

having apparently fallen back toward Johannesburg. At Vereeniging, on the north bank, the British are within fifty miles of Johannesburg and seventy-seven of Pretoria—their advance is now within a day's march of the former—but how soon either of these points can be reached will depend a good deal upon the decision arrived at by the Boer leaders as to the further conduct of the war. Hitherto the British army has been marching over a comparatively level plateau, highly favorable to its flanking operations, but it is now entering the high veldt, rising from 4,500 to 6,000 feet above sea level, and broken everywhere by high hills and ranges with narrow defiles. As the roads run through narrow valleys among the hills, it will be difficult to flank the Boers, who if they decide to fight, may thus offer a more effective resistance than any Lord Roberts has encountered since leaving Bloemfontein. It is said that they have determined to make a last stand in the Gatsrand, one of three parallel ranges of hills running from Potchefstroom to a point about ten miles east of Johannesburg, but it now seems improbable that there will be any serious resistance south of the Witwatersrand, which begins east of Mafeking and extends nearly seventy miles east of Johannesburg. As, however, the whole western border of the Transvaal is now practically defenceless, the Boer army will in that event be open to a British advance from Mafeking, and also from the southwest, General Methuen's forces being already reported at a point on the Vaal only seventy miles southwest of Klerksdorp. Meanwhile reports of the movements in the eastern part of the Free State, between Ficksburg, Heilbron and the Drakensberg passes, are so meagre as to give little indication as to what is going on, but at Laing's Nek, in Natal, the Boers are apparently concentrating their forces and preparing for a determined stand. General Buller has fortified his advance, and at the same time has sent a force east across the Buffalo River presumably to turn the left of the Boer position.

THE BRITISH ADVANCE

It is apparent that the Boers must decide upon their course at once if they are to have any option at all, Lord Roberts having advanced his headquarters during the week from Kroonstad to the north bank of the Vaal. The advance followed the line of the railway from Bloemfontein, the Boers offering little resistance, save at the crossing of the Rhenoster River, made probably by the rear guard to cover the withdrawal of convoys. The passage of the Vaal, which forms the southern border of the Transvaal, was made first on the 24th instant by General French with his cavalry at a drift near Parys, twenty miles to the west of the railroad and on the British left flank, General Hamilton's mounted division at the same time pushing on to the drift at Boschbank, on the British right. The advance guard of the main army following the railway crossed on the 26th instant, with little opposition, the Boers after partly destroying the railroad bridge, one of the finest engineering structures in South Africa,