CHAPTER XV.

EVENTS IN CAPE COLONY*

(Continued from Chapter XIII.).

SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER, 1901.

That Smuts had been so long redeeming the pledges given to De Wet in January† and February bore witness to the extreme difficulty under which the Boers were now waging war, for there was not to be found amongst the commandos a leader more sanguine and ardent than he. His promise of co-operation had been ratified four months later at the historic meeting on the Waterval.‡ Of the several plans of campaign born of that conference the participation of the Transvaalers in the invasion of Cape Colony was one of the most definite. De la Rey, the upholder of the cause in the Western Transvaal, was originally charged with the mission, and he left the council revolving schemes of shepherding the manifold but scattered sympathies of the British colony. Smuts was only to precede him with a small force for reconnoitring purposes, and to discover the hiding-places of disloyalty. But De la Rey found elsewhere full scope for his tremendous activity, and in the multitude of adventures in his own districts had neither need nor time to seek others beyond the frontier. To Smuts alone of the Transvaal Generals fell the duty of keeping compact with the Free Staters across the Orange, and, as has been seen, they waited long for his appearance.

* See map No. 63. † See Chapter IV., page 75.
‡ See Chapter XII., page 206.
EVENTS IN CAPE COLONY.

Unlike De Wet, six months earlier, he had kept the secret of his plan of campaign. His start from the Gatsrand and his difficult passage through the Orange River Colony* had not attracted undue interest, at any rate from his opponents, for neither his plans nor his striking personality were as yet revealed. Yet both were dangerous. With many of his fellows Smuts shared the patriotism, the keen observation, the tactical opportunism, the mingled daring and caution which kept the cause of the Republics alive long after the States themselves were dead. But his observation was enlarged by a certain statesmanship and prescience which marked him out from those whose vision was bounded by the line of kopjes within artillery range. His patriotism was remarkable chiefly for the tinge of romance and enthusiasm which made it glow amidst the somewhat sombre prepossession of the majority of his fellow-countrymen. Sharing to the full their inextinguishable hope and bitterness, his hope rose to a higher and brighter flame, and his animosity against his country's enemies was ennobled by a species of soldiership or chivalry to which all but a few of his compatriots were contemptuous, or strangers. Such was the man who, already much exhausted, arrived on the left bank of the Orange river at dawn on September 4th, 1901. With him returned Fouché with a band of about 100 men; another party of the same strength had preceded them two days earlier and joined Myburg, who was facing Monro, east of Rhodes. Kritzinger, left at Zastron, was to follow shortly.

Smuts found affairs in Cape Colony in the position described in Chapter XIII. In the south, Scheepers and Theron maintained the cause almost within sight of the sea, and with good hopes of success, for they were ransacking the most fruitful fields of disloyalty in all the colony. The north-west was still harried by roving bands, to whom Maritz had not yet succeeded in giving a definite aim. Elsewhere, the capture of Lotter and the northward retreat of most of the other commandos had

* See Chapter XIV.
practically demolished the Boer campaign. Of the difficulties which had arisen between the British Commander-in-Chief and the Cape Government, Smuts may have had no knowledge. The question was, as before, on the subject of martial law, especially at the ports, and it is sufficient to say that whilst doubling Lord Kitchener's difficulties in dealing with his anomalous and complicated campaign in Cape Colony, it exasperated those who might have done much to remove them. The Commander-in-Chief, with his thousand pre-occupations at Headquarters, French with all his energy in the field, and at the capital the Governor, Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson, striving with tact and industry to keep the equipoise between the insistent demands of the military and the dread of suspended animation on the part of the Legislature, all these thus found themselves confused and weakened at a moment when in the absence of such obstacles Cape Colony might have been swept clear.

