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Isa Khel
DERA-ISMAEL
KHAN
River Indus
DERA-GHAZI KHAN
N

KURUM, KABUL & KANDAHAR

BEING A BRIEF RECORD OF IMPRESSIONS IN

THREE CAMPAIGNS UNDER GENERAL ROBERTS

BY

CHARLES GRAY ROBERTSON

LIEUTENANT 8TH (THE KING'S) REGIMENT.

Vouchsafe to such as have not read the story,
That I may prompt them; and of such as have,
I humbly pray them to admit the excuse
Of time, of numbers, and due course of things,
Which cannot in their huge and proper life
Be here presented.

King Henry V.

EDINBURGH: DAVID DOUGLAS

1881.

ac

TO

MAJOR-GENERAL A. C. ROBERTSON, C.B.,

Late Lieut.-Colonel 8th (the King's) Regiment.

MY DEAR FATHER,

A young author's last anxiety, when his work lies finished before him, is for the first word he shall say to the public. Without embarking in a formal preface, let me ask you to stand sponsor to this little book, and lend your name to its dedicatory page. None will be so ready to overlook its many shortcomings as the most forgiving of fathers; and if it be found to contain any merits, with whom can they be more fitly

associated than with the kindest of my friends and the best of my advisers?

I cannot let slip this opportunity of expressing my thanks to Sir Frederick Roberts and Colonel Barry Drew for the plans which they have been good enough to place at my disposal; and of acknowledging my debt to Mr. James Dallas, R.E., for the pains he has taken to reproduce them in their present shape.

I am,

Your affectionate Son,

C. G. ROBERTSON.

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CHAPTER I.

WE GET OUR ORDERS.

The time is great.
What times are little? To the sentinel
That hour is regal when he mounts on guard.
George Eliot.

TUESDAY the 8th of October 1878 began not unlike other hot, hideous, Indian days. As usual we were at early drill, we may even have been engaged in the extraordinarily humiliating goose-step. The terrible sun-rays were beginning to beat down over the tree-tops on the Rawul Pindi parade-ground. They shone on till the honest cheeks of the least irascible of drill-serjeants looked done to a turn. They shone on too till many of the half-grown lads in the ranks grew white as the snowy tunics

they wore; for the sun is a chemist with many secrets. We all had the weary, listless, air of men who have tossed through a stifling night to be remorselessly aroused just as sleep becomes a possibility.

But deliverance was at hand. A tall figure on a tall horse galloped up. It was the Colonel, holding in his hand an order to proceed to the front at once. Never was reprieve more welcome to a condemned criminal. In five minutes the parade-ground was cleared. Each recruit as he marched off looked as if he had added an inch to his stature. At least he was no longer to be taught to move like an ingenious toy or a puppet in a procession, but to have his share of the risks and prizes of war.

If soldiers in time of peace are apt to be taken for as half-hearted a set of grumblers as are to be found anywhere, the contrast is the more striking when a regiment is ordered on service. The news spreads like lightning; in a second

every imagination is on fire. There is hope in the air that acts like a magical tonic to the system. The men lose their stolid machine-like appearance, the officers their languid air of indifference. Men who have the luck to be mounted gallop their horses as if the fate of India depended on their speed.

Go into the barrack-room or the mess-house: everywhere the eye rests on men intent on their outfits, and the ear is filled with an incessant clamour of voices. The stir and sound of practical spirits have invaded even the favourite retreats of red-tapeism and routine; and the pipe-clay, the varnish, and the glitter of showy parade days have all vanished. Before the start, each man must be provided with seventy rounds of ball-cartridge, a couple of blankets and flannel shirts, and two dull earth-coloured suits to wear over his scarlet serge, and dark-blue trousers.

And the officers have perplexities of their

own. To provide a roof to cover you, bed and bedding to lie on, and a kit fit for any extremity of winter bivouacs—the whole to weigh under 160 lbs.,—is a problem to exercise the most ingenious. A third blanket must be weighed against a waterproof sheet; a couple of extra flannel shirts against a spare pair of boots. It must be discovered if a hammock or a camp-bed be attainable; and what pattern of tent will give best protection from sun and wind. I confess my own preparations were hardly worthy of the name. Happily it matters less than might be supposed how a man starts on a campaign. The dog in the manger was never bred among soldiers; and there is no article, from a button-hook up to a violin, that cannot be borrowed in a regiment. The mode of life too and the accidents of the march have a decidedly communistic tendency. Still, there are two rules I never transgressed without regretting it. The first is to provide some

kind of shelter, even the size of a dog-kennel, which you can call your own. Then there is some hope for you when your temper gets ruffled. If you share a tent with the best fellow in the world, there will be rough weather within as well as without, unless you are both ripe for a pilgrimage to heaven. The second, to carry a camp-bed as long as the liberal Indian baggage-scale permits. Mother Earth may find a perfect resting-place for us all one day, but it is pure knight-errantry to trust her before you are obliged. At least so I determined, after three months' trial of sleeping on her breast.

CHAPTER II.

A BAD START.

Has the night descended? Was the road of late so toilsome? Did we stop discouraged nodding on our way?

Walt Whitman.

THE assembly sounded in the dead of the night. But the stars and their queen will do service to all wise travellers, and moonlit hours in India are often to the full as luminous as broad day in foggy England. The long motionless ranks of armed men; the women flitting to and fro beneath the trees, whimpering ostentatiously; the children, standing round-eyed and silent with wonder, were dimly visible. The word of command rang out sharply, the companies moved off one by one, and presently

the column was well in motion, undulating along the road like some dusky monster.

Thus we plodded on through the last hours of darkness, and the brief grey dawn.

When we halted, the morning sun was pouring on our heads a flood of most unwelcome rays. Grateful seemed the shelter of the little city of white tents that sprang up to receive us, and well within reach the sweets of well-earned repose. With it all, there were two unexpected exceptions to the general satisfaction. Going into partnership with a brother officer, I had confidently freighted a camel with my whole stock-in-trade. Our barque of the desert had apparently suffered shipwreck on its trial trip. In vain we strained our eyes till the last loitering straggler appeared, and the rear-guard itself hove in sight. It was too true : we were reduced at a stroke to what we carried on our backs. This was a monstrous bad beginning to an expedition as likely as not to land us in an

arctic climate. But want of faith in the miracles of 'to-morrow' is not a failing of the British subaltern. We fell back upon borrowed blankets and a spare tent, quite unabashed by our bankruptcy.

The day passed slowly and sleepily, but not so the night. Camp was to be struck at 12.30. Scarcely, it seemed, had we closed our eyes before the drums began their tyrannical rata-plan, and the bugles rang out their hateful summons. At this signal our ears were assailed by noisy knocking of soldiers loosening their tent-pegs, shrill chattering of ape-like camp-followers, hoarse roaring and gurgling of revolted camels, clashing and clattering of loads from the backs of specially ill-conditioned, or perchance overburdened, beasts—a very chaos of discordant sounds. When I was well awake, I drew back the curtain of the tent and looked out upon certain Rembrandt-like figures—a bearded Sikh leaning on his rifle, and the quaint old-world

profile of a camel, like a mediæval goblin, now lit up by the red glare of the camp-fires, now mysteriously obscured by drifting smoke. Above all was the moon, sailing along with her silvery smile and soft unconcern.

So far I had contented myself by slavishly copying my friend Frank's arrangements. It was now clearly my turn to exert myself. So I applied for leave to make a search after the missing baggage, and began to retrace my steps as the regiment moved off. My little Cachmere pony, 'Tommy,' was the unwilling companion of my retreat. His humour never improved unless when I pulled up to rain furious and futile interrogations on any half-dazed native straying along the road. Day was breaking as I rode into Rawul Pindi, and a native regiment—the 21st, I think—slipped past me almost before I was aware of it.

The hotel was full, but I chanced upon the most hospitable entertainer in Asia—let me

call him Prince Goldenrule—who provided me with the three things needful—a cold tub, a clean shirt, and a good breakfast.

Before the morning was old I started on my rounds, driving in a heavy, sad-discoloured, coach through the swarming bazaars, and round and round the wide-spaced bungalows of the cantonment. There was plenty of sympathy to be met with, and not a single 'not at home.' It was promised me that the headmen of villages should receive descriptions of the missing kits, and be held responsible for any failure in giving information. In short, the whole machinery by which the country is governed in these parts was to be set in motion for our benefit. Before dusk I despatched a native cart with some of the bare necessaries of existence in duplicate; and with the cart I sent forward two fresh ponies to lay out along the road.

At the last Prince Goldenrule outdid himself, for he insisted on camping out in the garden,

while I reposed in his comfortable bedroom. I am ashamed to say I was too tired to resist.

Five o'clock next morning saw me on the road again. 'Tommy' could make nothing of it, ambling along with a sort of lazy interrogative gait. I question which of us was the better pleased when the stage was finished.

The 'Boy in Grey'—as I called the second of my steeds—put a different face to it. After a steady gallop, I halted to break my fast at a little oasis by the wayside. It was a charming picnic ground. Hard by, a milk-white, dark-eyed bullock circled round an irrigation-well with slow and patient step. It was like music to hear the creak of the rough wooden wheels as they turned, and the splash-splash of the cool water as each tiny pipkin sent its liquid load lapping down the conducting trough. Of their own motion, the peasants brought an armful of some fragrant species of forage for the 'Boy,' which he appeared to savour like an

amateur. But some small coins changed hands before I was allowed to pollute a little earthenware cup with my lips. This humble friend served my turn as well as a goblet of gold. But because its owners and I had been brought up to call things by somewhat different names, its destruction was certain from that moment. I wonder, now, can we in England afford to cry 'Shame!' We have made ourselves safe for the time from persecutions with violence. But 'Do as others do' is still the golden rule of society, and woe to that man, be he saint or sinner, who regardeth it not!

At Futteh Jang, the second stage out, I came unexpectedly upon the regiment. Colonel Drew, taking advantage of the moon, had determined to make his third march at sundown, instead of before daybreak. Wisely, for 'Good-night,' after a long march, chimes in well enough in the small hours or at midnight, when 'Good-morning to you,' before starting, would set your

teeth on edge;—there is no destroyer like loss of sleep. In camp a yet more welcome surprise awaited me. Our kits had been recovered by a commissariat agent; after Corporal Dunce had passed by on the other side, and left them lying, because, forsooth, he thought 'as how they belonged to one of the men, and not to an officer!'

'Tommy' followed me into camp in time to take part in the third march, while his stable companions returned to Pindi. He picked his way along the road under protest, as it were, letting his ears flap backwards and forwards as a final token of mulish disgust. When we got in that night, he and I had, one way and another, covered some forty miles since day-break.

CHAPTER III.

LIFE ON THE MARCH.

The whirr of drums and the sound of soldiers marching and the hot sun shining south.
Walt Whitman.

THE remainder of the road was as barren of incident as of natural beauty. I remember nothing of it, unless it be the Bridge of Boats, and a swim in the cold snow-water of the Indus.

One fine morning we marched into Kohat before most of the inhabitants were out of bed. There followed a week of impatience and anxiety, rather than of repose. Predictions were not wanting from the cynical that we should not 'see a shot fired,' as the phrase

runs; and we did not breathe freely till we were off again, marching, as before, at the most unhallowed hours.

The life was vivid in a sense, for the heat and strain of the day kept the blood in a fever during the night. But fatigue is apt to confuse the impressions, and the pictures seem to shift in my mind like the patterns of a kaleidoscope. After months of close imprisonment in an Indian bungalow, the nomadic habit did not come easily. The ruthless midnight awakenings had almost a flavour of the torture-chamber. Later I got into the habit of half-arousing myself with the first uneasy stirring of the camp-followers. There was a certain luxury in thus forestalling the vulgar summons of the fifes and drums, and stealing ten minutes of semi-conscious peace before the piping began, and you must needs make shift to dance. A regiment has something of the iron compulsion of a machine; and the laziest man I ever met

did not wait more than once for his tent to come down about his ears.

After the ugly plunge into the bitter night air, like the sea in December, came the hurried forming up of the ranks, and then the column was launched once more into the darkness. The first cheery notes of the band never failed to fill me with a sudden sense of exultation, like one who had committed a virtuous action. Your swaggering trooper will hardly believe me, but it is possible to take a pride in using your legs, instead of letting them dangle by your horse's flanks. Certainly the foot-soldier, confident and complete in himself, is master of the battle-field. If the music and the triumph only lasted ten minutes, with hours of painful stumbling in the dark to follow, is not that very near the usual proportion of pains and pleasures through life? The regulation halts of five minutes aggravated the distress. A subaltern had to choose between hunting

some unlucky wretch who had sat down on the side of the road reserved by authority for his superiors, or being hunted by mounted officers for leaving him in peace. But there was a real break at the 'Coffee Shop,' or half-way refreshment place, where each man got his biscuit and his tin of sticky brownish fluid. The officers had a table, of course, with sandwiches and cold fowl for the active and aggressive, and dry bread and bare bones for the improvident and indolent. These early passover breakfasts were generally more than I could stomach, and I used to snatch ten minutes' sleep, curled up in a ditch or hollow by the way. Then on again, with the level rays of the sun full on our necks.

All extra regimental duties are taken in turn, so that if you are at the head of the column one day, the next you are driving camels, or whipping in stragglers in rear. On the march the best berth is with the advanced guard. You

must keep awake to prevent your men from closing in, or running away from the main body, as some perverse instinct will lead them to do on a dark night. Then you may change your point of view, now passing from your advanced scouts to your reserve parties, now trying the finest link of your chain, now its stoutest rivet. Out of the dust and trampling of the ruck, the bugle notes have a clearer ring, and the early dawn steals upon you more stilly and freshly: in truth, you taste some of the joys of a pioneer opening out an untrodden road. Contrast with this the worst days on rear-guard. Men and animals slowly stream off and leave you face to face with your fate, the most sorry brutes and preposterous loads in the line. With each break-down your temper grows shorter and your task longer, for, by fair means or foul, every load and every living thing must be brought in: for the rear-guard officer, like necessity, knows no law. But

there is no lot, however burdensome, without its compensations; and when you come in, many weary hours after your comrades, it is no small boon to find your tent pitched and your breakfast ready. Perhaps my first mishap had made me suspicious, but on days when I came in with the head of the column, any little delay in the arrival of my baggage-animals made me as miserable as if philosophy had never been dreamed of. Once safe within the grateful shelter of my tent, any summons to quit it for outside duty, no matter how urgent, seemed cause for open mutiny; and, for the first time in my life, I understood the meaning of 'living in a free country' with a roof of your own over your head.

The scenery had nothing very notable about it. We had now hills on both sides of us, always a gain to the landscape. But they were too low to be grand, and too bald to be beautiful. In the full glare of noon they were positively

ugly. But with the fall of evening they borrowed reflected beauty from the violet light and the softening shadows. Certain aspects of the country accidentally, as it were, engraved themselves on my memory;—a low hill, with groups of trees and mud-houses clustering on its brow, and a steep descent on the far side to a sparkling stream, where the men waded barefoot across, or took perilous leaps from stone to stone; a weary stretch of road, leading across a plain, shimmering with the heat-mists, where the long strings of camels looked like the hulls of ships on the distant horizon; the shadow of a noble group of trees, or of a steep rock, green with a mass of prickly shrubs; the flash of the white tents seen from far off, a veritable camp of refuge.

After breakfast indefatigable sportsmen would put up their rods, or shoulder their guns in the afternoon. But the bathing parties were my particular delight. What luxury of marble bath-rooms can compare with a green nook by the

river-bank, where you hurry off your clothes without restraint, and a clear running stream, where the cool rush of the water breaks over you, or carries you down over its pebbly bed fifty yards at a breath! When dinner-time came round, if the pleasures of a civilised table were absent, at least the best of all sauces—a healthy appetite—never failed us. The regimental mess was broken up; but we formed smaller circles, throwing our rations, and any camp delicacies that came our way, into the common stock. Here is our bill of fare one night we were in luck:—

Chicken Broth.

Stewed Mutton. Chops.

Boiled Potatoes.

Boiled Fowls.

Curry and Rice. Poached Eggs.

After this my servant produced a tin of cheese. But three votes out of four at the table were Scotch. So we looked at each other suspiciously, and put away the luxury against a rainy day.

CHAPTER IV.

THROUGH THE DARWAZA PASS.

'Tis the last hour of day.
Look on the West! How beautiful it is,
Vaulted with radiant vapours!
Shelley.

WE left Thal on the 21st of November. Crossing the frontier, in spite of the name of the thing, was a very matter-of-fact affair, very much like crossing the street. The road ran at first along the river-bed. In places there were dense patches of cane-brake, or great grasses. The men struggled obstinately through, and then on with a rush over the clearings, as if determined to cut short their trial. As often as not, there was a battery of artillery marching in front of us; and, in spite of the good-

will of officers and men pulling together in the bonds of a discipline that was flexible, yet perfectly well-knit, delays were endless.

Memory is a shifty and capricious guide through the past, but to be trusted by us about the march through the Darwaza Pass. The road was of the roughest, intersected by water-courses and ravines every hundred yards, so that short halts and starts succeeded each other the whole day through. We might as well have been doing serious penance in the palmy days of the Church. The ever-recurring temptation to slake one's thirst was too much for any principles. And if water-drinking ranks among the highest of the virtues in Exeter Hall, on the march it stands low among the vices. After all, the reward that was in store for us only seemed the more splendid. So far, low hills had hidden the best of the prospect: at last they fell back on either side, and, suddenly, we emerged upon

an open place, and stood looking broadly over the Kurum Valley, and across to where the Safed Koh rises with its air of majesty, calm and unapproachable from all eternity. It was as if Nature herself had thrown her inviolable shield over the land we invaded, saying, Thus far shalt thou go, and no further. Not a man but paused a second and held his breath before that sublime defiance. As we advanced, the sun dropped down in the west, and on the mountain-side there hung a tricolor of God's own weaving—first a band of glowing rose-light; above, a dark belt of pines; then the bare crests of the hills, blanched by all weathers till they shine like snow.

We had marched only thirteen miles, yet we did not arrive till late in the afternoon, and were glad enough to encamp without attempting the passage of the Kurum river. The following day was employed fording its ice-cold flood, sweeping up to our thighs. By

nightfall the 2d Brigade came in, after a hard march ; and everything was ready for a spring.

On the 28th of November, at 3.30, the regiment paraded, its tents being by this time struck and loaded on mules. We had a hard day's marching before us, so the men were obliged to parade as lightly clothed as possible. The morning was dark and bitterly cold ;—for the best part of three hours we shivered about, greatcoatless, on our parade-ground or close to it.

About six the different regiments of the brigade and their reserve ammunition mules had been got into order, and at last the march began—the 29th and 5th Punjab Infantry in front, our regiment bringing up the rear. Day broke, and we plodded on, with the usual halts of five or ten minutes at intervals. Directly in front of us were the reserve ammunition mules of the 5th Punjab Infantry, at one place there was a regular stampede among

them, and we passed more than half their loads lying on the ground. After four or five hours' marching, we reached the edge of the plain, which was bounded by what appeared to be an enormously broad torrent-bed. Here we passed the General and his staff, who were all scanning, with levelled telescopes, the famous Pass in front of us. We moved on slowly, and there was expectation in the very tread of the men as their broken footsteps sounded on the loose stones and gravel.

The brigade halted and piled arms by a water-course that was straying through this wilderness. But almost at once the order came for the 29th to push on;—we watched them disappear into the holly-scrub in front of us, and then the provident ones fell-to on any scraps they had in their haversacks. Conjecture was busy as to the whereabouts of the enemy, the general opinion being that he had bolted over the Pass, where he was no longer visible,

leaving his guns behind him. None the less, when again we were ordered to advance, a feeling of excitement spread through the regiment, as if at the prospect of coming unexpectedly into action. We struggled painfully through the scrub, toiling up and down several steep ravines, straining to catch the sound of firing from the front. When the first faint snapping of rifles reached our ears, a thrill ran through our ranks. Then the Brigadier gave the order to one of our companies and one of the Sikhs to clear the range dividing the twin valleys before us. The only person I could see from the top of the first hill we climbed was a little doctor, who shouted to us to 'Come on!' and support the 29th, who were engaged somewhere on the left. We could not move fast enough to please our excitable friend; but as we worked our way along from point to point, we had the satisfaction of seeing the rest of the brigade come swinging round the hill we had

just climbed, and pass up the valley on our right. Our task was done, and we moved down the slope in an oblique direction.

About three o'clock we came up with our comrades halted under the slope of the hills on the other side of the valley. The 2d Brigade, which had advanced by another road, were also halted about half a mile in front of us, and beyond them again there was an action in progress. At first all our views were coloured by the reports we had heard of the enemy's hasty retreat. As we watched the tiny puffs from the rifles creeping up the face of the steep hills in front of us, and the larger white clouds from the artillery fire breaking towards the peaks and the summit of the Pass, we jumped to the conclusion that our infantry were taking the position, while the Royal Horse Artillery and the mule battery were shelling the flying Afghans. We got the length of bewailing our hard fate in being left behind, and wondering

where the enemy's abandoned guns would be found.

Soon, however, more accurate news began to circulate. From a signalling party above us we learned that the 72d Highlanders were being shelled on their camping-ground. A still more impressive message arrived in the shape of a round-shot that fell close to our own position. Later, a cavalry officer who had been watching the fight rode in, looking rather anxious, and informed us that the enemy were holding a very strong position, against which we had made but little way. Then the firing began to slacken, and, as the light waned, the troops in front were gradually withdrawn, the dashing little Ghoorkas in their dark rifle-uniforms running out to cover the movement: first the Royal Horse Artillery, next the mule battery, and then the line regiments passed through our camp.

