

resumed with reluctance, and after some pressure had been placed upon them by the Boer Commandants or Field-cornets concerned.

3. During the period dealt with in this despatch the first objective in urgency and importance was to provide for the security of the railway south of the Vaal, and to capture or disperse the enemy's forces to the east of that line and in the north-east angle of the Orange River Colony. The second objective was to push eastward from Pretoria towards Komati Poort, defeating and dispersing the troops under Commandant-General Botha, and releasing the British prisoners confined at Nootgedacht. But at the same time that portion of the Transvaal which lies west of Johannesburg and Pretoria had to be kept under control; the railway line from Johannesburg through Krugersdorp to Potchefstroom could not be left unguarded; and, in view of the presence of the enemy north of the Delagoa Bay railway, it would have involved undue risk to attempt an advance against the Boer headquarters at Machadodorp until sufficient troops were available, not only for the forward movement, but to secure the line of communication between Pretoria and the field force operating eastward. To obtain these troops I had to wait until the railway from Natal to Johannesburg had been restored and proper arrangements made for its protection, and until the action which was being taken in the north-east of the Orange River Colony had been so far successful as to admit of the transfer to the Transvaal of a considerable portion of the troops engaged in that direction.

4. In further explanation of the delay which has occurred in dealing with the Boer force under Commandant-General Botha, it may be mentioned that, though the inhabitants of the Lichtenburg, Potchefstroom, and Rustenburg districts seemed at first disposed to submit quietly to the British authorities, a large proportion of them subsequently joined General Delarey's Commando and assisted him in attacking the garrisons which were posted at the principal towns and in intercepting convoys of supplies. It consequently became necessary either to withdraw or reinforce these garrisons, as well as organize flying columns for the pursuit of the enemy.

The vast area of the country in which the operations are being conducted has also to be remembered. The troops have had to march long distances, and, though existing railways have been utilized to the fullest extent, the limited capacity of single lines—especially of that between Pretoria and Bloemfontein—coupled with the scarcity of rolling-stock, has rendered it difficult to move and concentrate rapidly according to the European standard of what should be possible in war.

5. To deal with the organized forces of the enemy was a comparatively easy matter; but in South Africa the problem has been complicated, and the settlement of the country retarded, by the determination of some of the Boer leaders to pursue a guerilla warfare after their troops had been defeated in the field. Owing to the non-compliance of the Boers with the recognized custom of war which compels combatants to wear a distinctive uniform, they have found it easy to pose as peaceful agriculturists one day and to take part in active hostilities on the next. Their leaders have also usually found means by threats or by persuasions to induce them to disregard their oath of neutrality, although this was voluntarily taken by men who at the time professed them-

selves anxious to submit to the British Government. To their honour be it said, a few of the burghers have suffered imprisonment or loss of property sooner than thus break their faith, but their number was not sufficient to enable them to exercise any influence on the general situation.

Recent events have convinced me that the permanent tranquillity of the Orange River Colony and Transvaal is dependent on the complete disarmament of the inhabitants; and, though the extent of country to be visited, and the ease with which guns, rifles, and ammunition can be hidden, will render the task a difficult one, its accomplishment is only a matter of time and patience.

6. My last despatch ended with the defeat of the Boers under Louis Botha at Diamond Hill on the 12th June and their retreat the next day towards Middleburg. I then issued orders for the formation at Pretoria of a strong column* under Lieutenant-General Ian Hamilton, which would move through Heidelberg on Frankfort, and thence co-operate with Lieutenant-General Rundle and Major-Generals Clements and Paget with a view to driving the Commando under C. De Wet eastwards towards Bethlehem and surrounding it, as well as the other Boer forces which were still occupying the north-east angle of the Orange River Colony. On reaching Heidelberg the column was to be joined by the 81st Battery, Royal Field Artillery, from the line of communication and by two companies of Imperial Yeomanry from Major-General Hart's Brigade. Hart, with a portion of his Brigade† was to garrison Heidelberg. On reaching Frankfort Ian Hamilton's column was to be further strengthened.‡ The force thus rendered available for operations beyond Frankfort amounted to two Cavalry Brigades, some 3,000 Mounted Infantry, Imperial Yeomanry, and other mounted corps, seven Infantry battalions, three Horse and three Field batteries, two 5-inch guns, 5 pompoms, and twenty-one machine guns.

To protect the railway between Kroonstad and the Vaal River, and to prevent De Wet from breaking out westward, Lord Methuen's force§ was directed to take up a position in the neighbourhood of Paardekraal, 10 miles south-west of Heilbron on the Kroonstad road.

Heilbron, which would be Ian Hamilton's base of supply on reaching Frankfort, and operating thence towards Bethlehem, was to be garrisoned by 50 Mounted Infantry and one battalion from the 9th Brigade, with two 4.7-inch naval guns.

The force at and near Lindley under Paget||

* The 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Brigades, the 2nd, 5th, 6th, and 7th Corps of Mounted Infantry, the 21st Infantry brigade, under Major-General Bruce Hamilton, three batteries of Horse and Field Artillery, and two 5-inch guns.

† One company of Imperial Yeomanry, 1½ battalions of Infantry, and 1 Field battery.

‡ The 5th Battery, Royal Field Artillery; Cavalry and Mounted Infantry details, numbering 350; two companies of Imperial Yeomanry, Lovat's Scouts, Eastern Provinces' Horse, and three battalions of the Highland Brigade, under Macdonald.

§ Four battalions of Imperial Yeomanry, about 1,000 strong; two field batteries, two 5-inch howitzers, two Infantry battalions from the 9th Brigade, a provisional battalion of Infantry details, two pompoms, and 10 machine guns.

|| 400 mounted men from Kroonstad, two companies of Imperial Yeomanry, four field guns, 1st Bn. Royal Munster Fusiliers, 2nd Bn. King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, 4th Bn. South Staffordshire Regiment, and a wing of the 4th Bn. Scottish Rifles.