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## THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

‘You say my roads are bad, and country is impassable. It is well; I am pleased to hear you speak as you do. Now you understand how the powerful Tsar, who will not submit to three kings, can still do nothing with me, though he never ceases to send his armies against me. I do not venture to compare myself to those powerful sovereigns. I am Shamyl, a common Tartar; but my bad roads, my woods, and my defiles make me much stronger than a good many monarchs. I ought to anoint all my trees with oil, and mix my mud with fragrant honey, so much do they tend to the salvation of my country.’—*Words spoken by Shamyl, the great Circassian leader, who held Russia in check for thirty-five years.*

“Triumph you may; confident you may be, as I am, in the gallantry of your troops; but when through these gallantries the victory has been gained, and you have succeeded, then will come your difficulties.”—*The Duke of Wellington on the Invasion of Afghanistan, in 1838.*

“If we pass into Afghanistan and occupy Kabul and Kandahar, and, as some say, we are going to do, occupy Herat—and I can see no limits to these operations—everything of that kind means a necessity for more money, and means a necessity for more men. From whence are the money and men to come? What do you mean by this sort of strengthening of the Empire? It is simply loading the Empire.”—*Mr. Gladstone’s second Midlothian Speech, 1879.*

“Articles of provisions are not to be trifled with, or left to chance; and there is nothing more clear than that the subsistence of the troops must be certain upon the proposed service, or the service must be relinquished.”—*The Duke of Wellington.*



# THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

1878-79-80

ITS CAUSES, ITS CONDUCT, AND  
ITS CONSEQUENCES

BY

COLONEL H. B. HANNA

Formerly belonging to the Punjab Frontier  
Force and late Commanding at Delhi  
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MAPS

- I. STRATEGICAL MAP OF THEATRE OF WAR
- II. RECONNAISSANCE SKETCH OF ALI MASJID
- III. SKETCH TO ILLUSTRATE ACTION ON THE PEIWAR MOUNTAIN

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## CHAPTER I

### The Taking of Ali Masjid

#### THE TURNING MOVEMENT

JUST before sunset, on the 20th November, 1878, the 2nd Brigade of the Peshawar Valley Field Force,<sup>1</sup> consisting of the Guides' Infantry, the 1st Sikhs, and the 17th Foot<sup>2</sup> under Brigadier-General J. A. Tytler, left its camp at Jamrud to begin the flank march, which was to ensure the completeness of Sir S. Browne's victory over the garrison of Ali Masjid. Speed being essential to success, and the difficulties presented by the country to be traversed very great—tents, bedding and baggage were left behind, to be sent up later through the Pass; and the troops took with them only a small hospital establishment, a reserve of ammunition, two days'cooked rations, and a supply of water stored in big leathern bags, known as pukkals,<sup>3</sup> in addition to their great-coats, seventy rounds of ammunition, and one day's cooked rations carried by each man. Unfortunately, the greater part of the transport allotted to the Brigade consisted of bullocks instead of mules

<sup>1</sup> Approximate strength—40 British officers, 1,700 men, of whom 600 were Europeans.

<sup>2</sup> This regiment had spent the summer in the Murree Hills, where it had been carefully trained for the work that lay before it. Evatt, in his *Recollections*, says "that it was about the last of the long-service battalions of that army which was just then disappearing before the short-service system, and better specimens of that old régime could not be seen than the men of the 17th, who, for weight and space occupied per man, were probably 30 per cent. heavier, and much broader than the younger soldiers of to-day."

<sup>3</sup> These bags vary in size according to the nature of the animal on which they are placed, but every camel, mule, or bullock carries one on each side, and the *bheestis* have to exercise much discretion in drawing water, so that the two pukkals may continue to balance each other to the end.

—a mistake which was to leave the men without food for over twenty-four hours. Darkness soon closed in upon the column, and when the comparatively easy road across the Jam plain gave place to an ill-defined track running up a deep ravine, sometimes on one side of a mountain stream, sometimes on the other, sometimes in its very bed, even the Native guides, men of the district, familiar with its every rock and stone, were often at fault; the transport animals blundered into the midst of the troops; one corps lost touch with another; a large part of the 17th Regiment wandered away from the path, and was with difficulty brought back to it by the shouting and whistling of its commander; and there was so much confusion and so many delays that it was ten o'clock before the force, tired and cold, the men's boots and putties<sup>1</sup> soaked through and through, from frequent crossing and re-crossing of the Lashora River, arrived at the little hamlet of the same name. Here it settled down to such rest as could be obtained under these uncomfortable conditions, for fires were out of the question, where there was no certainty that hidden foes might not be lurking close at hand.<sup>2</sup>

The 1st Brigade, consisting of the 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade, the 4th Gurkhas, the 20th Punjab Infantry, and the Hazara Mountain Battery,<sup>3</sup> fared even worse than the 2nd, for it had to begin the day with marching from Hari Singh-ka-Burj to Jamrud, where it arrived to find, to the disgust of its commander, Brigadier-General

<sup>1</sup> "All the troops on this occasion wore woollen putties, or bandages, round the legs in place of gaiters. Now, these are excellent in the snows where they were first worn; but after being wetted, they dry on the legs, tighten, and cause stiffness and cramp. . . . I have no doubt many men, both of the 1st and 2nd Brigades, were hampered and hurt by these bandages during the long marches of November 21st and 22nd, without knowing the cause."—G. B. SCOTT.

<sup>2</sup> In the recent Tirah Campaign, the men suffered terribly from the enforcement of this essential precaution.

<sup>3</sup> Approximate strength—45 British officers, 1,900 men, of whom 600 were Europeans, and four guns.

Macpherson, that the supplies and transport which ought to have been awaiting it, were not ready, and to be kept hanging about till eleven p.m. before it could make a fresh start. What with the darkness,<sup>1</sup> what with the practical absence of a road, and what with the difficulty of getting the laden bullocks along, the subsequent march proved very trying, and the position of the troops throughout the night was, potentially, one of great peril, for, if the Mohmands had come down the eastern slopes of the Rotas Heights, and fallen upon them as they stumbled and groped their way along the Lashora ravine, Macpherson would have had to choose between a retreat or an advance up the steep mountain side, three thousand feet high, in pursuit of an invisible enemy, and exposed to a shower of rocks and stones—missiles which every hill-man knows well how to handle. Fortunately, no such alternative was presented to him, and the head of the column—the rear-guard being still far behind—reached Lashora between six and seven o'clock on the morning of the 21st, just as the 2nd Brigade was preparing to leave it, and halted to lock up and give Tytler a fair start.

The latter did his best to get and keep well ahead, but though his Brigade, led by that active and energetic officer, Colonel F. H. Jenkins, pushed on as fast as it could, its progress was painfully slow. The column, advancing in single file, extended over a distance of nearly three miles, and, as the sun rose high in the heavens, the reflected heat from the bare, slaty rocks became almost insupportable, and there were no trees to give the men shade, or springs to slake their thirst. For the first four miles, the road continued to ascend the Lashora ravine, between low hills on the right hand, and rocky, overhanging spurs a thousand feet high, on the left ; on issuing thence, it dwindled to a mere goat-track, which ran uphill and downhill,

<sup>1</sup> The escort in charge of the mules carrying the reserve ammunition of two of the regiments lost their way in the dark, and after vainly trying to regain the track, returned to Jamrud.

scaling cliffs and dropping into gorges, the shaly soil at every step slipping away from under the feet of men, mules and bullocks, retarding the advance of the two former, and almost bringing the latter to a standstill, so that it was two o'clock in the afternoon when the column, having crossed the Sapparai, or Grassy Flats, leading up to the watershed, arrived at Pani Pal, at the foot of the Pass connecting the Rotas Heights with the Tartara Mountain, the highest peak in this group of hills. Here a wide and varied view became suddenly visible. Far away to the north, the snowcapped Himalayas gleamed in the sunshine; to the south, the broad Indus washed the base of Fort Attock, and wound through the salt hills and plains of the Derajat; whilst to the west, almost immediately below the wilderness of rocks in which the invaders had halted, lay, in deep shadow, the yawning chasm of the Khyber. A magnificent prospect; but a spring of cool, fresh water which was soon discovered, had more attractions for the hot and thirsty troops; and Tytler's whole attention was absorbed in scanning the country for a possible enemy, and trying to trace the course of the three paths which branch off from this commanding point. One of these runs, northward by a circuitous and comparatively easy route, through Mohmand territory to the Khyber; the second descends abruptly to the same Pass through the gorge which separates the Tartara Mountain from the Rotas Heights; and the third follows the crest of those heights to their highest point, just over Ali Masjid. It was by the second of these roads that the column was to find its way down to Kata Kushtia, and Tytler, though hard pressed for time, felt so strongly that he must not entangle his troops in such difficult ground without first ascertaining whether danger would threaten their left flank and rear, that he decided to halt his Force, whilst Jenkins and a Company of the Guides reconnoitred towards the heights. Scarcely had this party left Pani Pal when a strange reverberation filled the air, which Jenkins, on laying his ear to the ground, at once pronounced to be the booming of heavy guns;

and as the reconnoiters drew near to the edge of the ridge overlooking Ali Masjid, the sound of Artillery fire became more and more clear and distinct. So far, though cave-dwellings and patches of cultivation had occasionally been passed, with, here and there, the tower of some robber chieftain, the country, but for one small band of marauders, which exchanged shots with the head of the column, had appeared to be entirely deserted by its inhabitants; now a large number of armed Mohmands came, suddenly, into sight, rushing down the hillside, and Jenkins fell back upon Pani Pal to report what he had heard and seen.

The news that the main body of the Division was engaged with the enemy, quickly spread through the ranks, and the men, forgetting fatigue and hunger—the last of the food carried by them had been eaten before leaving Lashora, and the bullocks carrying the rest of the rations had long since parted company with the troops—were eager to push on. But Tytler saw clearly that the circumstances in which he now found himself, demanded a change in the original plan, by which the whole of his force was to take up its position across the Khyber defile. As the Mohmands were evidently present in great strength and hostilely inclined, as his hospital establishment and commissariat were six miles in rear, and the Brigade which ought to have covered his left flank, was also behind—by abandoning Pani Pal, he would not only lose his communications with the latter and expose the former to the risk of being cut off and captured, but would leave open the road by which the Mohmand contingent in Ali Masjid might retire from that fortress after its fall, or by which it could be reinforced in case that fall should be delayed. Very reluctantly, therefore, though with soldier-like promptness, he made up his mind to send Jenkins with the Guides and the major portion of the 1st Sikhs, to Kata Kushtia, whilst he himself, with a detachment of the latter corps and Her Majesty's 17th Regiment, remained at Pani Pal to guard Jenkins's rear and keep in touch with Macpherson.

That General, having detached the 20th Punjab Infantry, under Major H. W. Gordon, to cover his left, had resumed his march at 8 a.m., and, following in Tytler's wake, had soon overtaken that officer's commissariat bullocks, which so blocked the narrow path that the troops had considerable difficulty in forcing their way through them. Between two and three o'clock, the column arrived at the lower edge of the Flats (Sapparai), previously mentioned, where it was fortunate enough to find a little water. By this time the men, who had been over thirty hours under arms, were so worn out that Colonels Newdigate and Turton reported their respective regiments, the Rifle Brigade and the 4th Gurkhas, unfit to go further,<sup>1</sup> and Macpherson, like Tytler, had to accept the responsibility of modifying the part assigned to him in the common programme and, to some extent, for the same reason, viz., the danger to which his hospital and commissariat transport would be exposed if, by pushing on to the summit of the Rotas Heights, he were to put it out of his power to protect them during the dark hours which were close at hand. On the Flats, then, the main body of the turning party bivouacked on the evening of the 21st of November; whilst the flanking regiment, after many hours of stiff climbing, during the course of which it had been threatened by a large number of Mohmands, established itself at dusk on the top of Turhai, a ridge parallel to, and immediately under the Rotas Heights.

<sup>1</sup> "I asked Colonel Newdigate and Colonel Turton if their men could go on, and they said they were quite exhausted. There was no water further on, and the whole of the baggage might have been carried off and the escort cut up if we had deserted it, and Tytler's baggage was all behind my Brigade."

Extract from General Macpherson's *Journal*.

## CHAPTER II

### The Taking of Ali Masjid

#### THE FRONT ATTACK

THE arrangements for the advance of the main body of the Peshawar Valley Field Force<sup>1</sup> had been completed on the evening of November 20th, by the issuing of an order that no baggage should accompany the column to add to its responsibilities and hamper its movements, nor any transport animals other than the mules set apart to carry the three days' cooked rations, which were to suffice for the needs of the troops till, Ali Masjid having fallen, the Pass would be open to the free passage of impedimenta of all kinds, which, meantime, were to remain at Jamrud in charge of the 45th Sikhs.

Before daybreak on the 21st, Sir Samuel Browne and his Staff had taken up a position on some high ground a little beyond the British camp, and, as the sun rose, it showed them all the hill-tops crowned by groups of Afridis, intently watching the movements of the long column, which was already winding its way through the Jam plain towards the entrance of the Shadi Bagiar defile.<sup>2</sup> Two companies of Sappers and Miners led the van, accompanied by their regimental mules carrying intrenching and road-making tools, also by a wing of the 81st Foot, and one of the 14th Sikhs, furnished by the 3rd Brigade to protect and assist them in the work of smoothing and widening the stony track so as to render it practicable for the heavy guns drawn by

<sup>1</sup> Approximate strength—110 British officers, 4,500 men, of whom 1,700 were Europeans, and 22 guns.

<sup>2</sup> Shadi Bagiar—Wolf's mouth.

elephants, and of ramping the sides of the numerous drainage lines which intersect this stretch of comparatively open country. The advanced guard was followed by the Artillery; that, by the 3rd Brigade, the 4th Brigade bringing up the rear; whilst a signalling party, under Major H. B. Pearson, which had been detached to occupy the Sarkai Hill, succeeded, later in the day, in establishing heliographic communication with Jamrud.

In the Shadi Bagiar ravine, the troops struck the road built during the first Afghan War by Colonel Mackeson, Commissioner of Peshawar. It was found to be in a fair state of preservation, except in a few places where it had been damaged by floods. These were easily repaired, and, after a flanking party consisting of detachments of the 81st Foot, 14th Sikhs, and a Mountain Battery, had been sent up a gully to occupy some heights from which they could cover its advance, the column pushed steadily on. About 10 a.m., the advanced guard reached the summit of the long, low, stony Shahgai Ridge, where it quickly deployed, and threw out skirmishers, who exchanged shots with the Afghan pickets and forced them to retire on Ali Masjid, which had now come into sight, about two thousand five hundred yards distant, in a northerly direction. The Khyber River, which here takes a sudden turn to westward, flows sixty feet below the ridge, and on its right bank, between Browne's Force and the Afghan fortress, lay a tangled maze of hills and ravines, clothed with low shrubs and tall coarse grass, in which any number of tribesmen might be lurking; whilst, on its left bank, advance was rendered excessively difficult, and the dispositions of the enemy were effectually concealed from view by a series of rocky spurs, thrown off from the precipitous south-western face of the Rotas Heights. Those dispositions did credit to their author—possibly some British pensioner or deserter from the Indian Army, who had acquired his knowledge of the art of fortification when serving in the Sappers and Miners. The Afghan position stretched right across the valley of the Khyber River, and embraced not only



the isolated hill on which Ali Masjid is perched,<sup>1</sup> but two other eminences. The first of these—a semicircular ridge eight hundred yards long, broken by three peaks—stretches from the Khyber River in the direction of the Bazar Valley, its southern face five hundred yards in advance, and a little to westward of the Ali Masjid Hill, from which its northern side is separated by a rocky gorge. This ridge, two hundred feet higher than the Fort which it completely dominates, is extremely difficult of access, its upper slopes being excessively precipitous; and the Afghans had shown that they recognized its tactical importance by erecting stone breastworks along its crest, and small redoubts on each of the three peaks, the whole line being defended by eight light guns.

The gorge, previously mentioned, divides after running back some little distance; one branch of it sweeping round to the north-west, the other, to the north-east. Between them, facing east and completely hidden from the Shahgai Plateau by the ridge just described, rises the second hill, covering the western front of Ali Masjid, and commanding from its summit the whole length of the gorge; here two breastworks had been thrown up to shelter the Afghan riflemen.

Ali Masjid itself, hardly distinguishable from the grey rock on which it rests, was, at that time, an oblong building a hundred and sixty feet long by sixty broad, with circular towers connected by curtain walls, standing on the flat summit of a detached hill, which rises to a height of three hundred and fifty feet above the river that washes its eastern base. On the southern face of the Fort which looks to the Shahgai Ridge, eight heavy cannon had been mounted; two more had been placed in position behind breastworks constructed in the face of the cliff, a hundred and fifty feet below the walls; and, lower still, a single gun swept with its fire the right bank of the Khyber River. Nor had the left bank of that stream been omitted from the

<sup>1</sup> Ali Masjid is about six miles from the eastern mouth of the Khyber Pass, and nine miles from Jamrud.

Afghan engineer's plan of defence; for, on precipitous cliffs, near the foot of the Rotas Heights, joined together by entrenchments and a rough covered way, more stone works had been built up, and armed with five guns, to command the approaches on that side of the river, and enfilade the low ground in the vicinity of the three fortified hills.<sup>1</sup> The garrison of this great fortress, consisting of three thousand regular infantry, six hundred militia, twenty-four guns, and two hundred cavalry, was, in point of numbers, adequate to its defence, and it had in Faiz Mahomed a brave and determined commander; but its strength had been weakened by sickness, and the *morale* of the troops impaired by the knowledge that they stood alone, with no supports or reserves within reach, surrounded by tribes who, though of the same blood as themselves, regarded them with jealous eyes, and were as certain to fall upon them, in the event of defeat, as to snatch from them a large share of the spoils of victory, should they succeed in repelling the British attack.

Sir Samuel Browne having secured the safety of his flanks by placing strong observation parties on suitable ground, proceeded to examine the Afghan position so far as it could be seen from the Shahgai Ridge. As the result of this examination, he ordered Appleyard, with the 3rd Brigade, to drop down into the valley of the Khyber, which here flows in a broad and shingly bed, and to occupy the abandoned village of Lala Chena, ready, the moment Macpherson's Brigade came into sight on Rotas, to advance and carry by assault the semicircular hill which has been shown to be the key of the Afghan position. In

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Archibald Forbes, the well-known war-correspondent, who was present with the Force during the action and who carefully examined the position afterwards, writes:—"The excessive labour which must have been expended in arming the position moved one's surprise and admiration. Guns had been hauled up precipices, and great stores of ammunition accumulated about them. One three-gun battery on the proper left of the Khyber River was perched on a mere ledge about half-way up the face of a beetling crag, and its guns covered the level sweep along which lay the only line of approach to the Afghan camp at the mouth of the defile commencing at Ali Masjid."

the meanwhile, the sappers and miners, under the protection of a wing of the 14th Sikhs, were set to work to render the steep and rugged path leading down to the valley, practicable for artillery, and detachments of the 81st and 51st Foot were directed to take possession of the nearest of the Rotas spurs, in order to cover Appleyard's right flank and to watch the enemy holding the true left of the Afghan position; whilst the Cavalry Brigade, under Brigadier-General C. Gough, was drawn up on the reverse slope of the Shahgai Heights. While these movements were in progress, the two guns of the Royal Horse Artillery, with elephant equipment which had come up with the advanced guard, opened fire, at a distance of two thousand eight hundred yards, on the enemy's fortifications. Their guns promptly replied, and, as the Afghan gunners had previously ascertained the correct ranges all round Ali Masjid, their practice was admirable; and had they used live shell instead of round shot, the British losses would have been heavy. At noon, the Elephant Battery, consisting of three 40-pounder B.L. Armstrongs, under Major C. W. Wilson, and the 3rd Battery under Major T. M. Hazlerigg, came into action, the latter a few hundred yards in advance of, and to the right of the former. At first their fire was not very accurate, the shells either dashing against the great mass of rock that rises close behind Ali Masjid, or falling into the deep gorge between the two hills; but, the correct range once found, the parapets of the Fort were quickly reduced to ruins and considerable loss inflicted on their defenders. Yet, the enemy's artillery was only partially silenced, and the Afghan gunners stuck with remarkable tenacity to their guns. At two o'clock, the British ammunition began to run short, the wagons carrying the spare powder and shot were far in the rear, and there was still no sign of Macpherson's Brigade. The situation, from the political point of view, was, in Cavagnari's opinion, growing critical; for he feared that, unless the Afghans were attacked, the Afridis and Mohmands would go over to them in a body, a secession which might oblige Sir S. Browne to remain on the defensive till reinforcements

could reach him. Influenced by the Political Officer's opinion, the General took up a more commanding position on high ground beyond Lala Chena, and ordered Appleyard to press forward without waiting for Macpherson's co-operation; the Mountain Battery, 11.9 Royal Artillery, to establish itself at a point from which it could support him by shelling the fortifications he was about to attack; and the 4th Brigade, under Brigadier-General W. B. Brown, consisting of the 51st Light Infantry and the 6th Bengal Infantry, to cover his right flank by advancing along the rocks under Rotas, and driving the enemy from its spurs. Hardly had these orders been given than the Afghan fire which had slackened for a time, burst forth with renewed energy, whilst the British guns on the ridge, owing to the threatened failure of their ammunition, were unable to reply with corresponding vigour. Major T. C. Manderson's troop of horse-artillery, however, with an escort of the 10th Hussars and a company of Sappers, found its way down to the bed of the river, where, at a range of a thousand yards, it took up a good position for shelling the Afghan works on the semicircular hill, though not without drawing on itself a rather heavy fire from the enemy's guns.