Our brigade was now next the enemy, and just as I was congratulating myself on the

arrival of my tent, I was ordered out on outpost duty with my company. There was nothing for it but to snatch up coat and waterproof sheet, and trudge off dinnerless and supperless;—luckily I had some bread and cheese left in my haversack. Taking fresh ground in the dark, and stretching a chain of piquets and sentries, with such an enemy before us, was nervous work. We passed the night in shivering vigilance, with not even a lamp to throw light on our watches, while the Afghans crowned every height and pinnacle with their triumphant bonfires.

On Friday morning, the 29th, our camp was moved back out of sight of the enemy, and a reconnaissance in force was made to our right. From one of our piquets it was quite possible, with a good glass, to make out guns in position, and troops drawn up, at the top of the Kotal. The Afghans were in high spirits, and could be seen waving their swords, beating

drums, and advancing a little way down the hill. They also kept pegging away at a working party of the 23d Pioneers, who were out road-making.

On Saturday, the 30th, we still kept as quiet as mice, but the General and his staff were up on our right, peering about and sketching the enemy's position. We heard that G III. Battery, or rather the half of it which was at Kurum, had been sent for. On Sunday G III. arrived, and a conviction, which towards evening became a certainty, spread abroad that we should delay our attack no longer.

CHAPTER V.

THE PAIWAR KOTAL.

An armed force is a means to an end—the end is victory over enemies; and this is to be achieved, partly indeed by a due use of discipline and method, but partly also by keeping alive, in those who may come to have command, a knowledge and a love of war; and by cherishing that unlabelled, undocketed, state of mind which shall enable a man to encounter the unknown.

Kinglake.

ON the 2d of December 1878 General Roberts struck his great blow. It was my first battle, and I suppose no other will ever seem like it to me. Never will the thunder of English guns sound so inspiriting, nor the shells seem to burst so splendidly.

A small tower where the road crosses the saddle of the Pass marked the enemy's main position.

PEIWAR KOTAL FROM BRITISH CAMP.

Scale 3/4 in to 1 mile.

1 ½ 0 1 2

SKETCH PLAN OF

THE PEIWAR KOTAL.

ACTION 2 DEC. 1878.

To reach his guns directly, infantry must have advanced nearly a mile under a heavy flank fire, from both sides of the road, and then scaled heights rising precipitously for about as far again.

Guarding his right like a bastion was an impregnable rock fortress, called The Crow's Nest: on his left there rose a succession of wooded heights, which commanded each other in turn. But words fail to paint the dangers that would have threatened a direct attack. General Roberts's flank march was our salvation.

At 4 A.M. two companies of 'The King's' were sent out as escort to the Artillery. Under cover of the darkness we moved up the road half a mile past our outposts, and half of G III. and two guns of Royal Horse Artillery quietly drew up in the open, and unlimbered. About this time the enemy took alarm, and we could hear their bugles all along the heights. Their

calls are the same as ours, and we could make out the 'double' very clearly. As soon as it was light G III. fired a trial shot to get the range; and a little later, say about 7 A.M., the guns began pegging away in earnest. The enemy replied vigorously from the Kotal and the Crow's Nest straight in front of us; but in the Artillery duel that followed G III. had it pretty much their own way. Their practice was perfect, shell after shell carrying havoc among the Afghan gun-teams, which were as speedily renewed. The enemy's round-shot, falling dead from a great height, were comparatively harmless, and their shells from a rifled 7-pounder either fell short or did not burst. Another thing was, that a good deal of their fire was wasted by being poured into a hollow just in rear of where my company was posted, probably under the impression that it was filled with troops intended to advance under cover of our guns. The men of my

company were in a very safe position under a steep bank; yet in spite of this we had some narrow escapes—the enemy's round-shot just grazing the top of the protecting ridge and curving in amongst us.

About eleven o'clock the enemy's attention, as well as our own, was drawn to the wooded hills on our right by the sharp rattle of the Martini-Henry. The remainder of 'The King's,' some five and a half companies, had come into action, and were giving the defenders of the Pass a lesson in the use of the new rifle at long ranges. Instantly the Afghan artillerymen slewed round their guns and began firing away at their new assailants, who, with the 5th Punjab Infantry on their right, were creeping up to within about 600 yards of the position.

There was no lack of cover, and casualties were few, the drum-major being the only man killed. Still, wherever a man showed, the fire was pretty hot, and the Brigadier, who was

wounded in the thigh, expressed himself well pleased with the behaviour of the regiment. When the fighting was at its height in this part of the field, we were treated to the prettiest part of the whole spectacle. Up from our camp, past the artillery and its protecting infantry, came the 12th Bengal Cavalry, winding along the road. With the bright sunlight full upon them, they looked like a wonderful dragon with quivering scales of brown and glittering gold. Right up to the foot of the Pass they rode, till it seemed as if the battle were over, and they were preparing for a rush after the flying enemy. But to our surprise, after attracting in their turn the fire of the enemy's guns (a result which might easily have cost them something more than the loss of a charger), back they came as unconcernedly as they had advanced.

The firing on the right now slackened ; little progress appeared to have been made towards

ousting the enemy by a direct attack, and our thoughts naturally reverted to the turning movement. Had the 2d Brigade accomplished its difficult task,—or was it possible that a link of our slender chain had given way? If the little army, which General Roberts was using like a finely-tempered sword, were by any accident shivered against this rock-bound barrier of Afghanistan, there was no other weapon of offence or defence lying ready to his hand upon which he might count in case of need. Visions of a retreat to Kurum, or even to Thal, of harassing attacks from treacherous hill tribes, and possible mutinies in our rear, mixed up with recollections of the *Spectator's* Cassandra-like warnings, presented themselves unbidden to the mind. G III. were as much puzzled as we were, and contented themselves with silencing the gun in the Crow's Nest, whenever its defenders ventured to relieve the monotony of the proceedings by opening fire.

But suddenly the battery received an order which cleared everything up, and set us all moving:—the guns were to advance up the Pass if practicable. Our two companies, confident that the day was won, ran out in skirmishing order. Their fire, and a few rounds of shrapnel that went crashing among the trees on the hill-side, soon cleared the way; and, leaving the Crow's Nest on our left, we advanced unmolested straight up towards the Kotal. The battery had to be left at the foot of the Kotal, which was almost precipitous, and scaled by a mere track. As we struggled up, we could not help wondering how the enemy had contrived to drag up his guns a few days before.

On reaching the coveted summit we found ourselves mingling with our fortunate brethren, who, to their surprise, had accomplished a similarly bloodless advance,—Colonel Barry Drew, the acting Brigadier, leading the way, and being the first to reach the crest of the

hill. A strange scene met our eyes. There, on the saddle of the hill, over which the road leads, were the brass field-pieces, to which the enemy had clung so sturdily, all dulled with smoke and dirt. A little further back stood his tents, and piled around them were munitions of war and every conceivable article of camp equipage in the wildest confusion. There had been some attempt at packing up and loading at the last moment before the flight. But the Turis, eager for plunder, had swarmed round and dragged forth everything to view. Amongst piles of sheepskin greatcoats, boxes of ammunition, powder and shot loose in bags, sacks of grain, rude blankets and rugs, and the like, you might come across a bundle of despatches, a copy of the Koran, or even an embroidered scarf. Though the enemy, according to his custom, had done his best to remove his dead, there were still many bodies lying about to testify the accuracy of our artillery

and rifle practice. On the hill-side lay one poor wretch who had been hit while baking his daily meal. A little further on, in the Pass, lay five camels in a group, slaughtered by the same shell. The Afghan gunners, too, had evidently suffered a good deal; their black forage-caps, with red tufts, lay strewed about in all directions.

As night closed in, we lit large fires with the pine-trees felled by our unwilling hosts, and prepared to bivouac as best we might in the biting cold. But we had reckoned without our indefatigable Quartermaster, who presently appeared at the head of our baggage-animals;—we fared better that night than all our neighbours. Next morning the details of the fighting on the right became gradually known. We heard of the sudden onslaught in the early morning, when the uncertain light made it hard to distinguish friends from foes. We heard of the dash of the brave little Goorkhas and

Highlanders at the stockade, and of the determined resistance of the Ameer's troops, who attempted with three fresh regiments to retake the position at the point of the bayonet. We heard how General Roberts, despairing of fighting his way to the Kotal from the flank, had left part of his force in a strong position to keep the enemy before him in check, while with the remainder he pushed right to the rear of the Pass, and so alarmed the defenders that they determined on flight while their line of retreat was still open. We heard how the 2d Brigade had bivouacked each corps in the position it occupied—some in rear, some in flank, of the Kotal, and how the completeness of the victory and the total discomfiture and flight of the Ameer's troops did not become generally known until the morning after the battle.

General Roberts's operations were characterised by a happy combination of prudence and audacity. From the first he inspired all

under his command with supreme confidence in his judgment as a skilful general, as well as in his boldness as an intrepid leader. The halt from the 28th to the 2d was useful and judicious. Repose was assured for the troops, and time gained for complete and careful study of the ground. The General was thus enabled to arrange all the details of the attack with sufficient certainty and precision. When the moment for action arrived, he was able to lead his troops during the dark midnight hours through formidable mountain defiles to the selected point of attack. Without serious pause or check, he struck a succession of sudden and effectual blows. When the difficulty of the ground and the number of enemies arrested his advance, without wasting life in needless efforts, he suspended his attack, and, guided by a sure *coup d'œil*, carried out the bold and skilful dispositions for seizing the line of the enemy's retreat, which decided the success of the day.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FAG-END OF A CAMPAIGN.

O weariness beyond what asses feel,
That tread the circuit of the cistern-wheel,
A dull rotation, never at a stay,
Yesterday's face twin-image of to-day.
Cowper.

THE position seemed mightily improved when seen from the right side. If the Afghans thought half as much of it as we, they must have had a fine contempt for the infidel invaders creeping about like an army of ants below. For myself, I felt anything but puffed up on the night of the victory. When our baggage was brought in, to crawl under the first heap of rugs and bedding, and get somehow buried and out of the turmoil seemed to me the great affair. At such times, for which the devil takes

care to provide a special litany, there is nothing so revivifying as a cup of hot tea. Raw spirits rouse you a little, but so would a hot iron.

There was no Capua to fall back upon, nor any winter-quarters for us beyond what we could contrive for ourselves. We fell at once into the regular backwoodsman's life: marking and felling and dragging timber on the hill-side by day, and bivouacking round a great fire by night. The scent of pine woods calls up before me still, like a spell, the great crackling, hissing logs, the clouds of bitter smoke, and the soft, thick, charred dust that begrimed one past recognition before morning, and strange associations will arise with the vision. Where is the republic that can match the ring round the piquet fire for equality? When men carry their lives in their hands there are no titles to consideration like a jolly face and a ready wit. We had a wag in my company, a Londoner of course, who kept the men in high good-

humour, and now and again a hint dropped by accident reminded you that many of the life-threads now woven into the same woof must have been strangely tangled in bygone years. But the savour of the wilderness loses its piquancy all too quickly. As times grew duller, he was a shallow hypocrite who did not rejoice, as he descended to a more temperate zone. Savage pine-woods and drifting snow are well enough in the fourth act of a melo-drama: but what a wretched background for everyday life in a log-hut with the thermometer —anywhere.

My last quarter in Afghanistan that year was at a little place called Ibrahimzai. Our camp nestled down by the river-side, sheltered between the village and a grove of trees. Our old friend the Quartermaster-General kept threatening our two weak companies with 20,000 hill-men. But where he had said there will be no grass, there *was* grass; and where he

foretold drought, there we were nearly drowned. So, taking the oracle at its usual value, we felt confident we should not be disturbed, and relapsed indeed into the dullest routine.

Our Christmas was sober to sinfulness. Not a single orthodox dish would have graced our table, but for the plum-pudding which the men compounded, and generously shared with us. With the best faith in the world a banquet of commissariat rations and rum is apt to end to the tune early to bed,—and violent indigestion next morning.

On the last strokes of the year, I had an adventure that came very near marking *finis* after my story. It was my duty to visit an outlying piquet of Sepoys posted at night. Your native sentry, with ears and mouth well muffled in the folds of his turban, is more than three parts deaf and dumb. To approach him incautiously is nearly certain death; and it came to pass quite naturally, with inexperience and

Corporal Boozer for my guide, that I discovered my Sepoys watching for me, with rifles levelled for a volley, just in the nick of time. What angered me most was the absolute want of sympathy which I had to encounter next morning. Lucretius no doubt treated average human nature fairly enough in his celebrated lines. But your modern egotist does not rejoice over the misfortunes of his neighbours:—he cannot be said to care enough about them for that.

About this time rumour was very busy with the march through the Mundior Pass and the expedition into the Khost Valley, caricaturing as usual every picture she drew. General Roberts, being human, may have made a slip here and there. But, happily for us, he saw —what his critics did not—that in Asia, Providence still sides, not with the biggest battalions, but with the bravest hearts. The truth is that our victory over the Ameer's forces had carried

us off our feet a little. For the moment the impolicy of bringing the tribes like hornets about our ears was forgotten.

From a military point of view, the work in Khost was done perfectly. More than once the hill-men, who had collected in immense numbers, were attacked and driven off with great confidence and *élan*, the 10th Hussars and the 5th Punjab Cavalry showing well to the front. One night a batch of prisoners attempted to break away at a signal from their friends without. The guard, as in duty bound, fired at them till they were quiet, or till an officer gave the order to spare. About a score were killed. The episode would probably never have been heard of, if an excited journalist had not suggested a new cry to persons who are fond of combining the partisan and the sentimental business. It is curious that any one should have overlooked the general truth, that the safety of his followers must be

the first thought and the last of a successful General; or the particular fact, that in this instance General Roberts, with his tiny force surrounded by thousands of the enemy, took as usual the side of clemency. But in writing, one side of a case is always almost as good as the other; and Englishmen, cold and unemotional in their speech, are among the most hysterical of readers.

The new year found me over the border once more. It is difficult to understand how such a dull place as Thal continues to be a place at all. Our life there for six weeks may be summed up in few words: eating and drinking, with the variation of eating and sleeping. But for the mail-cart which dashed in every evening at five o'clock, we must have shared the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar, and turned as the beasts of the field that perish.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TREATY OF GANDAMAK.

I cannot avoid beholding the Russian Empire as the natural enemy of the more Western parts of Europe; as an enemy already possessed of great strength, and, from the nature of the government, every day threatening to become more powerful.

The Citizen of the World.

Thou set thy foot where England used to stand!
Thou reach thy rod forth over Indian land!
Slave of the slaves that call thee lord, and weak
As their foul tongues who praise thee.

. . . . . .

But thou take heed ere yet thy lips wax white,
Lest as it was with Philip so it be,
O white of name and red of hand, with thee.

'The White Czar.'—Swinburne.

AT a certain stage of culture, the fancies of philanthropists are apt to oppress the imagination more than the hard facts of existence, and over every petty war that breaks out crafty partisans are able to stir some section of the

people, as if murder were on their souls. To fall into a mood in which a saner appreciation of facts becomes possible, it is necessary to remember that if fighting is the bane of civilised societies, it is as the daily bread of barbarous races. When a few thousands of the most turbulent members of a tribe disappear in a struggle with an irresistible power, the extermination of the human wolves and the irreconcilables of society is only accelerated a trifle. Even in Afghanistan it must be assumed that the mass of the population has no rooted aversion to peace and prosperity.

The early phases of our quarrel with Shere Ali can be of interest to few people, with the exception of certain noble Lords. The attention of practical men was never aroused till after the repulse of Sir Neville Chamberlain's mission, and by that time there was no question to discuss. The theory, however, that the English Government was moved by some

feeling of hostility to Shere Ali is out of all reason. It was determined, for State reasons, to force the Ameer to show his hand. He declared against us, and his blood is on his own head.

Our destiny in India was at the bottom of the matter. As Rome made Europe, so, if there is to be any future for the dusky millions of Hindustan, if the people are even to be allowed to follow their own simple pleasant lives unmolested, the English rule must be upheld at any price. That rule, like all alien supremacy, rests on the bayonet; and where men go armed, for the State as for the individual, there is but one way of wiping out insults. As for the enormity of the offence, ask any Asiatic what he thinks of the potentate—living almost in the shadow of our gates—who delivered a left-handed buffet to our Ambassador, stretching out at the same moment the right hand of friendship to our

declared rivals. Nor can the admission that a more dangerous enemy lay behind the Afghans affect the argument. As has been shown *ad nauseam* we are under no obligation to attack Russia before knocking the weapon pointed at us out of her hand. After our armies were set in motion, the Czar never moved openly a step against us :—if secret encouragements were conveyed to the wretched Ameer, that is no affair of our national conscience.

The treaty of Gandamak was framed to guard against a recurrence of such evils, and to secure a predominant influence for India in Afghanistan. With the railway at Kurum and the road up to Shutargardan, no ruler of Kabul could stand without us. The right of garrisoning Kandahar and Herat might no doubt have been retained. But nothing was to be gained by advancing without the railway. General Phayre's break-down in the autumn of 1880 is a significant warning against crossing

deserts to occupy isolated 'strategical' points. As has been pointed out a hundred times, if a flaw appeared in the treaty, it was in the unskilful working of it.

A proud people and a savage soldiery were smarting under recent chastisement, but they were far from considering themselves as a conquered race. Heaven knows how many defeats would be necessary to extort any admission of inferiority from such an incurable braggart as the Afghan. There are times when striking the iron when it is hot will produce nothing but sparks; if an Afghan monarchy of the desired pattern was to be built up, it required no hammering from us, but rather to be handled most gingerly. But the Nemesis of party government was upon the Ministry. The appearance of complete success was not less necessary to them than the substance.

Sir Louis Cavagnari started on his fatal journey before the new Ameer was well seated

on the throne, and, it is to be supposed, came soon to be looked upon by all concerned as a master in disguise. It was told me afterwards in Kabul that a tour round the mutilated Douranee Empire had been projected by the Envoy; but the Ameer, becoming suspicious, afterwards signified to Sir Louis that he should not accompany him. This was, perhaps, the beginning of offence.

Campaign II.

CHAPTER I.

'RETURNING TO THE FRONT.'

Varus, Varus, what hast thou done with my legions? Kenelm Chillingly.

WHEN the strange electric whisper thrilled round the world with the tidings of the Kabul massacre, a wail of vain regret and a cry for vengeance arose in the same hour from Calcutta and Westminster, from Simla and Balmoral. But there was that which intensified the emotion in India. At home the ordinary newspaper reader falls almost unconsciously into the attitude of a spectator. He has hardly recovered from the effects of one sensation before he begins to speculate from what quarter the next shock to his sensibilities will proceed. But a

disaster in India seems to touch every one; and the presence on all sides of possibly hostile elements works upon the imagination, and quickens the perceptions to every impression.

The second call to arms found me at Murree. In most Indian stations, to withdraw the military element is to disorganise society at a blow. A regular carnival week to end the season had been in prospect; but in a single night the whole train of preparations collapsed, and the gossiping, lounging population, seeking amusement and finding none, seemed strangely shrunken in all its proportions. The few men left hovered furtively about the luncheon-table at odd hours, or sat in different corners of the reading-room at the club, as if ashamed to look each other in the face.

It was a positive relief when a brief message set me at liberty to catch up the invading force —if I could. The doubt did not trouble me at the time, I confess, for those were hopeful days

for men who were struggling in the rear. All the wiseacres, who had spied out the nakedness of the transport in the Kurum Valley, were positive there could be no advance before the middle of October. And no imagination was likely to picture beforehand the obstructiveness of acting officials, swaddled in red tape after the fashion of infant administrators.

There were minor difficulties to be overcome from the first. The Government mail service from Murree was at once discontinued on the outbreak. All the teams were hard at work dragging people from Pindi to the front. If you will pocket your pride, it is always possible to get over forty miles of road: I began to think I should travel on foot with no other encumbrance. At last I hit upon a doolie for myself, and a crazy native cart for my baggage and servants. How they got in must ever remain a mystery to me; for horse and cart looked as if a special interposition of Provi-

dence would be necessary to keep them together for half a mile.

My own journey was prosperous up to the last stage. I started about eight o'clock in the evening, with six bearers, who were to be relieved three times at least. Things must have gone smoothly for about thirty miles, when I was aroused by the keen morning air, just in time to see the sun rise into a sky clearly ominous of insufferable light and heat. What interested me most, perhaps, was the discovery that I was practically alone. Retreating along the road towards the dim blue hills, I spied the figures of the gang, who had borne me so far only to desert me with perfect indifference. The fresh relay of bearers was represented by a frightful old man, who stood opposite to me, muttering some unintelligible sentences, and pointing with a skinny hand to a collection of mud hovels that lay half hidden in a patch of cultivated ground by the road.

At first I affected not to take his meaning, and refused to stir. Half an hour went by, and the situation was unchanged. Women passed and repassed from a well, with their earthen water-jars picturesquely balanced on their heads. A man persistently goaded a bullock, harnessed to a primitive sort of harrow, up and down a strip of ground at my side. It was clear I must follow their example and work, if there was to be any breakfast for me, so, with that old Judas for my guide, and the most imposing air I could command, I set off to beat up the village for recruits. After half an hour of this business, I felt that the recruiting-serjeant, for all the ribbons on his cap, is a man to be pitied. But that the anxiety of the inhabitants to betray each other exceeded their caution, I could never have laid my hand on even four able-bodied inhabitants. The last man pressed into my service was my friend at the plough. He could only be called a volunteer by courtesy;

as he unharnessed his beast and drew near at a snail's pace, he might have been painted as an ideal type of unwilling progress and rustic conservatism. With it all, this part of the journey lasted five hours, and the sun was high when we reached Rawul Pindi.

