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War Office, February 18, 1902.

THE following Despatch has been received from Lord Kitchener, G.C.B., &c., Commanding-in-Chief, South Africa:—

From Lord Kitchener to the Secretary of State for War.

Army Head-Quarters, South Africa,

Sir, Johannesburg, 8th January, 1902.

IN continuation of my Despatch of the 8th December, 1901, I have the honour to forward, herewith, an account of the operations carried out by the Troops under my command since that date.

1. As the result of the limitations imposed upon their mobility by the extension of the blockhouse system, the enemy's forces in the field are now practically confined to four definite areas. In the Eastern Transvaal the personal influence of General Louis Botha continues to hold together a considerable, but diminishing, force, between the borders of Swaziland and the Brugspruit-Waterval blockhouse line; in the west, Generals De la Rey and Kemp cling to the difficult country between the Mafeking railway line and the Magaliesberg; in the north-eastern districts of Orange River Colony De Wet and ex-President Steyn still control a comparatively large and determined following, who have quite recently given proofs of their boldness and initiative in attack; and in Cape Colony the country to the north-west of the Cape Town-De Aar line is infested by several bands of rebels kept together by adventurers from the late Republics. Elsewhere, smaller commandoes are to be found, but their numbers are insignificant, and their want of enterprise reveals, in all probability, an abating interest in the useless struggle in which they have so long been employed.

Good progress has been made during the month in most directions, especially in the Eastern Transvaal, where the operations of Major-General Bruce Hamilton have been rewarded with continued success, and where the improvement in the situation has been marked by a gratifying increase in the number of voluntary surrenders.

The capture of Commandant Kritzingen whilst on his way to resume control of the raiding operations in Cape Colony; the death of General Opperman at the action of Onverwacht in the Eastern Transvaal, and the loss of Commandant Haasbroek, who was killed in action near Vaal Bank, in the Orange River Colony, have removed from the enemy's ranks three of their most trusted leaders.

2. At the date of my last despatch, Major-General Bruce Hamilton was continuing his operations against General Louis Botha in the Eastern Transvaal; the column under Colonel Coliu Mackenzie and Lieutenant-Colonel Hon. C. G. Fortescue being in the vicinity of Carolina; Colonel Allenby at Boschmansfontein (204); and General Hamilton's other troops in and around Ermelo.

Upon his return to the latter place, on the 5th December, from his expedition to Oshoek (33), General Hamilton learnt that another considerable body of the enemy had moved in a north-westerly direction towards the Constabulary posts. He accordingly directed Lieutenant-Colonels Wing and E. Williams to move by Nooitgedacht (60) upon Kalabasfontein (170); Colonel Allenby was ordered to march west to Middelkraal (298); and General Hamilton himself, with Colonel Sir H. Rawlinson's column, proceeded from Ermelo in the direction of Bethal.

On reaching Spioenkop (39), on the 9th December, General Hamilton's intelligence reports showed that the Boers referred to, who had collected near Vaal Kop, some 20 miles north of Bethal, were moving in a southerly direction towards Trigaardtsfontein (151), with the evident object of escaping round his left flank. He therefore summoned the columns of Colonels Wing and Williams to join him at Spioenkop, and at dark the whole force made a night march upon Trigaardtsfontein. Here the enemy were completely surprised; their laager was rushed by our troops at dawn, and after a pursuit of six miles it was found that 7 Boers had been killed, and that 130 prisoners, with 4,000 cattle and a large convoy, had fallen into our hands.