The movement along the base of Rotas was soon brought to a standstill by a precipitous cliff crowned by the enemy's skirmishers; and, though Appleyard did his best to carry out his instructions, progress, owing to the intricate nature of the ground, was so slow that Sir S. Browne, seeing the impossibility of pushing the attack home before dusk, and feeling certain that, by morning, the movements of Tytler and Macpherson would have shaken the enemy's confidence, determined to postpone the assault till daybreak. Unfortunately, before Lord William Beresford to whom he entrusted the dangerous task of conveying a message to Appleyard, could reach the 3rd Brigade, part of its troops were already in action. Very injudiciously, the 27th Punjab Infantry, commanded by Major H. Birch, and a detachment of the 14th Sikhs, under Lieutenant F. G. Maclean, had been allowed

to get far ahead of the rest of the Brigade;<sup>1</sup> and, unconscious that the bulk of the troops had ceased to afford them support, these isolated bodies continued to fight their way up the steep sides of the ridge, Maclean leading, on the right, with his Sikhs; Birch, on the left, with a portion of his Punjabis; and the remainder of the 27th, under Captain Swetenham, some distance in the rear.<sup>2</sup> Suddenly, issuing from thick jungle, the Sikhs found themselves under a heavy fire. Pressing boldly on, they succeeded in getting within sixty yards of the breastworks, but here, Maclean having been shot through the shoulder, they had to seek temporary shelter under a cliff and to call back for assistance to the Punjabis. Birch, with a few of his men, rushed to their aid, to be shot dead before he could reach them.<sup>3</sup> His lieutenant, Fitzgerald, seeing him fall, dashed forward with fifteen of the Sikhs to try to recover his body, but the enemy's fire proved too deadly. Fitzgerald, twice wounded in the rush, was struck for the third time and killed outright in the very act of raising Birch, and most of his men shared his fate.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The point in doubt is whether the 81st Foot were ordered to attack at the same time as the 14th Sikhs and the 27th Punjabis, or whether they were held in reserve to support the attack as it developed. It seems, however, that they did in part advance and were recalled. The accounts vary so far, as I am aware, but this I know, that no European soldier came back wounded from the assault, nor was any dead European soldier found on the hillside next morning, so that it is evident that the brunt of the attack did not come on them, but on the Native regiments of the Brigade."—Evatt's *Recollections*.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Archibald Forbes says that "Swetenham heard the call, but, with an acceptance of responsibility which does him perhaps more credit than would the successful command of a forlorn hope, he dared to disobey it, for the sound had not reached Birch and Maclean, out there to his front, on the steep slope trending up to the Afghan position. . . . Had Swetenham obeyed the recall, he would have left them to their fate, and he held that his higher duty was to disobey and follow the fortunes of his advance."

<sup>3</sup> "Whilst examining the bullet wound of Captain Birch, which was in the region of the heart, it was found that a locket containing a picture of his wife had been carried into the wound by the bullet."—Evatt's *Recollections*.

<sup>4</sup> During the night several men of the 27th Punjab Infantry crept up to the

The position of the assaulting party was now extremely critical, but, fortunately, the Commanding Engineer, Colonel F. R. Manssell, who arrived, at this juncture, at the foot of the slopes and assumed command of all the troops in the neighbourhood, prevented the enemy from improving his success by pushing forward a company of sappers, and ordering up every available man from the rear ; and at nightfall, when hostilities had ceased all over the field of operations, Maclean and his Sikhs stole from the shelter of the cliffs, and fell back on the 27th Punjab Infantry.<sup>1</sup>

Sir S. Browne, who had spent an anxious day, was destined to spend a yet more anxious night. Of the 1st and 2nd Brigades, he had still no tidings ; the 3rd Brigade, broken up into various small bodies, was in a dangerous position, scattered over a difficult and intricate country, where low scrub and high grass offered the enemy every advantage, in case the Afridis and Mohmands should combine with the Amir's troops in a night attack ; the 4th Brigade was cut off from rendering assistance to the 3rd by the river and the numerous drainage lines which intersect the valley ; the artillery ammunition was nearly exhausted, and the wagons with fresh supplies were still in the Pass, struggling painfully forward in the face of the difficulties unavoidable where crowds of undisciplined camp followers, commissariat animals and vehicles are cooped up in a narrow and steep defile.

bodies of their officers, and, with the devotion so often displayed by the Native soldier towards his British leader, sat by them till dawn, when they were removed and sent to Peshawar for burial.

<sup>1</sup> It had seemed for a time as if Sir S. Browne's force would be left without any hospital establishment, for the order issued on the evening of the 20th, forbidding any but mule transport to enter the Pass, paralysed the action of a department to which only camels had been allotted. Fortunately, Surgeon-Major Evatt was a man of resource. He obtained permission from the principal medical officer at Jamrud to pack a number of doolies with blankets, brandy, beef-tea and dressings, and he and Surgeon-Major Creagh managed to force their way to the front, where they arrived just as the men wounded in the assault, were being carried down to the river.

*ETAT-DE-SITUATION* <sup>1</sup> OF SIR S. BROWNE'S DIVISION ON THE  
NIGHT OF NOVEMBER THE 22<sup>ND</sup>, 1878.<sup>2</sup>

MAIN BODY.

On the Shahgai Heights—

- E Battery, 3rd Brigade Royal Artillery.
- 13th Battery, 9th Brigade Royal Artillery (heavy guns).
- 3 Troops 10th Hussars.
- 2 Squadrons 11th Bengal Lancers.
- 2 Squadrons Guides Cavalry.

In front of Shahgai Heights on right bank of Khyber River—  
Brown's Brigade.

- 81st Foot.
- 14th Sikhs.
- 27th Punjab Infantry.

In the bed of the Khyber River below Shahgai Heights—

- I Battery, C Brigade Royal Horse Artillery, escorted by a troop 10th Hussars, and covered by the 2nd and 3rd Companies of Sappers and Miners.

On a spur of the Rotas Heights, to the right, overlooking the Khyber River—  
Appleyard's Brigade.

- 11th Battery, 9th Brigade Royal Artillery (mountain guns).
- 51st Light Infantry.
- 6th Bengal Infantry.

Troops belonging to Main Body had cooked rations, but no warm clothing.

TURNING FORCE.

Macpherson's Brigade—

On Sapparai Plateau, its left flank covered by four companies 20th Punjab Infantry.

Tytler's Brigade—

Part at Pani Pal ; part at Kata Khustia, commanding the road through the Khyber Pass.

The troops belonging to Turning Force had neither food nor warm clothing.

With the dawn came relief from anxiety. Just after Sir. S. Browne had ordered an assault in force, and whilst he was awaiting the occu-

<sup>1</sup> Technical phrase used by Napoleon to denote strength, position, and condition of a Force.

<sup>2</sup> See sketch of dispositions for the attack on Ali Masjid.

pation of some commanding ground on his right preparatory to the advance, news was brought in by a Kashmere trader that, on the previous evening, the enemy had heard that Tytler had crossed the Sapparai, and that he himself had seen the Afghan cavalry escaping up the Khyber defile. A little later, Lieutenant J. J. S. Chisholme of the 9th Lancers, rode up to report that he had just spoken with Captain Beresford, R.E., who, with another engineer officer and a small party of men, had crept forward at peep of day, to reconnoitre Ali Masjid, and had discovered that the place had been evacuated during the night. On this confirmation of the welcome news—for an assault would have entailed a great loss of life—the General and his Staff scrambled down to the enemy's encampment, which they found in a state of the utmost confusion, and of indescribable filth. Food and clothing, arms and ammunition, lay scattered about in every direction, and in the tents were many sick and wounded men. From the camp, General Browne ascended to the Fort, where, amid the ruins created by his guns, many more wounded were found, abandoned by their comrades in their hasty flight. All were removed as soon as possible to the field hospital, and later on to Peshawar.

The portion of Tytler's Brigade which had given Ali Masjid so easily into Sir S. Browne's hands, had begun the descent to Kata Kushtia about three o'clock in the afternoon of the 21st. The way lay down a deep, dark, narrow ravine, sometimes in the bed of the torrent, sometimes through thorny acacia scrub. Climbing over boulders, scrambling through difficult places on hands and knees, sliding down rocks so steep and high that return would have been impossible, each man, in turn, handing down his rifle to the comrade in front of him—the Guide Infantry and the 1st Sikhs made such despatch, that by 4.30, they had reached a rocky ledge a hundred feet above the little hamlet of Kata Kushtia, and about two miles in rear of Ali Masjid. Here, Jenkins decided to await the result of the engagement which he knew to be still proceeding. His force was too small and too exhausted



with fatigue and hunger to assume the offensive, whilst its presence in the strong defensive position he had taken up, might be expected to realize the hopes which had been built on its advance. News of its arrival in the Khyber was certain to reach the garrison of Ali Masjid before long, and, unless the day had gone against Sir S. Browne's main body, the fear of being taken between two fires and having their retreat cut off, would exercise its usual dispiriting influence on the Afghans.

Such a contingency as a failure of the front attack on Ali Masjid, was not so utterly impossible that it could be left entirely out of account, and Jenkins and his men must have had some very uneasy moments when they recalled the frightful difficulties of the road by which they had come, the swarms of Mohmands and Afridis whom they had seen on the hill tops, and had to tell themselves that no help could be looked for from the comrades whom they had left behind them at Pani Pal. At first, however, they had small time for such reflections, for hardly had they lined the rocks commanding the defile than a party of Afghan cavalry came leisurely trotting up the Pass. A volley from eight hundred rifles, at a distance of from three to five hundred yards, startled them out of their security, and sent some of them galloping back to Ali Masjid, whilst others dashed boldly forward and made good their escape. Presently, a second body of cavalry trotted round the spur close to Jenkins's position. Catching sight of his troops, they hesitated for a moment, then, urging their horses to their utmost speed, they, too, rushed past under a storm of bullets, leaving, like their predecessors, several of their number on the ground. When they had disappeared, Captain A. G. Hammond, of the Guides, proposed to take a company and occupy Kata Kushtia, thus completely blocking the Pass, but Jenkins refused to entertain the proposal. Darkness was falling; the sound of firing beyond Ali Masjid had died away. What had been the result of the engagement he had no means of knowing; and to weaken his force by dividing it, and expose a small body of his men to a possible attack under conditions

which would prevent his coming to their assistance, seemed to him unjustifiable. Therefore, as there was no further chance of work that night, and no hope of food before morning, the troops lay down among the rocks, whilst their commander wrote the following letter to Sir S. Browne which he entrusted to one of his own men, with orders to find his way, as best he could, to Head Quarters, accompanied by one of the prisoners just taken.

KATA KUSHTIA,

*November 21st, 1878.*

MY DEAR SIR SAM,—

I am here with Guides and 1st Sikhs. The enemy's cavalry came under our fire from three to five hundred yards, and after considerable loss galloped up the valley in disorder. No infantry and guns have come our way.

1st Brigade and rest of 2nd are at Pani Pal; the road between that place and this is very difficult, and our mules could not come down, consequently we are very hungry, both officers and men. If you can signal to 2nd Brigade, I should like the mules with our food to come down to Tor Tang and then on to us; the road between that place and Pani Pal is very easy, I believe. I presume, of course, that the Rotas mountain is in our hands. I send a prisoner, a cavalry man—he at one time belonged to the Indian army—who may give you information.

I shall hunt for flour in Kata Kustia as soon as it is daylight, but I expect these fellows have cleaned the place right out; you have no flour to send me, I suppose ??? I hardly think the men could march without some food.

Yours sincerely,

F. H. JENKINS.

Early the following morning three hundred Afghan Infantry, led by an officer on horseback, approached Jenkins's position, but, seeing the troops drawn up to receive them, they broke their ranks and tried to make good their escape up the rocky sides of the defile. It would have been easy to shoot them all down, but Jenkins, unwilling to kill brave men caught in a trap, sent one of the captured horsemen to assure them that, if they surrendered, they would be well treated. On receipt of this message, the Afghan officer recalled the fugitives, and, forming them up, made them pile arms, at the same time tendering his own sword to Jenkins, who courteously returned it to him. Then, much to the astonishment and delight of the prisoners, they were allowed to sit down and eat the food they carried with them. This detachment had held the outlying pickets of Ali Masjid during the night of the 21st, and only at daybreak of the 22nd, had its commander discovered that he and his men had been deserted by the rest of the garrison, who, finding the Khyber closed against them, had hastily decided to retire on Jellalabad by the Bazar Valley.

Tytler and Macpherson had been undisturbed during the night, but with the return of day numerous bodies of Mohmands and Afridis were seen moving about the hills ; and the former general, fearing lest they should cut his communications with his lieutenant at Kata Kushtia, determined to descend at once into the Khyber with the 17th Regiment, leaving the Sikhs strongly entrenched at Pani Pal. In their joy at this decision the troops forgot their hunger—successive messengers despatched during the night had failed to bring up the commissariat train—and they achieved the descent of the ravine in high spirits, to be met on issuing from it by the good news of Sir S. Browne's success. In a surprisingly short time, they fraternized with the Afghan prisoners, who were quite willing to share their cakes with such friendly foes ; indeed, it was well for the whole Brigade that the retreating Afghans had been amply supplied with provisions, as, but for what they could spare, the men of this column had no food till midnight of the

22nd, when a half ration sent from Ali Masjid was served out to them.

Macpherson's Brigade had been even earlier afoot than Tytler's. Crossing the Flats, and turning southward at Pani Pal, it followed the track along which Jenkins had reconnoitred the previous day; first, over rolling, grassy downs, and then, over broken, rocky ground, thickly strewn with boulders. Before reaching the Rotas Heights it fell in with the messenger carrying Jenkins's letter to Sir S. Browne. A little further on, the 20th Punjab Infantry, their special task accomplished, rejoined the Brigade, bringing with them fifty prisoners whom they had captured after a brush with a body of two hundred Mohmand fugitives, upon whom they had unexpectedly stumbled.<sup>1</sup> Satisfied by the information he had now received, that he should meet with no opposition, Macpherson ordered the 20th, the Gurkhas and guns to await his return, and pressed forward with the Rifle Brigade to the summit of the heights, where he found the *sangars* defending the Mohmands' late position intact, but deserted. From that commanding point, the course of events in the valley at their feet had been clearly visible to the tribesmen, and the moment they perceived that Ali Masjid had changed hands, they abandoned all thought of resisting the invaders and dispersed to their villages.

After enjoying for a brief moment the sight of the British flag floating on the ruined walls of the Afghan stronghold, Macpherson retraced his steps to the spot where he had left the bulk of his force, and thence led the whole of the 1st Brigade down to the Khyber by the Tor Tangi, or Black Defile, a gully in what the General himself characterized as "the most curious pile of mountains ever traversed by soldiers." Night soon overtook it on its perilous way, and only by setting fire to the bushes and grass could the men keep the track, any deviation from which meant certain death. Food, of course, they had none, and, what was far worse, they met with little or no

<sup>1</sup> The command of the detachment had devolved on Captain W. H. Meiklejohn, as Major Gordon had been disabled by a fall.

water on the day's march. Yet nothing could have exceeded their cheerfulness and alacrity. Even when after hours of "slipping down rocks and floundering about in the dark" they had to bivouack at midnight, hungry and thirsty, without shelter or warm clothing, not a grumble was to be heard, and their commander might well declare that he "was delighted with his men."

As Sir S. Browne was forbidden by his instructions to operate in the country lying to the south of the Khyber, it was impossible for him to follow up the Afghan Infantry in their retreat through the Bazar Valley, but the fate of these unfortunates was far harder than that which would have awaited them had they fallen into his hands; for, though the Afridis spared their lives, they robbed them of their arms, supplies and clothing, and left them, starving and naked, to find their way, as best they could, across the mountains to Jellalabad; whereas the sick whom they had left behind at Ali Masjid, and the men captured by Jenkins, many of whom were in a very weakly state, were well nursed and kindly treated during their short captivity. Yet these prisoners, in the end, fared badly too; for, on being dismissed—each man with the gift of a blanket and a couple of rupees, but without arms—they were waylaid by the Mohmands, who stripped them of all they possessed and turned them back to Peshawar. Here, many of them took service under the Engineer officers, and did excellent work in making the new Khyber Road. Being well paid, they saved a good deal of money, and, on the conclusion of peace, got safely back to their homes.

The capture of Ali Masjid, with its twenty-four pieces of ordnance, was achieved at a cost of:—

- 2 British officers killed.
- 1 British officer wounded.
- 2 British soldiers killed.
- 10 British soldiers wounded.
- 12 Native soldiers killed.
- 23 Native soldiers wounded.

Owing to the great extent and rugged nature of the field of operations, the number of the enemy's killed and wounded was never accurately ascertained; but, with their whole position exposed for many hours to a crushing artillery and rifle fire,<sup>1</sup> their losses must have been heavy, even without counting the men who perished in the retreat through the Bazar Valley.

The Afghan troops having disappeared from the scene and the Tribesmen showing themselves, for the moment, friendly towards the winning side, all the four Brigades composing the First Division of the Peshawar Valley Field Force, were permitted to enjoy twenty-four hours well earned and much needed rest in the positions taken up by them on the 22nd of November; only the Commissariat and Transport Departments were busy, working hard to bring up supplies in preparation for a further forward movement.<sup>2</sup>

#### OBSERVATIONS.

*Observation 1.* The Viceroy's peremptory order to attack Ali Masjid on the 21st of November, nearly wrecked Sir S. Browne's careful and well-thought-out plan for the reduction of that fortress. Time was an essential element of its success, since a long détour had to be made by the Brigades engaged in the turning movement; yet this order, coupled with the prohibition to cross the frontier till sundown on the 20th, gave them only a twelve hours' start of the main body of the Division—a quite inadequate advantage considering the nature of the country into which they were about to penetrate. Their march furnishes a striking example of the danger of interfering with a general when he is once in the presence of the enemy, and the futility of trying to conduct a campaign at a distance from the scene

<sup>1</sup> The Artillery expended 539 rounds of ammunition, the Infantry, 11,250.

<sup>2</sup> Tytler's and Maepherston's belated transport rejoined them in the Khyber, having followed the longer and easier of the two roads which branch off at Pani Pal.

of operations. Even Napoleon who, of all men, was the one who might most safely have assumed such a responsibility, always refused to accept it. To Massena, he wrote, in 1810 :—" I am too far off and the position of the enemy changes too often for me to give advice as to the way in which the attack should be conducted " ; and, again, in 1813, to Soult :—" I have no orders to send ; it is impossible to give orders from such a distance." Had Browne, like Biddulph and Roberts, been simply directed to cross the Frontier on the 21st, full discretion being left to him as to the day on which he was to deliver the attack on Ali Masjid, it is highly probable that he would have delayed it till the 22nd, and have detained the 1st and 2nd Brigades at Jamrud till the 21st, when, starting at dawn, with the whole day before them, they and their Transport and Hospital Establishment would have had no difficulty in reaching the Flats (Sapparai) before dark, and there, having entrenched themselves, they would have spent the night in perfect security and comparative comfort. The troops belonging to the Main Body would meantime have occupied the Shahgai Heights—or, better still; after seizing the Bagiar Pass, they might have spent the day in improving the road for the passage of the Artillery on the morrow and in reconnoitring as far as Shahgai. On the 22nd, all four Brigades would have started out well fed and fresh, and the combined movement have been executed with absolute precision, and, in all probability, without loss of life. Hampered by a time-limit imposed by persons who had no means of judging of the difficulties to be overcome, such precision was unattainable—Macpherson, at least, knew this from the beginning. " I saw," he wrote, " that the task given me was an impossibility in one day, and I begged for two. Ross<sup>1</sup> at Peshawar was quite of my opinion, and the result proved that we were right."

*Observation II.* The sending of large bodies of troops, accompanied

<sup>1</sup> Brigadier-General C. C. Ross, commanding at Peshawar.

by a transport train and hampered by camp followers, into the mountains after daylight, is a measure greatly to be deprecated, because :—

(a) It is impossible to secure the front, flanks, and rear of such a column, and, in this unprotected state, a well planned ambuscade, or a determined attack by a handful of men, must create a panic among the followers and a stampede among the cattle, in which the soldiers themselves may become involved.

(b) Progress at night in wild mountainous regions will always be very painful and slow, and, as a consequence, the troops must suffer so severely from exposure and fatigue as to render them incapable of long-sustained effort next day, just when such effort is most needed.

(c) The difficulty of maintaining touch in a long straggling column often advancing in single file, great in broad daylight, is nearly insuperable at night, for, even when the moon is at its full, the narrow gorges, shut in by high steep hills, through which the pathways chiefly run, are intensely dark.