Smuts plunged at once into difficulties. Though his designs on the colony had not long been known, the warning was enough. The three days following on his passage of the river, days which he spent in unnecessarily cautious fencing with the few local troops who stood in his way, saw the convergence of six bodies of troops towards his line of march. On September 6th Sir J. French ordered the column of Lieut.-Colonel B. Doran from Cradock and the 17th Lancers from Steynsburg both to Molteno, Gorringe from Venterstad to Stormberg. Pilcher's column, composed of two forces under Lieut.-Colonel H. d'A. P. Taylor and Major K. E. Lean, which had followed Smuts from the Orange River Colony, was detrained at Burghersdorp on the 7th. Monro, who was at Dordrecht, hurried out to cover Barkly East. Whilst these movements took place Smuts, leaving Fouché and Myburg behind in the Rhodes district, came southward, still skirmishing with levies of which he greatly exaggerated the strength and importance. On the 8th he was east of Dordrecht, and here, rather than attempt the Storm Bergen, which he imagined to be full of troops, he decided to break westward across the railway into the interior of the colony.
Up to this point Smuts had evinced nothing either of his wonted fire or tactical ability. Ill-informed, and not yet acquainted with the country, chastened by his experiences in the Orange River Colony, and over- heedful, perhaps, of tales of hair-breath escapes told by the recent invaders whom he had met rejoicing at their safety on the right bank of the Orange, he saw British troops everywhere, and confessed himself to be "completely hemmed in" and "practically hopeless"* of a situation which would have daunted not at all one of the seasoned marauders of the colony. Although he was in reality by no means surrounded, the place and moment adopted by Smuts for his turn westward might well have carried him straight into a cluster of columns. At Allemans Poort was Gorringe, with Taylor in line with him at Stryd Poort, on one side, and Monro at Vogel Vlei on the other, whilst Pilcher at Burghersdorp and B. Doran at Molteno formed a strong second line. Nevertheless, on September 10th Smuts made an attempt on the very centre of this combination, was repulsed by Gorringe and Taylor, and next day was caught in retreat by Monro, who attacked him with five squadrons and a gun. This force the Boers were able to hold in check until dark, when they retired northward, leaving Monro, who had lost ten killed and wounded, to bivouac on the Holle Spruit. Now Smuts exhibited one of those sudden miracles of judgment and endurance which had so often set at nought the closest meshes woven by surrounding columns. Monro in the course of his pursuit had opened a narrow interval between his left flank and the railway, to fill which B. Doran was marching eastward from Molteno. In a few hours the Sterkstroom—Dordrecht railway would be barred; but before the gap closed Smuts, though he had already fought continually for twelve hours, led his force at full speed between Monro and Doran, crossed the branch railway near Halseston, then rushing south-westward through a storm of rain, broke over the main line at Putters Kraal station and did not draw rein until, at daylight on September 11th, he stood on the heights of the

* Report to the Boer Headquarters by Assistant-Commandant-General J. C. Smuts.
Wildschuts Berg, more than forty miles from his starting-point. A party of twelve of his burghers who lost their way during the march were no more seen; but like those fragments which are cast off by certain organisms, they began a separate existence, and even gathered around themselves a small fresh commando. Their loss was more than counter-balanced by the arrival in Smuts’ laager of a band of local rebels, and these men, with their intimate knowledge of the country, made possible the certainty and celerity of movement to which Smuts was shortly to owe his safety.

Lieut.-General Sir J. French, who had been at Dordrecht, returned to Stormberg on finding his net empty, and made fresh dispositions. He had now to deal with a double problem. In the north Fouché and Myburg were too dangerous a threat to the river guards to be ignored, and French ordered both Monro and Pilcher with his twin command to operate against them from Dordrecht. The pursuit of Smuts was committed to Haig, who was given the columns of Gorringe and B. Doran, and the 17th Lancers, which had been railed to Tarkastad, Scobell also being ordered from Graaff Reinet to Cradock to block the west.

On September 15th Smuts made a short westerly movement to a neighbouring height, Bamboes Hoek. There he was engaged on the 16th by Gorringe, who with B. Doran had hurried after him from Putters Kraal. Smuts fell back slightly southward, intending to make for Maraisburg. The 17th Lancers, relieved by Doran at Tarkastad, had been posted in squadrons along the Elands river, less with the object of denying the drifts which were now unfordable from the incessant rain, than of blocking the southern exits of the mountains at Elands Poort and the adjacent passes. But Smuts was determined to gain his freedom. The numerical weakness of each particular detachment on the Elands river practically assured him of victory in an attack on any one of them, and when on the morning of the 17th he heard that the stream had fallen slightly, he sent his men forward against the nearest post. This was at Modderfontein, where “C.” squadron 17th Lancers, under Captain
V. S. Sandeman, 130 strong, with a 9-pr. gun and a Maxim, was disposed on a long double-topped kopje which lay in the angle formed by the left bank of the Elands and a small tributary spruit which joined it from the east. The kopje faced northward, looking across a gentle slope to where, about 2,000 yards distant, the river made a short bend eastward parallel to the face of the position. Another thousand yards across this bend, that is, about 3,000 from his position, Sandeman had placed a post in observation of the mouth of Elands Poort. In rear of the kopje he had pitched his camp, behind which again, almost on the margin of the tributary streamlet, stood Modderfontein farmhouse. Four miles to the southward was the camp of another squadron, "A.," of the 17th Lancers. The chief defect of Sandeman's position consisted in the proximity to its left flank of a commanding hill, which rose some 800 yards distant on the other side of the river. Until mid-day on the morning of the 17th a fog obscured the encircling hills, and taking advantage of this, Smuts first surrounded Modderfontein at a distance too great for discovery by the cavalry patrols, who at noon reported "all clear." The earliest warning of the enemy's approach came from the observation post on the right bank of the river about 12:30 p.m., and Sandeman at once sent forward a troop to reconnoitre. The patrol duly gained touch with a mounted band to the northward, but the strange horsemen were seen to be wearing khaki clothing, and were accepted at once as the forerunners of Gorringe's column, which was known to be marching from that direction. A volley from the saddle which killed two troopers and a few horses revealed the truth, and both the patrol and the observation post were quickly borne back into camp. The Boers then crowded along the bank of the Elands river, where, as described, it curved to face Sandeman's position, and opening a hot fire from the bushes, extended southwards, and occupied also the above-mentioned hill on the right bank, thus gaining a dominating fire position within medium range of the kopje. The cavalry replied with vigour, and though the Maxim soon jammed and the fire was too severe for the service of the 9-pr., the Boers were effectually held, not only in

