontein, were searching for some of Badenhorst's dismounted men left behind by the mounted portion of the commando, were successful in killing 3 and capturing 17 burghers. Sixty stragglers, driven up into the hills near Sterkfontein, were cleverly secured by the 12th Mounted Infantry of Lieutenant-Colonel Dawkins' column.

The total results of these well-planned and carefully-executed operations were 104 prisoners, 50 horses, 50 mules, 500 cattle, 6 wagons, 6,000 rounds of small arm ammunition, and the serious discomfiture of the enemy in a district in which he had long considered himself immune.

At their conclusion, Lieutenant-Colonel Dawkins marched to the line at Nylstroom, while