Fresh delays of days that seemed weeks were there in store for me. There never was a place so hard to get out of, nor one so demoralised by dustiness and dilatoriness, as Pindi. I did not breathe freely again till I shouted good-bye to my friends from my perch amongst the post-bags and the luggage piled high in the mail-cart.

The moon was in her most favourable mood, rising as we started about seven, and guiding us on our way almost till daybreak. Before us the road unrolled like a broad greyish-coloured ribbon, shining faintly in the pale moonlight. But presently we turned off the grand trunk road to follow the track which diverges to

Kohat. The broad ribbon became a narrow tape-line, which in its turn disappeared, lost in an indistinct expanse of vastly uneven brown surface. The two-wheeled, springless hill-cart jolted along till our bones ached again, and each bump and bruise added another indignant interrogative point to the query, Why are not the great strategical lines in India completed by contract, as elsewhere? It is not in human nature for a Government official, with a handsome fixed salary, to make himself as disagreeable to his superiors as he ought, merely because they do not give him enough to do.

We had our ups and downs all along; but just beyond the Indus there were some regular sloughs of despond, suggesting whole trains of bullock-carts stuck fast, and numberless natives sitting contentedly over their pipes for ten hours at a stretch.

At Kohat I was in luck, and got a seat in the cart for next morning. The place had a

deserted air, like a small country town in decadence. To escape from it was a relief, though all men were agreed that the next stage of the journey was an intolerable infliction. It rained in torrents that night, and my experience of the spring before taught me what to expect. Of the many villainous works that have left the hand of man, the Thal road is probably the most vile. On the first stage out of Kohat great efforts were directed towards keeping the outside of the platter clean. When the roadway seemed to require attention, a small army of villagers, disguised in much dirt and a few rags, would turn out, and a vast deal of shovelling and patting and smoothing take place. A level, fairly beaten track was the result; but after a few hours' heavy rain you might as well have driven over an ill-drained stubble-field.

The mails were heavy the day I started, and the wretched horses came to a standstill, and panted for breath, every two hundred yards.

As the wheels heaved slowly round, I noticed here and there some small stones imbedded in the mud that clogged them. Some specially industrious Royal Engineer had apparently been amusing himself by scattering a few bags of pebbles along his beat.

Presently matters mended a little. We had apparently been travelling almost below the general level of the country, when a sudden rise in the ground set us rattling along to a different tune. After a really fair breakfast at Hango Dak bungalow, visions of a possible reconciliation with one's temper presented themselves. But, alas! for the last stage of that road; it was a stumbling-block to many. After sticking in a dry torrent-bed, and being nearly drowned in a full one, we arrived at Gandiar, a police post six miles from Thal, unspeakably mortified in mind and body, only to find we could go no further that night.

CHAPTER II.

BULLOCK-DRIVING.

How can he get wisdom . . . that driveth oxen, and is occupied in their labours, and whose talk is of bullocks? Ecclesiasticus.

AT Thal my troubles by mail-cart were over. But worse befell me. Kinloch of the 13th Bengal Lancers, travelling with a single Sowar, had been murdered the day before I arrived. Instantly the authorities closed the stable-door with a bang; and the decree went forth that all officers should proceed with escorted convoys. Therefore, after a day's delay, behold me installed as an amateur bullock-driver, with a convoy of seven hundred of the worst pack-animals in India.

Up to this time the Indian bullock had always held a respectable, not to say revered place in my imagination. Something in the stillness of those large dark eyes, and the full contours of that milk-white form, seems superior to the rush and fever of modern life, that threaten to leave no corner of the earth at rest.

As he paces patiently round an irrigation-well some hazy summer's evening, with the droning of the wooden wheels, and the musical tinkle of the water for sole accompaniment, there is no quadruped less disappointing. The English dream of a little home with a green field or two about it comes to every one in India at times; and I used to fancy it would be pleasant to see some of those placid strangers domesticated with English farmyard friends, unfamiliar visitors recalling memories of far-off lands.

But my affections, like many warmer sentiments, were not destined to survive the strain

of a close relationship. After a day of my new calling, I felt I would as soon welcome a mediæval fiend among my household gods as one of those mild-eyed impostors.

First start your bullock may seem a simple maxim, but it soon became to me as the advice of the cookery-book to a hungry man in a grass field. To get the herd loaded in the morning was no mean problem in mechanics, and the driving of it an art like navigation. As a rule, your beast's first protest was to flop down on the ground, lying hopelessly flattened under his pack. Once on the road, before going far in those parts you came to a pretty steep descent. Here the late hopeless victim of oppression would develop an amazing activity of spirit. Starting at a headlong trot, it was ten to one he contrived to jerk his load over his horns with a series of spasmodic kicks, before he had gone fifty yards. After which there was ten minutes' hard exercise up and

down hill before beast and burden could be brought together again. I declare I would as soon have herded the swine of Gadara after the devils had entered into them.

Nothing could be more unfortunate for me. The day we left Thal we were astir at day-break, yet we were not fairly under way till eleven o'clock; after which we took six good hours to cover as many miles! My chance of witnessing perhaps the most extraordinary and most daring of General Roberts's efforts was really lost at Pindi. But I did not know it, and I thought the world more odious with each day of delay.

A pill is none the less bitter because it might become tasteless with keeping; and generally every age must be allowed to know its own worst failures. As a child you were quite certain the delightfully wicked grown-up people had the best of the cake when you were sent to bed. At school you thought most of that

race you lost by a neck, or that bully you never could thrash. At college you panted hopelessly after your ideal, if not of woman, then of learning or of fame. Even so, middle age and decrepitude will not be denied their share of disappointed desire and Dead Sea apples.

We followed the new road. It has the advantage of running the whole way on the left bank of the river, which is swift and unmanageable at times, like all Afghan streams. Otherwise it might be fairly described as a permanent provision for highway robbers and murderers—professions in which the neighbouring tribes are held by good judges to excel.

Shinak was the only post in the line that struck my fancy. It was built on the edge of a steep place, and had a defensible, self-contained air. From its walls you looked across the broad grey shingle, with the river winding through it like a thread of silver, to a span of

populous, cultivated land. Where the opposite bank rose abruptly like a small cliff, some villages stood forward in a cluster; and in the background the hills were gloriously dyed in saffron and purple. Budaskheyl I also remember—chiefly for the ludicrous position of the *serai*, or convoy enclosure, removed more than a mile from the camp. The night we arrived, things as usual sounded unpleasant to ears unaccustomed to Afghan amenities.

A friendly Khan sent in to inform the commandant that the enemy had sent away all their women, and collected three thousand men to overwhelm the post. Now a *serai* is simply a large quadrangular enclosure, with sheds constructed against the walls for the housing of travellers. In the open space in the centre, horses, camels, bullocks, and other beasts of burden are picketed indiscriminately. It did not inspire mirth to picture the scene of wild confusion—the trampling and blind terror of

animals, the shrieking and scuffling of natives—that would have arisen if the enemy had got to work among us with their long knives. As for defences, three sides of the place were well guarded by a deep ditch and a good wall; but on the fourth, near which our tents were pitched, there was only a low wall, without any ditch.

Our garrison consisted of a hundred men all told, or about a sufficient number to man one face of the *serai*. Before retiring for the night our little party of five went the rounds of the walls and settled on a rallying-place if the worst came to the worst. We slept in our clothes, but the night passed without any alarm, and we awoke next morning feeling decidedly uncomfortable and more than half ridiculous.

The last stage was disastrous in the extreme. Getting rid of our bullocks, when haste was no longer of any avail, we suffered in the loss of our kits the only ill we had not yet

experienced. For our camels broke down on the steep zigzag, that now led up to the Paiwar Kotal; and darkness and a band of 'friendly villagers' coming down together, our servants allowed themselves to be intimidated and robbed almost within hail of the guard.

Like travellers knowing the country, we had started well equipped. To think of our nicely-finished appliances scattered about the hovel of some idle, dirty, bloodthirsty savage, was enough to make us register a vow against 'taking thought for the morrow' for ever. The loss of two or three pet books and of all my writing things went near breaking my heart. As I collected a few things the thieves had dropped in their haste, I almost shared the experience of Robinson Crusoe taking stock of his first salvage from the wreck, while my servant trembled like a second Friday. Comrades of all ranks, however, were generously ready to help; and with a pair of boots from

one, a shirt from another, and a warm waistcoat from a third, I soon had a complete change of clothes to boast of.

Next morning we were allowed to search some of the neighbouring villages with an armed party. Sentries were posted all round the mud warrens with fixed bayonets, and positive orders to let no one escape. The curs, biped and canine, that inhabited the place stood sulkily in corners; but no one raised positive objections, except a shrivelled-up old beldam, who betrayed to me by her remonstrances a curious underground hiding-place, in which were buried some pounds of commissariat tea and sugar and some soldiers' blankets.

It was an excellent opportunity for gaining some insight into the interior economy of villages in these parts. For myself, I infinitely preferred the operations which were conducted on the house-tops. All along the mud roofs were great trusses of cut barley and other

crops, which the soldiers prodded with their bayonets most vigorously. The yellow and white heads of Indian corn lying out in the sun looked sweet and healthy; but when you came to the lower rooms, where smoke and a smell of cooking prevailed, the business was most unsavoury. In the basement rooms the stalled ox, and even the despised ass, shared the same roof with the human inhabitants. Beyond a few wretched bedsteads and earthen receptacles for grain, shaped like stoves, I could not discover a single article of furniture: indeed it puzzled me vastly to know what these primitive beings would have made of my possessions, if they had fallen into their hands. As for the women, they were all dressed alike in coarse blue smocks and trousers, without the smallest seeking after personal adornment. They may have possessed a certain comeliness; though, disguised as they were, I could discover nothing of it, unless it were a pair of

bright dark eyes here and there. Certainly they did not retire to a private chamber, as had been politely requested, for the prevention of ill-feeling.

CHAPTER III.

DAWN AT ALI KHEL.

The colour soothed me like a tune,
Green leaves all round the gold and red.
Swinburne.

Morn and eve
Were magnified before us in the pure
Illimitable space and pause of sky,
Intense as angels' garments blanched with God,
Less blue than radiant.
Mrs. Browning.

THE Mangals (first discovered by Colonel Thelwall in 1878) haunted the garrison of the Paiwar Kotal with persistence. Every evening after dinner the commandant received a telegram from a person of political importance, warning us that our enemy was on the war-trail; and every morning, before dawn, we turned out silently, under arms, to receive him. Like primitive man, we lived on the hill-tops,

perpetually on the look-out. But the Mangals were wiser than they pretended, and a day of reckoning never came. There were, however, two companies of 'The King's' a few miles off on detachment, under Captain Jervis. After working hard for a month, they had a little luck in the end. For the wolf came at last to Ali Khel.

The camp was pitched on a stiff ridge, sloping down in front to a dusty plateau. A grand amphitheatre of pine-clad slopes, with lofty summits and prominent spurs on the right and left, looked down upon it. In the middle distance were lower ridges with rice and Indian corn fields, villages, and many-coloured fruit-trees, lying deeply embayed in the flank of the hills.

Under cover of darkness, on the morning of the 14th of October 1879, the enemy crept up and lodged in masses close to the defences. The first shot was fired as the bugles finished

sounding the *reveillé*, and, with this prelude, the bullets came singing fast from all sides. With the help of daylight our people easily repulsed the attack all round. Some of the hill-men, armed only with knives, were bayoneted by the 29th outside of the stockade. Then General Gordon took the offensive, handling his troops boldly, so that every man had his chance. The battery (C IV.), and our Lancashire lads with their Martinis, made some very pretty practice. Then the 11th N. I. sallied out on the left to the edge of the plateau, and peppered the fugitives for a long way. Even a miscellaneous troop of cavalry, boldly led by a stalwart professor of the healing art, had a charge on the plateau, and cut off some stragglers.

Two days after this affair I got leave to go on to Ali Khel. What a ride it was! My spirits rose with a leap, as I quaffed the keen fresh-scented air, intoxicating as champagne. For scenery there were the solemn pine-woods

of the Paiwar, and, rising above them, the mighty head of grey Sika Ram, with its crown of awful solitudes. As I sped along, the valley opened out before me, with its precious October colouring—one of the best of my memories. In the wonderful southern sunlight even the grey shingle of the river-bed, and the light umber of the soil, seemed faintly luminous. Against this background there stood out orchard groves and bowers of trees, all aglow like Aladdin's jewels, or clusters of magical fruit, ruby, and topaz, and emerald, rose, and crocus, and evergreen. High above, the dark forest line, with its sharp points, like the setting of a ring, showed against the flawless azure of the sky.

After the 14th there was no more fighting at Ali Khel. Instead we were treated to a real Afghan burlesque; and, to tell truth, pieces with infinitely less humour have not seldom appeared on more civilised stages :—

ACT I.

Scene.—The Camp.

Patriot bands are discovered in the distance.

The garrison hurries to arms.

[*Shots are heard—alarm bugles* molto agitato.] A troop of sorrily-mounted horsemen arrives at a gallop—they are recognised to be hostages from Kabul. [*'Cease fire' sounds.*] Exeunt officers and soldiers grumbling.

ACT II.

Scene.—The General's Tent.

[*Politicals, staff-officers, interpreters, and Sepoy guards.*] The travel-stained hostages are introduced.

Recitative.—They celebrate the mighty exploits of the English army at Kabul—particularly the blowing up of the great magazine.

Jubilant exit of hostages, with light hearts and heavy purses.

[*Pas de deux—the General and the Political.*]

ACT III.

Scene.—The Patriots' Bivouac.

Hostages are discovered haranguing assembled chiefs.

Irruption of patriots armed to the teeth.

[*Grand sword-dance beneath the savage pine-trees.*]

Patriots bravely fire some deserted hovels and proceed—to disperse.

[*Distant droning chorus of soldiers and Sepoys balked of their prey.*]

CURTAIN.

And this is how history is made in Afghanistan.

By way of a parting compliment, the patriots turned us out of bed about midnight. Nothing was further from their thoughts than an attack. Our watchfulness was a mere military formality; but the darkest and coldest vigil would have been well rewarded by the vision of daybreak which came at last. At such a time the mind seems to take early impressions with a new freshness, sensitised, as it were, in the darkness and peace. Drawing the eyes of sun-worshippers to the east, the morning star arose, and hung gleaming in its setting of night's deep enamel. Soon a pathway of faint light, gradually overflowing and increasing in brightness, crossed the line of the hill-tops and the sky. One by one the stars grew pale. As I dropped my eyes, and raised them quickly, I seemed almost to discern wave after wave of ethereal radiance penetrating upwards. The profile of the dark ridge, at the foot of which I stood,

grew sharper and sharper; touches of saffron and rose appeared on the right and the left; and above, the deep sapphire blue shaded off into pale turquoise. Suddenly I became aware that the objects in the foreground were plainly visible. There were the deserted tents standing in cold white groups, and the troops in their grey greatcoats lining the stockades, and the animals in the hollow looking round inquiringly for their early dole of corn. Lastly, the hill-tops leaning forward in the west, that had remained in shadow, murky, almost smoky by contrast, took fire at the sight of the rising luminary.

As the first rays of the sun fell on us, a comrade, a man of much practical common sense, bade me laughingly 'Good-night.' And when our half of the world was waking up to work, I was mightily pleased to take the hint and turn into bed. After all, sun-worship must be terribly exhausting to its votaries, and start heavily weighted in the race of the creeds.

CHAPTER IV.

OVER THE SHUTARGARDAN.

To struggle against great odds! to meet enemies undaunted! to be entirely alone with them! to find how much one can stand!

Walt Whitman.

THE 26th of October saw a convoy fairly on the road to Kabul. The march over the Shutargardan is one of the most awkward and convincing proofs of what impossible places it is possible to lead an army across. The road drops from the Ali Khel plateau into the bed of a mountain-torrent, and very soon leads into a long and terrible defile. I never felt more like a mouse walking into a trap—without indeed the excuse of any savoury morsel by way of temptation. The great

mountain-walls on either side were so smooth and bare that it struck me if an enemy came at you from above, you could lie down and have half a dozen shots as comfortably as in a shooting-gallery—with your life instead of a handful of nuts for the stakes.

Some five or six miles on, at Dracoula, three roads, or, to be more accurate, three ravines, meet in a sort of well, sunk among the hills. We halted, facing a rock castle of Nature's own building, with turrets and battlements regularly cut and grooved out of the smooth fine-grained stone. From this vantage-ground half a dozen fanatics might have flaunted their flag in the face of the whole British army with impunity.

A little further on, the hills make some pretence of edging back, and allowing a lean valley to squeeze in between them.

But the road, escaping from the stony river-bed, gets entangled among the stunted firs

and bare stumps which represent but poorly the famous Wood of a Thousand Trees.

We halted for this night at Karatega. It was a dull, bitterly cold October evening, seeming all the greyer for the mist and the smoke from the camp-fires that trailed along the ground. As we watched the tired followers and baggage-animals come tailing into the *serai*, we congratulated ourselves on finding shelter without pitching our tents.

Indian servants are models of patience and resource on the march. But that evening, when the question of dinner was delicately raised, one poor wretch whined outright, with the tears in his eyes. As for his master, he grumbled as only an Englishman can. Smoke, dirt, and evil smells, the lack of forage for your horse, or a decent dinner for yourself, are not heroic evils; but they are like chopping seas to the philosopher's barque. Presently I caught myself reckoning up the extravagant sums I would

have paid for a place at a bright English table, and a pretty wench with trim ankles and a ready smile to do the service. At least we had four walls round us, so I deliberately stripped myself of many garments before turning in. Boots and breeches are among the most demoralising of bedfellows good or bad fortune can put in a man's way, while to earn a good night's rest and to take it is to come very near fulfilling the law of earthly happiness.

Next morning we were off in the teeth of a nipping wind before the sun was on the valley. About a couple of miles on, we came to the steep zigzag ascent of the Surkai Kotal. Above, there is a little upland plain to cross, and a long pull up a dangerous defile, before you can set foot on the crêst of the famous Pass. There was nothing but the biting air to remind us that we were marching among mountain peaks as high as the Alps. Here and there the face of a hill had a harmoniously blended colouring

of rose and grey. But for grandeur there is nothing to compare with the Paiwar Kotal.

A haze hung over the valley, so that the prospect was disappointing; but the descent was enough to make your head turn. The road goes down, and down, till you begin to suspect you must be in a waking dream, bound on one of those journeys that have no end. On the left, some rugged hills lean back in a group, the bright lines of the ridges, and the shadows in the valleys converging towards the traveller. Some way down we came upon a clear stream journeying with us. There was more than one narrow rock passage to wade through, which a company of sappers, with a single charge of dynamite, could have made impassable for a month. After passing through some villages and cultivated land, the stream and the road part company again, the stream disappearing into a deep gorge, the road leading over the Shinkai Kotal.

Surmounting this, the last obstacle between us and Kushi, we began to hope for better things. But the prospect on the reverse side was dismaying beyond belief. In place of smiling valleys there met the eye cold wastes of stone, and beyond these again the inevitable hills. The dead levels in front and the low hills on the left, rounded and hollowed by the ice-drifts ages back, were barren even of the common scrub and camel's thorn. After toiling long through this doleful desert, we came suddenly upon Kushi, lying hidden in a great cleft in the plain. The green fields, the orchards with their October wealth of fruit and colour, and the hamlets nestling low, looked like one great garden of plenty; and when the sun shone level with his glory of golden light among the western hills, we saw that Kushi is not called the Delectable Land in vain,—though its beauty is so hidden that you might fancy the beggarly people ashamed of it.

To us the capital interest of the ground we had crossed lay in the gallant struggle which it had witnessed a fortnight back. Colonel Money, with his own splendid regiment (the 3d Sikhs), the 21st P. N. I. and Morgan's Mountain Battery, had taught the wild hill clans they were as powerless against a few Sikhs and 'apostate' Mussulmans, when led and disciplined by Englishmen, as against the white soldiers themselves. The usual rough and ready scale, for estimating the importance of an action by the number of casualties fails here, as all rule-of-thumb measurements fail at times. No doubt the regiment that stands fast when half its numbers have fallen, gives the highest example of all valour. None the less the peril at the Shutargardan was as real as it was ugly to face. Match eight or ten long knives and swords against one bayonet—and it had almost come to that more than once,—and the result will not be doubtful. If a handful of men will

not only stand confidently, but fight a gallant, forward, and uphill fight in the face of great odds, they have done as much as discipline and courage, or anything short of despair or heroism will teach soldiers to do. And that in a few words is the story of the 14th of October,—the great day at the Shutargardan, when Major Griffiths, with 200 men and a couple of guns, sallied forth to the relief of the post on the Surkai Kotal.

CHAPTER V.

FROM KUSHI TO CHARASSIA.

The leaves caught gold across the sun,
And where the bluest air begun,
Thirsted for song to help the heat:
As I to feel my lady's feet
Draw close before the day was done;
Both lips grew dry with dreams of it.
Swinburne.