**EVENTS IN CAPE COLONY.**

VOL. IV. 18
front, but on the right flank, where the narrow eastern end of the kopje fell directly to the bush-covered plain. All seemed to be going well with the squadron when a misfortune occurred against which no care or courage could have guarded.

About 1 p.m., when the action in front was at its height, a party of horsemen were seen approaching the farm on the southern foot of the kopje. These, like the surprisers of the patrol an hour before, wore tunics and breeches of khaki, and as they were riding straight from the direction of the camp of "A." squadron so near to the southward, there was no man on the position but imagined them to be comrades who had been brought to the scene by the sound of the firing. They were, in fact, a strong body whom Smuts had sent round under cover of his diversions on the opposite side, and their unimpeded approach sealed the fate of the already fully occupied squadron on the hill. Gaining the cover of the farm enclosures the burghers first poured an annihilating fire into the backs of the defence, then rushed in to close quarters. A handful of men whom Sandeman led in person to check the attack were all shot down, the officer himself being wounded. The rest fixed bayonets and defended themselves stubbornly until overcome by the superior numbers which fell upon them from all sides. When the kopje passed into the enemy's hands four officers and twenty-eight men had been killed and two officers and fifty-one men wounded, or three-quarters of the number actually on the position, for some of the patrols sent out in the early morning had not returned. The Boers, who had lost about thirty killed and wounded, then proceeded to destroy the camp and wagons. At that moment "A." squadron, whose commander, Captain N. T. Nickalls, had only been informed about 1 p.m. of Sandeman's situation, came in sight moving at full speed from the south. Making straight for the key of the position, Nickalls crossed the river, which was now just passable, and attacked and took the hill on the right bank. The effect was immediate. The Boers hurriedly made off towards Elands Poort, leaving the guns untouched, but driving before them three wagons containing dead and wounded, and all the surviving horses of the
squadron, of which half had been already killed before the enemy closed upon the kopje.

