

which operated together from Klerksdorp in the direction of Wolmaranstad.

At daybreak on the 13th of December, Lord Methuen arrived at Kareepan (137), and sighting a Boer convoy in the distance, at once started in pursuit with all available mounted troops. A chase of 7 miles enabled our men to come up with the wagons which were all captured, and turned out to be the property of Field Cornet Van Rensburg's commando. On the 16th, 8 more burghers were secured, and the same night a march was undertaken to the southern slopes of the Makwassie range, near Wolmaranstad. Here General Potgieter's laager was successfully surrounded and completely surprised, the total captures made, including what had been taken with Van Rensburg's convoy, amounting to 36 prisoners, 108 wagons, 63 carts, 3,000 cattle, 250 horses, and a considerable supply of ammunition. In these operations Colonel Kekewich's columns afforded material support to Lord Methuen by marching to Korannafontein (146), where it blocked the roads to the north, and by engaging the commandoes under Commandants Vermaas and Celliers, who might otherwise have afforded assistance to the captured laager.

Both columns returned to Klerksdorp on December 21st, and on the 27th again moved out for fresh operations to the south-west of the town. From the neighbourhood of Wolmaranstad, to which he now proceeded, Lord Methuen pushed straight on towards Schweize Reneke, in pursuit of a commando which, unfortunately, had a long start of him, and was travelling westward in hot haste. He arrived at Vryburg on January 5th, having failed to overtake the object of his chase, but his effort nevertheless produced a satisfactory result, as the convoy, seeking safety by a sudden double to the south, ran straight into the column of Major Paris, who with his Kimberley troops, effected the capture of 40 wagons, and over 1,000 head of cattle.

From Wolmaranstad Colonel Kekewich turned north-east about the 29th of December, in pursuit of a detachment of Potgieter's men, and since that date has been operating in the country to the west of the Klerksdorp-Ventersdorp blockhouse line, always in constant touch with the enemy, and from time to time effecting small but useful captures.

Lieutenant-Colonel Hickie's column, the third one allotted to this district, has been employed lately in covering the extension of the new blockhouse line from Ventersdorp to Tafel Kop, which has made considerable progress during the past month. The occupation of Tafel Kop, long a favourite resort of the Boers, marks another step in the effective occupation of this particular part of the country.

5. The operations in the Orange River Colony have been marked during the past month by a great display of enterprise and determination on the part of the followers of De Wet, who, as a result, it is said, of deliberations at a Krygsraad held on the 11th December, has considerably modified his former system of tactics. Finding that the wide dispersal of his forces into small parties scattered throughout the country has only led to a steady decrease in their numbers, owing to the constant captures effected by our mobile columns, and perceiving also that evasive or merely defensive tactics could only end in his being inextricably hemmed in by the advance of the blockhouses, he decided to concentrate his men into several larger bodies, which, while still seeking to avoid contact with any considerable force of British troops, would watch for opportunities of falling suddenly upon isolated detachments, or working parties engaged at the head

of our lines of circumvallation. This new policy on the part of the Boer leader has already produced some determined fighting, which, despite the surprise and defeat of one of our smaller mobile columns, may be welcomed, I think, as likely to ensure an earlier collapse of the enemy's power of prolonging the struggle.

In the second week of December arrangements were made for a combined movement of the division under Major-General Elliot with the columns under Colonels Rimington, Byng, Damant, and Wilson. The columns under Brigadier-General Broadwood, Colonel De Lisle, and Colonel Byng moved east from the vicinity of Kroonstad, by Lindley, towards Reitz; the remaining three columns under command of Colonel Rimington passing south from Frankfort to the line of Liebenberg's Vlei, which was crossed in the first instance in an easterly direction. These dispositions gave an impression to the enemy that the six columns were about to carry out a general movement to the east, and this caused an attempt on the part of the Boers to break back again through the columns in small parties to the west. A complete countermarch of our troops was therefore undertaken on a given day, when the whole of the six columns, turning suddenly about, endeavoured to drive the enemy westwards into the angle marked by the main line of railway and the Wolvenhoek-Frankfort line of blockhouses. This movement began on the 8th December, the eastward march being maintained until 4 a.m. on the 11th, when the front was suddenly reversed, and the sweep back to the west at once commenced.

The parties of Boers who had broken back were not, however, in anything like the numbers expected, and the captures effected by the time the columns reached the railway were consequently not large. They amounted, however, in all to 43 prisoners of war, 780 horses, 3,000 cattle (including over 500 trek oxen), and 187 vehicles.

General Elliot's division was again rendezvoused at Kaalfontein, then the head of the Kroonstad-Lindley blockhouse line, by the 13th, and by the 14th Colonel Rimington had reassembled his force at Leeuwfontein, a few miles to the south of Heilbron.

Information was next received that a large concentration of Boers was taking place in the neighbourhood of Kaffir Kop, some 20 miles north-west of Bethlehem. Co-operation was therefore arranged between General Elliot's division from the vicinity of Kroonstad, General Dartnell's column from Elands River Bridge, and Colonel Barker's troops from Winburg.

General Dartnell was directed to take up a position about 6 miles south-east of Kaffir Kop by dawn on the 17th December, Colonel Barker moving simultaneously to a point about the same distance to the south-west of the same locality. General Elliot, in the meantime, was to march south in three columns, under Brigadier-General Broadwood and Colonels De Lisle and Byng, so as to eventually close in upon Kaffir Kop from the west, north-west, and north-east. This movement, though well timed, was unsuccessful, as the Boers dispersed rapidly and escaped as our troops approached, the only noticeable incident in these operations being the death of Commandant Haasbroek, a prominent Boer leader, who was killed in action with Colonel Barker's troops at Vaalbank on the 16th of the month.

On the 18th, General Elliot turned back in the direction of Lindley, a few small captures being