

THE WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA.

CHAPTER I.

THE REBELLION IN THE NORTH-WEST OF CAPE COLONY.*

OCTOBER, 1899—JULY, 1900.

Nor only ties of blood drew this part of the British South African dominions to the side of the Boer States. Yet these bonds were so strong that both Republican governments, relying upon them as an integral factor of their projected campaign, had many a stand of arms in readiness for distribution amongst the almost exclusively Dutch farmers who peopled this wild and inhospitable district.† But beyond this there had been at work upon the left bank of the Orange influences which would have borne down the scale, even had it wavered. Here, on the fringe of the British administration, its benefits had been less apparent than its restraints; and it is scarcely to be wondered at if many a pure-blooded Boer, passing a narrow, lonely, and almost inaccessible existence, remembered the history of the land rather than its frontiers, and clung to his individuality, which to a Boer was his nationality. To such a man sympathy for grievances, real or imaginary, could be wafted not from the south, but, like the warm wind of South Africa, from the north. Neither grievances nor sympathy were lacking. That the former had nothing to do with any human administration mattered little to sufferers so ignorant and prejudiced, that they were capable of giving credence to the rumour that the Government of Cape Colony was actually paying for the dissemination of disease amongst their

Causes of
disaffection.

* See map No. 43.

† See Volume I., page 80.

cattle. Many years of drought, season after season of rinderpest, had embittered those whom these misfortunes had brought almost to the brink of ruin ; until, as populations more enlightened have done, they laid the charge to the government within their boundaries, and looked for relief to one without. Nor was the latter backward to sow seed on soil so favourable. Boer agents had long stolen about the districts, planting disaffection where it did not already grow, watering it where it was budding, using it so openly where it grew strongly that, as early as July, 1899, rifles were in the hands of intending rebels ; and even, incredible as it may appear, target practice was in full progress on British soil to promote accurate shooting against British soldiers. Such a state of things, much as it may seem to reflect upon the preparedness of the sovereign power, is always to be expected on the borders of great empires, where races mingle, and the shorter arm triumphs temporarily over the longer. At the date mentioned, at any rate, even had there been civil or military machinery to deal with the matter, neither could well have been employed without precipitating the conflict which the British people hoped, and their statesmen were labouring, to avert.

The Boers' first action in the Colony.

Into this fertile field the Boers descended as soon as the declaration of war called them to their harvest. On October 21st General De la Rey entered Vryburg district with some two hundred Transvaalers. He himself moved down to Kimberley almost immediately, but left behind a certain Field Cornet Visser, who speedily enlisted a considerable force of rebels whom he armed from loads of rifles and ammunition sent down from Schweizer Reneke. This force was detailed to take Kuruman ; and at the beginning of November Visser moved off, leaving about two hundred men for garrison and patrol duty at Vryburg. The rebels were organised in four comandos, each under an elected field cornet. At the beginning of December Visser's levy amounted to some eight hundred.

In November, the Griqualand West district, also known as the Hay division, was proclaimed Orange Free State territory ; and the line of the Orange river was patrolled and watched

by Boers despatched from Griquatown. For the moment, however, no large body crossed to the left bank. Yet the British authorities knew well how exposed to invasion were the districts south of the Orange river, and how ripe for rebellion the inhabitants. A small column (about one and three-quarters companies mounted infantry, eighty New South Wales Mounted Rifles, and twenty-five Rimington's Guides), under Lieut.-Colonel E. A. H. Alderson, was therefore sent to Prieska, arriving there and occupying the place on January 3rd, 1900. A few shots were exchanged with Boers, but nothing of importance happened. Alderson and the mounted infantry were withdrawn the same day, but the other troops remained temporarily in garrison. One or two small patrols crossed the river and a few prisoners were taken with some cattle. So weak a garrison, however, ran too great a risk of being cut off, and it was also withdrawn about the 10th. The day after its departure about two hundred Griqualand Boers, under Field Cornet Fouché, crossed the Orange river and entered Prieska, but did nothing beyond destroying telegraphic communication ; and after a few days' sojourn in the neighbourhood, they, too, fell back across the river.

The loyalists at Kuruman, against whom Visser was marching, numbered fifty Europeans and thirty coloured men, commanded by Major A. Bates, Cape Police. On November 13th, at 10 a.m., the Boers approached, and fired on the entrenchments until dark. During the night the rebels dug trenches, from which they kept up a heavy fire for the next four days, not venturing to come to close quarters. On November 18th they retired, and were subsequently located by scouts about eighteen miles away. At the end of November they were reinforced by about 130 Griqualand rebels, under Field Cornet Wessels, and again attacked on December 5th. Till December 17th heavy firing was kept up, and four determined assaults were made on the works, all of which were repulsed with loss. The rebels then decided to await the arrival of a gun which had been sent for from Vryburg, and meanwhile continual shooting was carried on by both sides which reduced the ammunition supply of the loyalists to a low ebb. Wessels, owing to supply difficulties,

had moved off with the Griqualanders on December 26th towards Dronfield. On the 30th the expected gun arrived, and opening on January 1st, speedily settled the matter. After enduring some eighty rounds, Bates decided to surrender; and the little garrison, with the exception of twelve wounded men, were removed as prisoners of war to Pretoria.

On January 6th the Vryburg rebels left Kuruman and started for Kimberley to join Cronje, taking part in the fighting at Koodoesberg, February 6th—10th. On February 12th they were ordered to Douglas; but the British main advance frightened them back by Barkly West to Fourteen Streams, which was reached February 23rd. They moved to Rooidam early in March, and were joined there by some two hundred more Vryburg rebels, who had previously been doing garrison and patrol duties in their own district. The Vryburgers subsequently took part in the fight at Rooidam on May 5th, and for the remainder of the war formed part of the field army of the Boers. This was the largest of the rebel commandos formed on the western border.