Sir S. Browne, as was to be expected in an officer experienced in frontier warfare, had no love for night marches; though unable on account of his instructions to avoid one altogether, he did his best to secure that the troops engaged in the turning movement should reach their camping ground as early as possible on the night of the 20th; but a miscalculation of the distance from Jamrud, the mistake made in the nature of the transport of both Brigades, and the delay in providing Macpherson with rations, frustrated his intentions in this respect. Such miscalculations and delays, however, must always be reckoned with at the beginning of a campaign before things have properly shaken down into their places; a fact which adds emphasis to what has been said above as to the folly of tying a commander down to any particular date. To expect an unwieldy machine like an army, carrying all its provisions and equipped with every variety of pack animal, to manœuvre with as little friction as a company,



argues an astonishing ignorance of war ; yet, such an expectation must have been in Lord Lytton's mind, when he ordered Sir S. Browne to take Ali Masjid within twenty-four hours of crossing the Frontier.

Night marches are usually undertaken with a view to surprising an enemy, and may be successful when the distance to be traversed is short, the route known, the troops unimpeded by transport, and when the enemy has no reason to expect an attack. In mountainous countries, however, they are no less futile than dangerous. The hill-man, ever on the alert, hidden among his native rocks, dogs every step of the invaders, who may think themselves lucky if, before dawn, they do not exchange the character of surprisers for that of the surprised. In the particular case under consideration, not only was it impossible to conceal the flanking movement, but nothing would have been gained by concealing it, for, as Browne was forbidden to enter Afridi territory, a way of escape through the Bazar Valley was always open to the garrison of Ali Masjid, and, this being so, the sooner the Afghan troops realized that their position was untenable, the better for both sides.

A fine example of a night march justified by the conditions under which it was undertaken and crowned by full success, occurred in 1878, a few months before the Afghan War, when, to punish a raid of the Utman Khels on British territory, Captain Wigram Battye with a detachment of the Guides, consisting of one British and ten Native officers, and two hundred and sixty-six men, started after dusk for Sapri, a village belonging to the offenders. To deceive the Tribesmen as to his real destination he made a long *détour*, yet he reached Sapri before daylight, taking its inhabitants entirely by surprise, and capturing it without loss. In this case success was due to the correctness of the intelligence furnished by the Political Officer ; to Battye's own knowledge of the district and its people ; to the close proximity of his objective to the British Frontier, which made it possible to dispense with baggage and commissariat ; to the secrecy

of his preparations; and to the rapidity with which his men, all mounted on handy ponies, were able to move.

*Observation III.* The Staff, rather than the Commissariat Department, must be held responsible for the blunder of equipping the 1st and 2nd Brigades with bullocks instead of mules. It is the duty of the latter to collect every kind of animal likely to be needed in a campaign, and to provide for its maintenance and efficiency; it is for the former to decide what particular transport shall be used on each occasion, according to the nature of the country to be traversed and the character of the force to be employed—knowledge which the Staff alone can justly be expected to possess.

These observations apply less to Macpherson's Staff than to Tytler's, since the 1st Brigade only reached Jamrud on the 20th, whilst the 2nd had been encamped there quite long enough for its Staff officers to see the Transport and to insist on its being adapted to the work in prospect.

*Observation IV.* Political considerations may modify a plan of campaign, but they should never be allowed to interfere with a general's dispositions and movements when once fighting has begun. There was only a remote chance that a postponement of the attack on the Afghan position, would bring about a temporary coalition of the Tribesmen with the garrison of Ali Masjid, but such attack, prematurely delivered, was pretty certain to fail. and, in failing, to jeopardize the safety of all four British Brigades. In the end, Browne had to recall the orders which Cavagnari's reading of the situation on the afternoon of the 21st of November, had induced him to issue, and the result proved the groundlessness of the Political Officer's fears.

*Observation v.* The following letter from Colonel R. G. Waterfield to Sir S. Browne, presents a vivid picture of the perplexities and uncertainties attendant on all operations in wild and mountainous countries, especially when these operations include movements in

which the connection between the various corps engaged in them, is temporarily broken :—

JAMRUD,

November 21st, 1878. 6 P.M.

MY DEAR SIR SAM,—

I will just tell you how I have acted on your orders so that you may understand and counteract any mistakes. I gave your orders for the Heavy Battery to encamp and protect themselves for the night to Major Wilson—then to Stewart of the Guides and Colonel C Gough, and I told them how matters stood. I also told Hazelrigg of the Field Battery exactly how matters were, and that he and Wilson were to look out and not hit Appleyard and his men if they took the hill. I rather suspect they will not take it, and will have a rough night of it.

I then went on and found that the ammunition was not up and that Hazelrigg was sending back wagons for it.

From Mackeson's Bridge along the causeway, to the foot of the slope, is one line of ammunition wagons under Churchward, which cannot move, and yet there are plenty of elephants. I advised him to put in the elephants and walk up the wagons, *crowds of grass-cutters and some grain*. I advised all this to push up, and I think it will.

I told all the ammunition to push along, and I think it will all get up all right and in good time, but I doubt if your artillery ammunition will.

Then, at the foot of the slope up to Mackeson's Bridge, I met the officer commanding the rearguard. He was intelligent, and I told him to make a cheerful night of it, and to protect all that could not get up to the heavy guns on the upper ground.

From the rearguard to Jamrud, nothing is on the road—all clear.

At Jamrud, Colonel Armstrong appears quite clear on all points, and I have told him the orders given by you.

He will at once push on the second line of ammunition, understanding from me that this is the one thing wanted. It will push on to you and I hope arrive before morning. Armstrong seems very good and intelligent and I should bring him forward.

Now about the other columns. Colonel Armstrong says that about 12 o'clock the party in charge of the ammunition, 4th Rifles, returned to Jamrud, saying that they had lost their way. I flashed for instructions and got none. I then tried to push the ammunition through, but could get no guide. It is supposed that the two Brigades (Tytler's and Macpherson's) on the right have all their ammunition, and that of the first line, except the Rifle Battalion and Gurkhas. The ammunition of the latter was brought back by Beatson, who followed in the track of the two Brigades with a party of men to pick up sick men. They will therefore be a little short of ammunition.

The question is whether Colonel Armstrong can push on any ammunition after the two regiments—I say decidedly not. They will lose their way, and the only way is to send their ammunition up the Pass in the hopes that you will meet at Ali Masjid.

Nobody seems to know the route taken by the Brigades, and it would be impossible to follow them, and so I think that the only thing for the ammunition is to go up to you.

I would use my elephants in helping up ammunition wagons.

Now I'm off. 7.30.

Yours truly,

R. G. WATERFIELD,

Commissioner.

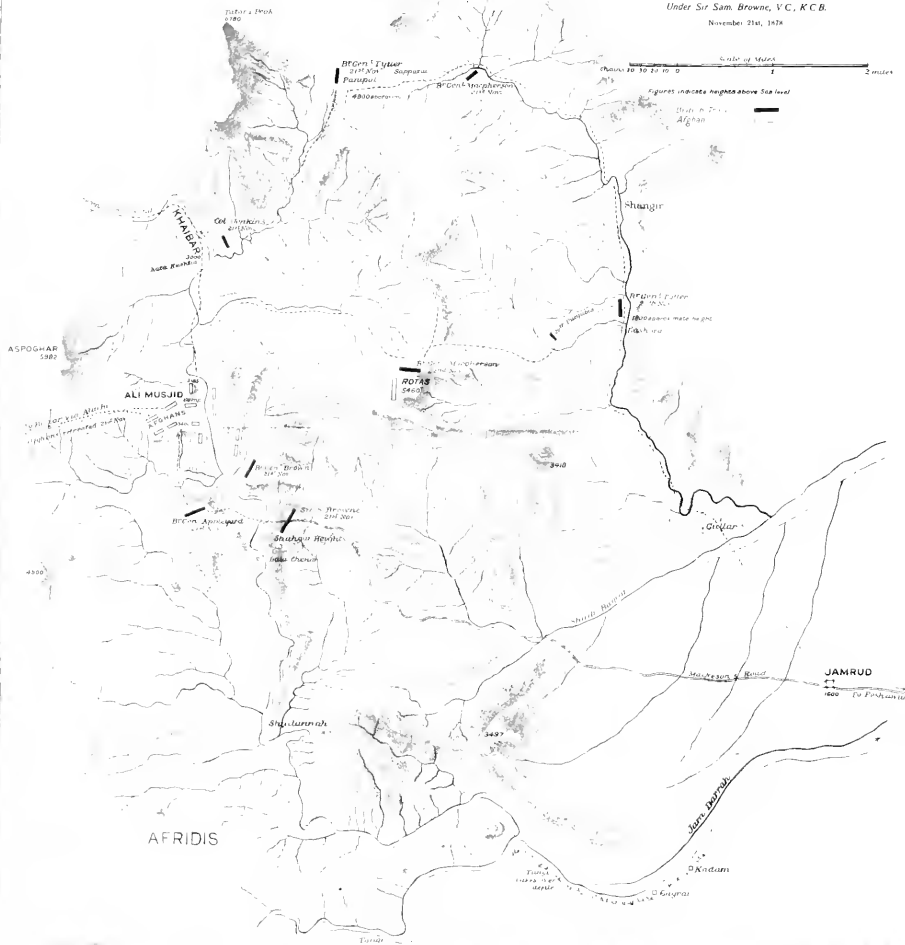
No baggage moving until further orders.

# MOHMANDS

RECONNOISSANCE MAP  
OF THE

## KHAIBAR PASS

by Mr G. B. Scott—Survey of India.  
SHOWING ADVANCE ON ALI MUSJID  
Under Sir Sam. Brown, V.C., K.C.B.  
November 21st, 1878





## CHAPTER III

### The Occupation of Dakka

SIR S. BROWNE'S position at Ali Masjid, in November, 1873, bore a close resemblance to that of Sir G. Pollock at Peshawar, in 1841, and, looking to the sickly condition of his troops and their lack of equipment and transport, he would have been justified in following his predecessor's example, and refusing to take a single step in advance till his Division had been placed in all respects on a proper footing; for if, on the one hand, his men, in the first flush of military enthusiasm, were as eager to press forward as Pollock's, after three years of weary, disastrous warfare, were reluctant to stir; on the other, the motives and considerations urging to prompt action in the last phase of the first Afghan War, were entirely absent in the first phase of the second. No one now questions Pollock's wisdom in withstanding the pressure put upon him by public opinion, at home and in India, to induce him to rush forward to the relief of Jellalabad, nor doubts that, if, in the end, he not only reached that city, but entered Kabul and rescued the English men and women held captive at Bamian, his success was due to the two months' delay which he turned to such good account in reorganizing his forces and restoring the health and spirits of his troops. A similar period devoted to preparation in the winter of 1873, would have endangered not a single British or Native life, nor have affected the amount and nature of the resistance to be encountered; and if Browne, a man of good judgment and much independence of character, did not insist upon such delay, it was simply because he had no inkling of the magnitude

of the task that was to be imposed upon him. His instructions assumed that, Ali Masjid once captured, his work would be confined to clearing the Khyber of the Amir's forces, and that as soon as the necessary troops—to be selected for local knowledge and frontier experience—had been established at its western extremity, he might safely withdraw the bulk of his Division to British territory, leaving Colonel Jenkins in military, and Major Cavagnari in political charge of the Pass ; and it was in full reliance upon these instructions, in the confident expectation that the policy embodied in them would undergo no material change, that he embarked upon an advance which was to carry him to Gandamak, and narrowly to escape landing him at Kabul.

Leaving Appleyard with the remaining troops of the 3rd and 4th Brigades at Ali Masjid, whilst the 1st and 2nd Brigades were concentrated at Kata Kushtia, under the command of Macpherson as senior officer on the spot—the General started for Dakka on the morning of the 24th November, with the 10th Hussars, Manderson's troop of Horse Artillery, the 14th Sikhs, and a company of Sappers. The Guides Cavalry joined him at Kata Kushtia, which lies just where the gorge of the Khyber proper expands from fifty to six hundred yards in width,<sup>1</sup> and where the Khyber River takes its rise in a spring whose crystal waters, impregnated with sulphuret of antimony, had been one of the chief causes of the sickness and mortality that prevailed amongst the troops occupying Ali Masjid in the first Afghan War, and were to prove no less fatal to the regiments holding that position in the second.<sup>2</sup> At Lala Beg, three-quarters of a mile beyond Kata Kushtia, the Pass widens out once more, and the advancing Force sighted a good many hamlets, each with loop-holed walls and

<sup>1</sup> The rugged, precipitous sides of this gorge rise from the river at an angle of 75°, and in places actually overhang it, shutting out the day.

<sup>2</sup> Between the 1st September and 27th October, 1839, the garrison of Ali Masjid lost 243 men, more than one-tenth of its total strength.



one or two towers so substantially built of clay, mixed with chopped straw, as to be capable of resisting the fire of field guns. The number of these hamlets gives an air of fictitious prosperity to this little valley, which in dry seasons is often entirely deserted by its inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> A little further on, the road, a mere tortuous track, became steep and difficult, and, at an awkward corner, one of the Artillery guns overturned, and three of its horses were flung over the side of the cliff, where they hung suspended in mid-air, their weight threatening at every moment to drag the gun and the remaining horses after them. There was nothing to be done but to cut their harness, and let them fall eighty feet into the stony bed of a dry water-course. One was killed on the spot; one so severely injured that it had to be shot; but the third, strange to say, escaped with a few bruises. Leaving the Sappers to improve the road, and the 10th Hussars to guard them whilst they worked, Sir S. Browne continued his march over the Lundi Kotal—a *col* three thousand five hundred feet above sea level, two thousand three hundred above Peshawar—and down a steep road, cut shelf-like in the face of the precipice, to Lundi Khana, a village lying a thousand feet below the summit of the Pass on its western side. Here, where the whole Brigade was to have bivouacked, he heard that the Afghan troops had retired from Dakka, and realizing that the place would be in danger of destruction at the hands of its neighbours, the Mohmands, whose chief village, Lalpura, lies facing it on the other side of the broad and rapid Kabul River, he sent on Jenkins and Cavagnari with the Guides to occupy it that night. The little party pushed on as quickly as the deepening darkness and the roughness of the road would permit; but the Mohmand thieves had been beforehand with them, and they

<sup>1</sup> Irrigation is impossible in this valley, whose inhabitants have to depend upon tanks for their own water supply; and as the rainfall never exceeds a few inches in the year, it is no unusual thing for the fields to yield no crops.

emerged from the Pass to find Dakka swept bare of all its contents, and its despoilers safe on the other side of the river. On the following day, Sir S. Browne and the rest of the troops arrived, and took possession of the Fort, a large walled enclosure, flanked by sixteen towers, containing the barracks lately occupied by the Afghan garrison, and the house and garden where the Amir lodged when visiting this outpost of his dominions. The Khan of Lalpura, a big, broad-shouldered man of unprepossessing appearance, very soon came into camp to pay his respects to the British General and his Political Officer; and the ostentatious cordiality with which he was received by the latter, may be regarded as a gauge of the political and military difficulties of the situation which a too hasty advance had created. Cavagnari was not the man to show undue consideration to Native potentates, great or small, and this particular potentate, whose troops had been on the way to reinforce Ali Masjid when that fortress was evacuated by its garrison, had little claim on his forbearance. But Mahomed Shah could put twenty thousand armed men in the field, his territory commanded Browne's line of communications, and if these were to be kept open and his troops provisioned, the Mohmands, as a tribe, must not take sides against him; so the offences of their chief were politely ignored, and his reception so framed as to relieve his mind of the fear that Cavagnari still harboured the intention of superseding him by one of the sons of Nuroz Shah, his predecessor in the Khanship.

Though the attitude of the Afridis and Mohmands during the operations of the 21st and 22nd, had been threatening enough to add considerably to Browne's anxieties, they had not openly opposed his advance. It was one thing, however, to conciliate this or that chief, or to secure the momentary good-will of this or that section of a tribe, but quite another to induce its individual members to respect the peace of the Pass. On the advance from Ali Masjid to Dakka no opposition had been met with, but loiterers or stragglers

had been cut off by unseen foes, and it was clear to Browne that, so far from being able to leave the protection of the Pass to a weak Brigade, it would be all he could do to keep it open with the whole of his Division, however skilful the dispositions by which he might seek to add to their strength and lighten their labours. It is curious to note how completely the simple programme in which Lord Lytton's views of the probable course of events in Afghanistan had found expression, went to pieces at the first contact with hard facts. There was no revocation or alteration of Sir S. Browne's instructions, but those clauses which were to come into force upon the capture of Ali Masjid, dropped silently away, leaving that General to adapt himself to the changing circumstances of the situation, as might seem best, from day to day. His first act was to strengthen his own position by calling up Macpherson's and Tytler's Brigades from Kata Kushtia, and Gough's Cavalry Brigade from Ali Masjid; to order the formation of a really mobile frontier Brigade, consisting of No. 4 Peshawar Mountain Battery, the 3rd Sikhs, and the Guides, with Jenkins in command; and to give greater unity to the troops holding the Shahgai Heights and Ali Masjid, by breaking up the 4th Brigade (Brown's), and transferring its regiments to the 3rd (Appleyard's). At the same time, he pushed forward Cavalry reconnaissance parties in every direction, to ascertain the resources of the country in food and forage, and to get wind of any hostile gatherings of Tribesmen that might need to be summarily dispersed. He kept the Engineer officers and Sappers and Miners busy improving the road over the Lundi Kotal; constructing strong posts to shelter his outlying pickets; fortifying the ridge overlooking Dakka Fort; and building two boats of considerable carrying capacity to secure his connexion with the northern bank of the Kabul River. He caused the high grass in the vicinity of the road between Lundi Khana and Dakka to be burned; he placed, by day, strong pickets on the knolls adjacent to the Fort, withdrawing them at night, and he ordered that all marauders caught

red-handed should be shot there and then ;—in a word, he took every precaution which his wide experience of frontier warfare could suggest to protect the traffic created by the presence of a large British force at Dakka, but with only partial success. The whole country swarmed with robbers. Bands of them hung about Dakka and infested the Pass. They lay in wait for, and cut up camp followers and stragglers ; they fired upon small parties of soldiers ; they were ever on the watch to steal horses, mules, or cattle watering in the river. Invisible and ubiquitous, they gave the troops no rest. Escorts and covering parties had to be doubled to enable the most necessary functions of camp life to be carried on at all, and the strain grew daily more severe as fatigue and sickness reduced the number of men fit for duty. Bad, however, as things were around Dakka, they were far worse round Ali Masjid. Not a yard of the road between Jamrud and Lundi Kotal was safe, although diligently patrolled by strong bodies of troops. The camps were fired into by night, and by day ; the Artillery men employed in removing the Afghan guns from the Fort were attacked at their work ; strongly guarded convoys, *en route* to Dakka, were boldly intercepted in the Khyber, grain and stores carried off, and the transport animals themselves hurried away into the hills. Emboldened by repeated isolated successes, the Afridis occupying the upper part of the Pass, very shortly persuaded their kinsfolk inhabiting its lower end, who had, so far, been comparatively quiet, to combine with them in still more daring measures. The united Tribesmen attacked the outlying pickets and advanced posts at Ali Masjid, seized the Shahgai Heights—thus severing Dakka from its base at Peshawar—and drove Major Pearson and his signalling party from their station on the Sarkai Hill, killing one signaller, three followers, and several mules, a loss which might have been much heavier had not the firing been heard in Jamrud, and the 45th Sikhs, supported by a company of the 9th Foot, been hurriedly despatched to the scene of action. Appleyard quickly recaptured

the Shahgai Heights, and, on the 30th, retaliated on his assailants by sending three companies of Infantry, a Mountain Battery, and a small body of "Friendlies" to destroy Kadam, a village overlooking the Jam plain, whose inhabitants were known to have taken a chief part in the recent outrages. Cavagnari, who had hurried down from Dakka to try what his influence could do towards checking the disaffection that was spreading through the Tribe which he had been at such pains to detach from its allegiance to the Amir, accompanied the expedition; but the Afridis, who had removed their women and children and their household goods to a place of safety, would neither negotiate nor fight, and, as the troops had forgotten to bring a supply of powder, they had to content themselves with burning the roofs of the houses, leaving their walls and watch-towers standing unharmed.

