

centimetre Krupp field guns, one old pattern 12-pr. quick-firing gun, and one Vickers-Maxim automatic 3·7 centimetre quick-firing gun have been taken, as well as many ox and mule wagons.

A very large area has to be occupied in a country like this, consisting of flat plains with isolated hills or kopjes, to prevent the enemy from seizing one or more of the latter, and thence by long-range gun and rifle fire rendering the interior of the position untenable. The perimeter of the Paardeberg encampment surrounding the Boer laager was about 24 miles, and the distances from one point to another added greatly to the labours of the troops.

I enclose a list of prisoners taken on 27th February.

I am sanguine enough to hope that the complete defeat and surrender of Cronje will materially improve the prospects of the campaign. For over two months he held us in check at Magersfontein, and his following included many influential men both from the Orange Free State and from the South African Republic. The despatch of these men, with nearly 4,000 other prisoners, to Cape Town, cannot fail to encourage the loyal inhabitants of the Cape Colony and Natal, and to dishearten the disaffected, while the capture of one of their ablest and most determined commanders must inflict a severe blow on the Boer cause.

It is my present intention to halt here for about a week longer, in order to get the Cavalry and Artillery horses into better condition, replenish my supplies of food and ammunition, and prepare my transport train for a further advance. On reaching Bloemfontein I propose to reopen railway communication between that place and the Midland railway line, and to transfer my advanced base from the Modder River Station and Kimberley to Colesberg or Naauwpoort. In anticipation of this transfer, and to relieve the congested state of the docks at Cape Town, I have directed a number of vessels carrying stores and supplies to proceed to East London.

Since I last addressed your Lordship the situation on the frontier north of Naauwpoort has remained virtually unchanged. On the enemy at Colesberg being reinforced, Major-General Clements found it necessary to withdraw from Rensburg to Arundel, where he experienced no difficulty in maintaining his position. A portion of the Boer force has now retired for the purpose of covering Bloemfontein, and on the 27th February Rensburg was re-occupied by our troops.

On the eastern frontier Brigadier-General Brabant moved forward on the evening of the 16th February, and, after continuous fighting on the 17th, stormed the Boer position near Dordrecht.

On the 23rd February Lieutenant-General Gatacre made a reconnaissance in the direction of Stormberg, which showed that the hostile garrison had been reduced in men and guns. Our casualties on this occasion amounted to 2 killed, 2 wounded, and 6 missing, among the last being included Captain the Hon. R. de Montmorency, V.C., 21st Lancers, and Major P. R. Hockin, 2nd Devonshire Volunteer Artillery, two very promising Officers.

On the 24th February Lieutenant-General Sir W. Gatacre provided a garrison for Dordrecht by moving to that place from Bird River 2 guns, 2 companies of infantry, 50 signallers, and 50 mounted police. The garrison was

directed to entrench and occupy a commanding position to the south of the town.

As regards Natal, the reports received from General Sir Redvers Buller are to the following effect. On the 14th February he attacked strong positions held by the enemy on the right bank of the Tugela immediately to the east of Colenso. These positions on the Cingolo and Monte Cristo heights covered the left flank of the Boers. Cingolo was gradually occupied by our troops, and on the 18th February the 4th and 6th Brigades assaulted the entrenchments on Monte Cristo, the enemy falling back after having offered but slight resistance, and being driven across the Tugela with the loss of their camps and supplies. Sir Redvers Buller has brought to special notice the work done by the 2nd Battalion The Queen's, 2nd Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers, Rifle Brigade, and Irregular Cavalry; but all the troops are reported to have behaved admirably, and the Royal Artillery and Naval gun detachments to have rendered great assistance.

On the 21st February Sir Redvers Buller telegraphed that commandoes from the Bethlehem, Heilbron, and Senekal Districts had returned by train the previous week from Spion Kop to the Orange Free State. On the same date he reported that the 5th Division had that day crossed the Tugela by a pontoon bridge, driving back the enemy's rear guard.

Subsequent telegrams show that on the 22nd the 11th Brigade forced the passage of the Onderbrook Spruit and seized the Landrat heights which command it, while on the 23rd the 5th Brigade crossed the Langawacht Spruit and similarly occupied the adjacent heights. On the 25th the force had not advanced far enough to the north to keep down the enemy's long-range Artillery and Infantry fire, and the country is stated to be extremely difficult, but Sir Redvers Buller is endeavouring to turn the Boer position to the east, and hopes to succeed in outflanking the enemy and reaching Ladysmith.

Apart from the progress of the war, there are two matters affecting the force under my command, to which a brief reference seems desirable. On the 25th February, I telegraphed to your Lordship requesting that 100,000 khaki warm coats of the Indian pattern might be sent to the Cape Colony and Natal from India. These coats proved very serviceable during the expeditions on the North-west frontier in 1897-98, and will greatly conduce to the health and comfort of the troops in South Africa as soon as the cold season sets in. On the 26th February, in reply to a telegram from your Lordship, I asked for the 8th Infantry Division to be despatched to South Africa as quickly as possible, more troops being needed in my opinion to enable me to operate in sufficient strength in the Orange Free State and Transvaal.

I have, &c.,

ROBERTS, Field-Marshal,
Commanding-in-Chief,
South Africa.

Prisoners taken at Paardeberg, 27th February, 1900.

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| Orange Free State Artillery, under | } 3 Krupps, 7·5-cm.* 1 M.H. Maxim.* |
| Major Albrechts:— | |
| Officers—V. Dewitz. | |
| V. Heister. Angenstein. | |
| 45 men. | |

* The guns taken are 3—7·5-cm., Krupp's; old pattern Q.F., about 12-pr.; 1—3·7-cm. Vickers-Maxim automatic gun.