Thus turned back, and finding himself still more effectually barred from the south by a westerly extension by B. Doran from Tarkastad, Smuts, with Gorringe in pursuit, strove to gain Maraisburg. But the local fencibles from that town denied all approach to the Bamboes mountains, and when on September 18th Doran closed up to Vlakpoort, the 17th Lancers to Kriegars Kraal, and Gorringe from Wildschuts Berg up to the head of the Elands river, Smuts appeared to be in a quandary. But by a manœuvre as bold and prompt as his recent feat at Dordrecht he quickly led his commando into the open. Espying the narrowing gaps between the columns, he wriggled between Gorringe and Doran on the night of the 19th, and raced southward without a halt for the Winter Berg, which he attempted to traverse on the 21st. But again the local forces turned him back, this time with loss, and doubling westward Smuts retired into the hills about Elands Drift on the Cradock—Tarkastad road. Scobell immediately sallied out from Cradock against him, the pursuing columns approached, and once more Smuts saw himself being surrounded. Once more, however, he achieved salvation by his resolution and the skill of his guides. On the night of September 23rd, when all but hemmed in, his rebel allies led him over the Winter Berg by an almost unknown bridle-path east of Quaggas Nek. A hundred horses succumbed by the way, but the commando, which had amply horsed itself by the success at Modderfontein, moved at incredible speed upon Adelaide. Then was resumed a chase such as had seldom awakened even the scourcd counties of Cape Colony. Beaten back by the skillfully disposed local forces, first from Adelaide, next from Seymour, then from Carlisle Bridge on the Great Fish river, Smuts ran fast up the left bank of that stream and burst across the railway at Sheldon. Gorringe, now with both his own column and the 17th Lancers, followed hard, and on the last day of September came up with the band, which had swung southward, at Driefontein in the Zuurberg. A sharp skirmish resulted in Smuts again disappearing southward into the
Uitenhage district, Gorringe following on October 1st. Meanwhile B. Doran and Scobell, entrained by French’s orders at Sheldon and Cookhouse respectively, steamed past the Zuurberg for Mount Stewart and Klipplaat on the Graaff Reinet line, in order to throw themselves between Smuts and the west, a notable use of the railway. Smuts, however, clung to the Zuurberg, his movements being for some hours crippled from a curious circumstance. Some wild trees, bearing attractive but deadly fruit, lured him and his men to eat, whereupon Smuts and half his commando were attacked by illness, from which they had barely recovered when Gorringe’s appearance necessitated a hasty move. With some of his suffering burghers tied to their horses, Smuts then fled northward, to be overtaken and driven on with loss on the morning of October 3rd at Brakfontein, where a dismounted rush by the 17th Lancers destroyed one of his piquets. Next day Gorringe moved into Darlington, whence, in conjunction with the other columns, he so harassed the commando that on the 6th Smuts, who endeavoured for reasons which will appear later to gain an opening towards Port Elizabeth, divided his force, sending half under Commandant Van der Venter towards Somerset East, whilst he himself with Commandant Bouwers and the rest made for the Graaff Reinet railway, which he reached and crossed near Marais Siding on October 8th. Scobell, who had been detached in pursuit of Smuts with the 17th Lancers from Barroe on the 6th, passed through Marais a few hours behind him, hearing that the quarry had run by the north of Aberdeen. On the 10th and 11th Smuts was traced through Zeekoe Gat and Camdeboo to Sneeuw; but Scobell, though he travelled almost without a rest by day or night, was still behind the Boer, who was now reported to be on the Murraysburg border to the north-west. Another night march on the 12th, the third in four days, brought the column upon a deserted laager. Smuts had now turned southward, and was flying down the Kariega River valley. For four days the hunt drove on, a number of foundered horses and a few stragglers falling into Scobell’s hands. On October 16th Smuts doubled westward near the junction of the Kariega and Salt rivers, and
striking across towards Prince Albert, fell in with a certain Commandant S. Pypers, who was at the head of the force lately commanded by Scheepers, that leader having vanished from the scene in a manner soon to be described. Pypers was at this moment occupied in evading Crabbe, who was seeking him from Beaufort West, and as Scobell was now compelled to put into Prince Albert (October 20th) for supplies, Crabbe undertook the pursuit of the combined commandos of Smuts and Pypers, following them down the Kouka river, then through Kandos Poort and over the Groote Zwarte Bergen into the valley of the Olifants. The Boers then turned westward, and Crabbe, moving on Oudtshoorn, combined with Kavanagh from Ladismith and the local troops extended from Willowmore to Prince Albert in an attempt to surround them. Incessant exertions along the Groote and Olifants rivers during the last week of October were brought to nothing by the commandos breaking out westward. On October 31st Smuts, with Pypers, after being chased up to Constable by Kavanagh, crossed the Cape railway at that place, and striking northward made for Sutherland and Calvinia. There he became absorbed in a fresh scheme of aggression which, slowly maturing under a strong and able leader, had influenced for weeks past the movements of every Boer leader in the midlands and south. But before describing the resulting events, it is necessary to pick up several threads which, having their origin in other parts, will be found to form part of the fabric of the new campaign in the west.