Appleyard's prompt action somewhat relieved the tension of the situation. The convoys that had returned to Jamrud, started out once more, and there was no longer reason to fear that the troops at Dakka would be left without food; but, between Ali Masjid and Dakka, the marauders were as active as ever, and every convoy paid its toll to the wild lords of the land. Up and down the Pass, hundreds of hapless transport animals were ever on the move; yet, toil as they might, it seemed impossible to do more than keep the troops fed from day to day.<sup>1</sup> In the hope of obtaining local supplies, if only of forage for the horses, Browne, on the 1st of December, threw forward portions of Macpherson's, Jenkins's and Gough's Brigades to Basawal, ten miles west of Dakka. To connect this ad-

<sup>1</sup> On the 7th December, Colonel J. Hunt, Principal Commissariat Officer, wrote to Sir S. Browne that he feared little progress was being made with the collecting of supplies at Peshawar, for the stores at Jamrud had decreased. A few days later, Hunt reported that the camels were going to ruin in the Pass, and unless he could get them back to the plains for a fortnight's grazing, a fresh lot would be wanted in the spring, and the rotting carcasses of the thousands that would die in the Pass must breed a pestilence.

vanced guard with the main body of his force, he entrenched a detachment of Infantry on the summit of the narrow rocky Khud Khyber Defile.<sup>1</sup> Still further to reduce the strain on his Commissariat, he sent his most sickly regiment, the 14th Sikhs, back to India. But the same causes which led him to desire to diminish the number of mouths for which he must provide, forced him to add to their number, and ten days' experience having convinced him that, although the Anir's troops had disappeared for good, he was none the less encamped in an enemy's country, he telegraphed, on the 1st of December, to the Government of India for reinforcements. That night, General Maude at Nowshera was roused from sleep by an aide-de-camp, bringing a telegram which directed him to despatch instantly two Infantry regiments in support of Browne's communications. The selected regiments—the 5th Fusiliers and the Mhairwarra Battalion—started at daybreak of the 2nd, and marched with such goodwill that they reached Hari Singh-ka-Burj, half-way between Peshawar and Jamrud, the same evening, the distance being thirty-one miles. But whilst asking for help, Browne continued to take vigorous measures for clearing his communications. On the day that he telegraphed for reinforcements, he had sent a column under General Tytler to co-operate with a smaller force, furnished by Appleyard, in punishing the Zakka Khel, the most troublesome section of the Afridis. The

<sup>1</sup> The disposition of the troops west of the Khyber Pass after the advance to Basawal, was as follows :—

*Basawal.*

Half Battery R.H. Artillery.  
 No. 2 Peshawar Mountain Battery.  
 10th Hussars.  
 Guides Cavalry.  
 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade.  
 4th Gurkhas.

*Dakka Forts.*

Half Battery R.H. Artillery.  
 Guides Infantry.  
 1st Sikhs.

two columns entered the Lala Beg Valley from either end, and, between them, levelled the fortified walls of its numerous hamlets to the ground; but, as had been the case at Kadam, the inhabitants were forewarned, and only empty huts remained to suffer the vengeance of the harassed and embittered invaders. Large numbers of armed Tribesmen watched from the hills the destruction of their homes, and exchanged shots with the troops; but the casualties on either side were few, and the Zakka Khel soon resumed their troublesome tactics, with appetite for plunder whetted by the desire to make good their losses.

It was well for the troops in Dakka at this time that casualties were few, for if many wounded had been added to the rapidly growing number of the sick, the hospital arrangements there must have completely broken down. As it was, they were inadequate enough, consisting, for the first fortnight, merely of a temporary hospital organized by Surgeon-Major Creagh from his Battery equipment; and, when, on the 8th of December, a fifty-bed Division of the Field Hospital, under Surgeon-Major Evatt and Surgeon Shaw, Medical Staff, arrived from Ali Masjid, as regards service it was quite defective, being without hospital sergeant, writer, and European orderlies, whilst to use Evatt's own words, "its Native establishment was wretchedly bad—literally and actually the lame, the halt, and the blind; as Falstaffian a corps as any man could ever see." The diseases to which this imperfect instrument had to minister, were due in part, of course, to exposure and incessant harassing work, but still more to the nature of the valley in which Dakka is situated. A low-lying basin, surrounded by peaked hills from two to four thousand feet in height, it is fiercely hot in summer, cruelly cold in winter, and subject to floods, which have not even the grace to impart fertility to the lands they devastate, but, in subsiding, leave nothing behind them but fever, and an efflorescence of soda (*reh*) that sterilizes and impoverishes the soil.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Occupation of Jellalabad

#### ADVANCE OF THE SECOND DIVISION

THE Commander-in-Chief, Sir F. Haines, had no intention of limiting the response made to Sir S. Browne's request for reinforcements to the despatch of a couple of regiments, and his arguments in favour of moving up the whole of the 2nd Division of the Peshawar Valley Field Force, prevailed over the Viceroy's unwillingness to recognize the necessity of a measure so far exceeding the limits of the programme to which he had given his sanction some weeks before. Lord Lytton's consent once obtained, no time was lost in giving effect to it. A very few hours after the departure of the 5th Fusiliers and the Mhairwarra Battalion from Nowshera, Maude received a second telegram from the Adjutant-General at Lahore directing him to assume command of all troops in the field, as far as and including the Ali Masjid garrison, in addition to those of the Second Division; to endeavour to keep open the Pass, strengthening the troops in advance if required, and fortifying all commanding positions and posts with *sangars* (breast-works); to act in conformity with the views of the Political Authorities, and, if considered advisable by the Political Officer, to attack Chura or other locality; to clear the Pass of all animals not required, also cavalry not actually employed, whilst the heavy artillery might be placed in position; to urge on the supply of provisions and stores for the front; to telegraph daily to the Adjutant-General; and, lastly, to keep down all unnecessary excitement.



On the 5th of December, General Maude with Head Quarters of Division, arrived at Jamrud, where his first business was to re-organize his Force. The following table shows its composition after that process had been completed, and the various changes which took place in it during the campaign.

TABLE SHOWING THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SECOND DIVISION OF THE PESHAWAR VALLEY FIELD FORCE

Lieutenant - General F. F. Maude, V.C., C.B. . . . .	Commanding Division
Captain F. W. Hemming . . . .	Aide-de-Camp
Captain A. Leslie . . . . .	Orderly Officer
Major G. Hatchell . . . . .	Assistant Adjutant-General
Lieutenant-Colonel M. Heathcote (joined 15th December, taken away 6th February). . . . .	Assistant Quarter-Master-General
Major A. A. Kinloch . . . . .	Deputy Assistant Quarter-Master- General
Captain S. Brownrigg . . . . .	Deputy Assistant Quarter-Master- General
Colonel Hon. D. Fraser, C.B. . . .	Commanding Royal Artillery
Major C. A. Sim (officiating till end of January) . . . . .	Commanding Royal Engineers
Lieutenant-Colonel Limond (from beginning of February) . . . .	Commanding Royal Engineers
Colonel C. M. Macgregor, C.S.I., C.I.E. . . . .	Deputy Quarter-Master-General in charge of communications
Major Dyson Laurie . . . . .	Assistant in charge of communications
Surgeon-Major J. A. Hanbury (joined in January, 1879) . . . . .	Principal Medical Officer
Colonel W. C. R. Mylne (health broke down about April) . . . . .	Principal Commissariat Officer
Major N. R. Bulton (succeeded Colonel Mylne) . . . . .	Principal Commissariat Officer
Rev. A. N. W. Spens (joined 15th March)	Chaplain
Colonel B. Soady . . . . .	Superintendent Transport
Lieutenant B. E. Spragge . . . .	Superintendent Army Signalling
Major P. FitzGerald Gallwey . . .	In charge of Field Park
Captain W. F. Longbourne . . . .	Provost Marshal
Lieutenant C. J. R. Hearsay . . . .	Field Treasure Chest

Brigadier-General J. E. Michell, C.B. . . . .	Commanding Cavalry Brigade and second in command of Division
Lieutenant C. T. W. Trower . . . . .	Aide-de-Camp
Captain M. G. Gerard . . . . .	Brigade Major
Brigadier-General F. S. Blyth . . . . .	Commanding 1st Infantry Brigade
Captain W. C. Farwell . . . . .	Brigade Major
Brigadier-General J. Doran, C.B. . . . .	Commanding 2nd Infantry Brigade
Lieutenant H. Gall . . . . .	Aide-de-Camp
Captain X. Gwynne . . . . .	Brigade Major
Brigadier-General F. E. Appleyard, C.B. . . . .	Commanding 3rd Infantry Brigade

## CORPS AND REGIMENTS

## ROYAL ARTILLERY

D—A Royal Horse Artillery . . . . .	Major P. E. Hill
H—C Royal Horse Artillery . . . . .	Major C. E. Nairne. (This Battery sent back 6th May in consequence of difficulty in bringing up forage)
C—3 Royal Artillery . . . . .	Major H. C. Magenis
11—9 Mountain Battery . . . . .	Major J. R. Dyce

## BRITISH CAVALRY

9th Lancers . . . . .	Colonel H. Marshall, part of time; Lieutenant-Colonel Cleland remainder
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## BRITISH INFANTRY

5th Fusiliers . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel T. Rowland
12th Foot . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel G. F. Walker (Regiment came up in April)
25th „ . . . . .	Colonel J. A. Ruddell
51st „ . . . . .	Colonel S. A. Madden (Regiment transferred to 1st Division in March)
81st „ . . . . .	Colonel R. B. Chichester (Regiment sent back in December on account of general bad health)

## NATIVE TROOPS

10th Bengal Lancers . . . . .	Major O. Barnes (Regiment joined Division in April)
13th „ „ . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel R. C. Low

## NATIVE INFANTRY

6th Bengal Native Infantry . . . . .	Colonel G. H. Thompson
24th Punjab Infantry . . . . .	Colonel F. B. Norman
2nd Gurkhas . . . . .	Colonel D. Macintyre, V.C.
Mhairwarra Battalion . . . . .	Major F. W. Boileau
Bhopal Battalion . . . . .	Colonel Forbes (half the Battalion came up in the middle of the campaign, and the other half later)
Two companies Madras Sappers and Miners . . . . .	Major C. A. Sim

The number of troops at Maude's disposal seems never to have exceeded 6,000. He had, indeed, at one time three Brigades under his command, but these lacked their full complement of regiments; and though, at the outset of the campaign, the Second Division was fairly healthy, yet there soon was sickness enough among the men, owing to the malarial nature of the country, and the arduous and monotonous character of their duties, to keep the real strength of the Division considerably below its nominal strength. Yet, this curtailed Force had to maintain its own communications and those of the First Division from Peshawar to Lundi Kotal, and, subsequently, as far as Jellalabad, a distance of eighty-one miles; to furnish, from the first, a strong garrison for a partly entrenched camp at Lundi Kotal, later on, a second for the Fort at Dakka, where there was a large depôt of commissariat and ordnance stores to guard, and a third for the partially entrenched position at Basawal; to hold a number of small fortified posts erected, at intervals, along the whole line of communications for the protection of the numerous convoys traversing the Pass; to provide escorts for the said convoys, which were daily moving up from Peshawar to the front<sup>1</sup>; to perform very

<sup>1</sup> Between Ali Masjid and Lundi Kotal there were no troops, consequently the escorts for convoys daily provided by the garrison of the former place were relieved half-way by detachments from the latter. "The convoy duties were very severe, commencing at daylight and lasting till dusk during the winter months. The camels were over-worked and constantly broke down, and the

heavy fatigue duties, including, amongst other things, the construction of a good cart road from Jamrud to Dakka, a service of much labour and difficulty—at Ali Masjid the bed of a river had to be turned and the road carried along a gallery in the rock<sup>1</sup>; and, lastly, to be always in readiness to carry out the views of the Political Officers, by attacking any Tribe which those officials might consider deserving of punishment.

The actual date of the order to occupy Jellalabad, was determined by the news that the Afghan troops had evacuated that town; but the advance of the Second Division, by aggravating the supply difficulty, tended inevitably to push on the First. The hope of substantial additions to food and forage, disappointed at Dakka and Basawal, turned to the district lying around Jellalabad. Political considerations had, however, much to do with the forward movement. Winter which had now set in, by closing the road over the Shutargardan, had put an end to all thought of exercising pressure at Kabul from the Kuram side, and, if the war was not to degenerate into a fatal farce, the influence of our vast military preparations must be brought to bear upon the Amir and his Durbar from some other quarter.

To prepare the way for the advance which he saw to be inevitable, Browne despatched Tytler on the 9th of December to punish the Shin-

troops in charge of them had to do the best they could to bring them on, or to divide the loads amongst some of the stronger camels. All this took time. The escorts had nothing but badly cooked rations with them, and they arrived in camp so jaded that they had no appetite, and there was not much food to tempt them when they got in. The night duties—guards, pickets, etc.—were numerous and trying. The stations were liable to constant attack, and therefore the sentries guarding the camp, whether furnished by the guards round camp, or by the pickets at some distance in advance, generally on high ground commanding the camp, were liable to be attacked at any moment by the Afridis, more or fewer in number according to circumstances, who crept up to the sentries and tried (sometimes successfully) to wound or kill them.”—General Maude.

<sup>1</sup> “This was a most creditable performance carried out under Colonel Limond, R.E.”—General Maude.

waris, a powerful clan inhabiting the upper end of the Khyber, and the valleys in the western slopes of the Safed Koh, which, at the instigation of the Mir Akhor, had been making itself extremely obnoxious to the troops. About the same time, he sent across the Kabul River a reconnaissance party consisting of Major H. F. Blair, R.E., Captains Wigram Battye, and G. Stewart of the Guides, and Mr. G. A. Scott, of the Survey Department, to seek for a second road to the plains for the use of the convoys, in case the disaffection of the Afridis should grow so serious as virtually to close the Khyber against them, and also to ascertain exactly how he was likely to stand with the Mohmands, when their power to harm him would be increased by a movement which must place them in his rear, as well as on his flank.

Tytler's expedition met with no resistance, and though it failed to capture the Mir Akhor, the destruction of the strongly fortified village of Chenar quieted the Shinwaris for a time. The reconnaissance party, after an absence of several days, returned with the news that the Mohmands were apparently well disposed towards the British Government, and that an alternative route debouching at Michni, had been discovered, but one so circuitous, difficult, and dangerous that nothing would be gained by substituting it for the Khyber as a line of communication, even apart from the obvious consideration that such a change would necessitate the transfer to Michni of the great depôt, so laboriously formed at Jamrud.

These and many other preliminaries accomplished, Sir Samuel Browne handed over the command at Dakka to Tytler, and started for Jellalabad on the 17th of December, with Macpherson's, Jenkins's and Gough's Brigades. His march was unopposed and uneventful. The road as far as Chardeh was fairly good, but between Chardeh and Ali Baghan almost impassable, so thickly was it strewn with boulders; water, too, proved scarce, and the great variation in temperature—60° between daybreak and midday—told severely both on the troops and the transport animals. The final march from Ali Baghan to

Jellalabad, was short and comparatively easy, the last three miles, over partially cultivated plains.

The impression produced by Jellalabad on its new garrison was not favourable. Though the capital of a district, the houses were small, mean, and wretchedly built of sunburnt bricks; the streets nothing better than badly paved lanes, filthy and malodorous. The fortifications destroyed by General Pollock's order in 1842, still lay in the ruins to which he had reduced them. Trade and manufactures there were none, and the resident population did not exceed three thousand, though it had been recently swelled to a much larger figure by the return of numerous shepherd families from their summer quarters in the hills. The scenery, sternly grand at the time of year when the invaders first beheld it, grew into unsurpassable beauty a few months later, when spring had added the charm of blossom and tender green to the wilder features of the landscape—towering mountains, vast snow fields, broad belts of dark-hued pine—but from the Commissariat Officer's point of view the valley was disappointing, its cultivated area being pretty strictly confined to a broad flat band on either side of the rapid Kabul River, and to similar, narrower strips, bordering the water-courses that drain the lateral valleys, formed by the spurs thrown off by the Safed Koh. The climate for the first few weeks, showed the new-comers its better side; the temperature, though cold at night, being just pleasantly warm by day; but in January severer weather set in, accompanied by snowstorms that brought much suffering to the shelterless followers and transport animals, whilst, at uncertain intervals throughout the period of the British occupation, dense clouds of dust, blown from the sandy wastes at the eastern end of the valley by the terrible Simoom, involved the whole camp in darkness and misery.

The very day of his arrival at Jellalabad, Sir S. Browne entered upon a repetition of the labours which had engrossed him at Dakka. Once again, sanitary conditions had to be introduced into a town which

knew nothing of sanitation, and a camp to be fortified and drained. Once again, there was a hospital to organize, cavalry posts to establish, great sheds for the shelter of stores to erect, and communication between the two banks of the Kabul River to secure, this time by the construction of a wooden bridge, four hundred and seventy-two feet long. And, over and above all these things, there lay upon the Commander of a Force, now encamped at a point eighty-one miles from its base, the responsibility of providing the daily bread of a large body of men and animals, and of filling the store sheds with the reserve of food without which the further advance that might one day be demanded of him, would be an impossibility. Upon this ceaseless round of duties which distant critics eager for news of battles fought, too often characterize as inaction, the year 1878 closed for Sir S. Browne, and the Staff which shared his anxieties and his work, the only military movement in which the First Division took part during the interval, being one to which Browne had given his sanction before leaving Dakka, and in which a column under Tytler co-operated with a larger force belonging to the Second Division.

#### OBSERVATION

There can be no doubt that the Second Division of the Peshawar Valley Field Force was too weak for the work expected of it, and its Commander was right in pointing this out and in asking for reinforcements; his requests, nevertheless, were persistently refused by the Government, sometimes on the score of expense, sometimes on the plea that there were no regiments available. Now, war is always a costly game, and it is quite possible that there were no troops to spare; but the validity of the excuses offered only accentuates two truths which have already been insisted on: the first, that Lord Lytton rushed into a big war without counting its cost, and without making the needful preparations for bringing it to a successful issue;

the second, that he frittered away upon three long lines of advance the troops and transport which would not have been too numerous if concentrated on one.<sup>1 2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *minimum* number of troops required to properly guard the communications of an army, in a mountainous country, is 100 men per mile, and Maude's force was, at least, two thousand short of that *minimum*.—H.B.H.

<sup>2</sup> Though there may have been no reinforcements to send, Government certainly had at its disposal officers qualified to fill Staff appointments, and its poverty did not justify it in leaving General Maude without his full authorised Staff, under circumstances which called for a large addition to its strength.—H.B.H.



## CHAPTER V

### The First Bazar Expedition

THERE was one part of his Instructions which General Maude viewed with grave dissatisfaction. He would have welcomed the advice of a capable and experienced *civil* officer, such as Mr. Donald Macnabb, but he felt very strongly the impropriety of subordinating him, in matters involving field operations, to a young *military* officer in civil employ ; more especially, as the latter was not on the spot for discussion and consultation, but many miles away and absorbed in other matters. He had grave doubts, too, as to the wisdom of undertaking expeditions into unknown valleys whilst the daily routine work of keeping the Passes open was so heavy ; nevertheless, he loyally accepted the restriction imposed upon his freedom of initiative, and before leaving Nowshera, forwarded to Cavagnari a copy of the Adjutant-General's telegram of December 2nd, and asked to be favoured with the Political Officer's views as to the advisability of attacking "Chura, or any other locality." On the 11th of December, he received a reply in which Major Cavagnari, after referring him to his assistants, Mr. A. F. D. Cunningham at Jamrud and Captain L. H. E. Tucker at Ali Masjid, for information and assistance, expressed the opinion that the conduct of the Zakka Khel of the Bazar and Bara Valleys, called for their punishment, as soon as the military arrangements would allow of the work being taken in hand, but that the Malikdin Khel of Chura were professedly friendly, and he could see no reason for meddling with them. The following day, General Maude asked for further particulars as to the proposed expedition, and received by heliograph the reply

that he was to invade Bazar in co-operation with a column from the First Division under Tytler, and this plan, after some misunderstandings and uncertainties, was finally carried out.

Being still without any map of the country, Maude had to rely for information as to the road into Bazar, partly on Native reports—always misleading so far as times and distances are concerned—and partly on Captain Tucker's memory, that officer having visited the valley in disguise some years before. From these two sources the General had obtained the impression that, by leaving Ali Masjid on the evening of one day, he should reach the first village in Bazar by dawn of the next, and as the Assistant Political Officer was very anxious to take the Zakka Khel at unawares, he determined on a night march. The manœuvre was not one which, as a general rule, approved itself to his judgment, but, in this particular instance, there were reasons which led him to feel that it might legitimately be adopted. The road to be followed during the hours of darkness ran, not through the enemy's country, but through the territory of the friendly Malikdin Khel, and the guides of the expeditionary force were to be furnished by the same tribe, so there was little risk of its being led astray, or exchanging the part of the surpriser for that of the surprised.

Bazar, into which British troops were now about to penetrate from two sides, is situated sixteen miles west of Jamrud and a somewhat less distance south of Dakka, and is one of those comparatively fruitful upland valleys which occasionally vary the savage desolation of the Afghan hills. It is about ten miles long, by three wide. Mountains six and seven thousand feet high shut it in on every side, their lateral spurs terminating sometimes in a single detached hill. The ground, generally level, but, in parts, much cut up by deep nullahs or ravines, is drained by the Chura, an affluent of the Khyber River. The villages, of which there are many, are of two kinds : in the open plain, ordinary collections of mud huts, roofed with wood and shingle, surrounded by

walls and defended by one or more loop-holed towers ; along the edges of the valley, nests of cave dwellings, hewed into, or scooped out of, the hill sides, with wooden porticoes over their entrances : in the former, live the settled, in the latter, the nomadic portion of the tribe. Lying to the south of Bazar are the valleys of Bara and Tirah, in both of which no European had ever set foot.

At five o'clock on the evening of the 19th of December, the troops noted below,<sup>1</sup> under the personal leadership of Lieutenant-General Maude—Brigadier-General Doran, C.B., being his second in command—assembled near Ali Masjid, and began their march to Bazar by the road that led past the village of Chura. The night being dark—the moon did not rise till 3 a.m.—and the path a mere mountain-track, so narrow and choked with thorny bushes that much of the way the men had to move in single file, and seldom could see more than ten yards ahead—progress was necessarily very slow, but in other respects the march was perfectly performed. Communication between all parts of the long line was well maintained, and the advance was delayed by none of those untoward accidents which had marred the night march of Generals Macpherson and Tytler ; yet, at four o'clock next morning, the column was still half a mile short of Chura, and Captain Tucker had to report that his memory and his guides had alike misled him as to the distance, that Bazar was still eight miles off, and that, as the road to it lay in the bed of the Chura stream which would have to be frequently forded by the infantry, there was no longer any hope of taking the inhabitants of the valley by surprise. Under these circumstances, General Maude ordered a halt, that the troops, especially that portion of them which had started from Jamrud and been, more or less, under arms since 9 a.m. the previous day, might have a breathing space for rest and food.

