

SOUTH AFRICA.

Lord Robert's Mail Despatches Up to November Fifteenth Gazetted.

General Smith-Dorrien Defeats Louis Botha's Commando of Two Thousand Men—Major Crewe Does Some Good Work.

LONDON, Feb. 9.—Public attention has again been turned to South Africa by the despatch of reinforcements and the publication of Lord Roberts' mail despatches. Rumors have been in circulation that Mr. Chamberlain had reconsidered his South African policy and was contemplating a round table conference with John Morley and Sir Wm. Vernon Harcourt and the recall of Sir Alfred Milner.

The Daily Mail, however, says it is able to assert on Mr. Chamberlain's authority that the whole story is a fabrication and that the government retains the most absolute confidence in Sir Alfred Milner.

Looking at all the circumstances, Lord Roberts says the campaign is "unique in the annals of war," and he pays the highest tribute to the gallantry and worth of the troops, declaring that "no finer force ever took the field under the British flag."

There is a general idea that the despatches have suffered considerable excision at the hands of the war office. They do not throw any further light on the military retirement of Gen. Colville or many other matters regarding which the public is anxious to hear.

The appearance of bubonic plague at Cape Town seems likely to add to the difficulties of the situation. The authorities there have decided upon a wholesale extermination of rats. Should the disease spread it will necessitate changes in the military arrangements.

Today Sir Alfred Milner makes another earnest appeal to employers to allow their men as many as possible to enroll in the colonial mounted defence force.

From Delagoa Bay it is reported that the British have occupied Ermelo and Carolina, which until recently were Boer depots. The Boers hold up a Natal mail train near Vlakfontein. The few soldiers on board exhausted their cartridges and the Boers then robbed the passengers, afterward allowing the train to proceed.

LONDON, Feb. 8.—Lord Roberts' details of the mail despatches ranging from Feb. 6 to Nov. 15, 1900, were gazetted this evening. They fill 157 quarto pages and make up the official history of the war, although without throwing new light upon several of the most interesting subjects, such as the Sannas Post affair.

Hundred officers, non-commissioned officers and men are favorably mentioned, including Lord Kitchener, who is referred to in warm terms. Sir Redvers Buller comes in for criticism.

Writing from Jacobsdal Feb. 15, Lord Roberts says: "The Boer has had pierced the enemy's lines, but that to give his artillery access to the Ladysmith plain would cost from 2,000 to 3,000 men. I replied that he must relieve Ladysmith even at that cost. Buller telegraphed, Feb. 9, that he was not strong enough to relieve Ladysmith without reinforcements, and regarded the operation in which he was engaged as impracticable. I replied that my instructions must hold."

BLOEMFONTEIN, Saturday, Feb. 2.—An influential burgher gives some details regarding the treatment of the peace envoys who went to Gen. De Wet's laager. It seems that they were ordered to remain with a cart until the mules arrived. As the Boers were breaking laager in the expectation of a British attack one morning, Commandant Froneman came up and asked them why they had not inquired. Morgendael replied that they had been ordered to wait for mules, whereupon the Boer commandant immediately jammed Morgendael on the head and face and said he felt inclined to shoot him.

Gen. De Wet, coming up to the moment, said: "Why don't you shoot him?" At this Froneman fired at the envoy, who died of the wound. Musler, another envoy, was jammed also.

CAPE TOWN, Feb. 3.—A Boer force of 2,000 men, including a battery of artillery, was defeated at Reddersburg. The losses were insignificant.

CAPE TOWN, Feb. 3.—Albert Cartwright, editor of the South African News, who was arrested yesterday charged with criminal and seditious libel, was formally charged in a police court here this morning and remanded in £2,000 bail.

BRUSSELS, Feb. 8.—In the chamber of deputies today a petition inviting Belgium to offer to arbitrate between Great Britain and the Transvaal was defeated at some length. The foreign minister, M. De Faverre, said the government did not object to the petition being referred to a committee, but they considered the authors of the petition mistook the meaning of article 27 of The Hague convention, under which it was intended to be referred to a committee.

M. Meunthout, reporter for the commission having the petition in charge, said he would support a petition suggesting a Belgian proposal of arbitration in the South African war, declaring that Great Britain could not take umbrage at the intervention of Belgium because The Hague convention, to which England adhered provided for arbitration.

Other deputies spoke in similar tones. M. De Faverre, replying, reiterated his statement that the authors of the petition were mistaken as to the import of article 27 of The Hague convention, adding that the spirit of the conference was that arbitration could be useful only on the eve of a conflict and that mediation could be proposed only when circumstances permitted.

M. Janson proposed a motion approving the conclusion of the commission dealing with the petition.

M. De Faverre repeated that intervention by Belgium was impossible, and that the motion was superfluous. The chamber, however, adopted M. Janson's motion unanimously.

LONDON, Feb. 11.—The war office has received the following despatch from Lord Kitchener, the commander-in-chief in South Africa: "FRETORIA, Feb. 9.—The columns working eastward towards Ermelo on Feb. 5, with slight opposition. A large force of Boers, estimated at 7,000, under Louis Botha, retired eastward. About 800 wagons, with families, passed through Ermelo on the way to Amsterdam, and very large quantities of stock are being driven east."

"A peace delegate under sentence of death, and other Boer prisoners, were taken away by the Boers. All the reports show that the Boers are exceedingly bitter. Fifty Boers surrendered."

"Louis Botha, with 2,000 men, attacked Smith-Dorrien at Orange Camp, Botha, at 3 p. m. Feb. 8. He was repulsed after severe fighting. Gen. Spruit was killed, Gen. Remdeymer was severely wounded, two field cornets were killed, twenty of the Boer dead were left in our hands and many severely wounded. Our casualties were twenty-four killed and fifty-three wounded."

"Our movement to the east is reported to have thoroughly upset all the enemy's calculations and created a regular panic in the district."

"Christian De Wet appears to be crossing the line south of the Jagersfontein road to the west this morning, having failed to effect a crossing by the drifts east of Bethulle."

"In Cape Colony Calvinia has been occupied by Col. De Lisle, who entered on Feb. 6, the enemy retreating toward Kenard. Col. Haig is driving the Midland commando north past Aberdeen."

"Great efforts are being made to secure a new treaty of alliance with England superseding the antiquated treaties."

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Laurier hopes to have another Washington picnic at an early date. The festivities will be repeated as soon as possible. In the meantime the temporary Alaskan boundary has been agreed upon, but there is no indication of a satisfactory final settlement.

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Mr. Fielding, in answer to Mr. Borden, promised to tell the house tomorrow what the auditor general's report will be ready.

From present indications it looks as if the session will be very short. Peter MacDonald of West Huron was appointed deputy speaker.

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