First, then, to trace Van der Venter after his parting with Smuts on October 8th. To all appearances this commandant had been abandoned to a certain fate. The terrible marching had all but exhausted his horses, and for the first four days of his isolation he circled desperately about Jansenville, pursued by B. Doran and by Lukin of the Cape Mounted Riflemen, who had succeeded Gorringe on the transference of the latter to a command in Egypt. MacAndrew, with a body of Cape Colonists, lay at Pearston, ready to turn the commando back into the arms of the columns; and when on the roth the local force from Somerset East joined hands with MacAndrew by extending upon
strong positions along the mountains between Pearston and their own town, Van der Venter's fate looked to be sealed. But the Boer, bearing with the unerring tactical instinct of his race upon the line of least resistance, staggered up the valley of the Vogel river, and on the 12th suddenly presented himself before the Somerset East contingent, who with scarcely a show of resistance surrendered not only the passes in their charge, but their persons, horses, arms and equipment to the delighted commandant. Replenishing bandoliers, and mounted on fresh horses, the commando sped on across the mountains, and on the 15th reached Garstlands Kloof, west of Cradock, whilst behind it MacAndrew, his rôle reversed, faced about; Lukin was hurried ahead by train to Letskraal Siding between Graaff Reinet and Middleburg, and B. Doran on the other flank pursued directly by way of Cradock. But Van der Venter had no intention of losing his so unexpectedly bestowed freedom. Drawing Lukin farther northward by advancing through Var Kens Kop and Spitz Kop to a position threatening the railway at Roode Hoogte, he suddenly (October 18th) doubled back and dashed westward across the line at the very spot just quitted by Lukin. Doran was then ordered to stand on guard at Letskraal Siding, and Lukin, pressing on in pursuit, overtook the enemy, and by a night march on the 20th surprised him in laager seven miles south-west of New Bethesda. The commando barely escaped destruction, and flying in confusion, left fourteen prisoners and many horses in the hands of Lukin. Continuing the chase, Lukin came in sight of Van der Venter again on October 24th at Elands Poort, south-west of Richmond. Three days before this, it will be remembered, Scobell had come in from his hunting of Smuts to Prince Albert, whence on October 21st he was pushed up to Beaufort West by Sir J. French, who foresaw Van der Venter's probable course. On receiving Lukin's report, French ordered Scobell still farther north to Victoria West Road, where he concentrated on the 25th facing Van der Venter, who was now moving cautiously upon the railway. During the day Scobell was informed that the Boers were making for Biesjes Poort. A night march to that place brought him to
close quarters at 5 a.m. on the 26th, when an attack, somewhat prematurely delivered, turned Van der Venter back to the south-east. False information now misled Scobell, who took a line of pursuit too much to the west, whereupon Van der Venter, clinging obstinately to his determination to cross the line, dashed northward again and made for Victoria West. Lukin had meanwhile marched into Biesjes Poort, his horses and supplies alike exhausted. Not until the 29th could he recover mobility enough to follow with 350 men; then Van der Venter, easily avoiding him, made good his point and his crossing at Victoria West, and like Smuts steered his course with fresh hopes towards the bestirring west.

As he struck the line a small band under Commandant Malan and Judge Hugo, which had joined him during the flight from New Bethesda, parted company again and made for Willowmore. This party had been led by Hugo into the colony on September 11th and, after being reinforced by Malan with the remnants of his veterans left from the adventures of the four previous months, had fought and stalked its way southward, surviving a host of narrow escapes at the hands of the cavalry from De Aar, the troops of Lund's column, and the garrisons of the blockhouses upon the railways. At one time not a burgher of the party remained horsed; at another all were in hiding in kloofs and caves; indeed, did space permit, how much might be written of the romantic adventures and the extraordinary tenacity of the score or so of weather-beaten riflemen who greeted Van der Venter's worn band, to vanish as suddenly as they had appeared. Nor is such an account willingly foregone, for it would depict in unmistakable colours the character of a race of fighting men of whom it is safe to say that their primitive peculiarities will soon be forgotten. Not alone of the soldier peoples of the world will the Boers, absorbed in the deep, calm waters of the *pax britannica*, invoke memory alone for the violent currents which gave to them character, and to their opponents a task of such enormous difficulty that rival nations, which began by gibing at a bungled task, ended by thanking fortune that it was not theirs to accomplish. The amazing
commingling of qualities which marked the burgher on commando, all guided by eyes keen as those of eagles to discern everything but foredoomed failure, nowhere is this more to be kept in mind than in studying the necessarily inanimate category of operations which must serve to compose the history of the campaign in Cape Colony, for only thus is the magnitude of the task, and the devotion of those who laboured at it, to be grasped.

There were few Boer leaders whose liberty might become more dangerous than Malan. Possessing an intimate knowledge of the country, a knowledge gained in innumerable adventures, not one-half of which can be referred to, in well-nigh every county of Cape Colony, Malan had in addition the peculiar faculty of appearing after every disaster with a fresh following many leagues distant from where he had seemed to have been crushed out of existence. He was besides a notorious wrecker of trains, little less dreaded than Hindon in the Northern Transvaal. French accordingly determined not to lose sight of him, and observing him separate from Van der Venter at the railway, ordered B. Doran from Willowmore to keep touch with the band, which numbered no more than twenty-five men. At dawn on November 6th Doran closed with it, forty miles to the west of Willowmore. Malan had now been strengthened by a junction with Lategan, another wandering marauder of the same type as himself, and the forces of both were securely ensconced in the bed of a spruit. They soon made off, however, though not before B. Doran, who rode at the head of his men, had been wounded by their first volley, his horse being killed. Lieut.-Colonel W. Doran, the President of the Military Court at Graaff Reinet, was then summoned to replace his namesake in command of the column, which pressed after Malan, Hugo and Lategan in a north-westerly direction. Like the rest of their comrades, these parties now hastened their steps towards the west. Passing through Prince Albert, W. Doran vainly pursuing, on November 13th they crossed the Cape Town railway above Fraserburg Road station, and ten days later were deep in Sutherland, where for the moment they must be left.
EVENTS IN CAPE COLONY.