WE halted two days at Kushi till the camp on the Shutargardan was broken up. The 21st unluckily were ordered back, but the remainder of the brave little garrison joined General Gough. Most of the troops were to march round the valley collecting revenue, but a large convoy started straight for Kabul. I never matriculated in a better school of patience. You might step out as bravely as you pleased at the head of the march, but the end of it was

that you had to pull up and wait for the weaker brethren in rear—a humble example which some of us who are for pressing on in the van of all reformers might lay to heart. Up among the bleak mountain-paths these halts were of doubtful advantage; but down in the valley, after crossing great shelves of stony land, we dropped now and again upon an oasis, and rested royally, basking in the warm sunshine, and feasting on the small sweet grapes of the country. For threepence I carried away as many cool clusters, fresh from a great deep basket, as I could hold in my two hands together.

After crossing the Logar river the traces of cultivation were decidedly encouraging. In one field I positively saw a man digging alone. In India the usual complement is three men to a spade—two to pull, and one to push. You may wonder how it is done, but it is so. Mechanically, I rode closer to examine this

solitary cultivator. He was a sturdy little fellow, with a nose of no shape in particular, curious twinkling black eyes all breadth and no length, and full podgy cheeks, with a dash of colour glowing through his dusky skin. The implement he was using had a sharp-pointed triangular blade, and two wooden spokes on the shaft. I thought I should never tire of looking at his bare, healthy feet, cleanly shaped, and pleasant to look upon, as a well-modelled hand. As I thought of the unsightly deformity, wont to emerge from the pointed case we call a boot, it struck me our fancied superiority over the Chinese in questions of fashion was hardly of the superlative kind. When I submit to my shoemaker—and who does not?—I am after all only a little wiser than a Chinese lady, and vastly more ridiculous than a Hazara peasant!

There were hills on either side of our line of march, as usual; but while the range on the

right between us and India retained its rugged, frowning aspect to the end, the slopes on the left were smoother and more inviting. Our second halt was close to Charassia, so that we had an opportunity of studying the field of the 6th of October.

Just beyond the camping-ground is a district abounding in cultivated enclosures and walled homesteads. An active enemy would have lined the hedges with swarms of skirmishers, and posted his squadrons behind the villages to dash out and disconcert the advance of the invaders. But the Afghans had no cavalry, and their infantry had a wholesome dread of being caught in the open. As usual, they had posted themselves along the crests of the hills, and meant to stay there so long as they saw a fair chance of being able to bolt down the reverse slopes in safety. Their position, roughly speaking, resembled a horse-shoe. The left segment was formed by a lofty range of hills,

ending in a precipitous conical-shaped peak, directly beneath which road and river run side by side through a narrow gap. A lower range with gradually falling, rounded slopes, completed the right segment. Beyond the right flank there was another road, but no attempt was made to advance by it. General Baker's brigade (composed of the 72d, the 5th Ghoorkas, and the 5th Punjab Infantry, and a mule battery) had a stiff day of it rolling up the enemy's right, and working steadily up and down hill towards the pass. The ground was bare and destitute of cover, and the enemy's fire waxed hot: at one point our losses were heavy, and a slight check occurred. It was two o'clock before our people below saw the mules of the mountain-battery against the sky-line, threading their way well round the bend of the hills.

Meantime G III., with a small escort of cavalry and infantry, went straight up against

the pass, where the enemy's guns were planted. Barring the passage were two steep isolated hills, one behind the other, crowned with stone breastworks, and strongly held.

Some time after G III. opened fire, Major White, of the 92d, brought a company close under the first hill, and then up they went, a mere handful, against the enemy above. On the hill-side the little band looked as if you could have covered them with a blanket. It was a fine sight, they say, to see the Highlanders straining doggedly on, without wasting a single shot. Now and then the Afghans swarmed out in front of their defences, but a couple of shells from G III. were always enough to turn them flying under cover again. About half-way up, the little storming party found shelter behind some rocks, where they collected for the last rush with the bayonet, that made the hill their own. After this exploit Major White, reinforced by some men of his own regiment,

and some of the 23d Pioneers, cleared the second hill, and then made for the centre of the enemy's position, where he took the guns. As soon as it was seen that the enemy were in retreat, the 5th Punjab Cavalry and a squadron of the 9th Lancers rode into the pass; but as a marsh in front of the two hills had prevented them from making a turning movement early in the day, so now they were hampered by the nature of the ground. The road and the river have to find their way together through the narrow pass; moreover, the ground between the two is very much enclosed, and intersected by broad ditches. The troopers were obliged to dismount; but they made good use of their carbines. Before evening the tribes who had occupied the heights on the right of the camp were driven off, and during the night both the pass and the camp were held by our troops.

CHAPTER VI.

KABUL.

The town, there, seems to seethe
In this Medæan boil-pot of the sun,
And all the patient hills are bubbling round
As if a prick would leave them flat.
Mrs. Browning.

I SHALL never stand beneath the Castle Rock in Edinburgh without thinking of the Bala Hissar, with Kabul stretching away behind it. To make the resemblance complete, you must fancy Arthur's Seat pushed close up, and a wedge out of the Pentlands aligned beyond that. But call the Castle—the upper Bala Hissar; the first house in the High Street—the Residency; the Old Town—the lower and inhabited part of the Bala Hissar; and the Princes Street Gardens beneath—the Ameer's palace; and

you will represent very truly the scene where the hero Cavagnari and his little band of followers met their doom.

There are the inevitable differences between North and South to be allowed for. Instead of the grey, massive northern strength, you have crumbling irregular outlines of turret and wall, hot and dusty, like the sun-baked hills they crown. The Afghan Sirdars, too, are better lodged than the old Scotch nobles. Their architects have to provide against heat as well as cold: so there are spacious courtyards and whitewashed galleries and corridors in place of peaked gables and squalid attics. None the less the main positions on that terrible day in September may be filled in as I have indicated. In the centre of all was the lion at bay, with the toils closing round him. In the narrow lanes a mob of scowling, dark-faced men, mad, and baying for their prey like bloodhounds that have tasted human flesh. These, now arming

themselves with stones, now with rifles, now at last with cannon, surged up to overwhelm the noble little band from the citadel above. Far below all, was the King or Cur, lolling in his palace, unwilling, or at best unable, to strike a blow for his guest, or his honour, or his crown.

It was pleasant to pass from the Bala Hissar, which must ever be haunted by such memories, to the city itself. If it has no famous monuments or architectural beauty to save it from the destruction already twice merited, it has at least a distinct Oriental character, and some interesting particulars, peculiar to it. The two main bazaars—thoroughfares, we should call them—are simply two great diverging galleries, roofed in with rough logs of wood and reed matting. Thus protected from the sun in summer and the snow in winter, the people eat and work, buy and sell, and almost live, in public. The rows of curious little booths, raised

off the street about the height of your saddle, reminded me of nothing better than stage houses or workshops, the facing removed for the uses of the audience.

Gaily-coloured wares from every accessible land—carpets of harmoniously blended hues from Persia, red cotton handkerchiefs from Manchester—are pressed indiscriminately into the service of the Oriental imagination. In summer the pleasantest booths to linger in front of were the fruit-merchants', piled up with fresh fruit and every green stuff in season; or the confectioners', with their great blocks of white ice, and their bowls of cunningly compounded sherbets. But the cook-shops, with the strongly-spiced kabobs, and high tid-bits, hissing and reeking in great iron pans, were an offence to any European nose. Through whole quarters the monotonous tic-tac of the tinsmiths resounds, or the sober guilds of the tanners reign unchallenged. Afghan workmen

are clever imitators in the rough, but lack finish and refinement; I never saw a bracelet or an ornament in Kabul I had a fancy to buy. But the curious in china and strange wares picked up some treasures from Bokhara or Kokhand. Perhaps the great square (with its fountains and water-ducts choked up to this day, as they were left by Pollock the Avenger) makes the bravest show, hung round with furs, and embroidered sheepskin mantles, and praying-carpets.

On the right or left are many narrow lanes and closes, clogged with dirt and all abominations. There is little temptation to stray down them and pause before the stout doors studded with broad iron bosses, to dream of the lovely houris pining within. I had few opportunities, and the nearest I got to acquaintance with a city interior was one day in spring, when a contractor with whom a friend of mine had large dealings, asked us to visit him in his house in

the Kuzilbash quarter. We had to leave our horses in the street; but after passing through a low doorway and passage, we found ourselves in a tiny court, overshadowed by a real green tree. In one corner there were two or three cows, placidly ruminating and mechanically switching the flies from their flanks. Perhaps the architect had hardly calculated for the entertainment of live stock. But after the garlic and offal and mixed high odours of the city, the fresh smells of this court reminded one of the country and farm-yards.

Our host ushered us into his drawing-room, which he had at least begun to furnish on artistic principles. Tables and chairs there were none, but in the centre of the room shone a bright patch of carpet, with a deep border of some more sober-coloured material, as thick and soft as felt, running all round the skirting. On the walls in little niches and recesses were china cups and gaily-coloured vases; over the door-

ways floated two Persian shawls, with rich fantastic patterns. The whole effect gratified the senses extremely ; so did the choice cup of tea and the sweet biscuits that were offered to us.

We sat on the window-sill for half an hour making friends with two or three dark-eyed urchins and a young soldier of the Guides, clinging with pride to his rifle.

The Kuzilbash quarter can be shut off from the rest of the city when times are troubled ; but neither the walls nor the gateways present any remarkable features that I know of. On the straight road to Sherpur the Kabul river is crossed by a bridge, the favourite station of the beggars. A more harsh-voiced, ill-favoured mendicant race does not disfigure any city in the world. The people, it should be observed, even the shopkeepers, unlike other Orientals, habitually receive you with an air of insolent indifference.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BURSTING OF THE STORM.

Over the hill-sides the wild knell is tolling,
From their far hamlets the yeomanry come:
As through the storm-clouds the thunder-burst rolling,
Circles the beat of the mustering drum.
Fast on the soldier's path
Darken the waves of wrath.
Long have they gathered, and loud shall they fall;
Red glares the musket's flash,
Sharp rings the rifle's crash,
Blazing and clanging from thicket and wall.
Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Les temps ne semblent-ils pas venir où, dans la plupart des rapports humains, les sages diront de plus en plus: comprendre, et de moins en moins: juger.
Revue des Deux Mondes.

ON Monday the 8th December 1879, General Roberts ordered a great Divisional Parade. That day all the force behind the English


SKETCH
TO ILLUSTRATE THE OPERATIONS NEAR
KABUL
from the 8th to the 23rd December 1879.
Scale 1/2000 or 3 mile to 1 inch
Ghaza
Kushgha
K. Karez
Last stand made by enemy 23rd Dec.
K. Khair
Little Argandi
Ghulam Husan Khan
Ghulam Haidar Khan
KHUSH KAK
K. Kazi
Kabul
Lalandar

K. Afzal Khan
Khoja Chasht
Aloui
Pai Munar
Ahgail
Khoja Bogra
Wazirabad Lake
Deh Kopak
Khoja Rawash
Wazirabad
Moguto
Bazukhel
Genl. Roberts
Counter Attack
23rd Dec
Kubulbai
K. Parsala Khan
Bemaru
Sherpur Cantonment
Nanachi
Aushar
Barika
Kabul R.
Kudhaidhad
Biland Khel
Asmai Heights
Camp 9th Dec.
Aliabadh
Deh Mozang
Kabul
Bala Hissar
Bagrana
Malai Yakub
Dehbori
Sirdar Walli Md. Khan
Guzarga
Sultan Jan
Gaukhana
Kalacha
Swamp
Hashmat Khan
Beni Hissar
Musai
K. Wazir
Deh Umrod Khan
Charkala
Kabul R.
Dehdhana
Waluithi
Logar R.
Deh Akhur
Thaba
Indaki
Shewaki
Saah
K. Shahan
K. Fathu
Khoja Fais
Rishkor
Rishkor
Char Asiah
Ali Mahomed
Chil Dukteran

name in Kabul was arrayed in the plain beyond Behmaru Ridge. Those slender steel-tipped lines may have seemed but a poor display to a turbulent population, accustomed to count its armed men by tens of thousands. But there was not a soldier in camp, from drummer-boy to staff-officer, who would not have turned upon you with derision, if you had hinted that within a week this proud army would recoil, baffled and discouraged, behind the cantonment walls. Yet so it befell; and the explanation is that we had reached one of those points, where political, and even electioneering, considerations in England, exercised their baneful influence upon the conduct of the war. We were floating, unconsciously perhaps, on the all-glory-no-expense policy, and entering upon a military occupation, or even a measure of tentative annexation, with the resources provided for a punitive expedition. From a military point of view General Roberts was strong enough

to take and hold Kabul against all comers; but to hold it as the capital of Afghanistan, he required at least five thousand more men.

Warnings had not been wanting. The deportation of Yakoob Khan, and the various tentative measures for securing tranquillity, excited nothing but enmity and distrust among the tribes; and the whole country-side was astir like a nest of angry wasps. A proclamation of annexation would have been answered by a less formidable burst of national rage. Yet with it all, the old supremacy, resting with a bold initiative, had very nearly reasserted itself. A little luck, and General Roberts would have carried matters with a high hand to the end.

The city of Kabul may, without extravagance, be looked upon as the centre of a maze of valleys. To catch the enemy, who kept threatening us, in one of those mountain avenues, or if possible to get him between two fires by stopping up both openings of a valley, was a

considerable military temptation. The difficulty was, that while our columns could only move by the valleys and regular passes, the enemy knew every accessible point where their native mountains might be scaled, or turned into a natural fortress.

The village of Arghandi, a great centre of discontent, on the direct road to Ghazni, was selected for attack. On the afternoon of the 8th of December, after the review, Macpherson's brigade, to which I was attached, moved into the Chardeh Valley, and encamped at Killa Aushar. On the 9th, although the enemy were observed plainly enough streaming down from Arghandi, we halted to allow General Baker to develop his turning movement by the Logar Valley and across the hills by Maidan, and on the 10th there was a change of plans.

A large contingent from Kohistan was reported to be creeping round from the north to join the gathering at Arghandi. To defeat

this new combination, Macpherson, leaving four guns and a squadron of Lancers in camp, slipped back into the Kabul basin, and thence through a defile further west into Koh-Daman. The manœuvre was so skilfully and secretly carried out, that the brigade was actually nestling in the hollow of a commanding ridge, before either the Kohistanis or the Arghandi column were well aware of its presence. Hope ran high: at last we were to strike from above, instead of toiling up to one summit to find the enemy fled to the next. Unluckily, before the enemy's main body on either side came within range, it became necessary to drop a shell among some adventurous Kohistanis, who were pushing up the slope towards us. And with the smoke of our first gun there vanished all chance of a surprise: in a second, the stream of men on the left from Arghandi was dammed up, and the Kohistani scouts scattered on the

hill-side disappeared like rabbits. There was nothing for it but to

'Cry "Havock!" and let slip the dogs of war.'

The gun-mules scrambled round the crest and half-way down a long spur of the hill—just in time for Major Morgan, who commanded the mountain-battery, to place a few shells at a long range with his usual precision. The infantry, Sikhs on the right, English in the centre, and Ghoorkas on the left, raced down the slopes without a symptom of a check. Meantime, the hostile masses below seemed to disperse and reunite with as little intelligent purpose, as swarms of flies in summer. On one low brow, indeed, there was a fine show of forming into line, with standards of white and red to mark the companies; but the whiff of a single shell was enough to scatter all this array like so much chaff. When the rabble streamed away towards Kohistan, dotting all the fields and darkening the slopes, a few resolute soldiers

continued to hold a detached knoll, firing volleys at our skirmishers. Before they were silenced or driven off we had one officer and seven men hit. Two fanatics remained crouching behind a rude breastwork to the last. Suddenly we saw their white-robed figures flash out upon some Sepoys incautiously sauntering towards them, dart zigzag down the hill in hot pursuit, and so on to death among the serried ranks below.

From start to finish the affair lasted little more than an hour. The enemy's loss was between fifty and a hundred; and towards dusk the fugitives were seen through telescopes miles off and still running.

This success left General Roberts free to follow out the original plan of surrounding and crushing the enemy at Arghandi.' General Macpherson was to push straight along by the Pughman Hills; his guns and cavalry (which had remained at Killa Aushar), slightly reinforced, and placed under General Massy, were

to advance by a converging line through the Chardeh Valley, while General Baker was expected to take the enemy in rear from Maidan. There was nothing foolhardy in this scheme, particularly when the conduct of the enemy the day before is taken into account.

We left Karez Mir about eight o'clock in the morning, halting for half an hour on the Kotal to allow the column to close up. Presently the sound of a distant gun, and then another and another, was borne across the hills. After this there was no lagging behind.

About the same hour that we started from Karez Mir, General Massy, with four Horse Artillery guns and four squadrons of cavalry, rode out from the camp at Killa Aushar. Up to this 11th of December 1879 the only difficulty had been to get the enemy to stand at all, and therefore it is assuming very little to suppose that General Massy's main concern that morning was to get a chance of dashing at the enemy, and not to wait for Macpherson

or any one else. In short, counsels of caution were not so much as considered, and the attack was made, as usual, with a light heart wherever the enemy appeared. The Killa Kazi Hill, two thousand yards off, made a good target for the first shells; but as village and ditch and enclosure were rapidly left behind, the battery became hotly engaged. Round after round of deadly shrapnel was hurled forward; but the enemy had taken the measure of the little force from the heights, and swept down with terrible determination. Then it was that the want of a few hundred good rifles was sorely felt. After thirty dismounted horsemen had in vain striven to make up for the deficiency, it became evident that a desperate effort must be made to save the honour of the day. Side by side the British and Indian Lancers dashed forward on their hopeless errand. But you might as well have tried to knock down a mile of wall with a single shell. The ground was unfitted for cavalry, and the

enemy's loose formation offered no resistance to the shock. After each trooper had maimed or missed his man, there was nothing for it but to turn and ride back, with many an empty saddle. Of all the officers of the 9th who took part in that charge, there were but three who came out unscathed. Hearsey and Ricardo of the 9th, and Forbes of the 14th, were hacked to pieces in an instant, and the colonel of the 9th was terribly wounded. Retreat, however, was still possible; but before a practicable roadway in the desired direction was hit upon, the leading gun toppled over into a deep ditch, hopelessly blocking the passage for those that followed. Groups of troopers made charge after charge without checking the enemy's masses. At last, when the case was desperate, General Roberts, who had come up, after General Massy was committed to fight, is said himself to have given the order to the gunners to cut the traces and gallop off; thus avoiding the useless sacrifice of many valuable lives.

All this time Macpherson's infantry was pushing forward so rapidly that, with another hour's grace, the guns would have been saved. As it was, part of the brigade actually got within distant view of the field before the fighting was over. But the dead silence that followed the sullen boom of the nine-pounders was taken to mean that the enemy had got out of range in that quarter; and General Macpherson contented himself with chasing the enemy on his right up to the hills for miles. Late in the evening, after the pursuit was over, he received the full tidings of the morning's fighting, and the brigade groped its way back to a cheerless bivouac at Dama Sang.

While General Macpherson was thus employed, General Massy's guns were recovered. The carriages had been stripped and left lying by the enemy in their haste, where captured; and Colonel Macgregor, with a handful of officers and men collected as he went, was able

to sally out and bring them back without firing a shot. But the real mischief was not to be thus lightly undone: for in the hour of that unhappy reverse an impetus was given that quickened a hesitating and half-hearted demonstration into a determined and most formidable onset.

The actual danger to cantonments, and the strength of the enemy, on the 11th of December, have been exaggerated. The original plan of the Afghan leaders was to occupy the line of hills, to which they had been accustomed to look for the command of their capital. As fortune kept smiling on them, and swelling their ranks, they may have learned to aim at the destruction of the whole English army; but on the 11th General Roberts's prompt measures of defence scared them from any active attempt, even upon the city. It is incredible that the capture of Sherpur should have entered into their wildest dreams that afternoon.

Throughout the day my fortune had been cast in with General Macpherson's rear-guard. The whole country-side was alive with men, and we had some smart fighting to keep the enemy off the baggage. But for half a battalion of Sikhs which was sent back to the assistance of the two companies of Ghoorkas with the rear-guard, it would have gone hardly with us. As it was, at one point where the road was pushed back by the shoulder of a ridge, and cramped by some vineyards and gardens, we were hard pressed. The Hill-men dashed along the slopes, springing like wild cats from point to point, to threaten our flank. Major John Cook and his brother went off to avert this danger, and both met with hard knocks in the hand-to-hand fight that followed. When they disappeared, I was left holding the road with a few Sikhs, in a pretty state of uncertainty, fearing lest I should uncover the flank of their party by retiring too soon, or be surrounded myself by remaining too long.

While engaged in a little exploring expedition, suddenly I came upon a wild Afghan standing above me on the hill. In my last moments, whether they come early or late, I expect to see this savage, with his pointed cap and his villainous smock, like a petticoat huddled up in front, and his rifle pointed at some one below. A pistol is but an uncertain weapon except at the closest quarters, and my first thought was to get my little following away before we were discovered and completely hemmed in; so, turning back, I hailed them, and we slipped away through some gardens. But the worst was to come. The last enclosure was bounded by a five-foot wall, with, to my horror, *no gate on the far side;* my pony was being led beside me;—there was no time to go back;—so, after one distracted rush up and down to look for an opening, I had to bid a sudden good-bye to the prettiest and gamest tiny charger I ever rode. Poor Minstrel! how he stretched out his neck, following me with a half-amazed, half-reproach-

ful look, as I took off his saddle and bridle, and scrambled over the wall. I am positive there never was a more unwilling prisoner of war, and regret for him haunted me long; but even an Afghan master could not find it in his heart to use him ill.