<sup>1</sup> Two guns, R.H.A., on elephants ; 4 mountain guns 11.9 R.A. ; 1 Troop 13th Bengal Lancers ; 300 men 5th Fusiliers ; 200, 51st Light Infantry ; 560, 2nd Gurkhas ; and 400, Mhairwarras.

When the march was resumed by daylight and the village of Chura had been passed, orders were given to crown the heights on both sides of the river, and Lieutenant-Colonel Heathcote, Assistant-Quarter-Master-General, was sent forward with a troop of the 13th Bengal Lancers to reconnoitre. That officer reporting that he could discover no sign of an enemy, the column moved on unopposed except by the firing of an occasional shot from the hills, till it reached Wallai, the first village in the Bazar Valley. This proved to have been abandoned by its inhabitants, and here, about 2 p.m., the troops bivouacked, waiting for news of Tytler, with whom, before evening, communication was opened up. That officer had moved from Dakka, on the 18th of December, with 300 men of the 17th Foot. On the 19th, he was joined at the western end of the Khyber Pass, by two guns 11.9 Royal Artillery (Mountain Battery) and 250 rifles of the 27th Punjab Infantry, and the united Force—22 officers, 768 men, and 2 guns—continuing its march past Chenar, the village which General Tytler had destroyed only ten days before, arrived early on the morning of the 20th, at the foot of the Sisobi Pass. Traversing this by a zig-zag path, leading upwards between oak-clad slopes, and downwards through a narrow gorge, the troops descended without hindrance into the Bazar Valley, and halted for the night near Kwar, a cave village, three miles north-west of Wallai, where not a living creature was to be found. *En route*, Tytler had received the submission of the five villages of the Sisobi region, whose headmen made offers of help, and furnished him with guides.

In Major Cavagnari's arrangements with the Khyber clans, wherever he could not prevail upon the whole of the headmen of a tribe to come in and accept their share of the subsidy, he came to terms with such of them as presented themselves—generally the leaders of the weaker of the two factions into which every clan was split. Among the **Zakka Khel**, a tribe even more divided by internal feuds than their neighbours, such a minority had given in their adhesion to the British

Government. The chief of this party was Malik Khwas, whom Tucker describes as a "tall, handsome, delicate-featured man," who "dresses well, and will promise to do anything . . . who is considered by his own countrymen rapacious, stingy, and absolutely treacherous. His word is never believed; and to these qualities he adds the shamelessness of a beggar." This Khwas had accompanied the expedition into Bazar for a purpose which became apparent when, in the afternoon of the 20th of December, the Maliks of the hostile sections of the Zakka Khel came into Maude's camp, to learn from the Political Officer's lips, on what conditions their submission would be accepted, and their past offences condoned. Tucker was prostrate with fever at the time, but Mr. Cunningham, who had volunteered to accompany him, acted as his spokesman. The terms to be imposed were as follows—

First, the payment of a fine of one thousand rupees.

Second, the providing of six hostages to be named by the Political Agent.

Third, the acceptance of Malik Khwas as their chief.

The fine might be paid in cash, in arms, or in cattle. Matchlocks to be taken at fifteen rupees, rifles, at forty rupees, and cattle, at the Commissariat Officer's valuation; or if the chief, who was to be placed over them, considered that their being indebted to him would rivet their allegiance, then his security would be accepted for the whole sum. These terms were so easy, except as regards the clause appointing Khwas chief of the whole Zakka Khel clan, which ran counter to all Afridi custom—that General Maude might well feel indignant at having been called upon to make such a display of force for so small an object, yet, to Tucker's great surprise, the Jirga left camp without accepting them. The explanation of the mystery lies in the fact that the deputation, alarmed at sight of the troops, had retreated into a cave and left it to Khwas Khan and his friend Afridi Khan to negotiate for them. The conference—a lengthy one—took place round a camp fire, and, at its conclusion, the two

chiefs went back to the cave, ostensibly to communicate Cavagnari's terms to the expectant headmen. What passed there may be guessed from the Jirgah's hasty departure, taken in conjunction with an incident that occurred later on in the night. Mr. G. B. Scott, of the Survey Department, perhaps the only man in the expedition versed in the Afridi tongue, lying awake in the darkness, overheard Khwas Khan tell his ally that he had not brought the British into Bazar to impose thousand-rupee fines, but to blow up the towers of China, which had long been his bane. Khwas had his wish. At nine o'clock on the morning of the 21st December, the troops paraded, ready to enter on the work of destruction marked out for them by the Political Authorities. At the same moment Tytler appeared on the ground and had a short interview with Maude, in which it was settled that the former should return to Kwar, complete the destruction of that place, which his troops had already begun, treat Nikai, a village two miles from his position, in a similar manner, and then return to Dakka ; whilst the latter was to deal with the remainder of the valley.<sup>1</sup> Tytler accomplished his share of the programme by 2 p.m., but even that early hour was far too late to admit of his re-crossing the Sisobi Pass before dark ; and, as on its southern side no water was to be met with, he determined to return by the hitherto unexplored Tabai Pass. A suitable camping ground, half-way up a wooded valley, was reached by 4.30 p.m., where the column bivouacked for the night<sup>2</sup> in tolerable

<sup>1</sup> General Maude was opposed to the indiscriminate destruction of the tribesmen's villages. "As a general rule," he wrote, "the towers only were destroyed by the troops under my immediate command ; an odd dwelling-house or so may also have been burned, but that was an exceptional case. My own feelings have always been opposed to destruction of this sort, its natural tendency being to exasperation against us."

<sup>2</sup> "It is highly interesting to note the result of this expedition for a few days without tents on the Khyber Hills. The 17th were a singularly fit regiment, and for several days after their return did exceedingly well ; but when the excitement passed off, the wear and tear and the exposure to the biting cold began to tell, and thirty-one cases of pneumonia resulted with eleven deaths. This

tranquillity, owing to the skilful way in which the pickets had been placed; but, by the following morning, the news of the invasion of Bazar had spread far and wide, and the tribesmen had gathered in such large numbers that Tytler had to fight his way for miles, first up a steep winding road to the top of the Pass, and then down the other side along a torrent's rugged bed till, on nearing a small cultivated plain owned by friendly Shinwaris, the enemy at last desisted from opposition and withdrew.

General Maude's force had a longer day's work before it. Whilst the Infantry, with the exception of a strong guard left in charge of the camp, advanced upon China, a large cave-village in the side of the mountain of the same name, a troop of the 18th Bengal Lancers, under Major W. H. Macnaughten, which had been despatched in advance by a different road to cut off stragglers, penetrated to the extreme west of the valley and destroyed the towers of Halwai a village at the foot of the Pass leading into Bara. At China, both the towers and the porticoes of the cave-dwellings were blown up, and stacks of fodder burned to the ground. Later in the day, Maude sent the 2nd Gurkhas, under Lieutenant-Colonel D. Macintyre, V.C., to the south of the valley, and a detachment of the Mhairwarra Battalion, under Captain O'M. Creagh, to scour the country lying to the east of China. When every part of Bazar had been visited, the whole force returned to Wallai for the night, and the next day re-crossed the mountains to Ali Masjid. The enemy showed themselves as the troops retired, and followed them up at a distance till they entered the limits of the Malikdin Khel, who turned out to cover Maude's retirement.

Except in as far as it failed to surprise the valley, the First Bazar Expedition was quite successful, and attended by

was amongst the European soldiers only. But the mortality in the ranks of the Native Army and among the wretched followers was much greater."

*Evatt's Personal Recollections.*

hardly any loss, only one man, a private of the 17th Foot, being killed, and two British and seven Native soldiers wounded, two of the latter subsequently dying. The loss of the Zakka Khel must also have been small, as, everywhere, they had disappeared before the troops could reach their villages, carrying off their families, cattle, and household goods to inaccessible refuges amongst the hills. One untoward incident, however, marred the satisfaction with which the Political Officer regarded this punitive raid into the territory of the most troublesome of the Khyber tribes. The Kadah (families and cattle) of the nomadic portion of the Malakdin Khel, which clan had excited the anger of the Zakka Khel by entering into alliance with the invading force, had been waiting for a favourable opportunity to pass through Bazar, on their way from their summer quarters in Tirah to their winter homes near Kajurai, and, counting on the presence of the British troops for protection, they tried, on the 21st of December, to rush through the valley. Mistaken for a party of the enemy, they were pursued and captured by a detachment out in search of cattle, one man being unfortunately shot. As soon as Captain Tucker discovered the mistake that had been made, he released the captives, ordered their arms and possessions to be returned to them, and gave three hundred rupees to the family of the dead man. Not content with this reparation, though it seems to have contented the Malikdin Khel, he suggested to Cavagnari that a further sum of two hundred rupees should be divided among the party as compensation for the loss of any little articles that the troops might have taken from them, and failed to give back; and as an acknowledgment of the friendly spirit displayed by the whole tribe, he also advised that three hundred rupees should be given to its chief, and another three hundred to the inhabitants of Chura. These recommendations were sanctioned by Major Cavagnari who, in reporting the occurrence to Government, called attention to the "strange coincidence that during the advance through the Khyber in 1837 a similar mistake



occurred, and a relative of Khan Bahadur Khan, the friendly chief of this very same tribe, was shot by some of our troops."

#### OBSERVATION

On his return march, Tytler adopted the unusual course of giving to each regiment the charge of its own baggage, thus interposing camp followers and baggage animals between the different units of the column, a disposition which must have interfered with the mobility of his troops and with his power of control over them as a united body. In his report, Tytler mentioned that the 17th Regiment and the 27th Native Infantry emerged from a portion of the Pass only five or six feet wide, "in some confusion," and were met, at the outlet, by a heavy fire from Afridis hidden in a gorge. Such confusion was inseparable from the formation he had given to his Force; and had a large body of the enemy, instead of only a hundred men, been posted at this point, disaster might have ensued.

When an enemy has been dislodged from the entrance to a defile by the leading troops, the heights crowned by strong flanking parties, and tactical points in the Pass itself occupied (and all these things Tytler had done), there need be little fear for the baggage if each regiment has furnished a detachment for the supervision of its own and the column is covered by a strong rearguard, for it will then be in the centre of a hollow square, two sides of which are the flanking parties, and the other two the advanced and rearguards—the safest position it could possibly occupy.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Occupation of the Kuram Forts

THE Kuram Valley, the scene of General Roberts's advance, is separated, on the north, from the Khyber and the Valley of Jellalabad where General Maude and Sir Sam Browne were operating, by the impassable barrier of the Safed Koh. To the south lies the smaller Valley of Khost, embedded in savage hills which no Englishman had yet explored, and to the west, thrown off from Sika Ram, the highest peak of the Safed Koh, rises the Peiwar Mountain, a formidable spur with flanking buttresses and intersecting ravines, clothed from base to summit with cedars, pine and oak, interlaced by an almost impenetrable undergrowth.

The valley is about sixty miles long, and from three to twelve miles wide. The river from which it takes its name, rushes out of a deep rocky chasm a few miles above the Kuram Forts, and broadens out almost immediately to a width of four hundred and fifty feet. Twenty miles below the Forts, its bed measures seven hundred and fifty feet, and at Badish Khel, eighteen miles further on, twelve hundred. From this point, it continues to widen slowly till it reaches the hilly country near Thal where it contracts, opening out again four miles above that village, opposite which its bed attains to a width of fifteen hundred feet, though its water-channel in the cold weather, is barely a hundred feet wide and three feet deep.

There are villages on its banks, and in the open country between Badish Khel and Keraiah. These are surrounded by orchards, and the land in their neighbourhood has been elaborately terraced and irrigated by channels brought from higher up the stream ; but, except for these oases, the creation of man's toil, the Kuram Valley is a stony waste, offering a striking contrast to the pretty, green glens lying between the well wooded offshoots of the Safed Koh. Its upper part is inhabited by the Turis, and the lower, by the Bungash, a clan that once owned the whole district, but has gradually been dispossessed and driven lower down the river by the former people, who, in their turn, live in constant terror of the tribes dwelling among the hill-ranges to the West and South.

There were paths up the valley on either side the river, but that on the right bank, although it entailed a two-fold crossing of its bed, was the one selected by General Roberts for the advance of his Force, on account of its greater openness and comparative immunity from the raids of the marauding Zymukhts, whose territory marches with the Kuram Valley on the east. This route starts from Kapiyang, the fortified Afghan Customs' Post, whose mud walls and round corner towers had, for many days past, been an object of curious attention to the British and Native troops collecting at Thal. Afghan soldiers had been seen going in and out of its gates : were they few or many, and what were the chances of their allowing themselves to be surprised and made prisoners ? The little fort was no Ali Masjid, and there would be small glory in taking it ; but every man in Roberts's command felt that it would be pleasant to fire a few shots on the first day of the campaign, and trusted that the Afghans would stick to their defences.

This very natural hope was, however, doomed to disappointment. The Afghans knew perfectly well that the 21st of November would see the war begin, and, although the vanguard of the Kuram Field Force was afoot long before day, and the passage of the river was rapidly

effected, the only prisoners taken were three little children left behind by their people in the confusion of a hasty retirement.

That retirement, however, had evidently been so recent that there seemed reason to believe that the fugitives might still be overtaken on the road, or at Ahmed-i-Shama, a second Afghan post, the exact counterpart of the first, eight miles higher up the valley. So the 10th Hussars and the 12th Bengal Cavalry—the former regiments had forded the river a mile below the trestle bridge, and two companies of the 29th Punjab Infantry a mile above it<sup>1</sup>—rushed off in pursuit, and rode at break-neck pace, up hill and down hill, over the roughest of rough ground, past position after position, where resolute foes with rifles in their hands could literally have annihilated them; but not a glimpse did they catch of any living soul, and the fort at Ahmed-i-Shama they found deserted. Here, therefore, the cavalry rested for the day, and here, in the evening, they were joined by the remainder of the vanguard, under Colonel J. J. H. Gordon, which had waited at Kapiyang till Cobbe's Brigade had crossed the Kuram.

The following day, Thelwall's Brigade being still detained at Thal, Cobbe's Brigade had to be split up into two detachments, one of which under the Brigadier himself, continued to occupy Kapiyang, and the other under Colonel Stirling, its progress impeded by the Horse Artillery Battery, and the Commissariat camels, carrying twelve days' provisions for the whole Force, moved slowly and painfully up to Ahmed-i-Shama to replace the advanced guard, which had pushed on to Hazir Pir Ziarat, sixteen miles beyond its first halting-place.

For the first four miles of this second day's march, the narrow, tortuous track, thickly strewn with boulders, ran, once again, through a silent wilderness; but, on emerging from a forest of dwarf-palm, the troops entered on a belt of cultivation half a mile broad and twelve

<sup>1</sup> The fords were only three feet deep; but, according to the Regimental Records of the 10th Hussars, the current was so rapid that several horses were swept down stream, their riders narrowly escaping drowning.

miles long, where villages were numerous, and welcome supplies and some information as to the whereabouts of the enemy, who were reported to be still at the Kuram Forts, could be obtained.

Gordon's party spent the 23rd of November at Hazir Pir in waiting for Stirling's detachment to come up; but those first four miles out of Ahmed-i-Shama presented such difficulties to the advance of the Artillery—the Engineers were kept busy blowing up boulders to clear the way for the guns—that the latter had to halt for the night at Esoar, four miles short of its destination. The same day, Thelwall's Brigade, bringing with it the Divisional Reserve ammunition, at last crossed the river, thus setting Cobbe free to move up to Ahmed-i-Shama, and Headquarters to push on to Hazir Pir, where General Roberts held a Durbar, to which all the headmen of the valley were invited to receive, from his own lips, the assurance of the British Government's benevolent intentions towards the inhabitants, so long as they offered no resistance and abstained from plundering.

On the 24th, there was movement all along the line: Thelwall's Brigade marching to Ahmed-i-Shama, Cobbe's two detachments coming together at Hazir Pir, and the vanguard re-inforced by a wing of the 5th Punjab Infantry, escorting Headquarters to a camping ground at the southern end of the Darwaza Pass. Here, for the first time, real cold was experienced, the thermometer falling at night several degrees below freezing-point; luckily, however, the air was dry and still, and even the camp followers suffered little from the low temperature.

On the 25th, news having been brought in that the last of the Amir's troops had evacuated the Kuram Forts, Headquarters, escorted as before, marched through the Darwaza Pass, crossed the river, and pitched their camp in an open plain well supplied with water, half a mile below the Forts. That night was spent by the 1st Brigade at the entrance to the Darwaza Pass, and by the 2nd, at Hazir Pir. The former was to have joined General Roberts the next day, but the Horse

Artillery Battery once again acted as a drag, and it got no further than Koh Mangi. As a consequence of this delay, both Brigades crossed on the 27th of November, when all the separate units of General Roberts's command were united for the first time on Afghan soil, and the first object of the campaign had been accomplished—in six days, and without the striking of a blow.

#### OBSERVATION

The advance from Thal to the Kuram Forts was conducted throughout on the assumption that the Afghans would make no use of the many opportunities for falling unexpectedly on the invading Force, afforded to them by the nature of the ground through which the narrow, stony track threaded its difficult way. From the first, the column was divided into four, afterwards, into three detachments, and these, again, were separated by marches so long that each body was completely isolated. Hazir Pir Ziarat was sixteen miles from Ahmed-i-Shama; yet the vanguard, numbering hardly eight hundred men, lay two nights at the former village, awaiting the arrival of the leading detachment of Cobbe's Brigade, which found it impossible to accomplish the march from the latter place in a single day. Again, the same body, re-inforced only by a wing of the 5th Punjab Infantry, the General and his Staff being with it, spent two days and nights outside the Kuram Forts, two thousand regular Afghan troops with twelve cannon, and an unknown number of warlike tribesmen in its front, a river at its back, and, for the greater part of the time, twelve miles of exceptionally difficult country between it and its nearest support.

## CHAPTER VII

### Preliminary Operations on the Peiwar Mountain

GENERAL ROBERTS'S first act after crossing the Kuram, was to inspect the Forts; his second, to reconnoitre the enemy's position. Accompanied by two squadrons of the 12th Bengal Cavalry, he rode forward twelve miles to a point near the village of Peiwar, from which, through field-glasses, the Afghans could be observed retiring in the direction of the Kotal, a *col* eight thousand six hundred feet above the level of the sea, three thousand eight hundred and twenty above the Forts, over which runs the road that connects the Kuram Valley with Kabul. Turi spies reported that the movements of the retreating troops, consisting of three infantry regiments, were much hampered by the twelve field-guns they had with them. Later on this rumour took a more definite form—the twelve gun-carriages had stuck in the ravine at the foot of the Pass—and in this shape it was so frequently and so positively repeated, that, in the end, General Roberts was fully convinced of its truth, and based upon it the plan of attack which he attempted to carry out two days later. At the moment, no advantage could be taken of the supposed difficulties of the enemy, so the reconnoitring party returned to camp to await the arrival of Cobbe's and Thelwall's Brigades.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was rather hard to retire, and one could see that Colonel H. Gough was dying to make a dash at the enemy. But General Roberts wisely restrained him, and after a good look, we returned to camp with the firm belief that the guns would fall into our hands whenever we were prepared to take them. (*Times* Correspondent, November 29th, 1878.)

The 27th was a busy day for the sappers, who were set to work at the Kuram Forts, improving gateways, re-roofing sheds, and generally repairing the damage done by the Turies during the interval which elapsed between the withdrawal of the Afghan and the arrival of the British troops. Both the upper and the lower forts were in too ruinous a condition to be rendered defensible, but a little labour adapted them to the purpose for which they were required. The least dilapidated buildings were set aside as hospitals and storehouses for surplus stores of all kinds, and a small garrison, consisting of two guns F.A Royal Horse Artillery, a squadron of the 10th Hussars, three guns G.3 Royal Artillery, the 7th Company Sappers and Miners, and the sick and weakly men of all regiments were detailed for their protection. With these exceptions, all the troops under General Roberts's command were to take part in the advance on the Peiwar Mountain, which had been arranged for the following day. In order to march lightly through the difficult hill-country in which the force was about to operate, the already low scale of baggage, both for officers and men, was ordered to be still further cut down; only seven days' supplies were to accompany the expedition, and commanding officers were directed to dispense, as far as possible, with camp-followers; even then, there were nearly three thousand of these necessary evils, owing to the number of dandies and doolies which, with severe fighting in prospect, it was impossible to leave behind.

The troops were under arms by five o'clock, on the morning of the 28th, formed up in two columns :—

## LEFT COLUMN.

Brigadier-General Cobbe,  
commanding.  
Advanced Guard.  
1 Squadron 12th Bengal Cavalry.  
2 guns No. 1 Mountain Battery.  
4 Companies 5th Punjab Infantry.