To retrace Scheepers and Theron, the harriers of the south, it is necessary to revert to the early days of September, when the Ladismith and Oudtshoorn districts were crossed and recrossed by their tracks and those of Beatson’s leash of columns in pursuit.

Theron may be briefly accounted for. It will be remembered how, on September 2nd, his descent upon Oudtshoorn had brought Kavanagh to Willowmore whilst the rest of Beatson’s columns devoted themselves to Scheepers. On the 4th Kavanagh moved upon Oudtshoorn, whereupon Theron, forcing the passage of the Attaquas mountains by Robinson Pass, drew on towards Mossel Bay. But he was not destined to appear in a British port, though the report that he had achieved this crowning feat delighted for a moment the Boer Headquarters. Caught by Kavanagh at Brandwacht on the 9th, Theron was driven westward over the Gouritz river at Otters Hoek, running in such haste that he dropped fifty-two horses and much of his equipment on the road, besides losing several killed and wounded. On the 12th Kavanagh struck him again, and Theron sped on through Riversdale. On the night of the 12th a despatch for Kavanagh from Lieut.-Colonel Burke, the officer in command of the local troops in this district, fell into the hands of Theron, who gleaned from it that Heidelberg, which stood in his way, was but weakly held. Accordingly on the evening of September 13th he delivered a sharp attack on the township, which was defended by only twenty-eight men of the 4th West Yorkshire regiment, under Major Sir W. H. Mahon. Burke himself, who had already shown much promptitude and resource in the handling of his troops against Scheepers, was also present, and stoutly supported by his men, kept off Theron, and held his own until, on Kavanagh coming up from the east, the commando beat a hasty retreat, leaving several dead and wounded. Kavanagh pursued through Barrydale until the 17th, when he was forced to go into Swellendam to replenish supplies exhausted by a fortnight’s incessant marching. Alexander from Laingsburg took up the chase, but was unable to head Theron. Wyndham, too, at Prince Albert, received orders
to follow Theron; but his participation was prevented by an incident which illustrates the difficulties of campaigning in these regions. It was necessary to traverse a ravine eleven miles long, through which ran a road and a river, the former crossing the stream no fewer than twenty-three times within the defile. Soon after the column had entered, heavy rain fell, causing the water to rise so quickly that for twenty-four hours the troops were not only imprisoned but in considerable danger. On September 22nd Theron, drawn by the magnet in the west, crossed the Cape Town railway near Touws River, and disappeared into Sutherland.

On September 9th Scheepers, headed from the Cape Town railway, turned inwards to the Klein Zwart Berg, and there showed the Boer's certain signal of distress by dividing his forces. He himself, followed by Atherton, moved with 150 men towards Swellendam; his detachment, 120 strong under Van der Merwe, went northward and was promptly encountered by Crabbe from Laingsburg, who on the 10th fell upon the commando at Seven Weeks Poort, east of the Buffels river, and destroyed it. Van der Merwe himself and two others were killed and thirty-seven burghers captured at a loss to Crabbe of two officers and three men killed and wounded.

On September 12th Crabbe was at Ladismith, whence he joined in the pursuit of Scheepers down the Groote river and across the Gouritz (18th), whilst Atherton marched around by Oudtshoorn to bar the line of flight. In the entangled country lying on both sides of the Olifants river Scheepers turned and doubled for days. Theron, flying in the opposite direction, at this moment intensified Scheepers' predicament by his successful evasion of Alexander, who, with Kavanagh, was thus set free to turn upon Scheepers. It should be mentioned that the five columns in this area, namely, those of Crabbe, Alexander, Atherton, Wyndham and Kavanagh, now came under the single control of Major-General T. E. Stephenson, who had arrived at Matjesfontein on October 1st. Scheepers strove like an imprisoned panther to break through the cage of troops and precipices which held him in. Displaying infinite skill he
EVENTS IN CAPE COLONY. 285