Various levies
and their
deeds.

Other rebel commandos levied along the western border were as follows:—In the Barkly West district Commandant Van Aswegen raised a commando some three hundred strong in the neighbourhood of Dronfield. These numbers included the force which Field Cornet Wessels had taken to and from Kuruman. In Barkly West also T. De Beer hoisted the Transvaal flag in December, 1899, at Klipdam, near Windsorton, and enlisted a number of local rebels into the Bloemhof and Wolmaranstad commandos. At Olive River, about fifteen miles east-north-east of Douglas, Jan Kolbe, a Free Stater, who, prior to the war, had been a secret agent in the employ of the Republics, was successful in raising a commando over five hundred strong during January, 1900. This commando also joined Cronje and took part in the Koodoesberg fight. After the relief of Kimberley many of them returned to their homes; but some three hundred followed the route taken by Visser's commando, by Barkly West, and reached Fourteen Streams. In November, 1899, Field Cornet Lotter, a blacksmith from

Campbell, formed a laager at Sunnyside, east of Douglas, in the Herbert district, and raised a commando of about two hundred. This party was that eventually surprised and defeated by Colonel Pilcher on January 1st, 1900. (Vol. I., p. 387.) These commandos had all joined the field army of the Republics and had remained north of the Orange river. Soon after the annexation of the districts north of the river, in November, 1899, guards had been posted here and there along the north bank of the Orange at the different ponts and drifts; but with the exception of the brief visit paid by a commando of two hundred Griqualand rebels to Prieska, where they only stayed from January 8th till the 11th, no attempt had been made by the Republics to commandeer in the districts south of the Orange.

To the west of Hopetown the large districts of Prieska and Kenhart, though known to be thoroughly Boer in their sympathies, had been practically left alone by both belligerents. It had been intended to occupy Prieska with a permanent garrison, to deal with any rebel movement in this part of the country, but the necessary troops were never available.

At the beginning of February the British forces, except the containing detachments, were all moving to the front; and the High Commissioner, Sir Alfred Milner, could not conceal his anxiety as to the possible results. On the 4th of February he addressed a memorandum to the Commander-in-Chief, in which he pointed out how great would be the danger of rebellion in the Cape Colony once the British troops should be out of reach, and how that danger would increase with every forward step taken by the army. He suggested that central points should be selected, and entrenched camps formed at each with garrisons of the three arms; and no better plan could have been devised to nip rebellion in the bud before it became formidable. But Lord Roberts, his gaze fixed forward rather than backward, could ill spare the number of troops necessary for such an occupation. The root of the rebellion lay not in Cape Colony, but in Bloemfontein and Pretoria, its branches at Ladysmith and Kimberley; and a blow at these would fell the whole tree. Moreover, Cape

Recommendations by the High Commissioner.

Colony, if at present weakly guarded, would not be so for long. Fifteen batteries of artillery and six battalions of militia were due at Cape Town within a month ; these might keep the country quiet until the army in the field could spare time and troops to clear up its rear. Nevertheless, the Commander-in-Chief was by no means blind to the danger to which his lines of communication would be exposed on their passage through regions full of open and secret enemies. But war, especially offensive warfare, is not to be made without great risks ; and a plan of campaign based on absolute safety would defeat its own end by becoming interminable.

General
Liebenberg's
incursion.

Encouraged by his success at Magersfontein, Cronje soon sent a commando to strike at the apparently neglected lines of communication in Cape Colony. The detachment consisted of about two hundred Transvaalers, under General Liebenberg, with whom went Commandant Steenkamp, a rebel, who was entrusted with the general direction of operations, and who carried written orders from President Steyn for the annexation of the Colony districts. The plan was to proclaim the northern part of the Colony, to commandeer all available men, and then to act in concert with the commandos east of the railway, under Olivier and Schoeman, their first aim to be at De Aar and other points along the lines of communication. Steenkamp took with him a large supply of ammunition and rifles for the arming of the expected adherents, and made his way through Douglas and Griquatown. Timely information of this movement reached the British Headquarters. To oppose it Colonel E. A. H. Alderson, with six hundred mounted infantry and six guns, was sent, as already related,* to Prieska, which was occupied on January 27th. A position was taken up close to Prieska, with a view to checking a hostile advance from Griqualand West or down the river from the north-east. Three days later, however, this force was recalled to take part in the general advance, and left Prieska for De Aar. An attempt was then made to strike Liebenberg's force in the neighbourhood of Douglas, Brigadier-General R. G. Broadwood, with 1,500 men, moving out to Sunnyside, which he

* See Volume I., page 439.

reached February 7th ; but Liebenberg's force had already gone across the river and Broadwood consequently retired. (Vol. I., p. 442.)

The districts south of the Orange river and west of the railway were now left ungarrisoned, and Liebenberg continued his movement to the south. On February 15th he arrived at Zween Kuil, on the Orange river, about twenty-five miles north-east of Prieska. The following morning, February 16th, Steenkamp, with a posse of Transvaal burghers, rode into Prieska. Proceeding to the public offices, the invader read the annexation proclamation, declaring the Prieska district to be Orange Free State and Transvaal territory, and the flags of the two Republics were hoisted. As in previous cases, according to the terms of the proclamation, anyone unwilling to own allegiance to the Republics was granted eight days in which to cross the border, those who remained being liable to be commandeered. But most of the loyalists had already fled. There were few silent voices in the market square when the Boer national anthem greeted the breaking of the Republican flags. Notices were then despatched in every direction, calling a public meeting to be held at Prieska on February 19th, for the purpose of appointing a military administration. At 3 p.m. on the appointed day the meeting was held. The village was crowded, the inhabitants having come in from all parts of the district. A president was elected, who announced that the object of the meeting was to ascertain public feeling as to going over to the Republics, as to the military law to be applied, and, further, to appoint a military administration. The few loyalists who still remained in the district awaited anxiously the result of this meeting ; and for a time those present at the discussion were not without hope, for there were many objections raised. But these arose only from the natural combativeness of Boers in conference. The harvest was ripe. It was known that General Liebenberg, with two hundred Transvaalers and two guns, was on the Orange river, not far away, and that the martial law proclaimed by the Republics would under any circumstances be enforced in the district. To be short, the meeting decided to submit, there being