Returning in the dusk of the evening to Sherpur, with one of the recaptured guns all sullied with dust and smoke, was an adventure in itself. Passing under the Asmai Hill, and through some of the narrow lanes of the city, an unusual interest in the demeanour of the townspeople forced itself upon us. But the shops were not closed; and all the muddy streams of Kabul life seemed to be flowing in their accustomed well-worn channels.

In cantonments there was every sign of an unwonted excitement. You rode up to a gateway and found it barricaded, passed round the walls and were stopped every hundred yards by a sentry's challenge; were admitted at last, only to be assailed by volleys of questions from

groups of men and officers, some cheery, chaffing, and confident, others veritably despondent and anxious.

During the day the excitement in the little garrison, which did not include one complete regiment, had been intense, and late at night the strain on the attention was still kept up. Again and again the piquet of the 72d on the Sher Darwaza was furiously attacked. The Hill-men crept close up to the wall, and taunted the Highlanders, crying, 'We killed Cavagnari, sahib; come and kill us.' For sole answer the flame of the Martini would leap like lightning round the crown of the hill. When day dawned it was seen that the enemy had left behind many of their bravest lying dead on the ground.

At midnight the Guides, cavalry, and infantry, marched in from Seh-Baba, having covered that day over thirty miles, or three marches, the first of which, over the Lataband Pass, was by far the worst on the line. The

arrival of this celebrated Corps was a matter of congratulation to themselves, and to all of us; for they had a heavy score of retribution to wipe out, and their opportunity was at hand. None understood better than our gallant chief the arduous task that lay before him. He knew that to re-establish our shaken prestige many desperate deeds must be attempted, and many brave lives sacrificed; for north and south, and east and west, messengers were riding furiously, with tidings that set the blood of the wild Afghans coursing like fire, and maddened them with memories of '42. Even now the priests were at work, calling on the clansmen to arise and snatch from their hiding-places sword, and knife, and jezail; and bidding them swear the same oath that their fathers before them had sworn—in the name of Allah and the Faith to exterminate the Infidels, and cast to the dogs and the vultures the carcases of the pale-faced invaders.

CHAPTER VIII.

GENERAL ROBERTS AT BAY.

Well, then, to work; our cannon shall be bent
Against the brows of this resisting town.
King John.

GENERAL ROBERTS was now fighting against time. The all-powerful Eastern creed of fatalism, his safest ally during a victorious advance, was now arming a whole people against him. If he could not beat the enemy off the hills overlooking the city in three days, there was no telling where the conflagration would stop. Many a bloody quarrel and national brawl had been fought out beneath those frowning peaks. Once they had even looked down upon an English army in its death-agony;

they were now to shelter in vain the greatest host raised in Afghanistan since the days of Akbar and Mahmoud.

On the morning of the 12th of December the enemy's flag waved from the lofty Takht-i-Shah, and from a lower and more advanced peak; but the Sher Darwaza and the command of the city were in the hands of the 72d. Part of Macpherson's brigade moving up early from Dama Sang, the attack began along the ridge. The base of the Takht-i-Shah was reached by the afternoon, but the murderous fire which swept its naked sides checked all further advance, and the attempt had to be given up. On this afternoon Major John Cook's tall figure towered for the last time above the little people he had so often led to victory.

In the evening the 2d Brigade marched in from Arghandi, the enemy having dogged their steps all through the Logar, and back

from Maidan. On the 11th of December the rear-guard had been hunted from one camp to the other, in spite of Captain Wynter's able and stubborn resistance. On the last march —such was the exhaustion of the transport animals—it was actually proposed at one time to park the baggage in Gholam Hyder's Fort, at the far end of the Chardeh Valley, from which not a man would ever have escaped alive: altogether, the expedition had been productive of much danger, and little or no profit. None the less, General Baker now became the hero of the hour. A direct assault on the Takht-i-Shah had been found impracticable; but a flank attack by way of Beni Hissar proved a glorious success.

About eight on the morning of the 13th General Baker marched out past the city with a strong brigade. His guns spoke early from beyond Sia Sang, and soon he sent the 92d Highlanders straight at the heights above Beni

Hissar, telling them that this was the post of honour. The gallant regiment, that has never disappointed friend nor foe, sprang forward at the challenge, and carried crest after crest at the point of the bayonet. Every incident of the struggle could be clearly seen from below; and there were many spectators of Forbes's heroic death. Outstripping his men, he reached the brow of the hill alone. At once the Afghans rushed upon him: he cut clean through the knife of his first assailant; but another, coming up behind, stabbed him in the back. His colour-serjeant, who came next, was killed in the same way. But when his men came upon the scene, the enemy broke and fled; and soon the little Ghoorkas were seen scaling the Takht-i-Shah itself, and avenging their losses of the day before.

But the fight still raged round General Baker. During the morning streams of men had been observed pouring over the Pai Manar Kotal;

a few shells had warned them off the Behmaru side of cantonments, and they presently made off for Sia Sang, with the effect of taking General Baker in flank and rear. The rabble, too, from the city were sharpshooting from the lower Bala Hissar, and, to complete the circle, from walled villages in the plain. But the fire from all these quarters was steadily quelled. A couple of shells well directed cleared the city wall; a company of the 3d Sikhs faced about, and silenced the enemy behind them; and the 5th Punjab Infantry surrounded one village and blew or burned down the gate, so that not a man escaped from it alive. Finally the cavalry settled accounts with the bands on Sia Sang. The Guides swept grandly round across the valley, while the 9th Lancers and the 5th Punjab Cavalry rode along the ridge itself. The enemy stood up boldly to meet them with their rifles, but the Guides, charging to the cry of 'Bala Hissar! Bala Hissar!' had not forgotten

the massacre of September. They say that in the *mêlée* the sabre of the irregular horseman proved more deadly than the lance of the trained trooper. But in a rapid pursuit, or in the charge of squadron against squadron, the verdict might be reversed.

The 9th Lancers were again unlucky in their losses. Captain Butson was shot through the heart, and Trower and Chisholme were wounded, so that young Gough, a captain of only nine years' service, was left in command of the regiment. None the less the pipes came back playing merrily, and cheer after cheer rose from the gateway by the 92d lines. For we were in high feather that night, and the final defeat and dispersion of the enemy on the morrow were looked forward to with all certainty.

When day broke on the 14th the Asmai Hill was occupied by masses of the enemy with flags flying from every spur and pinnacle. The position was an ugly one to look at, but skilful

dispositions were made for the attack, and the result seemed as certain as any in that great game where the hazards are infinite and the combinations defy calculation.

General Baker was to have the honour of finishing the work. Putting the trews of the 72d for the kilts of the 92d, he had with him much the same force as the day before. The action began with a brisk cannonade. Four field-guns, posted on a low eminence, crowned with the ruins of a mud fort, pounded the Asmai Hill on the front and right. Two Horse Artillery guns, posted by the General's Gateway, swept it on the left, where a pathway led down to the city; while the fire of Major Morgan's mountain-battery, on the Sher Darwaza, took it in rear. For every Afghan who comes out to fight there are a hundred strutting about on the hill-tops, and watching for their share of any plunder which Allah wills shall fall into the hands of the Faithful; but that

morning the upper air on the Asmai Heights was a trifle too disturbed for spectators. Swaying first to one side, then to another, the motley masses finally settled down upon the city, and streamed away towards Sia Sang. Then the scaling parties of Guides and Highlanders swept off the fanatics who remained in fine style—Corporal Sellars, V.C., leading the way,—and there established themselves under Colonel Jenkyns. During this time the cavalry were playing a grim game of hide-and-seek with the fugitives among the enclosures and villages outside of the city. Then it was that Vowsden of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, the second V.C. of the day, was seen to dash round the corner of a village, followed by half-a-dozen sabres, and slash his way through some hundreds of the enemy.

The day being apparently won, General Hugh Gough, with the cavalry, two guns Royal Horse Artillery, and two companies of

infantry, set off in pursuit towards Sia Sang. Judging after the event, it is evident that every man that could be spared should have been sent instead to reinforce General Baker. That commander's position was outflanked and overlooked by the enemy from a high hill on his right: with the help of a wing of the 3d Sikhs and the 92d Highlanders, he might have gained this point, without which his position was tactically incomplete. It is certain, however, that under no circumstances could we have continued to hold the whole long line of heights against the terrible odds the enemy brought into the field before nightfall. The thing actually turned in this way;—General Baker, deserted by the full tide of victory, fell into the slack water before the ebb;—then, on the arrival of fresh levies, a burst of impetuous valour, the like of which we had never seen before, carried the enemy irresistibly forward, and swept *him* back —defeated. The Conical Hill—a stepping-

stone, so to speak, to the Asmai Heights—had been intrusted to Colonel Clarke, with four guns and about a couple of hundred men of the 72d and 5th Punjab Infantry. Soon after midday, the plain beyond towards Indiki became black with skirmishers, coming within range of shrapnel, they seemed to open out and sweep round to the right, under cover of the hill already referred to. Signals for help were repeated by the defenders again and again. In answer, Colonel Jenkyns sent a party of men half-way down from his newly-won position on the Asmai Heights, but naturally, with his weak numbers, hesitated to do more. No other succour arrived, and the enemy, coming down from his high vantage-ground, collected in dangerous numbers in a fold of the ground close to our men. In a vain attempt to dislodge them, Spens of the 72d threw his life away, as a man might a weapon in despair. The danger to the guns

was evident to all. But Colonel Clarke set his teeth grimly, and refused to stir a foot. None the less, when their cartridges were all gone, his own men gave way. The 5th Punjab Infantry were not slow to follow, and the supports who were coming up would not look at the hill, when they saw their English comrades driven back. Some of the gun-mules were shot; and then the enemy, in hot pursuit, had again the triumph of capturing two pieces of our dreaded ordnance. The honour of checking and driving them back up the hill lies with the 3d Sikhs, who had been ordered out from Sherpur in hot haste.

After this there was some more firing at long ranges to very little purpose. The battle was lost; and General Baker sullenly withdrew.

During the afternoon, news was received that another dense column of the enemy was advancing by the road from the Logar Valley. When

a weaker man might have ruined us with half measures, General Roberts decided on instant concentration. Orders were flashed by heliograph across to the troops on the hills to return at once.

Colonel Jenkyns's withdrawal from the Asmai Hill, tardy though it was, came first. The blood-stained, mysteriously-curtained doolies had been plying their dismal office all afternoon; and every minute the strain on the minds of spectators within the walls grew more intense. The enemies' execrated figures and banners stood out against the sky-line in the west like sharply-cut silhouettes; and now we could see them dashing in thousands over the Conical Hill, and reaching the brow of the Asmai seemingly as our men left it. Then

> 'There was silence deep as death;
> And the boldest held his breath
> For a time.'

Could it be that those ghastly knives

were sheathed in the breasts of our best and bravest comrades? But no! A fresh burst of firing announced that Colonel Jenkyns was descending by one of the central spurs of the Asmai. The Guides and Highlanders supported each other nobly; and at the foot of the hill they faced about together and fired volleys, the deadly roll of the Martini lasting without a break for a quarter of an hour. It was the hottest fire I ever heard.

Meanwhile General Macpherson was hastening down from the Sher Darwaza. His movements were not easy to trace from Sherpur, but his anxieties must have been frightful. The narrow lanes of the city through which he had to struggle happily belonged to the Kuzilbash quarters. But the Logar column of the enemy had already taken the Takht-i-Shah and threatened his rear, and might at any moment appear on his right flank. On his left, skirmishers were already swarming up the

Dama Sang gorge. Worst of all, there was now menacing him the host from the Asmai Hill. A rapid retreat might have become at any moment a headlong rout; and his men, worn out with exposure and hunger, have been struck by panic as by the plague. Happily the 67th had a company above Deh Afghan, and the rear-guard stood like men: the enemy failing to press their advantage, the brigade reached Sherpur without serious mishap.

There were many losses to be mourned in Sherpur that night, and many anxieties to weigh heavy. Thousands of rounds of priceless ammunition, and many other stores, had fallen into the enemy's hands. But perhaps the most bitter regret must have been General Macpherson's refusal to drop a shell into the great magazine in the Bala Hissar, with its hundreds of thousands of tons of powder. It was all-important to prevent such a treasure from falling into the hands of the enemy. If

the Bala Hissar had been left a shapeless mass by the shock, and half the city of Kabul had been laid in ruins, that would have been but a just, though a tardy, retribution for the many outrages of its rulers and people upon the English flag.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ARMY ON THE WATCH.

Fighting for dear life, men choose their swords
For cutting only, not for ornament.
George Eliot.

GENERAL ROBERTS now took up a defensive position, and he chose Sherpur rather than Sia Sang, or the Bala Hissar, in virtue of a decision of his own arrived at two months previously, and not under pressure of any immediate necessity. He had soon to submit, under penalty of heavy loss, to all the appearance and some of the reality of an investment; but this misfortune he owed mainly to the nature of the ground: at the worst, on the bare fields to the west and north of Sherpur

not a single Afghan ever dared to show himself; and there was no day when the cavalry could not, and did not, sweep the country-side.

The conversion of Shere Ali's big barrack into a magazine for reserve ammunition and commissariat stores has itself been blamed, and even compared to the blunders of 1842. But what more convincing proof could critics give of their unreasonableness? The first blunder in '42 was the choice of an indefensible site for the cantonment; and the second—greater than the first—the suicidal neglect to bring the commissariat stores within the walls. In 1879 the English army occupied a position upon which no enemy unprovided with artillery could hope to make an impression, and had food enough to last for from three to five months.

The wisdom of a change of tactics after the events of the 14th was apparent to all. Reinforcements might be reasonably expected to arrive in a week. In the interval, if there

could be little bodily repose in the vast incomplete lines of Sherpur, there would be at least a breathing-space for men to recover their moral elasticity. There had been no direct defeat; but five days' marching, and climbing, and fighting, fasting and watching, is a severe ordeal for any troops; and all our regiments, excepting perhaps two, had felt the weight of the enemy's arm. Moreover, every hour that passed took as much out of the enemy's scale as it added to ours. The capture of the city permitted the Hill-men to hold together beyond the period of their ordinary raids; but even this source of supplies was not inexhaustible. There were, besides, the festering rivalries of the chiefs at work, and the undisciplined habits of the clansmen, hesitating between hatred of the infidel and greed for plunder. If the great agglomeration of Afghan tribes—I had almost compared it to some huge drift of icebergs—did not break itself to pieces against the rock

of our resistance, it must gradually melt away through the action of natural causes.

There was thus nothing to be down-hearted about. Yet it was a strange experience to look out over the fields, with their robe of innocent snow-white, and remember that the land we had been lording it over had brought forth, as by a miracle, from its barrenness, sons enough to rend us in pieces. Men catered for the smallest scrap of news of the enemy's numbers, or the approach of our reinforcements, with an undisguised appetite. It gave one an inkling of the state of mind when omens, on the right or left, seem of portentous significance, and of the reason why commanders of beleaguered garrisons are apt to die under the burden of responsibility. I will not even undertake to say that visions of defeat and disaster never presented themselves uninvited to the imagination. On one miserable night of snow my own musings were persistently gloomy; and perhaps

others, lying awake through the biting hours of darkness, may have been oppressed by the same nightmare—a wan procession of soldiers and camp-followers, fagged, famished, and half-frozen, struggling desperately on, with the horrible shadow of Death falling athwart their path at every turning.

I suppose there never was a defensible place that did not seem incomplete to its garrison, when the wolf appeared at its gates. Sherpur, with its two open sides, was no exception to the rule. A well-managed night attack (if such a thing be conceivable), by way of Behmaru, on the night of the 14th December, might have had awkward results. But the truth that fortified lines are no stronger than their weakest point seems less self-evident from without than from within: from the first the enemy were ready enough to show fight if General Roberts had attacked them, but it took them three days to discover he was

willing to change *rôles* with them, and six more to learn their new part of assailants comfortably. Meantime they were not idle. Toiling and moiling, sapping and mining, would have been little to their taste; but from Deh Afghan right round to Behmaru, villages and walled gardens had been left standing at a convenient distance from Sherpur. From these positions the Afghan gentlemen could enjoy a day's infidel-shooting with a minimum of risk and expense. It must be admitted that they entered into the pastime with infinite zest; but the amount of damage that was or could have been done to us in this way by an enemy unprovided with artillery was small. It was no part of the original scheme to turn Kabul and its environs into a vast fortified camp. Moreover, labour was scarce; and since the occupation all hands had been employed in preparing to meet 'General Winter's' inevitable assaults.

The position of Sherpur was naturally so

formidable that a few days' digging made us safe against an enemy with no guns. One disadvantage only could not be overcome,—the unwieldy size of the place, which held the whole force on guard day and night for its protection. In a day, however, the telegraph-wires were carried all round the defences, so that the General was able to control every movement sitting in his cabinet in the West Gateway.

English armies, in nine cases out of ten, are numerically too weak for the work they have to perform; but there is no reason why they should not be perfectly equipped. Encounters with equal weapons may have a high-sounding chivalrous ring; none the less, if you find yourself in a field with fifty half-naked savages, armed with the bloodiest of intentions, and the sharpest of knives, it is singularly inspiriting to know science has done her best for you. In Afghanistan we had no rockets, and no Gatlings worthy of the name; those at Kabul were

never known to fire a complete round;—perhaps the Royal Regiment of Artillery is not entirely blameless in this matter.

The heliograph, however, was well worked all through the war. The strength and the weakness of the instrument came out together in this hour of trial. The gravest anxiety, I suppose, that weighed upon the General, was for the safety of the little garrison that held the Lataband Pass. Communication could be held only by means of the heliograph; and there was something curious about the persistency with which the sun, so true to his votaries in these parts, refused, day after day, to smile on the exercises of the signallers. At last the tiny intermittent flash from Lataband reached us, like the light-house ray travelling over stormy waters. Welcome was its message, for the post was safe, and the advancing brigade was expected on the 22d.

The news was the signal for an exploit that

deserves to be better known. The advancing brigade had no cavalry: to supply this deficiency, and also to secure, if possible, the bridge over the Logar, the 12th Bengal Cavalry were ordered to make their way through the enemy's position, and join hands with General Charles Gough.

As soon as the moon was down, before the faintest streak of dawn appeared, the Sowars rode forth on their perilous errand. The gates of Sherpur had hardly closed behind them when the enemy took alarm and opened fire. Pressing on, they came to a deep water-cut; the banks were slippery, and the horses plunged and floundered about in a pitiful fashion. For half an hour the splashing and trampling attracted the enemy's fire. Some half-a-dozen men who were dismounted had to be left to find their way back through the sentries to Sherpur; but the squadrons were unbroken, and kept steadily on their way.

Happily the bridge over the Logar was found intact and unoccupied; but at Butkak, which was reached at daybreak, a regiment of Afghan regulars turned out and received the brave Sowars with volleys of musketry; so they rode on ten miles further, to Lataband, without drawing rein. This triumph of discipline and skill, in the face of the darkness and uncertainty, the perils and exposure of that night, was as a sign to mark the time when our troubles were at an end. The hours of Mahomed Jan's greatness were numbered.

CHAPTER X.

THE END OF THE JEHAD.

Some naked and savage, some like huge collections of insects,
Some in tents—herdsmen, patriarchs, tribes, horsemen.

Walt Whitman.

ON the 23d of December, an hour before daybreak, a clear beacon-fire shone out from the Asmai Hill. Before you could count twenty, every man in Sherpur was at his post; for this was the signal, as well known within as without, for the long-threatened assault. The sound of firing came first from the English Hospital, and then ran all down the long southern face of cantonments, to break out with tenfold

violence on the east. Every man strained his eyes in the darkness, and asked himself what this furious fusillade might portend.

When day broke, the state of affairs was made plain at a glance. There were no dead bodies piled up before the *abattis*, nor any evidences of an attack driven well home. But the enemy had collected in thousands close under Behmaru, and were increasing in numbers every minute, running in groups of ten or twelve from one village to another. The fire waxed hotter and hotter for a time, and the shelter-trenches stood our men in good stead. General Hugh Gough, who was commanding at this point, refused to take cover till a spent bullet knocked him over, and then even he condescended to place an earthen parapet between him and the enemy. The Afghans, with the true tactical instinct they invariably displayed, had discovered the most vulnerable point in the defences. But when the direction

of the main attack became thus evident, General Roberts was at liberty to concentrate reserves in sufficient force to roll back the most determined assault.

On the other sides the attack hung fire all day, never getting past the stage of a demonstration. Sharpshooters secreted themselves behind every available wall in larger numbers, and wasted ten times more cartridges than usual. Now and again a madman, drunk with opium, and frenzied with religious hate, rushed headlong forward, till a death-bearing messenger stilled the furious beat of his pulses for ever.

To strike a blow at a hated enemy, men have often made their lives cheap; but even a wild beast will pause before a twenty-foot wall with death staring over it. A more melancholy spectacle than those quasi-suicides I never looked upon.

When the first wave of the attack on Behmaru seemed spent, and before a second could gather force, General Roberts sent four guns

well escorted through the gorge in the centre of the ridge, with orders to wheel to the right, and take the enemy in flank. The moment was perfectly judged. No sooner did the Afghans perceive the cavalry and guns on their flank, than they began to retire from the nearest villages; their retreat gradually became more rapid, and soon could not be distinguished from a rout. The main body made for the Pai Manar Kotal in a broad black stream, while on either side a multitude of stragglers dotted the snow-covered fields. One breathed more freely when that mighty tide of men had rolled back across the plain.