succeeded in avoiding contact with the columns until October 5th, when Atherton, who was little less exhausted than his opponent, drove him between Barrydale and the Touws river into the arms of Kavanagh. With the loss of sixteen men and forty horses Scheepers ran for the Witte Berg, south of Matjesfontein, dropping stragglers and 150 more horses in his flight. On the 8th he lost a further sixty horses to Kavanagh, who allowed him not a moment’s respite. By the time he gained the mountains the commando was on the verge of collapse. Most of the burghers had been dismounted on the way and had disappeared into hiding. Only some fifty or sixty remained horsed, and rallying these, Scheepers, rather than remain in the dangerous vicinity of Matjesfontein, struggled across the Buffels river, hoping to get clear into Prince Albert. His prospects were not entirely desperate. Of the pursuing columns three, those of Wyndham, Kavanagh and Atherton, had now to refit, the two first at Touws River, the last-named at Montagu, preparatory to taking the field in the rapidly embroiling west. Only Alexander and Crabbe remained, and whilst the former followed behind Scheepers, Crabbe took train to Beaufort West, intending to come down upon him from the north. But now fortune dealt to Scheepers a blow more unkind than any to be feared from his foes. On the banks of the Dwyka river he fell ill with fever, and unable to ride further, was laid in Wolve Hoek farm, whilst the commando, led by Pypers, went on towards the Gamka river. On October 11th the 10th Hussars, coming up to Wolve Hoek, found the long-sought guerrilla leader delivered into their hands by a common enemy. How great a disaster to his side was this sudden termination to Scheepers’ career was confessed by President Steyn when he pronounced over the Commandant’s departed leadership the following epitaph:—“From my heart I hope that it is not true, because he is nearly indispensable to our cause. If true, we will always with gratitude think of the good and inestimable service that he has done us, and honour his name.”*

* President Steyn to Commandant Hugo, October 27th, 1901.
Meanwhile Pypers fled on, and was soon free of all his pursuers but Crabbe, for Alexander was withdrawn into Prince Albert to refit, and being granted leave of absence, was replaced in command by Kavanagh, who in his turn handed over his own column to Lieut.-Colonel C. E. Callwell, R.A. At the same time Atherton was relieved in command of his column, prior to its being broken up, by Major the Hon. H. G. Heneage (12th Lancers). Eventually, in the manner already related, Pypers attached himself to Smuts, and with him penetrated into the north-west, when Callwell took up the pursuit of both commandos in the Sutherland district.

There remain unrecorded only the operations in the north-east of Cape Colony, where Hart from Aliwal North watched the Orange river, and Pilcher, recently arrived with his two columns from the Orange River Colony, and Monro dealt with Myburg and Fouché after the departure of Smuts for the south.

On September 14th Pilcher reached Dordrecht, and was immediately strengthened by the arrival of another force, Lieut.-Colonel W. G. B. Western's, from the Orange River Colony. The commandos were still to the east of Jamestown, and Sir J. French desired that they should be pushed north-eastward, and prevented from moving across the Drakensberg into the interior of the colony. On the 17th Myburg of his own accord forwarded this plan by moving towards Barkly East and Rhodes. Pilcher then drew a line of guards over the passes from Rhodes down to Dordrecht; but before this was complete Fouché placed himself outside the barrier by crossing the mountains into Elliot county, passing within artillery range across the front of Monro, who was marching on Barkly East. On September 23rd Monro heard that Myburg had destroyed a post of local troops, killing and wounding six and taking twenty-one prisoners at Lauriston. He accordingly moved thither, and in a running fight inflicted nine casualties on Myburg, drove him east of Rhodes, and occupied that place himself on September 27th. Two days later Pilcher was recalled to the Orange River Colony. Monro, thus left alone, was ordered to draw in his detachments, in order to cover the completion of the line of blockhouses from Stormberg.
to Queenstown. Leaving 250 local troops facing the frontier at Barkly East, Monro fell back on Dordrecht on October 4th.

Meanwhile Major-General Hart had received (September 1st) from Lord Kitchener orders to fend off from the north (right) bank of the Orange river the bands which roved about the Orange River Colony watching for an opportunity to cross and add to the turmoil within Cape Colony. A modification of these instructions, sent on the 3rd, did not reach Hart in time to be acted upon. Accordingly on September 3rd and 4th Hart threw across the stream troops drawn from Western's column, Moore's mounted Connaught Rangers and a detachment of Lord Lovat's Scouts under Lieut.-Colonel the Hon. A. Murray, which he disposed at Beestkraal, Willemsfontein, Zandfontein and Quaggafontein in a series of mobile and extended drift-heads from Aliwal North round to the north of Herschel. With these he patrolled constantly towards the north, co-operating with the columns of Sir H. Rawlinson, Plumer and Thorneycroft, which were engaged in that part of the Orange River Colony. He was just too late, it will be seen, to prevent the crossing both of Smuts, who, as related, contrived to pass around his right flank between Herschel and the Basuto border on the 3rd and 4th, and of smaller bodies who circumvented the opposite flank and entered Cape Colony between Aliwal North and Bethulie. Smuts, indeed, either by skill or fortune, made his dash at the precise moment when Hart, in the act of passing his troops and transport across the difficult drifts, was powerless to turn upon him.* In front of Hart there remained Kritzinger, who was about Zastron, awaiting a chance to follow Smuts, with whom he had recently arranged a plan of campaign. Hart had by this time left no passage unguarded, and Kritzinger saw that if he were to keep his pledge to Smuts he would have to force an entrance. Accordingly he reconnoitred the river line on September 19th from Vecht Kop, a height north-east of Zastron, approaching within sight of the outposts of Lovat's Scouts, who