## RIGHT COLUMN.

Brigadier-General Thelwall,  
commanding.  
Advanced Guard.  
1 Squadron 12th Bengal Cavalry.  
2 Guns No. 1 Mountain Battery.  
4 Companies 5th Gurkhas.



## MAIN BODY

5th Punjab Infantry.

23rd Pioneers.

29th Punjab Infantry.

8th "King's."

2 guns, F.A., Royal Horse Ar-  
tillery, on elephants.

5th Gurkhas.

72 Highlanders.

2nd Punjab Infantry.

2 Guns F.A., Royal Horse Artillery,  
on elephants.

It was bitterly cold, and so dark that some of the regiments had hardly left their respective camping grounds before they became entangled in a net-work of ravines and watercourses, in which they wandered about, lost and bewildered, till the dawning of light enabled them to discover the direction of the appointed *rendezvous*.<sup>1</sup> By six o'clock order had been restored, except that all the four guns carried on elephants, attached themselves to Thelwall's Brigade, with which they remained during the day, and the two columns moved off parallel to each other.<sup>2</sup> As a whole, the force moved but slowly, for the banks of numerous drainage lines had to be ramped before the guns and baggage could pass over them, but the head of the left column with which were the General and his Staff, pressed on in front and reached Habib Killa, fourteen miles from the Kuram Forts, soon after 10 a.m. Here, Roberts halted the Cavalry; but, deceived anew by fresh reports that the Afghans were retreating in disorder, he determined to push forward the Infantry in the hope of capturing the guns which he believed to be within his grasp. Accordingly, as soon as

<sup>1</sup> "On the 28th November, at 3.30, the regiment (8th King's) 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, and for the best part of three hours we shivered about, greatcoatless, on our parade or close to it!" (*Kuram, Kabal, Kandahar*, page 25, by Lieutenant C. G. Robertson, 8th, the King's Regiment.)

<sup>2</sup> "The stars were still shining when we started, but it was very dark, and we were chilled to the bone by a breeze blowing straight off the snows of the Safaid Koh; towards sunrise it died away, and was followed by oppressive heat and clouds of dust." (*Forty-one Years in India*, page 131.)

the left column had closed up, he directed Cobbe to turn the spur that overlooks the ascent to the Peiwar Kotal, and to seize Turrai, a village lying at the base of that spur about a mile in a straight line from the summit of the pass, to follow up closely any body of troops they might come across<sup>1</sup>; at the same time, orders were despatched to Thelwall to support Cobbe's movement by marching on Turrai by the direct road that traverses the village of Peiwar.

In the thickets of prickly oak through which the 1st Brigade had now to struggle, it was an easy thing to miss the direction, and for one corps to lose touch of another; and thus it happened that, though Cobbe with the 5th and 29th Punjab Infantry and two guns, carried out his instructions, the 8th King's and the 23rd Pioneers went astray, and, keeping on the northern side of the spur eventually fell in with Thelwall's column. Seeing nothing of the enemy on the southern slope of the hill, Cobbe struck across it by a track which appeared to lead straight to Turrai, but which brought him instead to the entrance of a narrow gorge opening into a small valley, since known as "The Devil's Punch Bowl." Hardly had the leading files set foot in this passage, when, high above their heads, crowning inaccessible heights, the Afghans started into view. A glance at their numbers and the formidable position they had taken up, convinced Cobbe that the only course open to him was instantly to withdraw his tired and weakened force from the defile, and to fall back upon Turrai which now lay a quarter of a mile in his rear, though whether he should find that village abandoned or held by the enemy, he had no means of knowing. The order to retire was accordingly given, but no sooner had the retreat begun than a number of Afghans rushed down the steep mountain-side, and the troops had to turn to meet their attack. Some sharp fighting followed, in which a driver was killed, and one British officer—Captain A. J. F. Reid—and one Native officer and eight sepoy wounded. The

<sup>1</sup> *With the Kuram Field Force*, page 89, by Major Colquhoun.

two mountain-guns were brought into action, but the shells they threw did little harm to the enemy; and though the 29th, supported by a wing of the 5th Punjab Infantry, drove back their assailants, and even pursued them up the hill for a short distance, Cobbe would have had great difficulty in making good his retreat to Turrai, if, at 2 p.m., General Roberts had not come up with Thelwall's column, and instantly sent forward the 5th Gurkhas who, from behind some sheltering rocks, poured a deadly fire into the advancing Afghans, under cover of which the 29th were safely withdrawn out of action. Fighting now ceased; the enemy retired to the hill-tops from which they had descended, whilst Roberts, recognizing, at last, that nothing could be successfully attempted against them without far better information as to their strength and position than he had hitherto possessed, and perceiving that his men, who had been on foot and almost constantly in motion for ten consecutive hours, were utterly worn out, gave the order to encamp. Unluckily, in selecting a site for the camp on the terraces below Turrai, he reckoned without the Afghans, who were not slow to discover that the British position was commanded by one of the many spurs of the Peiwar Mountain, and, being as fresh as their adversary was jaded, had soon dragged a gun to its summit.

About 4 p.m., shells began unexpectedly to drop among the groups of British and Native soldiers who, having piled arms, had thrown themselves on the ground to rest, and it became apparent that safer quarters must be sought, and sought quickly, since the short winter's day was already near its close.<sup>1</sup> The neighbourhood of Turrai

<sup>1</sup> "One shell burst on the ground within six or seven yards of Villiers, N. Chamberlain, Perkins and myself, sending the pebbles and stones flying all round my ears. Several about the same range burst at a place where some two hundred Gurkhas were standing, but curiously enough only two or three were hit." ("Old Memories," by General Sir Hugh Gough, V.C., G.C.B.; the May number of the *Pall Mall Magazine* for 1898, page 45.)

afforded no position out of range of the Afghan fire ; further advance was impossible ; there was therefore no alternative but to fall back along the road by which Thelwall's column had marched, and up which the baggage was still advancing. On the rough, narrow track, in the gathering darkness, troops and baggage met, and soon men and animals, soldiers and camp-followers were mingled in one confused and struggling mass. And when, at last, the troops succeeded in forcing their way through the living stream opposed to them, and reached the new camping-place which meanwhile had been hastily selected, about a mile and a quarter to the west of Turrai, they found it strewn with rocks and stones, dotted over with dwarf oak and thorny bushes, and shut in on three sides by jungle and broken ground in which a scattered enemy might lurk unobserved, whilst a deep ravine running along the remaining side, afforded cover in which they might have collected in large numbers, to rush the camp. The spot was utterly unsuitable as a resting-place, and yet the best that could be found, short of falling back another three miles to the more open country near the village of Peiwar.

Little by little, as the strayed mules and camels were recovered and brought in, tents were pitched and the different regiments sought and found their baggage ; but so great were the difficulties of the situation and the hour that, in the end, many a man "went supperless to bed or to the strong pickets which were placed on the adjoining heights."<sup>1</sup>

#### OBSERVATION.

General Roberts, in his despatch of the 5th of December, calls the operations of the 28th of November a Reconnaissance in Force, but, looking carefully at all the events of the day and taking special note of the order given to Cobbe to attack and follow up the enemy, it is impossible to accord to them this

<sup>1</sup> *With the Kuram Field Force, 1878-79, by Major Colquhoun, page 92.*

misleading name.<sup>1</sup> It is contrary to all military precedent for a Commander to make a reconnaissance with the whole of his force, including guns on elephants; and no General would direct his subordinates, at the end of a twenty-one miles' march, to attack, with hungry and exhausted men, an unknown enemy in a position of extraordinary natural strength, except in the hope of snatching a success by the very irregularity and temerity of his tactics. There can be no doubt that Roberts, misled by the Turi spies, who were probably employed by the Afghans to deceive him,<sup>2</sup> imagined that he could make himself master of the Peiwar Kotal by a *coup-de-main*, and started from the Kuram Forts with this object in view. The retreating enemy proved to be calmly awaiting his approach, protected by the cannon which were supposed to be lying bogged at the foot of the pass; Cobbe's troops, that had been pushed forward into the very heart of the Afghan position, were for a time in extreme peril; and that the whole Division escaped an overwhelming disaster in withdrawing from their first untenable camping-ground, was due entirely to the lack of judgment displayed by the adversary.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "One Brigade, under Brigadier-General Cobbe, . . . was sent skirmishing over the hills overlooking the pass on the left, to seek for the enemy and make a strong demonstration on his right flank; and General Thelwall's Brigade . . . somewhat in échelon by the right; with this latter column the General proposed making a direct attack through the pass." (Italics not in original text.) ("Old Memories," page 44, by Sir Hugh Gough in *Pall Mall Magazine*, May, 1898.)

<sup>2</sup> "In war, spies and their information count for nothing. To trust to them is to risk men's lives on trifling grounds." (Napoleon.)

<sup>3</sup> "The eagerness of the Afghans to commence hostilities, was the salvation of the force. If, knowing the range as they did, and being in an inaccessible position, they had been content to wait till the camp was pitched at Turrai and had commenced to shell the camp with all their mountain-guns after dark had set in, the consequence would have been most serious. Nothing could then have been done, except to withdraw from the camp; but, in all probability, there would have been a stampede among the mules and their owners, who, with the other camp-followers, would have taken themselves well out of reach of danger. The camp, with all the bedding and baggage, might have been burned down, and the Kuram Field Force have been rendered *hors de combat* for some time." (*With the Kuram Field Force*, page 92, by Major Colquhoun.)

## CHAPTER VIII

### Reconnoitring the Peiwar Mountain

ON the morning of the 29th of November, having again slightly shifted his camp which took the name of Gubazan from an adjacent hamlet, and taken steps to improve its approaches and to render it somewhat less open to attack, General Roberts, taught caution by the events of the preceding day, went to work to reconnoitre the Peiwar Mountain; but the parties he sent out were too weak to venture into the vicinity of the enemy, and the reports they brought back were, in consequence, incorrect in more than one particular.<sup>1</sup>

There were three reconnoitring parties. The first, consisting of two companies of the 23rd Pioneers, under Colonel Æ. Perkins, Commanding Engineer, was directed to investigate the ridge lying immediately to the north of the camp; the second, one company of the 29th Punjab Infantry, Colonel J. H. Gordon commanding, was dispatched to the southernmost spur of the Peiwar, the foot of which approaches the Kuram River; to the third, consisting, like the first, of two companies of the Pioneers, under Major H. Collett, who was accompanied by Captain F. S. Carr, Captain R. G. Woodthorpe, R.E., and Lieutenant Manners-Smith—the two latter officers belonging to

<sup>1</sup> "We halted the two following days. Men and cattle were exhausted from their fatiguing marches, and supplies had to be brought up before we could advance further; besides, I required time to look about me before making up my mind how the Peiwar Kotal could most advantageously be attacked." (*Forty-One Years in India*, p. 133.) Napoleon bitterly complained that Wellington had been attacked at Talavera without first ascertaining whether his position could be carried. "So long as these errors are committed," he said, "my men will be led on to destruction and to no good purpose."

the Survey Department—was allotted the task of examining the alternative road over the Peiwar Mountain, known as the Spin Gawai, or White Cow Pass, which starts from the village of Peiwar and crosses the main ridge about two miles to the north-east of the Peiwar Kotal.

Perkins reported unfavourably of the spur north of the camp : it did not run up direct to the main ridge, but dipped suddenly into a deep valley, to descend into and to emerge from which under the fire of a strongly posted enemy, must necessarily entail heavy loss on a flanking party. Colonel Gordon, on the contrary, was satisfied that the southern spur was really a continuation of the main ridge, and practicable for a turning movement, an opinion which proved to be well grounded. The third reconnoitring party, which had scaled a hill overlooking the Spin Gawai Ravine, a mile and a half south-east of the Spin Gawai Kotal, also brought back a favourable report ; but in this case the judgment formed by Major H. Collett, based as it was on a bird's-eye view of a very rugged and thickly wooded country, was vitiated by several errors. He pronounced the Spin Gawai Pass practicable for all arms ; and in this he was right. But when he gave it as his opinion that an unbroken ridge connected the two kotals, and that the Spin Gawai position was held only by a picket and two guns, he was mistaken ; nor was he more happy in his estimate of the time required to reach the Peiwar Kotal by this route, which he set down at seven hours.

The following day, Gordon again reconnoitred the southern spur of the Peiwar Mountain, and Roberts went over the ground that Perkins had examined, whilst Collett and Carr, this time without any escort, succeeded in getting, once again, within a mile and a half of the Spin Gawai Kotal, and returned to camp with the opinions they had previously formed so strengthened that the former officer laid a plan for surprising the Spin Gawai position, and then advancing along the ridge to the storming of the Peiwar Kotal, before the General who

adopted it, under the erroneous impression that the Afghan strength which he would have to encounter, did not exceed the 1,800 men, with five field and six mountain guns, that had occupied the Kuram Valley, and withdrawn from it, at the approach of the British. This was, indeed, the case on the 30th of November ; but by the evening of December 1st, the Afghan force holding the Peiwar Mountain, had been increased to 4,800 men with seventeen guns, by the arrival of four regiments and six guns from Kabul ; and there is the best authority for saying that this force was no untrained rabble. " I may be permitted to point out," wrote General Roberts in his despatch of the 5th of December, " that no similarity exists between the Afghan army of the former war and that which has now been put into the field. The men are now armed with excellent rifles, and provided with abundance of ammunition . . . Their shooting is good ; their men are of large stature and great physical strength and courage, and are well clothed. The Afghan artillery is well served and efficiently equipped."<sup>1</sup> The military knowledge and ability of the generals in command of this excellent material—Kerim Khan and his Brigadiers, Gool Mahomed Khan and Abdul Ali—is attested by their choice of a position and their dispositions for defending it. Its only defect was its length—four miles from the end of the spur reconnoitred by Gordon on its extreme right, to the Spin Gawai Kotal on its extreme left ; but the whole of the ridge was so difficult of access, and so completely dominated at various points by knolls and peaks, which had been carefully fortified, that they were justified in believing it to be practically safe against attack.

This long ridge extends from south-west to north-east, the suc-

<sup>1</sup> General Roberts's comparison, so far as it implies that the Afghans were more on an equality with their invaders in the matter of weapons in the second war than in the first, is incorrect, as the jazails of the Tribesmen who shot down Elphinstone's men like sheep, were better arms, carrying farther than the muskets of the British and native troops.—H.B.H.



cessive hills that rise from it, increasing in height as they recede from the Kuram River till they culminate in the mountain above the Spin Gawai Kotal—that kotal being itself nine thousand four hundred feet above sea-level—from which point a spur runs nearly due north to the majestic peak of Sikka Ram. The Afghan position on the Peiwar Kotal, was crescent-shaped, facing south-east—more east than south—its horns threatening the British camp. Guarding the head of the pass on its northern side, rises a conical hill, and beyond this, a little to eastward, running from south-east to north-west and forming a right angle with the true front of the position, stretches a ridge a mile and a half long, afterwards known as Afghan Hill. The north-eastern face of this ridge dips suddenly into a deep hollow with precipitous sides, which hollow falls away at either end, leaving as the only traversable ground, a narrow strip of land, overlapped by Afghan Hill for a mile on the left, and half a mile on the right. This neck connects that hill with a higher peak, to which, on the 2nd December, General Roberts's troops gave the name of Pic-nic Hill. Looked at from the spot reached by Major Collett, these two hills would seem to spring from an unbroken ridge; but between them, in reality, lies this deep and difficult hollow, cutting the Peiwar Mountain into two distinct halves, only united by the narrow strip of land between the points where the drainage lines, to either side, begin their precipitous descent. Between Pic-nic Hill and the Spin Gawai Kotal stretches a plateau, or, more properly speaking, an upland valley, about a mile long and three-quarters of a mile broad, bordered by a succession of wooded hillocks. Afghan Hill is covered with dense forest, laced together by tangled undergrowth, whilst the south-eastern slope of Pic-nic Hill is comparatively open. From this latter, spring two spurs, one flanking the Peiwar Ravine, the other abutting on the valley close to Gubazan. The direct road to the Peiwar Kotal is exceedingly difficult—rough, narrow, steep—especially for the last half-mile. At the summit it turns away to the left, and descends towards Zabar-

dust Killa through a deep defile, at the entrance of which, unseen from below, the Afghans had pitched their camp.

Although possessing seventeen guns, the Afghans, on the 2nd December, only brought nine into action—three field and six mountain-guns—probably for lack of trained artillerymen to work the other eight ; but those nine were most judiciously placed. The three field-pieces—two twelve-pounder Howitzers and one six-pounder—were ranged thirty yards apart on the reverse slope of the Peiwar Kotal, where they completely commanded the pass, and were well protected against fire from below. The mountain-gun which had shelled the British camp on the evening of the 23th of November, was still on the edge of the hill overlooking the village of Turrai, christened “One Gun Spur” by Roberts’s men, out of compliment to that weapon ; whilst a second was placed half-way up the same hill, in a rocky hiding-place, known subsequently as the “Crow’s Nest.” The former swept the road leading up to the kotal from Turrai, and the latter, the series of spurs which branch off from the hill bounding the valley on its north-eastern side. Two mountain-guns were posted to the right of the Peiwar Kotal to guard against attack from the south-west, whilst two more were employed in the defence of the Spin Gawai Kotal. The approach to this last-named summit being somewhat less difficult than that to the Peiwar Kotal, what was deficient in the natural defensibility of the position, had been artificially supplied. The Afghans, like all hill-tribes, excel in the construction of *sangars* or breastworks. These are usually formed of large trees, placed lengthwise one above the other, or, where timber is scarce, of stones and brushwood, and give excellent cover to their defenders. Three such lines of defence had been erected on the spur up which the road runs in zig-zags to the top of the Spin Gawai Pass. The lowest breastwork spanned the ridge, completely blocking the pathway ; the second, two hundred and fifty feet higher up, extended only partially across the spur which had widened out ; behind the third, three hundred feet above the second, and parallel with the last

zig-zag, the two mountain-guns had been posted. The kotal itself was dotted over with knolls, and beyond these to the north-east rose thickly wooded slopes.

Such was the enemy and such the position which General Roberts, acting on the information laid before him by Major Collett on the 30th of November, had determined to attack at daybreak of the 2nd December, with thirteen guns and three thousand three hundred and fourteen troops of all arms ; meantime, however, he kept his own counsel, deceiving the Amir's commanders and the "friendly" natives as to his intentions and his strength, by marking out sites for batteries near Turrai, and parading his reinforcements of Cavalry and Artillery brought up from Habib Killa and the Kuram Forts, in full view of the Afghans, whilst secretly working out the details of the plan which, at 4 p.m. on the 1st of December, he laid before his staff and the senior regimental officers.<sup>1</sup>

The main body of the British force, consisting of the 29th Punjab Infantry, 5th Gurkhas, Wing 72 Highlanders, 2nd Punjab Infantry, 23rd Pioneers, No. 1 Mountain Battery and four guns F.A. Royal Horse Artillery on elephants, under the General's own command, were to start from camp Gubazan at ten o'clock that night ; and he calculated that, allowing for one halt, it would reach the Spin Gawai Kotal at dawn the next day. This it was to storm, and then to press on along the Spin Gawai Plateau to attack the left of the Peiwar Kotal position. The troops and artillery left with Cobbe, namely, the 5th Punjab Infantry, a wing of the 2/8, "King's," two guns F/A Royal Horse Artillery, three guns G/3 Royal Artillery, and two squadrons 12th Bengal Cavalry, were to steal out of camp very early on the morning of the 2nd, and to establish themselves at the foot of the Peiwar Pass. As soon as it was light enough to distinguish the enemy's guns, the British guns were to open upon them, and when their fire had

<sup>1</sup> Despatch of December the 5th, 1878.

begun to tell, the Infantry was to push its way along the hills on the right of the valley, so as to be in readiness to assault the Kotal in front, when the turning party should attack it in flank ; meanwhile Major A. P. Palmer was to lead five hundred friendly Turis up Gordon's Spur, to threaten the true right of the Afghan position. The turning party was to consist of two thousand two hundred and sixty-three officers and men and eight guns ; whilst with Cobbe, who would have to perform the threefold duty of protecting the camp, keeping open the communications with Thal, and making the front attack, there were to remain but five guns and one thousand and fifty-one men of all ranks, of whom eight hundred and sixty-eight were to be employed in the advance on the Kotal.

## CHAPTER IX

### Action on the Peiwar Mountain

#### THE TURNING MOVEMENT

AT dusk, on the evening of the 1st of December, the troops selected to take part in the night-march, were warned, and at 10 p.m. the Turning Party started, each regiment being followed by its own ammunition mules, and by its hospital doolies and dandies. Those belonging to the 29th Punjab Infantry, who, with the 5th Gurkhas, formed the advanced guard under Colonel Gordon, Brigadier-General Thelwall commanding the main body, went astray almost at once, and proceeded up the valley towards Turrai. The challenge of an outlying piquet showed them their mistake, and they hurried back in time to take up their proper place in the column.