only seventeen dissentient votes. That evening the burghers again met and selected a military committee, who appointed field cornets to call up the burghers in the various divisions of the district ; by February 23rd they had succeeded in collecting 150 recruits. These were immediately armed, and started the same evening to join Liebenberg, who was now at Omdraai Vlei. Until the end of the month parties continued to arrive from the outlying districts, and were at once equipped and sent either to join Liebenberg, or to line the borders on either side of Prieska. As for the townsmen, they had been immediately enrolled for the defence of the place, and employed as orderlies and in patrolling.

On February 27th news reached the loyal place of Kenhart that a hostile party from Prieska was advancing on the town. Whereupon a native constable of Kenhart, named McDilling, assembled some twenty-five of the Bastard tribe, who had but four rifles and thirty rounds of ammunition between them, and, acting on his own initiative, lay in wait for the advancing Boers in the sand dunes, a short distance from the town. At about 3 a.m. the Boers advanced, and, being fired on by the Bastards, retired. McDilling, knowing that they would return in strength, then led his little party off ; but all were subsequently captured by a strong Boer patrol, which secured also the resident magistrate and the chief constable of the district. Other means of defence Kenhart had none.

The Boers marched in ; the annexation proclamation was read ; and, as at Prieska, a meeting was called and held on March 2nd, after which commandeering was straightway begun.

On March 8th Steenkamp himself came from Prieska to Kenhart to hasten the commandeering, moving thence to Upington to annex the Gordonia district. While at Kenhart, Steenkamp was visited by a deputation from Calvinia, who begged that their district might not be proclaimed, and urged the rebels to lay down their arms. This deputation remained two days and then returned to Calvinia.

A party of rebels which had already been sent to annex

Upington had encamped, on March 3rd, some three miles from the town. Here they were met by the resident magistrate, who vainly endeavoured to persuade them to return to their homes. But Steenkamp and Jooste arrived on the 10th, the proclamation of annexation was read, and the Gordonia district, too, passed to the enemy. The war committee was elected on March 15th and here too fell to commandeering.

In order to assist the British subjects, the German Government in South-West Africa had not only suspended the duty on cattle and sheep, so that those who chose might take refuge in German territory, but had stationed a force of two hundred men near the border, 120 miles north-west of Upington, ready to receive refugees. The English inhabitants all left the district, most of them taking advantage of the asylum offered by their German neighbours. In Gordonia, as in other districts, the Dutch inhabitants were convinced of the ultimate success of the Boers. Many had already voluntarily gone to join the enemy; and at the time of the rebel invasion, the remainder, believing in the reported Boer victories, were in no way unwilling to join the rebels, whose numbers rapidly increased. They were not, however, destined to prove their value in the field. The arrival of Liebenberg and Steenkamp in the Prieska district had been reported to Cape Town; and on February 19th the High Commissioner telegraphed to Lord Roberts, urging that the movement should be promptly checked.

German courtesy to British subjects.

Lord Roberts was at this time engrossed with the blockade of General Cronje's force in the river bed at Paardeberg. He at once telegraphed orders to Colonel J. Adye, R.A., who was then at Arundel, under Major-General Clements, to proceed to De Aar, and take command of a column for the suppression of the rebel movement. Adye's instructions were to move on Britstown and to prevent disaffection from spreading in the direction of Carnarvon and Victoria West. There was some delay in starting, owing to the fact that the Commander-in-Chief's message to Clements had not been repeated to Brigadier-General H. H. Settle, the general officer commanding at Orange River; but on February 23rd Adye reported that he was ready

The Commander-in-Chief orders the suppression of the rebellion.

to start for Britstown. The following day, the Warwickshire mounted infantry company, eighty strong, left De Aar for Britstown, which lay thirty-five miles to the west. A second company was sent on February 25th, but was recalled for service elsewhere on the 26th. On February 27th Lord Kitchener arrived at De Aar, and instructed Adye to proceed with the Field battery then at De Aar to join the mounted infantry company at Britstown, and to drive off any rebels he might find commandeering in that part of the country. The rebel movement was not known to have spread south of Prieska, though at this time Liebenberg was at Omdraai Vlei.

Lord
Kitchener
arrives at
De Aar.

Plans for the
suppression.

Adye's
movements.

On February 28th, Brigadier-General Settle, upon whom had devolved the pacification of the disaffected region, submitted his plan of action to Lord Kitchener. He proposed first a joint advance by Colonel Sir Charles Parsons from Victoria West to Carnarvon, and by Adye from Britstown, to hold the rebels in check at Houwater. Adye would then advance to Omdraai Vlei, where Settle, moving from Orange River, would meet him and take the two columns on to Prieska. This being approved, Adye left De Aar on February 28th, with the 44th Field battery and two companies of the City Imperial Volunteers, and joined the mounted infantry company at Britstown on March 1st. On the 3rd he received information that the rebels had occupied Houwater, and telegraphed to Settle for reinforcements. In reply, he was informed that a company of South Australian mounted infantry was on the way to join him from Cape Town, but that he was not to wait for them before harassing the enemy. Accordingly, on March 4th, Adye moved from Britstown with the company of Warwickshire mounted infantry and the 44th battery, and, having made a circuit to clear up country in which it was reported that rebels had been looting farms, he encamped at Karee Boosch Poort, a farm about half-way from Britstown to Houwater. The following day he was joined by one of the City Imperial Volunteer companies, which he had called up from Britstown, and spent the day making a personal reconnaissance of the enemy's position. In front of Houwater are a series of defensible ridges, and on the nearest of

these a rebel post was observed. Adye then decided to make a reconnaissance in force the following day, with a view to ascertaining the enemy's strength, position and armament. He had no intention of fighting an engagement, having made up his mind, that, unless the enemy had vacated the position, he would retire again to Karee Boosch ; and he informed his officers that such were his intentions.