* See also Chapter XIV., and footnote on page 267.
held the drift-head opposite Quaggafontein. Murray, whose strength had been in any case insufficient for the proper guardianship of his allotted length of river, which included several drifts, happened at this time to be weaker than usual owing to the absence of one of his two squadrons, with a gun, which had been despatched under Major Lord Lovat to the relief of Lady Grey, that place being reported to be in danger from Smuts' descending commando. Lord Lovat had departed on the 11th, and should have rejoined about the 16th; but the rising of the river enforced a long détour to regain Quaggafontein, and on the evening of the 19th he was still on the left bank near Elands Kloof Drift, with a difficult crossing before him and his draught animals exhausted by four days' hard marching. Arranging with Lord Lovat to join forces next morning, Murray, who had visited the detachment and inspected the drift in person, returned to his camp across the river at 8 p.m., hearing from his outposts that the Boer patrols seen during the day had returned to Vecht Kop.

Murray's force on the right bank of the Orange river now consisted of one gun and 106 men. Of these more than one-third were on night duty, a party of sixteen being on guard at a drift three miles from his camp, twenty-one more on piquet and horse-guard at the camp. Ordering reveillé to be sounded at 3 a.m., Murray retired to rest with small anticipation of being attacked, for the moon would shine brightly until midnight, and the Boers, having retired to their distant haunt at Vecht Kop, had very few hours of darkness in which to be dangerous. But immediately night had fallen Kritzinger led out his burghers to attack the enfeebled post at Quaggafontein. Marching by the rays of the moon he was within striking distance just as the light failed; he then ordered his men to dismount and advance in a crescent on foot. Murray's outposts were completely surprised. Not until the Boers had penetrated to the horse-lines was a shot fired, and then a semi-circle of musketry from 400 rifles at short range called the sleepers in camp to arms and many of them to instant death. Murray and Captain the Hon. J. Forbes-Sempill (The Black Watch) did their utmost to retrieve the already
complete disaster. The colonel rallied a few men around the machine gun, which maintained a hot discharge until a bullet, striking the muzzle, rendered it useless. The enemy then closed upon it, and Murray, refusing to surrender, was shot by a rifle held close to his breast. Forbes-Sempill, who was severely wounded, called some rifles together under cover of the wagons, and offered a stout resistance until, seeing the whole camp in the enemy's hands, he withdrew his party and led them in safety back to Lord Lovat's camp. The Boers then took entire possession of the camp. Their stay was brief, and they made no attempt to push on across the Orange river, the main object of the expedition. About 1.30 a.m. they hastily abandoned their capture and retired towards Rouxville with many of Murray's horses and the gun, which was retaken by Thorneycroft next day.*

Kritzinger's unaccountable hesitation removed all danger of his co-operation with Smuts, and it was followed by months of inactivity which drew bitter complaints from his exasperated superior. When at last he made a brief and fateful reappearance he found himself alone in the scenes of his old adventures, for the campaign in Cape Colony had completely shifted its axis in a manner soon to be described.

* See Chapter XVIII., page 318.


## Approximate Strength States of Columns referred to in foregoing chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLUMN</th>
<th>Mounted Troops</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
<th>Guns, including Vickers-Maxims</th>
<th>Machine Guns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>September—October, 1901.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt.-Col. G. F. Gorringe Officer Commanding 17th Lancers</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt.-Col. S. C. H. Monro</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt.-Col. E. M. S. Crabbe</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt.-Col. H. J. Scobell</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt.-Col. B. Doran (later W. Doran)</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt.-Col. P. G. Wyndham Capt. F. T. Lund</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt.-Col. C. P. Crewe</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt.-Col. J. R. MacAndrew Officer Commanding at Conway</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt.-Col. A. G. Hunter Weston Lt.-Col. C. T. McM. Kavanagh (later C. E. Callwell, R.A.)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt.-Col. H. Alexander</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt.-Col. T. J. Atherton (later the Hon. H. G. Henegae)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt.-Col. H. T. Lukin Lt.-Col. the Hon. A. Murray Lt.-Col. M. G. Moore Lt.-Col. H. d’A. P. Taylor Maj. K. E. Lean Lt.-Col. W. G. B. Western</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Major-Gen. A. FitzR. Hart directing.

Col. T. D. Pilcher in command.

**NOTE.**—The columns of Lieut.-Colonels Crabbe, Alexander, Atherton, Wyndham and Kavanagh were controlled by Major-General T. E. Stephenson from October 1st.