The first stage of the march lay over ground already known to many of the men; the road also was fairly good; yet, so slow was the movement of the long line of troops, hampered as they were by the intervening mules and litters, that it was midnight before they passed the village of Peiwar and arrived at the edge of the Spin Gawai Nullah. Here they were to have rested, but as by this time it had become clear that, if the Spin Gawai Kotal was to be attacked at dawn, no time must be lost by the way, the leading regiments at once plunged down into the ravine. The descent was twenty feet deep, rough with projecting ledges, and slippery with frost, so that great difficulty was experienced in getting the mules safely to the bottom. As the Force advanced the cold grew more and more severe; the darkness, too, deepened, for though the waning moon had risen, its light hardly

penetrated into the nullah, and it was no easy matter to keep the regiments in touch. At one point, where there was a turn in the track, the 2nd Punjab Infantry lost their way, and, as their lead was followed by the 23rd Pioneers, the four guns on elephants and all the animals and camp-followers belonging to both corps, nearly half the column had gone two miles in a wrong direction, actually heading back to the village of Peiwar, before it was overtaken and recalled by Lieutenant G. V. Turner, who had been sent by Thelwall to look for them. Further on, the 72nd Highlanders halted in perplexity, vainly straining their eyes to discover what had become of the 5th Gurkhas, which was immediately in their front. It turned out that one regiment had gone to the right, the other to the left of a wooded island lying in mid-channel. Still, progress was made. Very slowly, and in profound silence, the men moved upwards, climbing over ridges of loosely heaped-up stones, stumbling over boulders, splashing through icy water, avoiding the deep holes of dried-up pools, or falling into them, as the case might be. Every ear was on the alert to catch the faintest sound that might betray the proximity of an enemy, or reveal that their march had been discovered. Suddenly, about a mile and a half up the nullah, there rang out the sharp report of a rifle, and this first report was instantly followed by a second. The sounds came from the head of the column, and clearly issued from the ranks of the 29th Punjab Infantry. There was no mistaking their meaning: the regiment consisted largely of Pathans, the kinsmen and friends of the Afghans, and the shots had been fired to warn the garrison of the Spin Gawai Kotal of the approach of their foes, thus justifying the fear which had been present to General Roberts's mind ever since his arrival at Kohat.<sup>1</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> "I had chosen the 29th Punjab Infantry to lead the way on account of the high reputation of Colonel John Gordon, who commanded it, and because of the excellent character the regiment had always borne; but on overtaking it, my suspicions were excited by the unnecessarily straggling manner in which the men were marching, and to which I called Gordon's attention. No sooner

the darkness it was impossible to discover the culprits, so all that could be done was to put the 5th Gurkhas and one company of the 72nd Highlanders in the place of the 29th, and to trust that the disaffection which had manifested itself would go no further.<sup>1</sup>

Again, the long line of now wearied men and beasts got under weigh, and by 3 a.m. the point where the track leaves the Spin Gawai Nullah and enters a side ravine, had been reached. As the troops moved upwards in the darkness, they could see fires blazing in a village on the edge of the plateau, overlooking the nullah they had just quitted, but whether, or not, they were signal fires, it was impossible to tell. At last, the path issued from the gorge and entered the woods which clothe the spur leading up to the top of the pass. It was six o'clock and day was at hand, but in the shadow of the pines it was still quite dark. Feeling their way, step by step, the Gurkhas had come within a very short distance of the lower of the three breast-works, when a sentry, posted one hundred and fifty yards in advance of it, became aware of their approach, and fired off his rifle to give the alarm.

In a moment, the Afghans were afoot, and as the Gurkhas, led by Major A. Fitzhugh and Captain J. Cook, rushed forward, they were met by a volley which failed, however, to check their onslaught. In a moment they were pouring over the barricade, and, after a brief hand-to-hand struggle, the Amir's troops were driven back upon their second line of defence. Here, again the stand they made was short; the Gurkhas and one company of the Highlanders, who had hurried forward

had I done so than a shot was fired from one of the Pathan companies, followed in a few seconds by another. The Sikh companies of the regiment immediately closed up, and Gordon's Sikh orderly whispered in his ear that there was treachery among the Pathans." (*Forty-one Years in India*, vol. ii. p. 138.)

<sup>1</sup> It transpired later that the reports were heard by an Afghan sentry on the hill above, who reported the occurrence to his officer; but this latter, apparently, thought little of it, for he took no steps to find out by whom, and for what purpose the shots had been fired.—H.B.H.

at the first sound of the firing, outflanked the *sangars* and compelled its defenders to take refuge behind the third and last stockade. The two mountain-guns posted there, came immediately into action, but, owing to the darkness, with very little result. The three remaining companies of the Highlanders who, finding the path blocked by the mules and dandies of the Gurkhas, had pushed their way up through the woods on its right, now reinforced the ranks of the assailants, and all pressing forward up the zig-zag track, which led over open ground to the Kotal, this breastwork also had soon changed hands. But on a knoll above it, the Afghans were still strongly posted, and they swarmed in the woods and on the Spin Gawai Plateau. The Highlanders, with whom were the General and his Staff, soon dislodged them from the knoll, and orders were sent back to Captain J. A. Kelso, R.A., to bring up one of two mountain-guns which had already established themselves in the abandoned battery, and were firing on its recent occupants. Kelso hastened to obey; but, on issuing from the battery, he was shot through the head; the mule carrying the wheels of the gun-carriage broke away, and was never seen again; the mule with the spare wheels could not be found; and the gun was disabled for the rest of the day. Its help could ill be spared. Even after the knoll had been captured, the Afghans twice issued from the woods into which they had been swept by the impetuous advance of the Highlanders, and charged down upon the kotal, where the Native troops, broken up and dispersed by the nature of the ground, and deficient in officers to hold them together and lead them on, were perilously open to attack. The first charge was repulsed by Major Galbraith, Assistant Adjutant-General, and by Captain J. Cook. The former collected a few stragglers, whose fire checked the Afghan rush, and the latter, after rescuing Galbraith from great danger, put himself at the head of twenty men and drove back the assailants at the point of the bayonet.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For this gallant act Cook received the Victoria Cross.



The second charge was defeated by the Sikh companies of the 29th Punjab Infantry; but the Pathan companies hung back, showing the greatest reluctance to turn their weapons against men of their own blood, eighteen of them actually deserting the field and returning to Camp Gubazan, as was discovered when the roll was called over at night.

This skirmish, in which Lieutenant S. C. H. Munro was wounded, proved the enemy's last attempt to retain possession of the Spin Gawai position, and by 7 a.m., after barely an hour's fighting, they were in full retreat towards the Peiwar Kotal, unpursued, but harassed so long as they were within range, by the fire of the mountain-guns. At 7.30 a.m. the news of the capture of the left of the Afghan position was heliographed to Cobbe, who was instructed "to co-operate vigorously from below in attacking the Kotal."<sup>1</sup> This message, owing to some mistake on the part of the intervening signalling party, who failed to take up the position selected for them by the Signalling Officer, Captain A. S. Wynne, was the only one which passed that day between the two portions of the Kuram Field Force.

Unwilling to allow the Afghans time to recover from their defeat, Roberts determined not to await the arrival of the 2nd Punjab Infantry, the 23rd Pioneers and the Elephant Battery, which were still far behind, but to press forward to the storming of the Peiwar Kotal with the troops under his hand; so, after a very brief interval of rest, the little column of about twelve hundred and fifty men was again in motion, led, as at the beginning of the night march, by the 29th Punjab Infantry, the three mountain-guns, the command of which had now devolved on Lieutenant J. C. Sherries, bringing up the rear. The sun had now risen above the hill-tops diffusing a genial warmth very pleasant to the tired men after the bitter cold of the previous night, and lighting up a scene of exquisite loveliness. On either side, the Spin Gawai Plateau was bordered by picturesque knolls and grassy

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's Despatch of the 5th December, 1878.

undulations, crowned by spreading deodars and lofty pines between which, to the north-west, many glades sloped away to the Harriab Valley, through which the road over the Spin Gawai Kotal runs down to Zabardust Killa.

The troops quickly crossed the plateau, and began to ascend the peak at its south-western extremity. The difficulties opposed to their advance by the steep hill-side, by the dense forest, by tangled brushwood, by trunks of fallen trees, by rocks and stones, were enormous; but, urged on to ever greater exertions by the fiery impatience of their leader, General Roberts himself, the 29th Punjab Infantry—now creeping, now climbing—worked their way upwards till, at the end of two hours, they gained the summit, to find that there was no continuous ridge between the two kotals; for at their feet, lay the deep hollow mentioned in the description of the Afghan position, and opposite them rose another hill, its precipitous face clothed with dense woods, whose dark recesses they felt, rather than saw, to be alive with the enemy. The disappointment to the General was of the keenest, but the anxieties of the moment left him no time to dwell upon it,—all his thought, all his energy, were needed to cope with the situation which revealed itself, when, turning to organize his Troops, he discovered that he and his Staff were alone with the untrustworthy 29th, face to face with an enemy of unknown strength; Highlanders, Gurkhas, and guns had all disappeared, and the pathless forest upon which he looked back, gave no hint of their whereabouts.

Many men would have withdrawn instantly from a position fraught with such great and pressing danger, but Roberts's indomitable courage and resolution saved him from what would have been a fatal error; for a backward movement on his part must have drawn the enemy after him, and shown them the possibility of destroying, singly, the scattered members of his Force. With imperturbable *sangfroid* he stuck to the summit of the hill, and had he had an army-corps at his back, instead of a single regiment, one half of which was in a state of incipient mutiny,

he could not have shown a bolder front to friend and foe. Though lost to view, the missing troops must, he knew, be close at hand, and, at first, he hoped that the Afghan fire, which had begun as soon as the 29th had shown itself on the crest of Pic-nic Hill, and which was growing momentarily heavier and heavier, might give them the direction, and bring them to the spot where their presence was so urgently needed ; but when a little while had elapsed, and still there was no sign of their approach, he sent off one Staff-officer after another in search of them. The last to leave him, was the Rev. J. W. Adams, the Chaplain of the Force, who had accompanied him that day in the capacity of aide de camp ; and when, after an interval of cruel suspense, he returned with no news of those he had gone to seek, the tension of the situation had become so great that Roberts felt it safer to break it himself than to stand idle any longer, waiting for it to be broken for him by some act of treachery on the part of his own men, or by an overwhelming rush of the Afghans, who must, by this time, have discovered the weakness of their adversary. Accordingly, after starting Adams off in a new direction, he turned to the 29th, and, in a few brief sentences, bade them seize the opportunity now afforded them to retrieve the honour they had lost the previous night ; but though Captain G. N. Channer, the officer in command, was able instantly to answer for the loyalty of the Sikh companies which had never been in question, the Pathan companies stood silent and sullen, and it was evident that the utmost to be hoped from them, was that they would not turn their weapons against their officers and comrades. Relying on this chance, the General now ordered Captain Channer and Lieutenant H. P. Picot to lead the Sikhs cautiously down into the hollow, he himself following a short distance behind to judge, with his own eyes, of the feasibility of the enterprise on which he had bidden them embark. That it was an impossible one, he had soon to confess, and the whole party returned to the crest of the hill, where good news awaited them : Adams had returned, having found not only the

Gurkhas, Highlanders and mountain-guns, but also the 2nd Punjab Infantry, and the 23rd Pioneers. The elephants with the Horse Artillery guns, were also close behind.

Great must have been the relief to the General and the handful of British officers who had shared his suspense, with courage and coolness only second to his own, when, one after another, the eagerly expected reinforcements were seen to issue from the woods ; and, as soon as the Pioneers had been substituted for the 29th, confidence and hope took the place of a sense of insecurity and helplessness. Yet, beyond a strengthening of the British power of defence, no change had come over the position of affairs. Broken up into groups to take advantage of the cover afforded by the trees and crags, Roberts's men could do little more than keep up a rifle duel with the Afghans on the other side of the chasm. The latter were armed with Enfield rifles, the gifts of Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook to Shere Ali, which, at close range—and the two hills were only from a hundred to one hundred and fifty yards apart—were but slightly inferior, except in being muzzle-loaders, to the Sneiders of the Native troops, and they were amply provided with ammunition, supplies of which were distributed at convenient points all along their line. Time after time, the enemy made determined charges from behind the barricades with which they had obstructed the narrow causeway in front of their position, only to be driven back. But when Roberts ordered a party of the 23rd Pioneers to deliver a counter-attack, they, in their turn, were repulsed, losing their leader, Major A. D. Anderson, and a havildar and two sepoys who tried to recover his body. A second party of the same regiment, led by its commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel A. A. Currie, after some hand-to-hand fighting, was likewise compelled to retire, with the loss of one havildar and three men killed, and seven wounded. It seemed as if the two forces might continue facing each other and firing into each other's ranks till the ammunition of one side, or both, ran short ; but an event was at hand which was to

change this state of things and give victory to the British arms, though not to the troops under General Roberts's immediate command.

## OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. Turning movements have always played a great part in war, but no sound strategist has ever undertaken one with the bulk of his force, nor under circumstances which isolated each detachment, and left both, in case of disaster—a contingency which should never be lost sight of—without any safe line of retreat. At Aroza del Morino, General Girard, having made a flank movement which severed his force entirely from its base, was surprised and overthrown by General Hill, on the 18th of October, 1811. Napoleon characterized the manœuvre as “so ill managed that the enemy might have cut him off at any time.” “Remind him,” he wrote to Berthier, “that when one has to fight . . . one must not divide one's forces, but collect them and present imposing numbers, as all the troops which are left behind run the risk of being beaten in detail, or forced to abandon their positions. General Roberts fell into the very error here condemned. He divided his troops in the presence of the enemy, thus jeopardizing the safety both of those under his command, and those left behind in camp. He himself has admitted that, unless he could reach the Spin Gawai Kotal while his approach was still concealed by the darkness, “the turning movement would in all probability end in disaster” (see *Forty-One Years in India*,” vol. ii. page 139). It is also not only probable, but certain, that if the Afghans had poured down from the hills whilst the Turning Party was struggling up the Spin Gawai Nullah—and this had really been their intention, though on account of the fatigued state of the newly arrived reinforcements the projected attack was put off for twenty-four hours<sup>1</sup>—the little body of men occupying Gubazan

<sup>1</sup> “If we could have looked behind the wall of rock that rose in our front, we should have seen that the enemy also had received their reinforcements, four regiments of infantry with a mountain battery, and, on their side too, were

must have been overwhelmed, the camp and all it contained captured, and General Roberts would have found himself shut up in the nullah, with one half of the enemy on the heights above him, and the other half attacking his rear.

Out of innumerable instances of successful turning movements which will occur to every student of military history, none more clearly illustrates the conditions subject to which such a manœuvre may legitimately be resorted to, than Sir Arthur Wellesley's double flank movement at the actions of Roriça and Vimeiro, fought, like the action of the Peiwar, in a wild, mountainous country.<sup>1</sup> Wellesley's army, consisting of thirteen thousand four hundred and eighty British Infantry, four hundred and twenty Cavalry, eighteen guns, and a contingent of Portuguese, divided, almost immediately on issuing from the town of Obidos, into three columns. The left, commanded by Major-General Furguson, was composed of four thousand nine hundred British troops of all arms, and six guns ; the right, under Colonel Trant, of one thousand and fifty Portuguese, and the centre, led by Sir Arthur in person, of nine thousand men with twelve guns. The advance of the flanking parties, *neither of which was ever more than a mile and a half distant from the main body*, and the vigorous attack delivered by the latter, compelled the French general, Laborde, to retreat ; and when, with admirable skill, he secured a second strong position, one

meditating an attack on the camp ; but though they had the will, by not attacking on the night of the 1st, but postponing the assault to the 2nd, they lost their opportunity for ever. Their reinforcements may have been tired, and probably were, as the garrisons of the Peiwar and Spin Gawai Kotals were not very much on the alert on the morning of the 2nd December ; but whatever may have been the cause of the delay . . . it was fatal to the Afghans." (*With the Kuram Field Force*, by Major Colquhoun, p. 97.)

<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Wellington in his Dispatches uses the generic name of Vimeiro for the two actions, of which he wrote :—"The action of Vimeiro is the only one I have ever been in, in which everything passed as was directed, and no mistake was made by any of the officers charged with its conduct." (Dispatch of August 22nd, 1808.)

and a quarter miles in rear of the first, a repetition of the triple movement, carried out with the same caution and precision, soon rendered that, too, untenable.

OBSERVATION II. No commander is justified in pushing forward one portion of his force into a pathless wilderness in such a manner as to separate it entirely from the remaining portion ; still less, in accompanying that advanced guard, and thus allowing himself to lose all knowledge of and control over his main body. The imprudence in General Roberts's case was doubly reprehensible, as the regiment whose leader he constituted himself, had just given proof of disloyalty.

## CHAPTER X

### Action on the Peiwar Kotal

#### THE FRONT ATTACK

AT 5 a.m. on the morning of the 2nd December, Major Palmer and his Turis set out to endeavour to turn the right of the enemy's position, and the two Horse Artillery and three Field guns, escorted by one hundred men of the 8th "King's," under Captain J. Dawson, Major S. Parry commanding the whole body, moved out of camp and took up a position about a mile higher up the valley, waiting for day to dawn to open fire upon the gun half-way up One Gun Spur. At 6.15 a.m., when it was just light enough for them to come into action, the 5th Punjab Infantry and the 2/8th "King's"—the two regiments combined only numbering seven hundred and sixty-three officers and men, including the one hundred men of the 8th, detailed to protect the guns—left Camp Gubazan and, passing the Artillery, took ground to the right amidst sheltering jungle, behind a lateral spur, one of many which descend from the ridge flanking the valley on its north-eastern side. There they remained till 8 a.m., when two companies of the "King's," under Lieutenant-Colonel E. Tanner, and the 5th Punjab Infantry, under Major J. M. McQueen, secured a position three hundred and fifty yards nearer to the enemy. Meantime, the guns had been turned upon the Afghan battery on the Kotal which replied vigorously, until, about eleven o'clock, two of its pieces were silenced. Whilst this fierce Artillery duel was raging, the Infantry



pressed steadily on, crossing spur after spur—the 8th “King’s” on the left, the 5th Punjab Infantry on the right—working their way towards the ridge from which, as from a backbone, these spurs descend. Once, about ten o’clock, the enemy made a movement to cross the ravine and come to close quarters, but the two squadrons of the 12th Bengal Cavalry which, so far, had been drawn up out of range in front of the camp, undeterred by the frightful nature of the ground—a perfect wilderness of rocks and stones—led by Captain J. H. Green, charged up the valley, and the Afghans fell back; and, though the Cavalry also retired, their watchful attitude at the foot of the pass prevented any renewal of the attempt to take the Infantry in flank.

About noon, the 8th “King’s” came out upon the crest of a spur distant only fourteen hundred yards from the kotal, and just opposite the ridge running up to it from the “Crow’s Nest,” the summit and slopes of which were held by the enemy in considerable strength. Here, where the regiment was exposed not only to a direct, but also to an enfilade fire, the chief losses of the day occurred, the drum-major being killed, and two sergeants and several men wounded, whilst Brigadier-General Cobbe received a bullet in the thigh which obliged him to resign the command to Colonel F. Barry Drew. The change of command made no difference to the vigour with which the “King’s” returned the Afghan fire; but for so small a force, in the presence of a strongly posted and unshaken enemy, the position was a critical one, all the more so because the 5th Punjab Infantry, whose duty it was to cover their right flank, had failed to do so.<sup>1</sup> The incident has never been explained, but a study of the geography of the Peiwar Mountain throws light upon what occurred. Up to a certain point, the two regiments kept in touch with each other, so far as the violent accidents of the ground would permit; but, entangled among ravines and scrub jungle, they drew apart; and, in the end, the 5th, bearing more and more away

<sup>1</sup> See Sketch of Operations on the Peiwar Mountain.

to the right, came out in the rear of Pic-nic Hill.<sup>1</sup> As, under the enemy's fire, it pushed up the last ascent, through a narrow opening in the pine-woods, its commander, Major McQueen, caught a glimpse of the Afghan camp with all its followers and baggage-animals, lying, in fancied security, at the entrance to the defile behind the Kotal. McQueen instantly realized that it was possible, from this point, to carry confusion and dismay into the very heart of the enemy's position, and pointed this out to Colonel Perkins, the Commanding Engineer, who, on joining the Turning Party, reported the matter to General Roberts. Lieutenant Sherries was at once directed to take two of his mountain-guns to the spot indicated, and, a few minutes later, their shells were bursting in the camp and among the crowded transport animals. The shells set fire to some of the tents; the conflagration spread; the terrified mules, camels and ponies, and their no less terrified drivers fled in hot haste, hurrying away to westward in the direction of Zabardust Killa. The panic communicated itself to the Afghans on the conical hill a little to the left of the camp, and these, fancying themselves in danger of being cut off, abandoned their post and joined in the flight. Their retreat exposed the right of the enemy's position on Afghan Hill, and some, at least, of its defenders must very quickly have followed the example thus set them, for the withering fire to which General Roberts's men had been so long exposed, began to slacken. About the same time, the Horse Artillery guns on elephants came up and fired a few rounds into the dense woods in which the Afghan left lay concealed. Whether they did any execution it was impossible to discover, but they probably contributed to the enemy's discomfiture.