Starting early on March 6th, the force marched without incident until, on arriving within four miles of Houwater, the leading scouts were fired on from the ridge on which the enemy's post had been seen the previous day. Till then the advance had been unobserved, and Adye was now opposite the enemy's left flank. On the guns being brought into action, the enemy's piquets retired, followed by the mounted infantry and City Imperial Volunteers up to the near end of the ridge which they had recently occupied. The enemy then brought up reinforcements and with them a 9-pr. Krupp and a Vickers-Maxim, which engaged the troops in front. At the same time it was reported to Adye that a force of mounted men was working round his left flank, with the evident object of cutting off his line of retreat. Adye then gave the order to retire. Estimating the enemy's strength at three hundred to four hundred men, he considered that with the force at his disposal it would be impossible to push his advance further. Nevertheless, the fire of the enemy's guns was completely kept under by the 44th battery, and there had been no casualties. Once the retirement commenced, the advantages were all on the side of the Boers, who, being mounted, repeatedly got round the flanks of the little detachment, the pace of which was regulated by the tired infantry. The Boers clung to the column to within two miles of the camp at Karee Boosch, when, darkness coming on, they turned back. The casualties during the retirement were three killed, fourteen wounded, and six prisoners. The following day (March 7th), Adye returned with his detachment to Britstown.

His skirmish
at Houwater.

Meanwhile, on March 5th, Settle had also started from Hoptown with a column, consisting of one battery New South Wales artillery, one company Gloucester mounted infantry, Orpen's

Settle's
movements.

Light Horse, and the City Imperial Volunteer cyclists. Karee Kloof or Plaats was reached on March 8th, and a depôt of supplies was formed there. That day information was received that the main body of the rebel force was at Roodepoort, and that detachments, each about three hundred strong, were at Zoutpan and Houwater. The advance was continued, and a small party of rebels was encountered near Schiffer's Pan on March 10th and driven back with loss.

When the news of Adye's affair reached Headquarters, Lord Roberts decided to send his Chief of the Staff, Major-General Lord Kitchener, to superintend the operations west of the railway line, Settle being ordered to suspend all further movements pending his arrival.

Sir Charles Parsons, with the southern column, had sent two companies New Zealand Mounted Rifles to Carnarvon, which was occupied on March 8th. The West Australian mounted infantry, which had arrived at Victoria West from Cape Town, left for Vosburg, near Carnarvon, the next day, but were recalled on March 10th, and arrived at Victoria West on March 13th. The force concentrated there on the morning of the 13th consisted of: One company Derby Imperial Yeomanry, two companies Canadian mounted infantry, and two batteries (D. and E.) Royal Canadian artillery. This column marched on the 13th and was followed two days later by the West Australian mounted infantry, who overtook it before reaching Carnarvon, where the force arrived on March 17th.

Sir C. Parsons' movements.

It was known that the rebels had retired north from Houwater after Adye's skirmish of the 6th. When Lord Kitchener arrived at De Aar on March 10th, he decided to take reinforcements to Britstown, and advance to Houwater, where Sir C. Parsons' column would join him with a view to supporting Settle's advance on Prieska. That day, however, information was received that the rebel commandant at Kenhart was about to descend upon Calvinia. Lord Kitchener, therefore, ordered Sir C. Parsons' column to Van Wyks Vlei, where its presence would check any hostile movement towards Calvinia, trusting to his own strength to support Settle.

Immediately on receipt of the news of Adye's encounter, Lieut.-Colonel G. F. C. Mackenzie, with four companies 1st Suffolk regiment, had marched from De Aar to Britstown, which they reached on March 8th. On March 13th Lord Kitchener arrived at Britstown, bringing with him the remainder of the 1st Suffolk regiment, 68th battery Royal Field artillery, Suffolk and Cheshire Imperial Yeomanry, one squadron Nesbitt's Horse, one squadron Kitchener's Horse, and one company South Australian mounted infantry. Already at Britstown were : One company Warwick mounted infantry, 44th battery Royal Field artillery, two companies City Imperial Volunteers, and four companies 1st Suffolk regiment.

Lord
Kitchener at
Britstown.

Lord Kitchener's instructions to Settle were, to turn the enemy out of Zoutpan, and, moving by Groot Varsh Kuil Drift, to co-operate with his own column in an advance on Prieska. On March 14th Adye was sent on with 550 mounted men to reconnoitre to Houwater, which was occupied by Lord Kitchener the following day. The advance to Prieska *via* Roodepoort and Omdraai Vlei was carried out without incident, no enemy being seen. Colonel B. T. Mahon took over command of the advanced cavalry on March 18th, and entered Prieska March 19th. On March 20th Lord Kitchener arrived with one squadron Yeomanry, the 44th battery Royal Field artillery and the 7th Dragoon Guards less one squadron, which, with the 68th battery Royal Field artillery, two companies Suffolk regiment and Yeomanry details, were left at Doornbergfontein. The remainder of the column followed on to Prieska.

At Prieska.

