

casualties in this force amounted to 3 killed, 11 wounded, and 3 missing, whilst its captures included 24 prisoners, 1,500 horses, and a large number of cattle.

Lieutenant-Colonel Crewe's column was slightly engaged with Brand's commando at Olivenberg, to the south-west of Petrusburg, and entered Bloemfontein on the 11th, bringing with it 5 prisoners, 21 waggons and carts with teams complete, and 2,000 horses.

2. During the progress of these operations General Lyttelton was preparing to carry out with the troops at his disposal a combined movement with the object of clearing the country to the east of the railway between the Orange River and the Thabanchu—Ladybrand line.

Major-General Bruce Hamilton's columns under Lieutenant-Colonels Monro, Maxwell, and White began the northward movement on the 10th March, advancing from Aliwal North and extending to both flanks. Colonel Hickman and Lieutenant-Colonel Thorneycroft, moving out from Bethulie and Springfontein respectively, prolonged the line on the left to the railway; Colonel Haig's troops from Edenburg, joined in the general advance, as the other columns came abreast of them, and at a later stage, Colonel Bethune's Brigade, from Bloemfontein, filled up the gap, between Leeuw Kop and Boesman's Kop, with its right flank resting on the Kaffir River.

The line of posts from Bloemfontein by Thabanchu to the Basutoland Border was temporarily reinforced by Colonel Harley, whose force of 200 mounted men, two guns and a battalion was detached from that portion of Lieutenant-General Sir Leslie Rundle's force which was holding Ficksburg. Lieutenant-Colonel Pilcher's column was in position near Hout Nek, to guard against any movement from the north.

The troops advancing north, met with little opposition. The Boers, following the tactics which have frequently enabled them to evade our columns during recent operations, dispersed and broke back, abandoning their stock. The columns reached the Thabanchu line on the 20th March, having captured 70 prisoners, 4,300 horses and many trek oxen.

On the conclusion of these operations General Bruce Hamilton, with his own three columns and Colonel Hickman's force, proceeded to the vicinity of Wepener and Dewetsdorp. Colonel Haig was sent south to secure the line of the Caledon and to watch for the possible return of some of the raiders from Cape Colony. Colonel Bethune's Brigade, required to join a mounted force which was being organized at Kroonstad, marched north via Winburg and Ventersburg; Lieutenant-Colonel Thorneycroft's column, placed at the disposal of Major-General C. Knox, moved by his direction upon Brandfort.

3. Concurrently with the operations for the pursuit of De Wet and those just described in the south-eastern portion of the Orange River Colony, some useful work was being carried out by other columns in the Winburg and Heilbron Districts.

During the first week in March, Lieutenant-Colonel E. Williams and Major Pine Coffin, working in combination, were engaged in clearing the Doornberg, a supply depôt, which, in the absence of De Wet, had been left but weakly guarded.

In the course of this operation eight Boers (including General P. Botha) were killed, two were wounded, and several were taken prisoners; all stock was removed from the district.

Lieutenant-Colonel Williams with the combined forces was then directed to take up a position near the junction of the Vet and Zand Rivers, where he would be favourably placed for intercepting the retreat of De Wet if the latter should move north. Major Massy's small column was brought by rail from Edenburg to reinforce these troops.

When, however, it became evident that De Wet had broken eastward, that his forces had dispersed, and that, for the moment, he meditated nothing but escape, Lieutenant-Colonel Williams's column was moved north to the Heilbron district.

Leaving Heilbron on the 27th March, accompanied by a detachment from the garrison, under Major Weston, Lieutenant-Colonel Williams proceeded to clear the country to the east and south-east. Satisfactory results were obtained, in spite of the most persistent opposition on the part of the local commando, and large quantities of grain, forage, foodstuffs, and ammunition were seized and destroyed.

Subsequently, Lieutenant-Colonel Williams moved through the country to the north of Heilbron, collecting all stock and supplies between the Wilge River and the main line of railway. By a well executed night march he captured a small Boer convoy near Grobler's Drift, and, on the 16th April, arrived at Wolvehoeck, bringing in with him 30 captured waggons and a number of cattle.

4. The temporary lull which occurred in the Orange River Colony about the middle of March as a result of the dispersion of De Wet's forces afforded me a favourable opportunity for the re-arrangement of the mobile columns in that part of the theatre of war.

Without in any way altering the disposition of the troops employed in guarding the lines of communication, I decided to subdivide the Colony into four districts, each one under the control of a General Officer whose special duty it should be to deal promptly with any concentration of the enemy, and to clear the country systematically of all horses, cattle, and supplies.

The Southern District bounded on the south by the Orange River, on the north by the line Petrusburg—Ladybrand, on the west by the Kimberley Railway, and on the east by the Basuto border, was entrusted to Lieutenant-General the Honourable N. G. Lyttelton, his mobile troops including Major-General Bruce-Hamilton's columns, and the troops commanded by Colonels Hickman and Haig.

The Central District, bounded on the south by Lieutenant-General Lyttelton's command, on the north by the line Bultfontein—Winburg—Ficksburg, and extending as far west as Boshof, was assigned to Major-General C. Knox, the columns under Lieutenant-Colonels Pilcher and Thorneycroft being placed at his disposal.

The Northern District, including that part of the Orange River Colony situated to the north of Major-General Charles Knox's command, and bounded on the east by the line of Frankfort—Reitz—Bethlehem, was allotted to Major-General E. L. Elliott. His force of mounted troops consisted of Colonel Bethune's Cavalry Brigade Lieutenant-Colonel De Lisle's column (withdrawn from Cape Colony), and a brigade under Brigadier-General Broadwood, composed of the 7th Dragoon Guards, three battalions of Imperial Yeomanry, and six guns.

Lieutenant-General Sir Leslie Rundle retained in his sphere of operations the country east of the line Frankfort—Reitz—Bethlehem—Ficksburg; the troops under his command being those of the