

Lieutenant-Colonel Byng to cover the head of the blockhouse line, then approaching Lindley, he set out on the 27th with his division to endeavour to gain touch with the Boer forces. On the 28th, Liebenberg's Vlei was reached at Fanny's Home, where the enemy were found in position, apparently barring General Elliot's further advance upon Reitz. As a matter of fact, General Elliot was only in presence of a rearguard, which was masking a withdrawal of his force by De Wet from east to west of the Vlei, some ten miles further to the north, and in an opposite direction to General Elliot's line of advance.

Having effected a passage of the river and brushed aside the Boers in front of him, General Elliot pushed on into Reitz, which he found to be deserted, but where he ascertained the true direction of De Wet's retreat. The pursuit, undertaken at once, was, however, practically ineffective, although a few prisoners and a certain amount of stock was captured. But the approach of darkness soon enabled the Boers, under cover of a rearguard engagement, to withdraw out of reach, and to disperse once more over the spacious veldt.

To give an idea of the distances now covered by some of our columns, it may be stated that General Elliot's column made the following marches during the foregoing period, viz. :—

On December 29th.—Marched 70 miles in close pursuit of De Wet.

On December 31st.—20 miles.

On January 4th.—60 miles,

these marches being all in the same week.

6. At the date of my last Despatch, the columns under Major-General C. Knox and Colonel Rochefort were still in occupation of the south-eastern district of Orange River Colony, where they remained, continuing their clearing operations until the 19th December. It then became necessary to detach Colonel Rochfort's troops, under Lieutenant-Colonels Western and Du Moulin and Major Driscoll, to the west of the railway in pursuit of straggling bands of the enemy, who had been forced by the pressure of pursuit to escape from the country occupied by our troops. Lieutenant-Colonel A. C. Hamilton's column had already been sent to the Philippolis district earlier in the month, with the same object.

With the remainder of the force hitherto employed in the area east of the railway, General C. Knox completed his work of clearance, making a systematic advance in conclusion from the Caledon River up to the Thabanchu-Ladybrand line. This he crossed, and he is now operating to the north of it, undertaking, in conjunction with Colonel Barker's troops from Winberg, a thorough clearance of the adjoining districts on similar lines to those which have proved so successful to the south.

North of the line of the Modder River, Lieutenant-Colonel Sitwell (who has succeeded to the command of Colonel Henry's column) has operated in support of the South African Constabulary against the bands of Boers who still frequent the country between Boshof and Brandfort. Latterly, Colonel Sitwell has been employed in escorting convoys of supplies to the posts lying to the west of the Kimberley line.

Very excellent work has been done in this north-western portion of the Orange River Colony by Major Paek Beresford, of the South African Constabulary. At the end of December this officer conducted a well-managed raid upon Bothaville, which led to the capture of 36 prisoners, 80 horses and 29 vehicles, and on the 4th of January he followed up this success by

taking Field Cornet Theron's laager, near the junction of the Vet and Zand rivers. Upon this occasion Major Paek Beresford secured 35 prisoners (including Field Cornet Le Roux), 70 horses, 30 rifles, and the whole of the enemy's transport.

7. During the past month the contemplated blockhouse line from Botha's Pass to Vrede has made very substantial progress under the direction of Brigadier-General Bullock, who has had at his disposal Lieutenant-Colonel Garratt's column as a covering force, and the first York and Lancaster Regiment as a working party and garrison for the blockhouses. This line, in a few days, will be connected with the Frankfort-Tafel Kop-Vrede line, which is also being rapidly pushed on by Brigadier-General E. O. Hamilton.

On the north-eastern frontier of Natal, the small column under Lieutenant-Colonel Chapman has continued to operate on the Zululand border against parties of the local Boers in the extreme south of the Vryheid District.

8. In the north-eastern portion of Cape Colony the situation has not materially changed, though constant pursuit by the columns under Colonels Monro and Scobell, supplemented by some useful work by Lovat's Scouts, has completely disorganized and broken up the bands under Fouché and Myburg, whose followers continue to lead a life of brigandage in the hills about Dordrecht, Jamestown, and Lady Grey. A considerable number of these rebels have been killed and wounded during the past month, and their power for mischief is being steadily reduced from day to day.

The capture of Commandant Kritzinger has been a notable incident of December. On the night of the 16th December he was returning from the north of the Orange River with an escort of 100 men to resume direction of the commandoes in Cape Colony. Near Hanover Road he came in contact with the blockhouses held by the Grenadier Guards on the Naauwpoort-De Aar line of railway. The bulk of the escort were successful in effecting a crossing to the south, but Commandant Kritzinger (himself dangerously wounded), 12 of his men (also wounded), and 100 horses were left behind to be captured by our patrols.

Lieutenant-Colonel B. Doran and Major Lord W. Cavendish Bentinck, with small columns, were at once sent in pursuit of the remainder of Kritzinger's followers, who made their way into Aberdeen District closely followed by our troops.

In the western portion of Cape Colony, operations have been steadily maintained against the numerous bands of rebels in this wide area. With a view to curtailing the freedom of movement which the latter now enjoy, a line of blockhouses has been commenced which will ultimately run from Lambert's Bay, by Calvinia to Victoria West, a distance of over 200 miles. This is a formidable undertaking, necessarily involving much labour, but, owing to the nature of the country and its inhabitants, it seems to me to offer the only reliable method of dealing with a very difficult situation.

On the 9th of December, Lieutenant-Colonel W. Doran, whilst moving in the direction of Tontelboschkolk, was successful in surprising the Sutherland rebels under Nesser near Brandwagt, 30 miles east-north-east of Calvinia, where 1 Boer was killed and 8 captured.

On the approach of Colonel Doran the enemy in the neighbourhood of Tontelboschkolk broke up into a number of small parties, and moved south into the Clauwilliam District, with the intention of re-assembling for an attack upon the next