Settle left Karee Kloof, about forty miles south-west of Hopetown, on March 18th, advanced, as instructed, by Zoutpan, and, moving on the right flank and in communication with Lord Kitchener's column, reached Prieska on March 21st. No sign of the enemy had been seen during the advance ; but, as the Commander-in-Chief had foretold, the colony's speediest purge had come not from the south, but the north. After Cronje's capture, repeated orders had been sent from Fourteen Streams to General Liebenberg, telling him to retire immediately, and warning him that he was in imminent danger of being cut off,

The effect of
the capture of
Cronje.

Liebenberg had consequently fallen back on Prieska, which he reached on March 15th, and that day he heard of the fall of Bloemfontein. He at once sent his wagons, guns and the Transvaal commando across the Orange. The following day he held a council of the rebels whom he had created, and was now about to desert; and, explaining that he was recalled, advised them to await Steenkamp's return. On March 17th he started with his party for Fourteen Streams. The Prieska rebels, seeing their dream vanish with the retiring Transvaalers, at once threw down their arms and dispersed to their farms, to the bewilderment of 150 men of Kenhart, who came to Prieska on March 17th, and seeing the state of affairs, at once returned whence they had come. On March 19th, Jooste at Kenhart wired to Steenkamp at Upington to know what was to be done. The reply pricked yet another hole in the fast subsiding bladder. Jooste was told to destroy all papers, and to instruct every man to look to his own safety. The Kenhart rebels, too, consequently laid down their virgin rifles, and one and all returned to their homes. At Upington Steenkamp had assembled about three hundred men, for the most part unarmed, who were to have been equipped at Prieska. On March 19th he likewise dismissed his flock and fled to Griquatown himself.

While Lord Kitchener and Brigadier-General Settle were advancing on Prieska, Sir C. Parsons' column on the left had reached Van Wyks Vlei after having concentrated at Carnarvon. Owing to difficulties with the water supply, Sir C. Parsons had decided to push forward his column in two divisions. The leading portion, under command of Major M. Cradock, consisted of a company of Canadian and two companies of New Zealand Mounted Rifles, with a section of D. battery Royal Canadian artillery. These left Carnarvon on March 19th, and were followed by the remainder of the column, under Lieut.-Colonel C. W. Drury, on March 21st. On March 22nd Cradock's detachment had reached De Naauwte, and the main body Van Wyks Vlei. Owing to heavy rains the road between Van Wyks Vlei and De Naauwte became impassable for wheeled transport for the next three days. On March 27th the main body ad-

vanced as far as Hartebeeste river, which was found to be in flood. Sir C. Parsons then asked for permission to send back Drury's column, and to go on with the remainder from De Naauwte to Kenhart. This proposal having been agreed to, after three days' rest at Hartebeeste river, Drury started with the main body on April 4th, reached Carnarvon on the 7th, and De Aar on April 14th. Cradock's detachment pushed on by forced marches from De Naauwte, and entered Kenhart unopposed on March 31st. There the leaders in the rebel movement were arrested, and some 170 rifles and 20,000 rounds of ammunition were collected from farms in the vicinity. The column remained at Kenhart till April 8th, when, having been relieved, it started for Victoria Road, which was reached on April 17th. The march of Sir C. Parsons' column was made under exceptionally trying conditions. Continuous and heavy rains had rendered the roads most difficult; after leaving De Naauwte the wagons had to be manhandled for some miles through water three feet in depth. Supplies ran short; and from the time of the flooding of the Hartebeeste river, which prevented wagon communication with Van Wyks Vlei, Cradock's force was entirely dependent for forage and rations on such supplies as could be found in the country. There was much sickness among men and horses. In the New Zealand Mounted Rifles alone, as many as seventy out of two hundred men were on the sick list at one time, chiefly suffering from dysentery, and a large percentage of the horses were unfit for work.

Sir C. Parsons
at Kenhart.

To return to Lord Kitchener's column. Finding that the country was clear of any organised rebel bands, Lord Kitchener decided to send Settle with a flying column, one thousand strong, by Upington to co-operate with Sir C. Parsons' column moving on Kenhart; and, leaving Adye with a force of all arms to garrison Prieska, to return himself to De Aar with the remainder of the force. Accordingly on March 22nd Lord Kitchener started back with the 7th Dragoon Guards, and Staffordshire, Hampshire and Suffolk companies of 4th battalion Imperial Yeomanry. Overtaking at Houwater the troops which had been

Lord
Kitchener
returns to
De Aar.

left at Doornbergfontein, he moved by Britstown, and reached De Aar on March 27th.

Settle's flying column, consisting of one battery New South Wales artillery, one company Gloucestershire mounted infantry, one company Suffolk mounted infantry, 2nd battalion Imperial Yeomanry, Orpen's Light Horse, one squadron Kitchener's Horse, and City Imperial Volunteer cyclists, started on March 22nd with twenty days' supplies, and reached Drachoender on March 25th, progress being much delayed by heavy rains and bad roads. Koegas Pont, fifteen miles from Drachoender, was seized, and orders given for the ponts at Kheis and Groot Drink to be sunk or destroyed. One section of the battery, one and a half squadrons Orpen's Horse, one squadron Imperial Yeomanry, and the Suffolk company mounted infantry, were pushed on from Drachoender, and entered Upington on March 30th, securing some of the leading rebels and members of the local war committee, who were in the act of leaving the town. The remainder of the column entered Upington on April 2nd. A section of the battery and the Gloucester company mounted infantry were then sent to relieve Sir C. Parsons, and reached Kenhart on April 5th. Sir C. Parsons, as previously related, started three days later with his column for De Aar. To guard against further trouble in these districts, garrisons were now placed at Prieska, Drachoender, Koegas Pont, Upington and Kenhart.

Settle's troops
at Upington.

On April 8th, Brigadier-General Settle issued orders and proclamations, dealing with the duties of commandants and the treatment of inhabitants and rebels; these were made known through the districts. He was shortly afterwards recalled to his duties on the lines of communication, and was succeeded in the command of the north-west districts by Adye. The chief duties of the commandants were connected with the surrendered rebels, who were dealt with according to the evidence against them as to the part they had played. All arms were required to be handed in and all inhabitants to register their names and receive passes.

