

the repulse of Gen. Gatacre at Stormberg on December 10th, mentioned in our last issue, was quickly followed by word that Lord Methuen's advance had been checked on the following day at Magersfontein, four miles north of Modder River. Marching across the open veldt to attack the Boers on an intrenched kopje, the Highlanders, who led the advance, were suddenly subjected to a deadly fire from hidden trenches; and, as one correspondent says, the greater part of the fearful loss of the day was thus suffered in a single minute. The Black Watch and the Gordon Highlanders suffered heavily. Gen. Wauchope, commander of the Highland brigade, and the Marquis of Winchester, a major in the Coldstream Guards, were killed in action. Our total loss was nearly a thousand men; and Lord Methuen must for the present remain at Modder River, instead of pushing on to the relief of Kimberley. In both these battles our troops were taken by surprise, and were largely outnumbered by the enemy.

On the 15th Gen. Buller, advancing from Colenso to the relief of Ladysmith, met a serious defeat at Tugela River. Here the enemy was found strongly posted on the hills which command the fords of the river, and the British were obliged to fall back, with a loss of ten guns and over a thousand men.

The three disasters of the past month have brought up the total of the British loss, in killed, wounded and missing, to nearly 7,000 men; and have aroused the government and the empire to a realization of the magnitude of the work of driving back the invaders and ending the war.

The effect of three such reverses in one week was to show the urgent need of further reinforcements, and it was at once announced that preparations would be made for increasing the armies in the field by 120,000 men, or more, if necessary. This announcement was enthusiastically received in all parts of the empire. In the colonies, as well as in the mother country, volunteers pressed forward for enrolment. A second Canadian contingent, consisting of field artillery and mounted rifles, will sail from Halifax during this month in transports chartered for the purpose by the Canadian government. The Nizam of Hyderabad and other Indian princes have offered aid; and it is curious to note that even the Canadian Indians of the Six Nations are asking to be sent to the front with other Canadian volunteers.

An evidence of the importance now attached to the operations in South Africa is to be found in the appointment of Lord Roberts, of Kandahar, to take command, with Lord Kitchener as chief of staff; and these two

distinguished generals are now on their way to the front. By a strange coincidence, on the very day when the appointment of Lord Roberts was made public, news came that his only son had died from the effects of a wound received in the battle of Tugela River.

The three divisions of the British army in South Africa, which have been checked, but not driven back by the Boer invaders, are (1) the force under Sir Redvers Buller, in Natal; (2) that under Gen. Gatacre in northern Cape Colony, near the southern boundary of the Orange Free State; and (3) that under Lord Methuen, at Modder River, close to the western boundary of the Free State. Gen. Buller is opposed by the Boer leader, Joubert, with an equal force; but should have the aid of the beleaguered force of 10,000 men in Ladysmith when the day of battle comes. The fiercest and most important battle of the war is expected here. Gen. Gatacre is in a difficult country facing an enemy of unknown strength. Though unsuccessful in driving back the Free State troops, he has checked their advance into Cape Colony. Lord Methuen is confronted by a superior force, under Gen. Cronje (pronounced Cronie), who are strongly entrenched between him and Kimberley. At Belmont, on his line of communication, the Canadian infantry is stationed; and there is gratifying news of a successful attack on a Boer laager at Sunnyside, near this place, on New Year's day, in which some of the Canadians had their first experience in actual warfare.

Between the line of Lord Methuen's advance and the position held by Gen. Gatacre, there is another British force, under Gen. French, of which little mention was made in the despatches until his defeat of the Boers at Colesberg, close to the southern point of the Free State boundary, on December 31st, threw a ray of light into the gloomy records of December battles. Latest advices tell of further skirmishing at this point. A decided success would open a possible route for an advance into Free State Territory.

Among the disquieting rumors current in the newspaper world is one to the effect that Menelik, king of Abyssinia, will take advantage of the Transvaal war to send an army into the Soudan. Abyssinia, or Ethiopia, is a Christian country, of four or five million inhabitants, who are not negroes. Menelik is said to claim the Nile as his western boundary line.

Another rumor, which would be absurd if it had not been carried into effect thirty-five years ago, is that of an intended invasion of Canada by Fenians from the United States. It is probable that both of these stories were started with the object of helping the Boers by