

In the district to the east of Springs, Brigadier-General Gilbert Hamilton, Colonel Allenby, Lieutenant-Colonel Barter (and latterly Lieutenant-Colonel Wing) have maintained an unceasing pursuit of the bands of Boers who, as mentioned in my last despatch, had broken back to the west of the Constabulary posts.

These burghers have clung tenaciously to this area for the principal reason, no doubt, that to effect their escape they would again have to face one of the fire-swept blockhouse lines. From time to time some of the fugitives have been captured by our pursuing troops, the most important reduction of the band resulting from a successful engagement on the 3rd February, near Grootpan (317), in which the columns under General Gilbert Hamilton and Colonel Wing killed three and captured 31 of their number, together with all their transport.

3. In the northern Transvaal, operations at any distance from the railway line have necessarily been temporarily suspended by the season of horse-sickness.

The departure of Colonel Colenbrander's column for the south for this reason appears, however, to have given General Beyers breathing time and sufficient leisure for the initiation of a plan which aimed at an attack on Pietersburg, in conjunction with the simultaneous removal of a number of burghers, who had been residing voluntarily and as neutrals in the refugee camp at that place.

The withdrawal of a certain number of the latter, who were no doubt acting in collusion with General Beyers, was unfortunately effected under cover of darkness, but the attack upon the town was not equally successful. This commenced at 4.20 A.M. on the 24th January, and, after 20 minutes' sharp firing, resulted in the complete repulse of General Beyers, who retired, leaving three of his followers killed, and three dangerously wounded within 300 yards of our defences. Great steadiness was shown by the Volunteer Town Guard, who turned out with promptitude to support the troops in garrison.

After the failure of this attempt, General Beyers appears to have retired in a south-easterly direction.

On the 6th February, Major Vallancey, detached from Pietersburg with a small force to ascertain General Beyers' dispositions, encountered a portion of the command at Cyferkuil (342) to the north of the Haenertsburg road, which he dispersed with ease, capturing 11 of their number.

4. At the date of my last despatch, Lord Methuen had reached Vryburg from the east, Colonel Kekewich was operating to the south-west of Ventersdorp; Lieutenant-Colonel Hickie was covering the extension of the Ventersdorp—Tafel Kop blockhouse line; and Lieutenant-Colonel Colenbrander was searching the country in the neighbourhood of Rustenburg.

Whilst at Vryburg, Lord Methuen organized a raid in a north-westerly direction towards Zoelief, where seven rebels were captured. He also afforded assistance to the passage into Kuruman of a convoy which moved under escort of Major Paris' Kimberley column.

Having refitted his column, Lord Methuen left Vryburg for Lichtenburg on the 12th January, and on the 16th, at Boschpoort (169), overtook and captured a Free State laager, with 24 prisoners, 65 wagons, 26 carts, 53 horses, and 1,930 cattle, besides a number of mules.

Soon after arriving at Lichtenburg, a detachment of Lord Methuen's Yeomanry, whilst engaged in reconnoitring at some distance from the town, was suddenly attacked by General

Celliers with 200 burghers, who killed 8, wounded 5, and captured 40 of our men.

Lord Methuen completed his supplies at Lichtenburg, and then turned south by Otterfontein (202) to Klerksdorp, being again engaged on the 30th at Knoppenfontein (28) with Celliers' commando, which fled in a south-westerly direction. He reached Klerksdorp on the 1st February, and his troops after a week's rest, then proceeded under Lieutenant-Colonel Von Donop towards Wolmaranstad.

They left Klerksdorp for the latter place on the 7th February, with the information to the effect that a laager under Commandant Potgieter might be found at Rhenoster Spruit (16). This spot, together with Zendingfontein (88) an adjoining farm, was surrounded during the night, with the result that at dawn on the 8th, Colonel Von Donop was able to effect the capture of 36 prisoners, 49 horses, 25 wagons, and 15 Cape carts. Two Boers were killed and three wounded. Commandant Potgieter himself narrowly escaped.

Up to the 31st January, Colonel Kekewich operated to the west of the Schoon Spruit, in the neighbourhood of Vaalbank (116), from which centre his mounted troops made frequent night raids which led to a few captures.

On the 1st February he was joined from the north at Vaalbank, by Lieutenant-Colonel Hickie's column which had been placed at his disposal to enable him to undertake more far-reaching operations against General Delarey's forces, scattered about in the country to the south and east of Lichtenburg.

The first expedition planned to effect the capture of General Delarey himself did not lead to the attainment of that object, but was productive of a very marked success, which reflects great credit upon all concerned.

Acting on intelligence received which appeared likely to be trustworthy, Colonel Kekewich sent the combined mounted troops of his own and Lieutenant-Colonel Hickie's columns, under the command of Major Leader, from Leeuwfontein (42) on the evening of the 4th February, with orders to move north by a circuitous route through Twee Buffels Geschiet (34) upon Roo-depan (76), some 15 miles north-east of Lichtenburg, where General Delarey was reported to be encamped.

During Major Leader's advance, however, he came upon and captured a Boer picquet, from which he ascertained that General Delarey had already moved his camp, but that Commandant Sarel Alberts's laager was for that night at Gruisfontein (114), just south of Roo-depan. Rightly determining to deal with the objective that lay for certain within his reach, Major Leader made direct for Gruisfontein, which he reached just before daybreak. Our men charged the enemy's laager with great dash, the Scottish Horse taking the main share of the attack, and as most of the Boer horses had been stampeded by the fire of Major Leader's pompon, the gallantry of the attacking force was rewarded by an unusually large measure of success; seven Boers were killed, 132 prisoners, 11 of whom were wounded, together with 130 rifles, 2,800 rounds of ammunition, and a large number of horses, mules, cattle, and wagons were taken. Amongst the prisoners were Commandant Sarel Alberts, with his Adjutant and Secretary, Landdrost Potgieter, Field-Cornets Jan du Plessis and Jan du Toit, two Assistant Field-Cornets, and ten corporals. Our casualties were two officers and six men wounded, all belonging to the Scottish Horse.

5. After his pursuit of De Wet near Reitz, described in my last despatch, Major-General