The mass of the fugitives, as usual, escaped unscathed. Infantry pursuit was impossible; but if the cavalry brigade had been together, and well led, there would have been terrible slaughter. As it was, Major Williams, with two squadrons of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, made short work of a good many of the stragglers; and others streaming back towards the city

were raked with a searching fire by the 67th from the cantonment walls. In the afternoon the two infantry Brigadiers, moving out to the east of Sherpur, blew up the towers of some of the villages that lay in the path of General Charles Gough's probable advance. In performing this service, the lives of Captain Dundas, V.C., and Lieutenant Nugent, two most distinguished officers of the Royal Engineers, were sacrificed to a defective fuse—a mine which they had prepared exploding before they could get clear.

The enemy, though they made a last demonstration on Sia Sang, fell back that night upon the city, disheartened and ripe for flight. Next morning there was not an armed man to be seen; and the cavalry had a twenty-mile ride in vain pursuit, without firing a shot.

Thus ended the great Jehad of Mahomed Jan and the Moolah Musk-i-Alam. The curious in such matters might find an interesting experience in applying a sort of moral thermo-

meter to determine the degree of fervour and religious zeal which animated the humbler ranks. I fear they would seek in vain for the noble dignity of purpose and the pathetic single-mindedness of Peter the Hermit's Crusaders.

Two circumstances proving the ignorance and credulity of the tribesmen seem worth recording. Judging from the habits of their own leaders, they found it easy to believe that the body of cavalry which broke through their lines under cover of darkness, the night before the attack, consisted of the principal persons in the English army; and they actually advanced to the attack shouting to our Sepoys —'Your generals and colonels have gone out of your lines!' The other is still more grotesque, but I had it from an Afghan of rank. It was rumoured the English losses were so heavy, that the defenders on the walls of Sherpur were represented mainly by goats, with turbans artfully arranged on their heads, figuring for soldiers! It had also been given out

which clan would give its attention to the Europeans when the slaughter began, which to the Sikhs, and which to the Ghoorkas. I was somewhat struck by this last piece of forethought, for, if things had gone as they hoped—it may be noted parenthetically that Mahomed Jan had constructed enough scaling-ladders to carry a first-class fortress—some time and arrangement would certainly have been required to cut 12,000 throats.

On the 24th, General Charles Gough's brigade marched into Sherpur in time for more than its share of mud and misery, but too late for anything else. There was here the fuel for a burning controversy.

It is obviously a matter in which a man should be careful how he throws the first stone. The accusations which were bandied about by partisan members of the Kabul and Khyber Forces would certainly have been disavowed by their respective Commanders. Difficulties swarmed round General Charles Gough at

starting. In these days there were no moveable columns at Jellalabad and Gandamak, and, during the hasty move forward, some of General Bright's posts were more than once completely denuded of their garrisons. Moreover, the weak relieving brigade, when concentrated at Jagdalak, had before it the worst of the road, where enemies were numerous and supplies *nil.*

Coming to the day of the 23d, the case is different. All the data are known, and they seem to point to the conclusion that General Charles Gough missed a chance of adding a chaplet to his laurels. If he had pushed forward two regiments and a couple of guns to seize the Logar Bridge; collected his baggage and his transport in Butkak Fort; and then dashed at Sia Sang; he would have done no more than was justified by the situation. After all, the 'sound of the cannon' is the surest guide on the battle-field.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRANSPORT.

πρὸ δ' ἄρα οὐρῆες κίον αὐτῶν·
πολλὰ δ' ἄναντα κάταντα πάραντά τε δόχμιά
τ' ἦλθον. Iliad xxiii.

He is diligent to give the kine fodder.
Ecclesiasticus.

WHEREVER English armies take the field, the old Transport trouble is not slow to raise its unsightly head. After each discreditable breakdown the critics rush in, laying about them wildly; and then things go on, or rather stand still, much as before.

To treat the question, as raised in Afghanistan, at all fairly, it is necessary to bear in mind the exceptional difficulties of the undertaking.

The work was carried on in a country where rugged hill-sides and torrent-beds are the chief roads; where opposite extremes of climate must be endured within the twenty-four hours; where stones represent the chief produce of the fields; where munitions of war and the commissariat stores for 50,000 men were carried almost exclusively on animals' backs; lastly, where the attendants enlisted to care for the animals were so ignorant, so indifferent, and so brutish, that *these attendants were, in fact, the worst enemies of the animals.* What is the good of a new pattern saddle if the driver will let his animal march a whole day in torture, rather than trouble himself to shift a strap or a buckle?

There was but one remedy which could be applied on the spot—an extended scheme of supervision of the Transport animals and drivers by soldiers who had learnt the habits of discipline at least in the ranks. This system was most per-

fectly worked by Colonel Low, who was to the Transport much what General Roberts was to the Army. After the animals had been handed over to the different corps, he contrived to insure that the best care should be taken of them. The result, as every one knows, was that during the summer of 1880 the Kabul Field Force was ready to go anywhere on a moment's notice, and in the autumn actually did accomplish one of the most arduous marches on record, without a single serious break-down in the Transport arrangements. The strain, it is true, tried the new organisation severely. Cases of carelessness began to crop up. The men—small blame to them—were inclined to think if they could but get to Kandahar, other things were of small account. But even here there was an example to prove what could be done with extreme care and resolute management. One Commanding Officer (Colonel Boswell of the 2d Sikhs) was determined that, come

what might, his men should neither overload nor neglect their mules. The consequence was, that Lieutenant Dunlop, a most conscientious and vigorous worker, who was directly in charge, marched into Khelat-I-Ghilzai *without one sick beast;* and at Kandahar returned only three animals out of nearly three hundred to hospital! The fact that the animals originally issued to this regiment were unusually good detracts very little from such a brilliant feat.

Coming to the question of administration, men are at all times of more importance than measures in war. Yet the absence of that irreducible minimum of organisation and forethought which Englishmen steadily refuse themselves in all departments of public life, will always lead to serious inconvenience. A small nucleus of trained departmental officials, —men who have renounced the gold lace and tinsel of the service, and who will not grumble if they are left in charge of important posts on

the line of communications,—might surely be formed without difficulty in time of peace. For the forward work (where there is generally no lack of adventure), either in the Transport, or, as far as I have been able to observe, in the sister department, the Commissariat, young hands are positively to be preferred to veterans grown grey in the peace routine. All that is required for purposes of expansion is, that the authorities should take the trouble to keep lists of qualified volunteers, both in the commissioned and non-commissioned ranks. A pass examination, to test practical knowledge of farriery and saddlery, would hardly alarm the least sanguine of competitive candidates. If the shuffling of the cards is left to chance, curious results will crop up at times. When Jellalabad was the most advanced post on the Khyber side, the whole work of the Transport department fell for a time on the shoulders of a youngster with two years' service and no special

experience at all. He was a clever fellow; but the incessant rain of correspondence, requisitions, forage contracts, demands for money, memos. from every officer in the station, from the General downwards, nearly beat him to the earth. He used to sit at times, he afterwards told me, with his head in his hands, wondering how soon he would go mad.

The work was never showy, even when it was best done; but it had its own compensations. The pleasantest part of it was that it brought you amongst the animals. No doubt, unhappy beasts of burden, with spirit and character crushed out of them in the ceaseless round of daily toil, are but sorry specimens of their race. But there are glimpses of Nature to be caught even in the dullest prison-house.

Feeding-hour is the time to visit your lines. There is something refreshing in the undisguised delight of animals in eating: they are not ashamed, as Walt Whitman says. To see a

line of ponies when the feed-trumpet sounds is like watching the wind stirring in a grove of trees. Ten minutes later, the long row of sloping contented quarters, with perhaps one indignant head raised in the air, tells its own tale with dumb eloquence.

Camels are perhaps the most irritating, as they are the most imperturbable, of brutes. On the march it is impossible to disturb their grave, deliberate gait; and they will wear an air of imbecile and abstracted self-satisfaction under the most wretched circumstances. In the depth of winter I once timed a camel standing up to the knees in ice-cold water, with one great absurd padded foot in the air, quite undecided, and apparently indifferent as to what he should do next. Three minutes elapsed before he settled to take a step forward.

In camp, camels are usually assembled kneeling in circles with their heads inwards. At feeding-time they are all anxiety, stretching out

their long necks restlessly, and giving vent to a deep, uneasy growling. Every now and then a gaunt figure rises excitedly, and looms apart, till it is driven with blows into the ring again. When their dole of grain has actually been placed before them, it is pitiful to see the poor famished brutes sweep up their whole meal with their great loose lips in a few gulps.

Mules are easier to get on with, and less eccentric in their habits. We had some sleek-coated, really beautiful animals, that would trip along under any fair load, as daintily as a fine lady. A mule's ears, flapping absurdly backwards and forwards, or pointing fixedly towards you, with portentous gravity, seem made to turn the laugh against the creature. But observing my favourites closely, I fancied I discovered a reflective look in their eyes, redeeming their character for shrewdness. As justly suspicious of two-legged strangers as cats, if they found you meant them well, they

would recognise you with pleasure, and receive your advances graciously.

Later on we had troops of little grey donkeys. Such workers were never seen: I defy you to treat them with disrespect. It was not good on that last terrible march to see the poor, tiny, patient neddies come staggering in,—their delicate little shanks hardly able to support two great eighty-pound bags of flour. But alas! it was part of the horror of war in a semi-barbarous country like Afghanistan, that the living flesh and blood of animals had often to be used up as remorselessly as so much shoe-leather.

CHAPTER XII.

THE KHYBER LINE.

Far out, kindled by each other,
Shining hills on hills arise.
Mrs. Browning.

AFGHANISTAN is not the country for a nervous traveller. The grass did not grow under the feet of an officer in the Kabul Transport. Indeed, I question if at any time I pitched my tent or tethered my horses for ten days together in the same place:—yet I cannot remember ever sleeping in a post where an overwhelming attack was not supposed to be impending. The truth is, that our presence in their borders kept every tribe we came near

in a state of smouldering excitement, and fuel was never wanting to keep the fires of their resentment alive. The 'friendly' country-folk you met walking about might have hesitated whether to cut your throat first or your purse-strings. That they would have preferred to do both, if the opportunity offered, was certain. One ended by getting used to it; but it was not a reassuring state of affairs.

Critics who perceived one-half of the truth only were not slow to suggest that the invading army should have been doubled. Irrefutable proof, however, of the sufficiency of the force employed is to be found by turning to the record of facts. For two years we held three long lines of communication, with military posts every ten miles. Yet the mountaineers were not equal to organising a single successful attack of any importance upon one English garrison or escort. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, the threatening thousands, after

playing the game of brag with an incalculable amount of assurance, quietly dispersed to their homes, perhaps murdering a few miserable ambulance-bearers on the road. The hundredth, and last time, when the blow really fell, the moment was probably selected in obedience to some contemptible omen of superstition, or some unaccountable spasm of rage, demonstrably never in accordance with any rational plan of hostilities.

The case of Fort Batteye, in the spring of 1880, is a perfect instance of this incapacity. The attack was timed to fall, not when one of the large convoys of transport animals (the loss of which would have crippled a brigade) was passing up to the front, but one night when the garrison chanced to have been almost doubled. The only other attempt upon a post that occurs to me was the attack upon Chapri, in the Kurum Valley, which resulted in the death of Lieutenant Wood of the Transport; and

beyond this, in no other gain, small or great, to the assailants.

Fully to account for the impotence of such a large hostile population, it must be remembered that if there are plenty of the best rifles in Afghanistan, as our losses in all the regular engagements prove, any one tribe can muster but few soldiers well armed according to modern standards. The tables have been turned since the days when the deadly jezails used to harass our men, who were powerless to reply. The change is dead against all accepted rules of tactics in Afghanistan. If a Pathan can crouch behind a rock and shoot you safely, he enjoys himself amazingly; but he hates risk, and if there is any chance of your shooting him instead, the sport is entirely spoiled in his eyes. I have heard men of much frontier experience declare it is almost enough to build a wall round a post without putting a man behind it!

There are tracts of grand scenery between

Peshawur and Kabul, and some landmarks to be remembered for a lifetime. About eighteen miles from Peshawur is Ali Musjid, a wild eyrie, perched on an insulated inaccessible mass of rock, with a stream of clear water washing its base. From this point the Khyber, monarch of passes, winds its way royally through a majestic avenue of mountains—

> 'Mountains that like giants stand
> To sentinel enchanted land.'

Lundi Kotal, an unapproachable little outpost surrounded by precipices, marks the highest point about half-way through the Pass. Then the road is cut out of the face of the hill for a couple of miles, after which it descends gradually to the level of the Kabul river at Dakka. Once in the Jellalabad valley it is all plain sailing till you reach Jagdalak, where convoys are again apt to be in difficulties.

A little off the beaten track is the Purradurrah, a rift in the mountain flank, where

stupendous cliffs on either side rise sheer, a few feet apart, to an unknown height. If the hapless fugitives of the 1842 had really struggled through this terrific passage, they might well have fancied, and almost prayed, that the hills would fall upon them, and make them a tomb for ever.

Last of all there is the Lataband Pass, with a memorable prospect from its crest. South, barren plateaus and peaks seem to stretch away above the clouds to the Shutargardan, one summit in the middle distance giving a conception of loftiness and remoteness combined, that would make the despair of an artist; West, you get your first glimpse of the famous Bala Hissar; North, there is an abrupt mountain wall and a deep, unexplored gorge where the Kabul river has forced its gloomy passage; East, low ridges, regularly smoothed and rounded, roll away for miles like the billows of a petrified sea, and beyond there is

a distant vista of the passes leading to India, valley opening into valley in interminable succession.

It is written that military roads shall not lie in pleasant places. To tell truth, a camp, with its trampling and countermarching, would make a desert of Eden in a week. Though I travelled along the whole line, from Jumrood to Lataband, twice, I have pleasant recollections of only two halting-places—Jellalabad, for its fine trees and well-shaded gardens; and Fort Rozabad, which did not altogether disgrace its soft-sounding name. Politicals, and other men more fortunate than their neighbours, tell you there are beautiful valleys hidden away in the flanks of the Saved Koh and elsewhere. But most of the posts were low, mean-looking, dusty enclosures—mere magnified commissariat flour-bags, dropped by the way for the use of all travellers; and the surrounding country was rich in sand and stones, as Siberia or the Great Desert.

The life was sober, almost sombre, of hue; even the military record did not escape the general dulness—note, by way of exception, General Charles Gough's brilliant action at Futteahbad, which closed the first campaign.

What memories there were to bear away were heavy with melancholy. Pharaoh and his Egyptians were not worse tormented than the Khyber army. Every evil pursued it, from the plague of the flies to the horrors of that terrible death-march in 1879, when men lay sweltering in their tents with the thermometer at 120°, and cholera wasted whole regiments to mere skeletons.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SECOND FIGHT AT CHARASSIA.

Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill.
Wordsworth.

THE olive-branch of peace, despite the care of the Politicals, sunning it with their smiles and watering it with their tears, was slow to put forth shoots in Afghanistan. Even the news of General Stewart's crushing victory at Ahmed Kheyl did little towards keeping things quiet at Kabul.

In the latter half of April a thousand men and a couple of guns were sent out to the Logar Valley, to keep the road open for supplies, and draw off some of the tribes who were threaten-

ing General Ross's column of observation at Zaidabad.

This second object was so effectually attained that on the 25th we awoke to find ourselves nearly surrounded by the enemy, at a distance of only eight miles from Kabul. The action that followed is worth recounting. Colonel Jenkyns's dispositions, full of caution no less than of determination, might serve as a model of frontier tactics. There could be no better example of how to handle a small force in the face of heavy odds.

We were encamped on very nearly the same ground as General Roberts had occupied on the 5th of October, only we stood with our backs instead of our faces to the city. Stretching along our right and right rear were the village and vineyards of Charassia, and beyond these the interminable hills ; straight to our front lay the road through the valley, and on our left again ranges of hills. There had been rumours afloat

of gatherings of tribesmen, so Colonel Jenkyns was early astir. About daybreak the Guides fell in quietly by companies, and a piquet with a strong support moved out, as if to occupy a peak about a mile above our camp, which we had always held by day as a signalling station. Presently the heavy report of the native jezail broke upon the still morning air, and the dawning light revealed the figures of the Hill-men, with their accustomed banners sharply picked out against the sky-line. Colonel Jenkyns had forced the enemy's hand, and deprived them of all hope of surprising the camp. The advantage thus gained was turned to account swiftly and noiselessly. Not a single bugle was allowed to bray forth its alarms, but the tents were struck and the baggage-animals loaded up in a trice. The decks, so to speak, were now cleared for action; and our little force of a thousand men was ready for attack or for defence. We were not long left in suspense as to which attitude to

assume. The Hill-men, first observed on the peak in front, spread along the ridges and down the slopes, keeping up a brisk fire, while fresh bands, probably summoned from a distance, were seen moving down the valley and threatening our right flank. Colonel Jenkyns took in the situation at a glance. In rear of our camp, at a distance of some 600 yards, lay a low rounded mount, well detached from the main range. This mount naturally suggested itself as a rallying-point in case of extremity, and a company of Highlanders, under Captain Napier, was at once sent off to crown it. Parties of the Guides were also despatched to hold three walled enclosures, one lying under the hill and two covering our right flank. The remaining companies of infantry doubled forward and found cover among the irrigation banks and ditches. The thin extended fighting line had the shape of a great fan, two companies held in reserve representing the handle.

Meantime, without any appearance of haste, the baggage-animals had been moved off under the lee of the mount. Out of some 700 animals, there were only three or four trifling casualties to prove that the movement had been decided upon wisely and in time. On our late camping-ground were the two Horse Artillery guns, and behind them the Guides Cavalry, pacing patiently backwards and forwards, on the watch for a chance to charge.

Such was the position of affairs when the enemy's attack developed, and the bullets began to fly about, the sharp spit of the Sniders and the wheezy moan of the Enfields betraying the presence, in his ranks, of soldiers well trained and armed. On our side, during the six hours of resistance that followed before help arrived from Kabul, there was little shifting, and no giving up of ground. Woodhouse, however, had to move his guns back two hundred yards after losing a couple of his

horses. Similarly the Guides Cavalry were ordered to retire from their unpleasantly exposed position, when it became clear that our infantry were holding their own in front. The Afghan attack presented all the peculiar merits, with the accompanying defects, of an irregular style of fighting. As if by magic, a crop of flags, red and white, sprang up to right and to left of us. Some of the brave standard-bearers crept up to within two hundred yards of our men; and the rank and file skirmished round us in their usual admirable fashion, offering no mark for artillery, and very little for riflemen. But the absence of discipline and of any settled plan of action was as conspicuous as ever. Bands of men were seen hurrying to and fro, uncertain which way to turn. Hundreds more never left the hills, employing all their energies in the beating of drums and cheering on of their comrades down below. At one moment they rose up all

round with a shout, and threatened to break over us like a great wave. Men felt for their pistols, and instinctively tightened their grip on their swords; but it turned out that even the Ghazis down below were in no hurry to face the bayonets of our slender fighting line; and the human froth above subsided as quickly as it had risen.

About noon the promised help from Kabul arrived, and after much watching we caught sight of the head of Macpherson's column debouching from the Sang-i-Newashta Pass. The first troops to come up—the 2d Ghoorkas—were ordered to clear the enemy from our right. To see them settle to their work was a sight for a king's birthday. The *élan* of these minikin soldiers, as they dashed at the enemy, was not more notable than the steadiness with which they kept together and poured in their death-dealing volleys. Then the Guides on the left, backed up by the 45th Sikhs, drove

the enemy off the peak they had held, so that with one rush we had won all his positions. Finally, when the cavalry rode out in pursuit, Woodhouse was not a whit behind. Galloping forward about a mile with his two guns, he completed the rout of the enemy with four parting shells dropt clean in their midst, as they were tailing over a distant range of hills. The contrast between this disciplined onslaught and the desultory fighting that had been going on was a trifle startling. I like to imagine the disgust of the Afghan leaders, who had confidently expected to swallow us up when darkness came on.

The cavalry cut down a score or more of fugitives in the plain. We counted our losses in this brilliant little affair by tens—the enemy, as we afterwards learned, by hundreds.

CHAPTER XIV.

SUMMERING THE TROOPS.

I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.

Song of Solomon.

FROM huge rectangular Sherpur, half-barrack, half-warehouse, we looked out many a time with longing on the lofty Pughman range. Around its cool peaks the grey mists gather, and the snow glistens in the hollows, and the light and shade shift from the rosy morning to the violet-tinted evening all through the seasons, and verdant valleys, that penetrate its base like narrow creeks, lure explorers with tempting invitations.

I had like enough missed visiting our Hes-

peria altogether; but I chanced to be attached to a brigade that was ordered out from Kabul in June, in quest of nothing more poetical than food for men and forage for animals. When we took our way past the cool white slabs of Baber's tomb, green luxuriant growths seemed to spread over the Chardeh Valley like a magical carpet; and in the Koh-Daman country beyond the year was at its best.