He is
succeeded by
Adye.

Although there still remained many disaffected persons, the more determined rebels had all moved north of the Orange.

Parties from Griqualand West occasionally appeared on the north bank and exchanged shots with the piquets; and on April 13th a small commando attacked the post at Koegas Pont, which was held by thirty-seven Orpen's Light Horse. The enemy was driven back, Orpen's Horse losing two killed and one wounded. The river at this time of the year was about two hundred yards wide, and could only be crossed at the ponts, of which there were but three between Hopetown and the German frontier, namely, at Prieska, Koegas and Upington. Adye had orders to confine his operations to the south of the river; but when the river had fallen sufficiently to allow of passage by the drifts, he made one or two raids on the right bank, capturing several hundred head of stock and arresting a few farmers who were known to be harbouring rebels. There was no further sign of rebellion south of the Orange. In Griqualand, however, the trouble continued, and in May, Lieut.-General Sir C. Warren was appointed governor of that portion of the Colony, which was well known to him in former campaigns. Early in the month he began the task of suppression; and establishing himself at Belmont on the 6th, he undertook the following scheme of operations:—

Sir C. Warren
appointed
Governor of
Griqualand.

1. To drive the rebels out of Herbert district as far as the Vaal river and capture Douglas, thus pacifying the whole of the territory east of the Vaal, and securing Hopetown.
2. To attack and drive out the rebels on the Kaap range, and capture Campbell and Griquatown, and liberate all the western portion of Griqualand West.
3. To relieve Kuruman and drive the rebels from Bechuanaland.*

His plans.

On assuming control he found himself in command of the following troops: One battery Canadian artillery, two companies 8th battalion Imperial Yeomanry, four companies 19th battalion Imperial Yeomanry, eight companies Duke of Edinburgh's

* Sir Charles Warren's report.

Own Volunteer Rifles, one company Warren's Scouts.* To these were subsequently added a detachment of Royal Munster Fusiliers mounted infantry, a section of Cape artillery, and a company of Cape Town Highlanders.

May 15th,
1900.
He takes the
field.

This force Sir Charles Warren gradually collected at his base at Belmont; and by May 15th he considered that he was strong enough to carry out the first part of his plans. Sending forward half a battalion of the Duke of Edinburgh's Volunteer Rifles to take up a position at Rooipan, he himself followed three days later with one company Imperial Yeomanry, two guns Canadian artillery, thirty police, and the detachment of the Royal Munster Fusiliers mounted infantry. It was reported that Douglas was occupied by about three hundred or four hundred Boers, who could readily be reinforced from Campbell and its vicinity. By a night march made on the 20th, Sir Charles Warren turned the flank of the Boer position on the Kuki Hills, and evaded a concealed entrenchment on the bank of the Vaal which commanded the direct road by which he had been expected to approach. After a few rounds from the artillery, the enemy fled, leaving wagons, Cape carts, personal effects, and ammunition in the laager, besides a considerable number of cattle. Douglas itself was occupied without opposition. In collecting the enemy's cattle a patrol of the Yeomanry had a skirmish the same afternoon on the west of the Vaal, having an officer wounded.

After the capture of Douglas, the country east of the Vaal being now clear of rebels, Sir Charles Warren was able to proceed with the second part of his scheme. The enemy had been reinforced from Griquatown and Campbell, and for a time held a strong position about two and a half miles to the west of Douglas, but evacuated it on the approach of two columns brought against them on the 24th from different directions by Sir C. Warren. Owing to deficiency in transport, it was impossible to make any further advance, and Sir Charles Warren

* These scouts, in number about thirty, were chiefly loyal Dutchmen, who, either personally or through their relations, had known Sir Charles Warren during his service in Griqualand some years previously.

remained about five miles west of Douglas. On the 26th, however, he was able to move to a farm called Faber's Put, where there was a good water supply, about twelve miles from Douglas in the direction of Campbell. Here he determined to collect all his forces, with a view to advancing on Campbell by way of Tweefontein. But he was still much hampered by lack of transport; and, indeed, the difficulty of bringing up reserves of food was such that on the 28th there was only one day's supply in hand. On that day a reconnaissance was made for several miles in the direction of Campbell, and some shots were exchanged with the enemy, who everywhere retired. On the 29th a convoy of provisions arrived at Faber's Put, and Sir Charles Warren now prepared to continue his forward movement. In this he was anticipated by the action of the enemy, who took the offensive first.

Surrounded by thick scrub, Sir C. Warren's position at Faber's Put was bounded by low ridges to the north-east and west; and the extent of its front, which faced northwards, was marked by two farmhouses eight hundred yards apart. A shallow valley, trending towards the Vaal river, fell southward from the front between the comparatively high plateaux on the right and left. In this depression lay a garden of fruit trees, and near its northern end was situated the water supply. Most of the infantry were bivouacked near the farmhouse on the right flank, with Sir C. Warren's Headquarters. The men of the Intelligence branch, Warren's Scouts, and the remainder of the infantry were at the north-west farmhouse on the left; the Yeomanry and artillery occupied some kraals in the garden near the water supply, that is, slightly in rear of the rest. The front and flanks were covered by infantry outposts, and the Yeomanry furnished piquets on the high ground to the south-east and south-west. The enemy having concentrated from various quarters to the number of five hundred to six hundred men at Campbell on the night of the 29th of May, their Commandants determined to attack Faber's Put from three sides in the early morning of the 30th. One party, under Forster, composed of men from the northern part of Hay and Barkly West districts,

The Boers
decide to
attack him.

was to attack the Headquarters, farmhouse and infantry bivouac. Its first shots were to be the signal to a second party under De Villiers, formed of picked marksmen taken from the country about Campbell and Griquatown, which was then to make its way into the garden from the east, and attack the Yeomanry and artillery. A third division under Venter, composed of men from Postmasburg, was to take possession of the western ridge, and fire into the kraals and artillery bivouac. This programme was begun by a combined movement from the north-east, passing round and to the east of the British position, the two first-named detachments breaking off as they arrived opposite to their points of attack, while the third, by a wide détour to the south, made for the western ridge.