In that delectable land there is a summer of bright holidays to be spent in the saddle or on foot. In the morning the fields lie open before you; the air is filled with the crushed-out sweetness of peppermint and wild lavender; and the country folks are reaping a golden harvest thus early. Here and there fruit-trees spring up right amongst the corn, or a patch of brilliant green betrays the presence of a walled vineyard. As the sun grows hotter, there are the narrowest and most tempting of country lanes winding through

the shade, with sudden openings upon terraced gardens, or perhaps upon a village green. Through the turf a clear streamlet steals along, and beneath the trees the peasant women are moving up and down at a primitive loom, with their lords and masters stretched lazily beside them. Then there are the orchards, like silvan temples, with sturdy trunks of trees for pillars, and chequered light and shadow for pavement, and tremulous green leaves with a background of azure for canopy overhead. For music, the wandering airs among the tree-tops bear down the ceaseless cooing of the doves, till you fancy you have chanced upon a grove beloved of the Immortals, and almost watch for some strange Venus, escaped long ago from the ruins of Greece, to glide amorously towards you.

Go where we would, there was a profusion of fruit within reach. Mulberry-trees were as common as chestnuts in England, laden in season with white wax-like berries, each con-

taining a drop of some sweet unsatisfying essence like the honey you suck from clover, or with imperial fruit streaming with tell-tale purple juice. Then there were the sun-dyed apricots, and the peaches, and the milky nuts, and the little rosy apples, and the promise of a full harvest of grapes and melons. Of all these we ate our fill, knowing we were robbing no man in that generous southern land, where Nature does not teach her children to be niggard of her gifts;—where the blue depths of heaven are open, and the life-giving sunlight quivers upon forest and field.

To the intense splendour of the days succeeded the lustrous reign of the moon. Her fair unearthly light invested the hill-sides with new mysteries of shape and shadow, and streamed across the valley, silvering all the leaves, and enchasing the homeliest objects. The mellow exhalations of night, and the suave airs with their caressing touch, seemed one

prolonged invitation to reverie. But, alas! joy that is not reflected in loved eyes never seems without flaw, and the miseries which surprise the lonely find a favourite ambush in a beautiful scene, even using as a treacherous ally the indolent spirit which is the genius of the place.

Campaign III.

CHAPTER I.

THE LESSON OF MAIWAND.

Admirals, extoll'd for standing still,
Or doing nothing with a deal of skill';
Generals, who will not conquer when they may,
Firm friends to peace, to pleasure, and good pay.
Cowper.

THE defeat which called General Roberts into the field for the third time is without parallel in English military history in the East. The story of it is cruel reading. If it is good to write or to speak of at all, it is not to indulge in illogical whining, but to search rigorously for the cause of the disaster. When the present Quartermaster-General of the army, who combines all the ardour of a Reformer with the technical skill of an expert, has publicly stated

that the army has entered upon a dangerous stage of transition, when all may depend on the stamp which the new mould receives, it is hardly the time to mince matters fine enough to spare all personal susceptibilities.

The advance on the Helmand began under bad auspices. Much stress need not be laid upon the fact that reinforcements were applied for both by General Primrose and his Lieutenant. The despatches of English Generals might not seldom be made up of such applications; and the knowledge that if one man refuses to take a brigade to the devil, a dozen are ready to accept his place, is a most healthy stimulus to the service. But the instructions which sent General Burrows half-way to meet his enemy, and then forced him to halt and appear to hesitate, have another significance. There are two ways of treating risings in Afghanistan: to stamp out the flames wherever they appear, or to wait coolly to see if

they will ever reach you. Either course, followed out with the persistence and indifference of fate, will probably cow Asiatics into submission. To order a Commander not to advance is to deprive him of his best weapon.

Unhappily if General Burrows's responsibility can be lightened here, its load is grievous enough in the end. For once, the critics have undisputed possession of the field. It could hardly be maintained that the reconnaissances before the defeat were boldly conceived and vigorously carried out; or, when the column stumbled on the enemy at Maiwand, that the position was turned to good account, either for attack or for defence. Comparisons do not improve the case. When General Burrows is described forming up his men in the old-fashioned line of battle, I cannot help thinking of Colonel Jenkyns at Charassia, shaking out his little force, trusting to a few good rifles to cover all gaps in his line, yet never leaving himself without a small

reserve. It was not Ayoub's artillery that won him the battle, but the Ghazis, who got our men in their toils, and then delivered their terrible charge.

There is one redeeming feature in the affair—the unflinching courage shown by the soldiers concerned, from the unfortunate General downwards. If there were some exceptions to this noble conduct, I suppose that unalloyed metal is not to be found in the world, and gold will always separate from dross in the furnace. The conduct of the little company of Sappers, who died fighting to a man; of the 66th, who rallied round their colours, and kept off the enemy till the last cartridge was gone; of the gunners who closed that terrible retreat so patiently—is beyond all praise of mere words. It is better to admit at once that soldiers who are well officered and led do not refuse to fight—the case of a sudden panic being excepted. There is a difference in the fighting

power of the races of Northern and Southern India—a difference enough shown by the resistance they were able respectively to offer unaided to the advance of English armies. But under good English officers they have all done, and will do again, the work of a soldier, which, it cannot too often be repeated, is distinct from the work of a hero.

What followed at Kandahar,—the precipitate flight to the Fort, and abandonment of thousands of pounds' worth of property lying under the muzzles of his guns, a week before the victorious Ayoub appeared,—the state of depression and demoralisation that fell on the troops,—the 'mad and miserable' sortie, cannot here be discussed.

* * * * *

When General Primrose published his story, and the official censure fell on him as much for what was omitted as for what was told, I began to understand why I had never been

able to listen quietly to men sneering at a stirring order, or picking holes in a graphic despatch. After all, if a soldier cannot conceive of a great action, it is improbable that he will ever perform one.

The teaching of most of our recent disasters is the same. Nothing short of the tests of actual warfare will unmistakeably determine capacity for command; yet for the higher grades, selection honestly worked is the only safeguard possible.[1] Even in Germany, where length of pedigree is commoner than length of purse, the present standard of efficiency could hardly be kept up, if appointments and promotions were the recognised prizes of family interest and longevity:—in England, where the opportunity, and perhaps the inclination, to lead an easy life belong to many, we can ill afford to drop the spur of competition. It is

[1] Sir George Colley, though over-sanguine and overmatched, was certainly able.

not the pay, though that is poor enough, so much as the fear of old age creeping up before success, that repels the active and ambitious.

There lies the greater question behind: Who is to call upon the people to give us a real army, and make England safe for ever? When are we to cease from tinkering and tampering with the surface of things? The answer cannot long be delayed, in spite of our incessant nominal changes. In Asia we must soon stand face to face with a great continental neighbour. May we not recall when it is too late Sir Frederick Roberts's warning advice to keep our boy-soldiers at home, and send out men to fight our battles in India![1]

[1] *Vide* General Roberts's speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, 14th February 1881.

CHAPTER II.

THE MARCH.

The swarming ranks press on and on, the dense brigades press on;
Glittering dimly, toiling under the sun—the dust-covered men
In columns rise and fall to the undulations of the ground. Walt Whitman.

On the 8th of August 1880 General Roberts started on the march that will be remembered when every other incident of the second Afghan War has faded out of history. The dangers and difficulties of the undertaking were nowhere better understood than in Kabul. But the spirit of confidence, which animated the picked force that took part in the expedition, was not slow to spread within the sphere of General Roberts's personal influence.

In England, the wisdom and the success of the enterprise were held to be doubtful; in Kabul speculation was confined to the chances of unavoidable delays which might occur in its execution.

It was hard work from the first. But the earliest stage—the march divides itself naturally into three—was the least trying. Men and animals were fresh, comparatively speaking that is,—for it is not the least notable part of this forced march of 300 miles that it was undertaken at the end of an arduous and protracted campaign. As for surroundings, the banks of the Logar are a very Eden when compared with the stony desert that lies beyond Ghazni. The interminable defiling of the baggage-animals through the narrow country lanes continued from morning till night; but at least there was no lack of green trees and running water, and well-shaded resting-places. The instinctive longing of all travellers for such

pleasant variations in the landscape has its own practical meaning for the Commissariat department; short rations were unknown, and even the animals were in clover.

There was a regular block at the Tanji Wardak. It took two days to get the division either through the Pass or over the Kotal. But the dead pull did not make itself felt till we left Zaidabad in the Maidan Valley.

From this point we said good-bye to all trees and verdure of every kind. Time seemed to resolve itself into an endless, scorching Indian day. Man and beast struggled on as if driven by an implacable fate. Under foot were stone and sand and choking dust; on either hand a barren mountain wall, neither closing in nor opening out; and above and below and all around, the dead mid-day glare seeming to dry up the marrow in your bones and make your soul faint within you.

If shadows could have been made saleable,

and rolled up in a commodious fashion, they would have fetched any price. Even the patch of shade under a horse's girth would have been a marketable object. I remember one day coming upon a ravine, where it was just possible to get a little shelter by sitting bolt upright against a bank of moist clay. An English officer, a little donkey, and a low-caste native had taken refuge there. I took my place among them with satisfaction.

The amount of dirt it was possible to carry about on your person was positively startling. Getting into camp, I have a distinct recollection of often staring with wild blood-shot eyes at myself, and finding my features coated with dust past recognition. But the worst torment that pursued us was unquenchable thirst. Lips and throat were parched beyond the power of beakers of water to cool; and Tantalus-like dreams of impossible draughts of ruby-coloured claret-cup, or amber

cider, used to haunt my imagination till I thought I must drink something or perish.

In such extremity, I remember asking a Sepoy to lend me his cup to draw some muddy brown water from a little stream. He refused me with a Pharisaic shake of the head. I thought I had never seen a more stupidly brutal bigot. I think I should have struck him but for very shame.

On the march the necessity of sending our parties for forage and supplies, immediately on arrival in camp, pressed heavily on regimental officers. Rise when we would, the baggage was never fairly under way before daylight; nor the rear-guard through with its heart-breaking task till any hour of the afternoon or evening. Half the labour consisted in picking up and bringing along camp-followers with suicidal tendencies strongly developed. Old Indians declare, even during more severe marches with small parties in India, that they

have never seen anything like this collapse of native followers. The explanation is that the unpopularity of service in Afghanistan made it necessary, in the first instance, to engage poor recruits, whose constitutions were already shattered by the hardships of the winter campaign. But the health and spirit of the troops were certainly wonderful. Considering the quantity of unripe fruit and filthy-looking water swallowed by Sepoys and Englishmen indiscriminately, it was a standing subject of surprise to me that we were not smitten with some epidemic, or at least some dangerous sickness. If this had happened, or if we had come in for much fighting on the way, we should have been terribly hampered. As it was, the unlucky doctors were wellnigh distracted with the difficulty of providing carriage for their patients. There might be 30 or 40, in one case 90, men from one regiment unable to march; but of these the vast majority only wanted a day's

rest to take their place in the fighting line. On the way one Englishman and, I think, two natives deliberately destroyed themselves, thinking life not worth having at the price.

The strain on the departments also was inevitably severe. Under Major Badcock's able management, the Commissariat, with perhaps some inconsiderable exceptions, was able to comply with all demands in a fashion that surprised those who had taken part in General Stewart's march at a more unfavourable season; and the waving fields of Indian corn, with its feathery crests, inviting the sickles of our grass-cutters at each encamping-ground, were a godsend to the animals. Colonel Low, Chief Director of Transport, left Kabul with over 3000 mules and ponies, and filled up the gaps in the ranks ingeniously by purchase and impressment on the march. Casualties were heavy, but on a march like this the only subject for surprise is that the supplies and

necessaries for an army of 10,000 men, with accompanying followers, should have been conveyed on pack-animals' backs over 300 miles of such country in three weeks with so insignificant a loss of property.

Ghazni was sighted in a week. But we had only time to note the square, massive look of its walls, and the proximity—ludicrous to modern artillerymen—of some low heights behind the city. Conspicuous, too, were the dark pillars that mark the site of Mahmoud's Palace. Next day we marched twenty-three miles, right past the field of Ahmed Kheyl. Again there was only too little time for interesting digressions ; but the best possible testimony to the heavy punishment recently inflicted on the tribes was the absence of all opposition during our progress through this the most warlike and fanatical district in the country.

With *reveillé* sounding daily at 1 A.M., a

snatch of three hours' sleep got to seem little better than a feverish dream ; and a real night's rest at Khelat-i-Ghilzai was a priceless boon. The garrison of that curious little camp of refuge, perched high above the surrounding country, had not been molested, and joined us intact.

It was a disappointment not to have even a brush with Ayoub's cavalry ; but from this point onwards there was no lack of rumours to enliven the road. We advanced by shorter marches too, with the exception of one stretch of thirty miles, accomplished by the cavalry in excellent form. One day Ayoub was reported to have bolted, and the anathemas in camp were both loud and deep. On the next we were told a picked force was to cross into the Argandab in hot pursuit, to intercept the enemy's guns. Then there came a day's halt within striking distance of Kandahar, and finally the order to move straight ahead as originally

intended. Up to the last it was difficult to believe Ayoub would stake all he had won, including the reputation of the conqueror of the English, which no one could have taken from him, on such a desperate chance as a pitched battle.

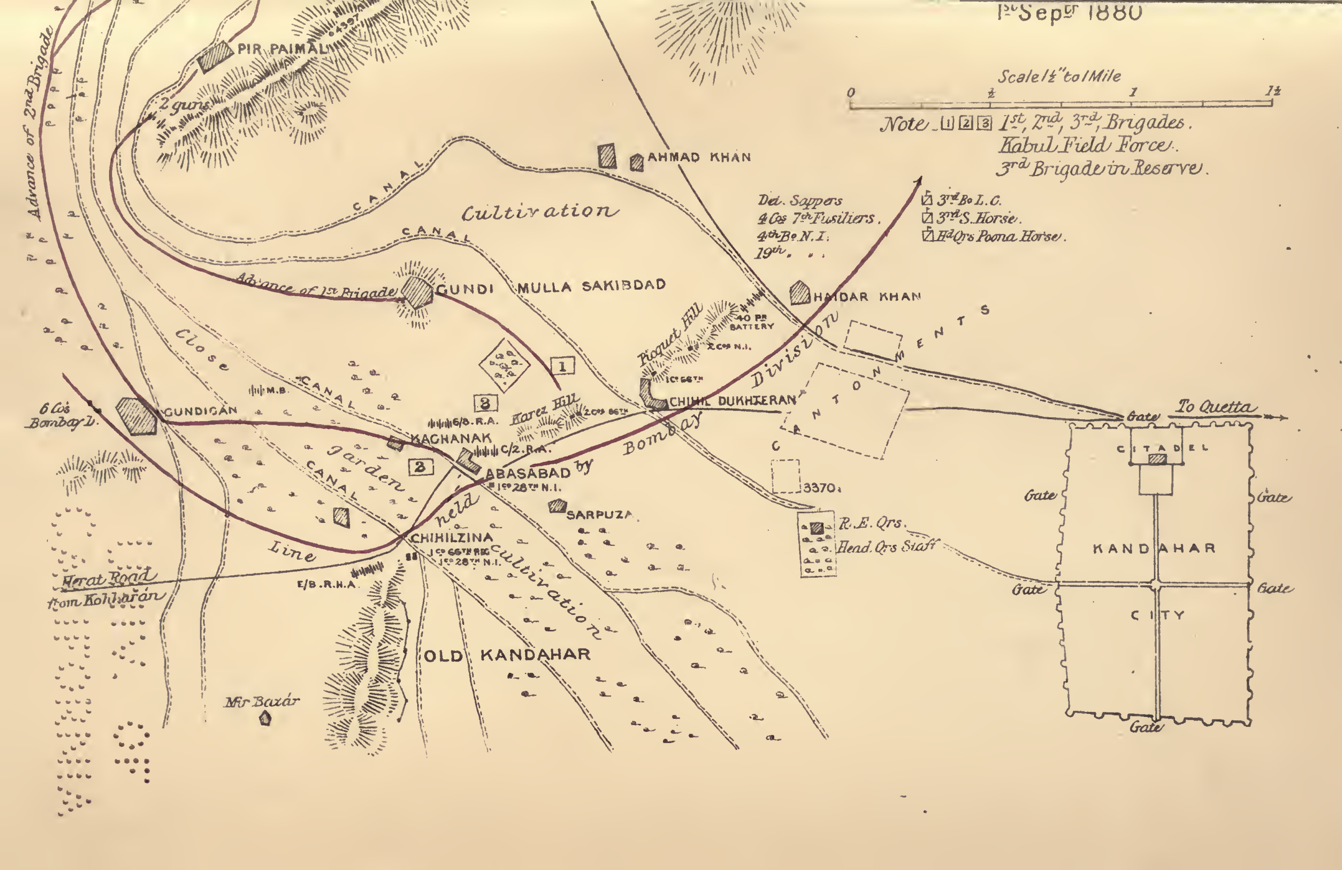
CHAPTER III.

THE VICTORY.

Gi'e me the plaid, and the tartan trews,
A plea that's just, a chief in the van
To blink wi' his e'e, and cry 'On wi' me!'
Then turn the blue bonnet wha can, wha can!
Scottish Song.

ON the 31st of August the goal of all our toils was reached. Kandahar is a perfect example of a walled town, square and compact, without so much as an outhouse or a garden straggling beyond its defences. Looking down from the upper citadel on the gaily-coloured uniforms, the sentries and the big guns, the commissariat magazines, and all the stir and brave show of warlike preparation, it was difficult to believe that any semi-organised hordes of Afghans

N
To Khoja Mulkh
Murcha Pass
Passable for Cavalry but not for Guns
To Mansurabad
Direct Road, passable for cavalry
1 Troop
Argandab River
CANAL
CANAL
CANAL
Gardens with walled enclosures
Road to Kalat-i-Ghilzae viâ the Argandab
MAZRA
BABAWLI
Ayubs' Camp
guns abandoned
2 guns
2 guns
Camp
Camp
Babawali Pass
3 guns
SKETCH PLAN
OF THE
KANDAHAR


1st Sepr 1880
Scale 1½" to 1 Mile
0
½
1
1½
Note 1 2 3 1st, 2nd, 3rd, Brigades.
Kabul Field Force.
3rd Brigade in Reserve.
3rd Bo L.C.
3rd S. Horse.
Hd Qrs Poona Horse.
Det. Sappers
4 Cos 7th Fusiliers.
4th Bo N.I.
19th
PIR PAIMAL
2 guns
Advance of 2nd Brigade
AHMAD KHAN
CANAL
Cultivation
CANAL
Advance of 1st Brigade
GUNDI
MULLA SAKIBDAD
HAIDAR KHAN
40 PR BATTERY
2 Cos N.I.
Piquet Hill
1 Co 66th
CHIHIL DUKHTERAN
CANTONMENTS
Division
Close
CANAL
M.B.
1
3
2
6 Cos Bombay D.
GUNDIGAN
6/8 R.A.
Karez Hill
2 Cos 66th
KACHANAK
C/2 R.A.
Garden
CANAL
ABASABAD
1 Co 28th N.I.
Bombay
SARPUZA
3370
R.E. Qrs.
Head Qrs Staff
Line
held
by
CHIHILZINA
1 Co 66th Regt
1 Co 28th N.I.
Cultivation
E/B R.H.A.
Herat Road
from Kohkaran
OLD KANDAHAR
Mir Bazár
To Quetta
Gate
CITADEL
KANDAHAR
CITY
Gate
Gate
Gate
Gate
Gate

had lately been surging round its ramparts, and were even now insulting us with their presence only a few miles off. From the day we left Khelat-i-Ghilzai, the General's sole preoccupation was to force Ayoub to have it out somehow;—as he caught sight of the enemy's piquets extending from the Gòlden Mine Pass westward to Babar Wali and beyond, he may well have felt that his enemy had been delivered into his hand.

Unlike the northern capital, Kandahar does not lie in the shadow of lofty hills; but about three miles off, from the north, westward, to the south, there runs a bare serrated range, with many a fantastic peak and clearly-cut block showing against the sky-line. Behind this screen Ayoub had posted himself. His position might be approached by the Golden Mine and Baba Wali Passes: but the first of these was difficult of access, and the second was strongly held with artillery. Further west,

however, there is a great gap in the hills, where the Kandahar plain narrows and runs into the Argandab Valley. To force a passage in this direction, through thickly sown villages and gardens and vineyards, was no child's play. Without masses of well-trained infantry the attempt could not have been made at all. But once level with the hills, Ayoub's flank was laid bare, and his line of retreat might be threatened with cavalry. Once more General Roberts gave the first place to this consideration in his plan of attack, and again its peculiar supremacy in Asiatic warfare was made evident.

About a mile west of the city stood the cantonments, and half a mile beyond them a low ridge of rock called Picket Hill, directly barring the way to the Argandab Valley. With his usual determination the General decided to seize this position on the day of his arrival, and further push a reconnaissance boldly in the line of the intended attack. The result

was some smart fighting for the 3d Brigade, which was leading. The Ghazis came on again and again in their blind rage, but the 4th Ghoorkas, one of the finest of Indian regiments, gave them a bitter taste of their mettle. The Henry-Martini bullets whizzing about on all sides proved we had in front of us an enemy better armed than any we had yet met; and some half-a-dozen shells from our own captured nine-pounder fell on the roofs of the cantonment, and even right into camp. But no one was hit, and no one seemed much surprised. 'How like the Paiwar Kotal!' exclaimed one old campaigner; and it seemed much as if he had said, 'What a good omen!'

During the night the piquets of the 3d Brigade were attacked, and the 15th Sikhs had a brush with their hereditary foes. At daybreak all the troops were under arms; but at six o'clock the men were dismissed, and a deceitful calm fell upon the camp. It was not

till after an early breakfast that the wise decision to strike hard and at once was made known. Tents disappeared in a trice, and the baggage and the transport animals were parked in the great garden, where the General had established his headquarters. Then the 1st and 2d Brigades were assembled under cover of Karez Hill, the stern, dusky-coloured masses of soldiers, with here and there a bright scarf or the gleam of a rifle-barrel lighting up their workmanlike uniforms, standing ready to spring forward as one man on the word of command.