May 30th,
1900.
The attack at
Faber's Put.

At 5.30 on the morning of the 30th the blow fell. Immediately after reveillé, and before it was yet light, a sudden burst of musketry from the east directed upon the Headquarters and the infantry camp, forced the piquets, which were buried in the thick bush, to fall back. The Volunteers were at once under arms, and two companies with a Maxim gun, under Captain G. Twycross, hurried out in the direction of the firing. One company moved to hold the front and north, the other was kept in reserve. The Boers had made their way through the bush to within 250 yards, and were for pushing on when they were encountered by the two companies of Volunteers, who met them with so much determination that they were speedily driven back to the eastern ridge and over the bushy plain beyond. The shooting at this point, which was very heavy and well directed, ceased about 6 a.m., when Sir C. Warren rode to see that the Yeomanry were on the alert, and the artillery ready for action as soon as there should be sufficient light. On approaching the camp of these units he and his staff were assailed by heavy fire at short range, which wounded both his aides-de-camp, and killed the horse of his chief staff officer. It was clear that the Boers had occupied part of the garden, and Sir C. Warren directed the reserve company of the Volunteers, with all the other infantry at hand, and the Maxim gun, to fire upon the garden and particularly upon its nearer

edges. After ten minutes' fusilade he ordered Captain W. V. Simkins with half a company to charge. This party ran upon the garden ; but before they could close the enemy fled, followed by the fire of the artillery which came into action beyond the garden. In a few minutes more the whole attack was over.

On the western ridge the chief success of Venter's band was the stampeding of all the horses of the Yeomanry and some of the artillery. Whilst the Boers fired at long range into the camp, some of their more daring men pushed forward and lined a stone-walled cemetery about six hundred yards to the west of the large kraal in which the horses were enclosed. The frightened animals surged up against the wall of the kraal, broke it down and scattered in all directions. It was noticed that few but the English horses belonging to the Yeomanry stampeded ; most of the Cape and Hungarian horses did not stray from camp. The Yeomanry then became closely engaged ; and eventually, with the assistance of Lieutenant-Colonel S. Hughes and such men as he could collect, drove Venter from the cemetery and his position on the western ridge. In advancing over open ground to the ridge, on which one of their piquets had stubbornly held its own throughout, the Yeomanry suffered many casualties and would have lost even more heavily had not a party under Lieutenant A. W. Huntington covered the flank by firing point blank into the garden. As the attack died away, Sir Charles Warren sent out all the available mounted men, two guns, and two companies of infantry across the veld to the north, in the hope of intercepting the retreating enemy. Unfortunately there were not now available sufficient horses for more than scouting duties, and, though some shells were fired, the pursuit was ineffectual. Every effort was then made to collect the scattered horses, a difficult task, as many had strayed widely, some for over twenty miles. Of the British troops engaged in this brief but spirited affair fifteen were killed and thirty wounded, including Colonel W. A. Spence, Duke of Edinburgh's Own Volunteer Rifles, killed, and four officers wounded. The losses of the Boers were undoubtedly heavy. Thirteen were left dead on the field, and several severely wounded were taken prisoners.

It was subsequently reported that, altogether, at least seventy were killed and wounded.

Its effect on
the rebellion.

The action at Faber's Put was a fortunate occurrence for Sir Charles Warren; for it solved a problem which was about to present some difficulty. To have himself attacked the Boers in their positions at Campbell and Griquatown would have been a costly manœuvre. That his opponents adopted the unexpected and unusual course of themselves taking the offensive was due to their belief that they only had untried and unsteady troops to deal with. Their mistake, with the serious loss which it involved, had a far-reaching effect, practically deciding the fate of the rebellion, and causing its sudden collapse. On the same day as this action four companies of Paget's Horse arrived at Schmidt Drift, twenty-four miles from Faber's Put. Of these two were brought on to Faber's Put, as was also the garrison that had been left at Douglas. During the next few days Sir C. Warren was fully occupied in accumulating the food and transport necessary to further operations.

Adye in the
Prieska
district.

In connection with Sir Charles Warren's operations north of the Orange river, record must here be made of the action taken by Colonel J. Adye in the Prieska district. By order of the C.S.O., Lines of Communication, on May 19th Adye had consulted with Sir C. Warren how he could most usefully assist that general in his forthcoming operations in Griqualand West. He was informed that this could best be done by clearing the rebels from the country on the north bank of the Orange river for thirty miles north of Prieska, or as far north as Kheis, if sufficient force was available. Adye, having intelligence of the presence of Boer commandos opposite Koegas Pont, and at Groot Drink, decided to move down the river; and, on May 22nd, he marched from Prieska with four guns 44th battery Royal Field artillery, one company Gloucestershire mounted infantry, and a detachment of Nesbitt's Horse. On arrival at Drachoender, he learned that the Boers had moved from Groot Drink to Kheis, had sent patrols across the river, and had done some mischief. He therefore determined to march on Kheis, and drive them from the river at that point. He considered that he would then be