The general plan of action was simplicity itself. The 1st and 2d Brigades were to advance abreast; and the 3d, now halted on our left front, was to follow in reserve. General Macpherson, commanding the 1st Brigade, was to make in the first rush for a large village conspicuously placed on a mound a little beyond Picket Hill. General Baker had a similar landmark much further ahead on the

left. The fighting line was composed of the 92d Highlanders, 2d Ghoorkas, 2d Sikhs, and 72d Highlanders, in the order named from right to left; and such was the brilliancy of their attack that they alone crossed bayonets with the enemy. None the less valuable was the presence of the 23d and 24th, the 3d Sikhs, 3d Ghoorkas, and 2d Beloochees, for without powerful supports the attack could not have been delivered with such confidence. Stiff work lay before our men in that densely-cultivated valley. For every inch of two miles they had to fight their way from wall to wall and garden to garden, or, worse, here and there, from house to house and lane to lane. But the result was doubtful to no one, least of all to General Baker, as he issued his orders to the commanding officers of the 2d Brigade with perfect coolness and clearness, and yet with an underlying intensity of purpose of his own which never fails to compel attention.

What was asked of General Macpherson at first was rapidity of movement, since he had most ground to cover. And to add that he sent the 92d to lead the way is simply to say that his advance was magnificent: under a Napoleon, Major White would be a Marshal, but the loss is not the country's, for at the head of his regiment he would make any battle safe in India. Then the pluck of the 2d Ghoorkas and the stubborn resistance of the great village they took are only too well attested by their heavy losses.

With General Baker the 72d, as usual, were well to the fore wherever hard knocks were exchanged, and they swept on unchecked by the casualties among their officers and the heart-sickening loss of their gallant Colonel. General Baker's chief difficulty at first was to keep his men moving, and yet to prevent them from forging ahead of the 1st Brigade.

It was a precious opportunity to study how

a commander of General Baker's well-tried ability and extraordinary energy set himself to the task of guiding his brigade through such an attack. Dashing through hedge and ditch and enclosure with his breathless staff at his heels, now looking to his centre, now to one flank or the other, as reports or calls for assistance poured in from the half-a-dozen independent units under his command, he always preserved a clear perception of the relative importance of events, and of the general course of the action. If he ended by inclining a trifle to his right, he only followed the drift of the fight.

Just below the Wali Kotal there occurred one of those decisive incidents that turn the scale of battle. By the corner of a walled garden two companies of the 2d Sikhs come suddenly upon the enemy, massed behind a bank ;—Major Slater falls wounded, and his men hesitate ;—the Ghazis rush forward, the

figure of their leader, sword in hand, dimly visible through smoke and dust. We are within an ace of destruction ;—but Major Pratt with one effort draws his men together and pours in two volleys, that stagger the Ghazis ;—the 92d come up on our right, and the danger is past.

General Baker's second line was not less ably handled. When for a moment it seemed as if the 2d Sikhs might be overwhelmed, Colonel Money, with the 3d Sikhs, was close at hand to join the front line. Then Colonel Fitzhugh, of the 5th Ghoorkas, after working faithfully round by the second great village, and finding it empty, managed to double round with his little men in time to pour a few volleys into the flying enemy. For Ayoub was routed by the time our men turned the Wali Kotal. There was a good deal of blazing with big guns and small after we wheeled to the right, but the sight of Major White on his

horse sufficed to keep the enemy on the run. In short, attacked in flank, and becoming aware of the dust of the Cavalry Brigade in the distance, Ayoub decided upon a flight not more conspicuous for its wisdom than its haste. Since the start there had been no general *coup d'œil* possible. But it was a fine sight when the two brigades, once more united, swept on steadily up the bare gorge to complete their mission of recovery and retribution. As camp after camp came in view unstruck and unoccupied, and the guns were sighted, some half-a-dozen in position and the remainder scattered down the road, where the fugitives had cut the traces and galloped off with the horses, we drank deep of the intoxication of victory. That hour of triumph was worth a whole year of toil.

Once fairly among the tents of the Philistines, there were many congratulations, and some pleasantries to be exchanged, and even a little

looting to be done on the sly, though the leading regiments were marched steadily on to guard against the chance of a surprise. In one corner a party of the 3d Sikhs were observed prodding along a mild, not to say melancholy old elephant, one of Shere Ali's Indian presents before the gods decided upon his ruin. In another the Beloochees had reaped a good harvest of purple bannerets from before the tents of the Afghan leaders. With half an hour's leisure you might have collected miscellaneous objects enough to start a very fair curiosity-shop or museum in a provincial town; taking your pick of some thirty pieces of artillery; tents, from the humblest known pattern to the 'Political's' palace in canvas; helmets, carpets, arms, ammunition, commissariat and ordnance stores; bullock-trunks crammed with native wearing apparel, writing materials, muster-rolls, Korans, English tinned meats, grapes, pomegranates, and even rupees

—all abandoned in headlong haste. The best thing that came my way was a water-melon, with dark-green rind and rosy melting substance—a very fountain of cool juices.

The battle had been fairly won by the infantry, and that in a very few hours. But the other arms had their own part to play. From about eight in the morning, the 40-pounders had been thundering before the Baba Wali Pass. Their last shell fell almost amongst our men when the position had been turned; we could find no traces of any effect in the form of dismounted guns or dead bodies lying about, but the enemy had replied vigorously, perhaps believing that a front attack was in preparation. The field-battery C II. drew a good deal of the enemy's fire as it moved about, with the loss of one man and one horse. As for the mule guns, the pace had been too good and the country too 'blind' to give them a chance after the first start. Altogether, the action was made for

those critics (and they are not few) who hold the preposterous opinion that artillery is only valuable for the amusement it gives to ignorant persons in action. Last of all came the cavalry's turn. General Hugh Gough's fine brigade had unluckily so much ground to cover that it failed to come up with the main stream of the fugitives: however, good work was done, especially by the 3d Punjab Cavalry, in cutting up stragglers to the number of three or four hundred. But the Bombay Cavalry from Kandahar had the real opening of the day; and in the circumstances it was particularly unfortunate that General Burrows should not have sent them over the Pass as hard as they could go, at the first hint from Sir Frederick Roberts.

Summing up: to have been absent from the Baba Wali Pass would have been to have missed the fight nearest the pitched battle of regular warfare that the crop of dragons' teeth

produced in Afghanistan. The Paiwar Kotal was a fortress of giants surprised by a tiny storming party; Charassia was won with a brigade; at Kabul the enemy was wise enough to avoid a general engagement; Ahmed Kheyl was an accident which valiant soldiers turned to fortunate account. But at Kandahar, at last, you have all the elements that go to make up a great *tableau* in war. In the darkest shadow you have a reverse to the British arms, the like of which was never known in India, followed by weeks of uncertainty regarding the one city in Afghanistan which all strategists believe to be of importance to us. Then come the bright lights and the life of the picture;—the magnificent march of the Kabul field force, and the skilful movement of the Afghan leaders from beneath the walls of the city to a position that gave them the command of the Kabul and Herat roads, and the power indefinitely to prolong the struggle;—the arrival of the English

army of the North, and the victory that scattered the southern Afghans like sheep, and stripped their leader of his cannon, and his laurels, ay —when we remember murdered Maclean—of honour itself.

All the players on the world's great stage may have their 'exits and their entrances;' but some of them who step forward midst the noisiest flourish of trumpets disappear most ignobly, as through a trap-door, into the darkness beneath. Fate willed it should not be so with the Kabul field force and its noble leader, and a *rôle* which began bravely with the Paiwar Kotal ended most gloriously with Kandahar. The future has high honours in store for our General; and a welcome from the people awaited him; but will he ever taste a sweeter triumph than on the field of victory itself? There is but little enthusiasm left among the best of us: we have no shields now to bear up our Vikings. But as Sir Frederick Roberts

rode down the line, with a kindly word for all, by each regiment and battery he was greeted with a ringing cheer, which was taken up by the Bombay troops as he rode back from the famous Baba Wali Pass!

CHAPTER IV.

THE POLICY OF RETREAT.

Poor England! thou art a devoted deer,
Beset with every ill but that of fear.
Cowper.

THE national instinct for compromise, that wins us so many admirers in our domestic relations, proves not seldom an indifferent guide in foreign affairs. A political see-saw that has landed us from the moderation of the Treaty of Gandamak in the extravagance of the present *quasi*-settlement can hardly win the applause of any class in any country, unless it be of the governing clique in Russia. If in 1879 we secured a predominant influence for India in Afghanistan, without risking hasty and dangerous annexations, we are now in the position of having

spent thousands of brave lives and fifteen millions, to gain exactly—nothing.

It is bad enough to withdraw from our bird's-eye post on the Shutargardan—a position unassailable in front, from which it was easy to throw a force into Kabul, or Ghazni, or well on the road to the Bamian Pass in a week. But to give up Kandahar at the same moment—a moment when proofs of Muscovite aggressiveness and perfidy are staring us in the face; to refuse to push on the railway, and prepare for the inevitable struggle at least on the side of Herat, is a historical folly of the first magnitude. Strategical considerations—and nearly every name of authority, as well as the practical teaching of the campaign on the Helmand, is on the Conservative side—need not be considered in detail. The question may be tried on wider issues. It is in fact not merely an important position for attack or defence, but our moral ascendency in the

greatest of our world-wide possessions, that is imperilled. The turbulent clans on the north-west frontier and the warlike castes all over the Indian continent scan our attitude with sleepless vigilance. While we keep a bold front, without flinching before the new duties and difficulties of our time, they will be for us rather than against us. But in the hour that our standards, twice raised in Afghanistan, fall back before the Russian eagles, it will seem to them that the hour of destiny has struck, and the British rule will pass from them like a dream.

Happily the last word has not been spoken. When the Liberals, in the face of their last given electoral pledges, reversed the foreign policy of the country in an important direction, they were laying up defeat for themselves. For to tamper with the logic of accomplished facts is to lose the confidence of all wise men. If there were any doubt of the meaning of 'scuttling' out of Afghanistan, *that* has since occurred, of which no honourable man can

think without a sense of burning shame. The peace-at-any-price school have left no word unspoken, and no deed undone, that might tend to the degradation and disintegration of the Empire. Kick the British lion hard enough twice or thrice, and the magnanimous beast will slink off, in mortal terror of—blood-guiltiness! That is the lesson a craven Ministry has proclaimed to English subjects all over the world:—when the nation is called to pronounce upon it, will the verdict be doubtful? Lord Beaconsfield failed at the last to cope with his enemies' peculiar views of rectitude, and with the restlessness of the popular caprice, but his rare gift of looking into the future never deserted him. His political heirs have found their undivided attention absorbed by the very questions which they reviled him for placing in the forefront of his electoral manifesto. And so it will be with Afghanistan. We will have an English watch-dog, and no Russian spy, in possession of the 'great gates of India.'

CHAPTER V.

THROUGH THE BOLAN—THE END.

Keep your splendid, silent sun ;
Keep your woods, O Nature, and the quiet places by the woods ;
Keep your fields of clover and timothy, and your corn-fields and orchards ;
Keep the blossoming buckwheat fields, where the ninth-month bees hum ;
Give me faces and streets ! give me these phantoms incessant and endless along the trottoirs !
Give me interminable eyes ! give me women!
Give me comrades and lovers by the thousand !

Walt Whitman.

BEFORE the end of September the last brigade of General Roberts's victorious army was on its way back to India. The pledges given to the Force at Kabul had been redeemed, and an immense contentment reigned in every

breast. But if we started fancying the best thing in Afghanistan must be the road out of it, we soon decided in one sense there is not a worse. From Kandahar to Quetta it is a worthy continuation of the Ghazni road. To know the one is to have learnt to detest the other before acquaintance. The line of march lies through a sandy plain, broken with many ranges of low hills. Here and there the red glare of the desert, or a pile of regularly-shaped limestone rocks, like Cyclopean building stones, break through the dull level; but the first great natural landmark is the distant line of the Kojak range, which stretches across the horizon seemingly without a break or a fall. Surely if some old Greek had reached that solid blue impenetrable mass he would have named it the boundary wall of the world; or perhaps returned to tell how, as he advanced, the hills had divided miraculously before his prayer to Athené. The present road, con-

structed by English engineers, not with prayers to Athené, but with much labour and many pickaxes, is a very tolerable one. But at the beginning of the campaign the Kojak Pass must have been as terrible a trap for baggage-animals as the Lataband of my early experiences. On the Kandahar side there is a sudden fall as steep as the walls of a quarry; and towards India there is a long fatiguing descent through an avenue of low trees, that were bright with colour in September.

Some of my companions professed themselves delighted with the prospect from the crest, but I never felt less moved. Certainly there was the Kandahar plain stretched out behind us like a dried-up ocean-bed, studded with hills for islands; but to my mind fifty miles of barren sand are to the full as hideous as five. There was a little defile just out of Quetta that pleased me infinitely more. As we rode through it, I had a glimpse of as

grandly massive a pile of mountains towering heavenward as ever I saw.

Quetta, with its club and solidly-built houses, gave a refreshing foretaste of civilisation which served but to whet our appetite. The only question was, who should be first in the race down to Sibi. I entered my name like the rest, and started with a comrade who forced the running furiously.

At the Quetta end of the Bolan there were some threatening-looking defiles, and here and there a mountain seemed to bar the path boldly. But we had grown hypercritical in hill scenery; and presently, when the Pass opened out into a valley, we were ready to accuse the road of dulness.

Towards the close of our journey we came upon the Bolan river traversing the Pass beside us. The sight of its leisurely progress set my thoughts to a different key. Henceforward all haste became to me an abomination. The

bright-eyed wavelets, playing idly over their bed of mottled brown, seemed to murmur insinuating invitations to strip off shoes and socks and loiter by the way; and the transparent water-green depths in the shadow of the cliffs carried with them I know not what suggestions of the ocean. I could have found it in my heart to have spent hours swimming about alone, and hugging myself on my freedom. After all, neither the devil nor an order of recall was at our heels. If we could have stepped out of Afghanistan on to the Boulevards or Pall Mall, it would have been a different affair.

When Sibi was reached there was an interminable railway journey to be gone through, and the terribly doubtful time for the fainting landsman on the throbbing steamer. I began to doubt if I should have any appetite left for civilised fare. Yet the name of my homeward voyage was prosperity, and even the first meal in Europe, that had tormented me in antici-

pation, had a piquant and unexpected flavour with it, that I am vainly anxious to reproduce.

There was a curiously assorted party assembled to partake of it—an English Peer, an Irish Colonel, a Major in the Indian Army, who is famous for his tact, and a Cavalry Officer, entirely without conceit. Where mail trains are concerned, the authorities revel in arbitrary regulations, and the living is a trifle uncertain for the passengers. In our compartment, after missing two regular meals, I do not mind confessing we fell upon cold chicken, real Bologna sausages, perfect white bread, fresh butter, a handful of luscious pears, and some French chocolate, as if knives and forks had never been heard of. There were some bottles of honest red wine to wash down the banquet. Gnawing a bone doggedly, and secretly smacking my lips in the tunnels, it struck me that there is much to be learned even from writers of proverbs; for, with the bone we will not

grasp firmly, the sweetest of the meat disappears. We are perpetually undone by our conventions. An Indian who cannot believe a little scrubbing will cleanse a brass vessel appears to us rather ridiculous: but at least he has no scruples about the efficacy of washing of hands.

As we rushed past a dark hill-side, crowned with snow-powdered, feathery trees, I remember singing to myself gleefully that the days of my bondage were past like a dream. It is good to live with the Pharaohs, not to make bricks, in Egypt. Were we not within earshot of Paris? and is not he a dullard whose pulse does not quicken to the beat of a nation's heart? When I leaned out and listened, the roar of the streets seemed to me almost to match the undying song of the ocean. Then how strange, yet how familiar, was the smallest particular of the crowded thoroughfares; how startling, or how reassuring—it is as you take

it—to feel you need not look for recognition in every white face you meet. 'Tis at least easier to say farewell, and disappear in the midst of a crowd.

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

OF THE

CHIEF EVENTS OF THE AFGHAN CAMPAIGNS OF 1878-79-80.

1878.

21*st September.*—The Commandant of the Fort of Ali Musjid refuses to allow the British Envoy, His Excellency General Sir Neville Chamberlain, G.C.B., to pass his post.

The Ameer of Kabul, Shere Ali Khan, is informed that, unless an apology for this insult is received before 20th September, and certain other conditions are complied with, he will be treated as an enemy.

21*st November.*—No answer having been received from the Ameer, Sir Samuel Brown attacks the Fort of Ali Musjid, the force of General Roberts crosses the frontier at Thal, and the advanced guard of General Donald Stewart leaves Quetta, and commences its march on Kandahar.

22*d November.*—The Fort of Ali Musjid surrenders.

2*d December.*—General Roberts totally defeats the Afghan force defending the Pass of the Paiwar Kotal.

20*th December.*—General Sir Samuel Brown occupies Jellalabad.

23*d December.*—The Ameer, Shere Ali, leaves Kabul, and appoints his son, Yakoob Khan, Governor of the city.

1879.

2d to 30th January.—General Roberts's expedition to Khost Valley.

12th January.—General Donald Stewart occupies Kandahar.

21st January.—Khelat-i-Ghilzai occupied by General Stewart.

21st February.—Death of the Ameer, Shere Ali, at Mazar-i-Sherif.

2d April.—General Charles Gough defeats the Khujianis with loss at Futteabad.

26th May.—Treaty of Gandamak.

24th July.—Sir Louis Cavagnari, the British Envoy, arrives in Kabul.

3d September.—Massacre of Sir Louis Cavagnari and his suite.

11th September.—Brigadier-General Massy occupies the Shutargardan with the advanced guard of General Roberts's force.

6th October.—Battle of Charassia gained by General Roberts.

12th October.—General Roberts occupies Kabul.

14th to 19th October.—The Afghan tribes attack the troops posted at Ali Kheyl and at the Shutargardan, and are defeated.

16th October.—Explosion of magazine in the Bala Hissar.

28th October.—Proclamation announcing abdication of Yakoob Khan, and assumption of government of Afghanistan by the English.

10th December.—General Macpherson defeats, at Karez Mir, a force advancing from Kohistan.

11th December.—Mahomed Jan and a force advancing from Ghazni are unsuccessfully attacked by a brigade of cavalry under General Massy, who loses two guns.

12*th December.*—Part of General Macpherson's brigade, under Colonel Money, attacks the Takht-i-Shah unsuccessfully.

13*th December.*—General Baker drives the Afghans from Takht-i-Shah.

14*th December.*—General Baker makes a successful attack on the Asmai heights, but is afterwards driven back, with the loss of two guns. Sir F. Roberts abandons the Bala Hissar, and city of Kabul, and concentrates his troops within the entrenchments of Sherpur.

15*th to* 22*d December.*—Mahomed Jan cuts Sir F. Roberts's communications, and effects a partial investment of Sherpur cantonment. Desultory fighting at Jagdalak.

23*d December.*—Mahomed Jan makes a general attack on Sherpur cantonment, and is signally defeated. The tribes disperse, and the city and Bala Hissar are reoccupied by Sir F. Roberts on the following day.

1880.

15*th January.*—Mohmands dispersed near Kam-Daka.

1*st April.*—Sir Donald Stewart commences his march from Kandahar to Kabul.

12*th to* 16*th April.*—Hisarak expedition.

19*th April.*—Battle of Ahmed Kheyl—enemy's loss 2000.

21*st April.*—Sir Donald Stewart again defeats the enemy beyond Ghazni.

25*th April.*—Attack on Colonel Jenkyns's detachment at Charassia defeated.

2*d May.*—Sir Donald Stewart arrives at Kabul.

About 15*th June.*—The Sirdar Ayoub Khan advances from Herat to attack Kandahar.

1*st July.*—General Hill's cavalry disperse a gathering at Padkao.

10*th July.*—A brigade under General Burrows and the troops of the Wali Mahomed take up a position at Geriskh, on the Helmand, to oppose Ayoub Khan.

14*th July.*—The troops of the Wali Mahomed mutiny, and join Ayoub Khan. General Burrows retires to Khusk-i-Nakhud.

22*d July.*—Abdur-Rahman Khan recognised as Ameer of Kabul.

27*th July.*—General Burrows attacks the troops of Ayoub Khan near Maiwand. He is totally defeated, and his brigade driven back to Kandahar with great loss.

6*th August.*—Ayoub Khan invests Kandahar.

8*th August.*—Sir F. Roberts commences his march from Kabul to Kandahar.

11*th August.*—Sir Donald Stewart withdraws from Kabul and hands over the city to the Ameer Abdur-Rahman.

16*th August.*—Sortie of the garrison of Kandahar repulsed with heavy loss.

25*th August.*—Ayoub Khan discontinues the investment of Kandahar and concentrates his troops.

31*st August.*—Sir F. Roberts arrives at Kandahar.

1*st September.*—He attacks and totally defeats the troops of Ayoub Khan at Bala Wali, capturing twenty-seven guns.

9*th September.*—The British troops are withdrawn from the Paiwar Kotal and the Kurum Valley; during this month they are also withdrawn from Jellalabad.

1881.

21*st April.*—The British troops are withdrawn from Kandahar.

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