at the nearest point on the river to the Kuruman and Langeberg districts, and would be able to threaten the retreat of rebel commandos along the river, either above him or below. He left Drachoender on the 25th, and was followed by the Lancashire Imperial Yeomanry, also by the Warwickshire Imperial Yeomanry, which he had ordered to join him from Kenhart. On the 26th Stof Kraal, a farm on the Orange river, a few miles above Kheis, was reached; and on the 27th Adye was able to reconnoitre the enemy's position, and to form his plan of attack. The rebel laager at Kheis was situated exactly opposite the drift on the north bank of the Orange river, which was here four hundred yards wide. The banks were covered with high trees; in mid-stream lay a large and thickly wooded island, to be crossed in passing from one bank to the other. To have forced this drift in face of an enemy holding the further bank, and perhaps the island, would have been almost impossible for Adye's small force. Fortunately it was ascertained that there was another drift six miles higher up the river at Tesebe, which was not strongly held. Adye, therefore, determined to force a passage at the Tesebe drift with his mounted troops, while his artillery shelled the laager from the opposite bank at Kheis. On the morning of the 28th, he marched from Stof Kraal concealed by the trees that line the river bank. The 44th battery took up a position on the left bank, opposite the rebel laager, escorted by the Warwickshire Yeomanry, who joined the force after a rapid march from Kenhart just as the guns prepared for action. The remainder of the troops were hidden opposite Tesebe Drift.

May 28th,
1900.
He crosses the
Orange at
Tesebe Drift.

As soon as the artillery opened fire musketry was directed upon the enemy's piquet at Tesebe Drift, which, startled by this attack and by the sound of the guns, offered such feeble resistance that Adye was able to cross without any loss. He then moved swiftly down the right bank towards the laager, and found that the shells of the artillery had forced the enemy to evacuate it, and to fall back upon some low, bushy hills to the north. Here the Boers showed every intention of making a stand, and Adye detached the Lancashire Yeomanry, under Captain L. H. Jones, to get round to their left rear, holding

back his main attack until this movement was completed. The artillery fire was diverted from the laager to the enemy's new position; and, when Jones closed in and Adye himself advanced, the Boers found themselves enclosed and under long-range artillery fire. Though taken by surprise, they made a determined resistance, under the leadership of a foreigner named Hermann, who was killed. Finally, they broke and fled, abandoning their laager and all that it contained, including one hundred rebel women and children,* a few loyalist prisoners, arms, correspondence, about 30,000 rounds of ammunition, with wagons, carts, baggage and plunder from neighbouring farms. A very large number of cattle and live stock were also taken. The broken nature of the ground and the smallness of his force, prevented Adye from making any effective pursuit.

The affair at
Kheis Drift.

Whilst these events were in progress, a misadventure had occurred at Kheis Drift. There the officer in command, seeing that Adye was in full possession of the enemy's laager, and in action beyond it, desired Major J. A. Orr-Ewing, Warwickshire Yeomanry, to ascertain if the drift was practicable, and, if so, to send over and communicate with Adye. In response to a call for volunteers, Lieutenant J. S. Forbes and Corporal A. Baxter attempted to cross to the island in mid-stream. But some of the refugees from the laager were there in hiding, and, at a range of not more than 150 yards, they opened fire upon the daring men, killing their horses. With difficulty the two regained the left bank, where the corporal fell mortally wounded. Orr-Ewing and Private E. P. Ashley, who went to his assistance, were also struck down; and, as they were still being shot at, Civil Surgeon Dun, Lieutenant C. S. Paulet and eight non-commissioned officers and men of the Warwickshire Yeomanry ran forward to help them. They, too, came under a deadly fire, and all, except Lieutenant Paulet and two men, were hit. Major Orr-Ewing, Corporal Baxter and Private W. F. Lane were killed. The rest of the Yeomanry had lined the bank to cover this

* "I was unaware that the laager contained women and children or I should not have shelled it, but fortunately none were hit, having been quickly hidden in a spruit or gully."—Colonel Adye's Report.

attempt, but the enemy were so well concealed that the fire had no effect, nor could the guns be brought to bear on the island. Colonel Adye, fully occupied on the right bank, knew nothing of all this. When he heard of the presence of the enemy on the island, he sent one of his prisoners captured in the laager to try to induce these men to lay down their arms, hoping to avoid loss of life in ejecting them. Six rebels then surrendered, but several others succeeded in escaping.

The total losses to Adye's force in the attack on the laager and at the drift were three officers and five other ranks killed ; three officers and fourteen other ranks wounded. The bodies of the Boer leader and some others were found, and several wounded (some mortally) prisoners were taken. The result of this action was that the whole course of the Orange river was, for the time being, free from rebellion. There was no further disturbance till early in 1901, when the thinly inhabited districts again fell into a state of unrest through the action of raiding commandos.

Effect of the
action on the
rebellion.

On June 3rd, Sir C. Warren recommenced his forward movement, advancing by Tweefontein and Knoffelfontein to Campbell, which he occupied on the 5th. There were considerable hostile forces in his front ; but he was careful to turn all positions that offered opportunity for defence, and the commandos everywhere fell back before him, their rearguard evacuating Campbell only an hour before the British column approached. At Campbell large numbers of the rebels surrendered, giving up arms, horses and equipment. Sir C. Warren was here delayed till the 7th waiting for supplies, but he was able to occupy Griquatown with an advance guard on the 7th, and to go there himself on the 8th. After this date the General was principally engaged in arranging for the effective occupation of the country by establishing garrisons at various points. On June 20th, De Villiers' commando, to the number of two hundred, laid down their arms at Koning ; and nothing remained but to bring the country into a settled condition under martial law, before handing it over to Civil Government. On the 24th, Kuruman was occupied, and measures were taken to bring

Sir C. Warren
completes his
plans

the normal number of police into the district from the lines of communication.

In July, much of Sir Charles Warren's force was removed for other service, and as his task was successfully completed, and the districts in which he had been employed had passed under the control of the O.C. Lines of Communication, he returned to Cape Town.

And returns to
Cape Town.

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