General Roberts and his Staff now crossed the neck of land con-

<sup>1</sup> "The 5th Punjab Infantry had worked away we knew not whither (they eventually joined Roberts's column), and we began to think we should really have to storm the Kotal with the weak battalion of the King's." ("Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough; *Pall Mall Magazine* for May, 1898, p. 47.)

necting the two hills, and pushed a little way up the opposite slope. The reconnaissance only proved that it was vain to attempt to reach the Peiwar Kotal from this side. The trees and undergrowth with which the mountain was thickly covered, formed a barrier too strong to be broken through, even if no other resistance were to be feared; and of this there could be no certainty, for although the enemy had disappeared from Roberts's left, they were still firing away on his right, and it was impossible to know in what direction and for what purpose they had withdrawn. It was already one o'clock; only a few hours of daylight remained; and the men who had been marching and fighting for fifteen hours, were, for the most part, without food, and all, without water, none having been met with since leaving the Spin Gawai Kotal. Under these circumstances, his communications being already lost, General Roberts decided on separating himself still further from the troops he had left behind, by entering on a second turning movement in the direction of Zabardust Killa, with the object of getting in rear of the Afghans' position, and, supposing them to be really retiring, of cutting off their retreat.<sup>1</sup>

After a short interval of rest, during which the men who were lucky enough to have any food remaining in their haversacks, shared that little with less fortunate comrades, and British lightheartedness gave to the scene of this scanty repast the name by which, in anticipation, it has already been designated—General Roberts's troops, with the exception of the 2nd Punjab Infantry which stayed behind to guard against a possible return of the enemy, retraced their steps to the edge of the Spin Gawai Plateau. Here, after parting from the 29th Punjab Infantry ordered back to the kotal to watch over the Field Hospital established there, they dropped down into a nullah on the northern side of the plateau, crossed its frozen stream, pushed up

<sup>1</sup> "I asked Perkins to return and tell Drew to press on to the kotal in the hopes that Sherries's fire and the turning movement I was about to make would cause the enemy to retreat." (*Forty-One Years*, vol. ii. p. 145.)

its further bank and came out upon high ground, over which they dragged along, their progress constantly delayed by precautions which the fear of surprise imperatively demanded, till, at last, the resolution of their Commander had to yield to their utter weariness and the lateness of the hour.

Since it was clearly impossible to cut off the Afghans' retreat by occupying Zabardust Killa before dark, there would be nothing gained by lessening the distance between the two forces, so, at 4 p.m., the order to halt was given, and, on the open hill-side, nine thousand four hundred feet above the sea, in bitter frost, without tents, warm clothing, or food, in ignorance of the fate of their comrades scattered in small parties over an area of many miles, in doubt as to what the morrow had in store for themselves—the Turning Party settled down for the night.<sup>1</sup> Luckily, there was an abundance of pine-trees on the spot, and when the Pioneers had felled a few, large fires were lighted, round which the tired and hungry men gathered to get what comfort they could from the cheerful light and heat. At 8 p.m. the anxiety

<sup>1</sup> In his despatch of the 5th December, 1878, General Roberts describes this second movement thus—"Having ascertained, at one o'clock, from a reconnaissance that the Peiwar Kotal was practically inaccessible from the northern side on which I was operating, I resolved to withdraw the troops from this line of attack altogether, and ordered the following disposition: . . . A column formed as follows to march under my command in the Zabardust Killa direction, so as to threaten the enemy's line of retreat." (See Map.)

In *Forty-One Years in India*, vol. ii. p. 145, he says—"The enemy's position, it was found, could only be reached by a narrow causeway, which was swept by direct and cross-fire, and obstructed by trunks of trees and a series of barricades. It was evident to me that under these circumstances the enemy could not be cleared out of their entrenchments by direct attack without entailing heavy loss, which I could ill afford, and was most anxious to avoid. I therefore reconnoitred both flanks to find, if possible, a way round the hill. On our left front was a sheer precipice; on the right, however, I discovered, to my infinite satisfaction, that we could not only avoid the hill which had defeated us, but could get almost in rear of the Peiwar Kotal itself, and threaten the enemy's retreat from that position."

The reader, to understand the movement, should consult the map. The line by which Roberts retired is marked by arrow-heads.

which had lain heavy on every heart, was set at rest by the arrival of a messenger bearing a pencilled note from Colonel Barry Drew, which told that the Peiwar Kotal had been captured by the 8th "King's" at 2.30 p.m., just after Roberts had turned back from Pic-nic Hill.

It was very shortly after taking over the command from General Cobbe that Barry Drew had ordered a further advance, and, after a desperate scramble up an almost precipitous hill, his gallant little band had gained a point only eight hundred yards from the Kotal, whence Martini-Henry rifles could be brought to bear on the Afghan gunners, who were picked off, one by one, as they bravely served their guns. No men could have behaved better, but the fire of the 8th was too much for them, and, about 2 p.m., the battery was abandoned. By this time the effects of the destruction of the Afghan camp had made themselves felt on the Kotal, and Colonel Barry Drew, perceiving that the enemy were much shaken, though ignorant of the cause of the confusion that reigned among them, judged that the moment for the crowning effort had arrived. He therefore directed the Artillery, supported by the 12th Bengal Cavalry, under Colonel Hugh Gough, to take up a more advantageous position for covering the attack, and called up the two companies of his own regiment which, so far, had protected the guns, to co-operate with their comrades in the final advance. Two deep and difficult ravines still lay between the companies on the ridge and the road leading up to the kotal. These were crossed under a dropping fire, and then, behind the shoulder of a projecting spur, the men were re-formed and pushed rapidly up the rough, steep path to the summit of the pass.<sup>1</sup> There was no resistance, and by 2.30 p.m. the Afghan position on the Kotal had been occupied, and eighteen guns and a large amount of ammunition captured. The

<sup>1</sup> "The reputation of our young soldiers was bravely sustained by the 'King's' at the battle of the Peiwar Kotal. The average age of the men of this regiment is about twenty-two, but on this day in powers of endurance, in resolute courage, in a cheerful bravery and contempt of fatigue, they nobly sustained the honour of the British Army." (*Civil and Military Gazette.*)

enemy's flight had evidently been very sudden, for they had left their tents standing, their food ready cooked, and a number of their dead lying near the guns. The 12th Bengal Cavalry which had followed the 8th up the pass, the men leading their horses, now remounted and started off in pursuit. But neither in the deep, dark defile immediately behind the kotal, nor yet in the open country beyond, was any body of troops to be discerned, only, here and there, a solitary fugitive or a wounded man ; so, bringing with them a complete mule battery which they had found in the pass, the Cavalry returned to the Kotal.<sup>1</sup>

When all the fighting was over, the left Turning Party appeared in the nick of time to take an active share in the looting of the Afghan camp; a congenial work in which they were ably seconded by crowds of fellow-tribesmen who had hovered round the scene of war whilst the contest was going on, ready, with perfect impartiality, to fall upon the defeated side whichever it might prove to be, and who now swarmed up the pass, with their ponies and camels, at the heels of the victorious "King's," and swooped down upon the abandoned position like hungry wolves, hacking the bodies of the slain, ripping up tents, tearing the prey from each other's hands, striking at each other with their long, sharp knives, and smashing and destroying what they could not carry off. The 8th were not well pleased to see what they held to be their well earned spoil snatched from them, under their very eyes, by men who had contributed nothing to the success of the day ; but the Political Officer, Colonel Waterfield, thought it politic to allow those who, at least, professed to be friendly to profit by the British victory, and to carry away to the villages conclusive proofs of the defeat of their former rulers. Still, some share of the plunder was secured by the troops, who, in particular,

<sup>1</sup> "We went through an extremely narrow gorge for about three miles, over ground so broken and frozen that it was impossible to move except at a walk single file. Though still early in the day—about three o'clock—it was dark as night, the gorge being so shut in that the sun could never penetrate." ("Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough; *Pall Mall Magazine*, May 1898, p. 49.)

laid hands on every "pushteen"—sheepskin coat—they could find, in which, however dirty, they were glad to wrap themselves as a defence against the bitter cold.

Looting, however, was not allowed for long; day was declining, and order must be restored before dark. Strong piquets had been thrown out as soon as the kotal had been occupied; now, Colonel Barry Drew recalled the rest of the men to duty, and gave orders to clear the camp of all intruders. Turis and Jagis were summarily ejected, and when the baggage came up the 8th "King's" encamped in the position they had won, and the 12th Bengal Cavalry returned to camp Gubazan, where their presence was all the more welcome as, for some time, wounded men and stragglers had been dropping in with the news that, after severe fighting, the Right Turning Party had been driven back.<sup>1</sup>

Early on the morning of the 3rd December, General Roberts rode over to the Peiwar Kotal; the troops with whom he had bivouacked during the previous night, moved nearer to Zabardust Killa; and the Kuram Field Force was once more practically united.

*ÉTAT DE SITUATION*<sup>2</sup> OF THE KURAM FIELD FORCE ON THE NIGHT OF DECEMBER THE 2ND, 1878<sup>3</sup>

(1) PEIWAR KOTAL.

Wing 8th King's . . . . . Tents and rations arrived before dark.

(2) GUBAZAN.

Two Squadrons 12th Bengal Cavalry	}	Provided with everything.
Five Guns Royal Artillery . . . . .		

<sup>1</sup> "On reaching camp news came in gradually of Roberts's force by stragglers and wounded men, whose account showed that he had had severe fighting. Many of the stragglers in question were Pathan sepoy of the 29th Punjab Infantry, who had treacherously left their regiment at the commencement of the attack, and whose false reports that we had been beaten back caused for a time much alarm amongst the camp-followers and others." ("Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough; *Pall Mall Magazine*, May 1893, p. 49.)

<sup>2</sup> Technical phrase used by Napoleon to denote strength, position and condition of a Force.

<sup>3</sup> See Sketch of Operations on the Peiwar Mountain.

## (3) PIC-NIC HILL.

2nd Punjab Infantry . . . . . Bivouacking without food, water, or warm clothing.

## (4) SPIN GAWAI PLATEAU.

29th Punjab Infantry . . . . . In charge of Field Hospital. Bivouacking without food, or warm clothing.

## (5) MIDWAY BETWEEN SPIN GAWAI KOTAL AND ZABARDUST KILLA.

Four guns Royal Horse Artillery	} Bivouacking without food, water, or warm clothing.
(Elephant Equipment) . . . . .	
Four guns No. 1 Mountain Battery . . . . .	
72nd Highlanders . . . . .	
5th Gurkhas . . . . .	
23rd Pioneers . . . . .	}
5th Punjab Infantry (originally belonging to Cobbe's Brigade) . . . . .	

## OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. The march to Zabardust Killa was as ill-advised as the turning movement by the Spin Gawai Kotal. It was begun too late—two o'clock in the afternoon, at a season of the year when the sun has set by five; it followed a track nearly three times as long as the line of retreat open to the enemy; and, with night in prospect, it took the main body of the Kuram Field Force farther and farther away from the troops on the Peiwar Mountain, and the handful of men guarding the camp at Gubazan. General Roberts's proper course, when he found that "the Peiwar Kotal was practically inaccessible on its northern side,"<sup>1</sup> was to entrench an Infantry regiment and the Horse Artillery guns in an impregnable position on the brink of the chasm which had checked his advance, and to return to camp by the track up which McQueen had led the 5th Punjab Infantry, thus placing the safety of every portion of his Force on a perfectly secure basis, and sparing his own men much unnecessary suffering.

OBSERVATION II. The Kuram Campaign was marked throughout

<sup>1</sup> General Roberts's Despatch of December 5th, 1878.







by haste and rashness, and there was no need for the first, and no excuse for the second. Its object was the occupation of the valleys of Kuram and Khost with a view to their incorporation into the Indian Empire, *not* the capture of Kabul; there was no question, therefore, of rushing on in order to cross the passes before snow had closed them for the winter; and though General Roberts's instructions directed him to clear the gorge between the Peiwar and the Shutargardan of the enemy, the time and manner of that clearance was left to his discretion. From a political, as well as from a *general* military standpoint, General Roberts's aim, on discovering that the Peiwar was strongly held by the Afghans, should have been to facilitate the advance of the Khyber Force by keeping the largest possible number of the Amir's troops at a distance from Kabul, and neither in his Despatch of December the 5th nor yet in his autobiography, has he shown any *local* military necessity for attacking those troops in an almost impregnable position.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, military science demanded that General Roberts, bearing in mind the axiom that a commander should always try to fight under circumstances the most favourable to his own troops and the least favourable to those opposed to them,<sup>2</sup> should have manœuvred to draw down the Afghans from their fastnesses, as Lord Kitchener drew the Dervishes from their stronghold at Omdurman. By such tactics, the chances of success which were largely against the British and in favour of the Afghans, would have been reversed, and the victory that must have ensued, though a little later in time, would have been complete—no body of troops escaping to strengthen the Amir's position elsewhere.

<sup>1</sup> "I confess to a feeling very nearly akin to despair when I gazed at the apparently impregnable position towering above us, occupied, as I could discern through my telescope, by crowds of soldiers and a large number of guns." (*Forty-One Years in India*, vol. ii. p. 133.)

<sup>2</sup> Napoleon issued the following order in August, 1809:—"A battle should never be risked unless the chances are 70 per cent. in favour of success; in fact, a battle ought always to be the last resource, as, from the nature of things, its result is always doubtful."

## CHAPTER XI

### The Reconnaissance of the Shutargardan Pass

#### THE PASSAGE OF THE MANJIAR DEFILE

THE three days which followed on the reunion of the Peiwar Expeditionary Force, were spent in making arrangements for the security and comfort of the European troops who were to pass the winter on that mountain. Three guns, G.3 Royal Artillery, were got into position for the defence of the Kotal; the 8th "King's," set to work to lower the cannon abandoned by the Afghans down the steep hillside and to collect the enemy's scattered ammunition; the Sappers, called up from the Kuram Forts to erect huts for officers and men; the treacherous 29th Punjab Infantry, sent back to Gubazan; whilst the other regiments that had borne the fatigues and anxieties of the 1st and 2nd of December, were permitted to enjoy a well-earned rest in the position near Zabardust Killa to which they had been transferred on the morning of the 3rd. In its neighbourhood, luckily for them, were discovered sufficient stores of rice and grain left behind by the Amir's army, to stay the hunger of men and animals, till, on the 4th, Lieutenant Buckland appeared with a convoy of provisions.

On the 6th, everything being in train, and his presence no longer necessary on the Peiwar Mountain, General Roberts started off to complete the first part of his work by reconnoitring the Shutargardan, taking with him No. 1 Mountain Battery, a detachment of the 12th Bengal Cavalry, a wing of the 72nd Highlanders, the 2nd and 5th Punjab Infantry, and the 5th Gurkhas, the whole under the command of Colonel Barry Drew. That day, the Force marched twelve miles, and

halted for the night at the village of Alikhel. On the the 7th, Roberts with an escort of two hundred and fifty Highlanders and two hundred and fifty men of the 5th Punjab Infantry, under Lieutenant-Colonel F. Brownlow, encamped at Rokian three and a half miles west of Alikhel. On the 8th, he and his escort pushed on through the Hazar Darakht<sup>1</sup> defile to Jaji Tanna, where Ghilzai territory begins; whilst two mountain guns and the 2nd and 5th Punjab Infantry, Colonel Tyndall commanding, moved up to Rokian to be at hand to cover the General's retreat should the Shutargardan prove to be strongly occupied by the enemy. On the 9th, leaving its camp standing, the reconnoitring party crossed the Surkai Kotal and descended to the plateau on its further side. Here, Roberts halted his escort whilst he himself, accompanied by a few officers and some Ghilzais, ascended to the summit of the Shutargardan Pass, from whence the fertile valleys of the Logar and Kabul rivers could clearly be discerned, though enshrouding mist hid the Amir's capital from view. An abandoned battery of mountain-guns was observed at no great distance—a tempting prize—but, for lack of means of transport, it had to be left where it lay, the Afghans subsequently recovering and removing it.<sup>2</sup>

The features of each day's march had been the same—a boulder-strewn pathway, running, for the most part, up the bed of a frozen stream at the bottom of a deep ravine, above whose precipitous banks, steep hill-sides, dark with deodar and pine, sloped boldly upward, but emerging, here and there, on to open spaces where a village or two and patches of cultivated ground might be seen, and whence the eye could roam over an endless maze of mountains. Day by day, too, the cold had deepened, bitterest at dawn when icy winds swept down

<sup>1</sup> "Hazar Darakht or the Thousand-Tree Defile, so named from a forest of pines and yew-trees near its centre." (Bellew.)

<sup>2</sup> According to the *Times* Correspondent (Dec. 9, 1878), the guns had already been carried away, and the six gun-carriages and four limbers were discovered "thrown down a steep ravine and irredeemably smashed."

the narrow gorges ; <sup>1</sup> and everywhere the inhabitants, though anxious to conciliate the invaders whom they had so recently helped to oppose, had had nothing but their services as carriers to offer ; for the country, which yielded them a bare subsistence, could furnish neither food nor forage to the strangers who had so unexpectedly intruded on its remote solitudes.

Having convinced himself that there were no Afghan troops remaining on the eastern side of the Shutargardan, General Roberts returned on the 10th of December, to Alikhel, to arrange for the withdrawal of the troops to lower ground before the advent of snow should render the mountain-roads impassable. Judging, however, that it was important to exercise some supervision during the winter over the region lying between the two Kotals, he invested Captain R. H. F. Rennick, an officer of much resolution and well versed in the language and habits of the frontier tribes, with political powers, selected a house dominating the village as his residence, and ordered up a company of the 29th Punjab Infantry for his protection.<sup>2</sup>

On the 11th, the 2nd and 5th Punjab Infantry, and the four guns Royal Horse Artillery, started for the Kuram Valley *viâ* the Peiwar Kotal, and, next morning, the Highlanders, Gurkhas, Pioncers and the Mountain Battery, with a long transport train consisting of baggage, ordnance stores and a commissariat column,<sup>3</sup> marched for

<sup>1</sup> " Letter-writing was a difficulty, as the ink froze in the bottles, and washing was out of the question, as sponges and water were alike blocks of ice." (" Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough ; *Pall Mall Magazine*, June 1898, p. 200.)

" The sun was completely hidden by the hills on each side, and there was a cutting wind sweeping down the gorges. I thought I should never feel warm again." (Ibid. p. 202.)

<sup>2</sup> " A small body of troops would have been useless unless Captain Rennick had been able to keep his position by force of character instead of force of arms, and that he was able to do this, is, in itself, sufficient praise." (Major Colquhoun.)

<sup>3</sup> " The baggage of four regiments, even on the reduced scale, made a tolerably long column, and the Commissariat camels added somewhat to the length to be protected." (*With the Kuram Field Force*, by Major Colquhoun, p. 130.)

the same goal by the more southerly path that traverses the difficult tangle of hills lying between the Peiwar Mountain and the Kuram River. This path first followed the Harriab to its confluence with the Kuram River, and then, after crossing and recrossing the latter stream, turned sharply away to the left, and ascended a narrow, thickly wooded glen till it came out into an upland valley on the further side of which stood the village of Sappari, against whose people—Mangals by race—General Roberts had been warned by the headmen of a hamlet previously passed through.<sup>1</sup> As, however, day was declining when Sappari came in sight, he thought it better to spend the night on open ground than to tempt, in the dark, the perils of the terrible Manjiar defile, which he knew to lie two and a half miles ahead; and accordingly, though he sent on the Pioneers to secure the summit of the Sappari Pass overlooking the defile, he encamped the remainder of the troops in the vicinity of the village, whose inhabitants showed much alacrity in bringing in supplies, and seemed altogether friendly and harmless. At 1 a.m., however, orders were suddenly issued to strike tents and load up the camels which were at once sent forward in charge of the Transport Officer, Captain F. T. Goad, in advance of the main column, which marched an hour later.

No doubt Roberts's idea in making this sudden move, was to frustrate any treacherous plans which the villagers might have laid, by getting through the defile hours before they expected him to enter it, and had the road and the hour lent themselves to a rapid march, he would probably have succeeded in outwitting them; unfortunately, the night was dark, and the path steep, rugged and fearfully slippery,

<sup>1</sup> "When I arrived at the village of Kamana, about three miles from Ali Khel, the headmen came to pay their respects, and informed me that it was probable the force would be annoyed by the men of the Mangal tribe when passing through the defile which lay between Sappari and the next halting-place, Keraiah, on the Kuram River. Although I was anxious not to come to blows with the Mangals, yet it was now too late to turn back." (Despatch of General Roberts, dated 18th December, 1878.)

having been converted into a succession of ice-slides by the recent overflowing of a mountain stream.<sup>1</sup> On these the laden camels slipped and fell, and soon the track was strewn with frightened animals struggling vainly in the darkness to regain their footing. Forcing their way, as best they could, through this helpless mass, Roberts and his troops left the miserable beasts and their miserable drivers behind, and, toiling up the pass, joined the Pioneers on its summit. The morning light showed many small groups of herdsmen scattered among the rocks, but their peaceful demeanor<sup>2</sup> apparently laid the General's suspicions to rest,<sup>3</sup> for leaving the Gurkhas as an escort for the camels when they should come up, and giving the mules in charge of a wing of the Pioneers, he started off with the remainder of the troops and the Artillery,<sup>4</sup> and descending the broken, rocky staircase which constitutes the reverse side of the Sappari Pass, threaded his way through the Manjiar Defile, and came safely down to Keraiah on the Kuram River, where he encamped.

Matters went less smoothly with the Transport Train and its

<sup>1</sup> Roberts attributes this unexpected difficulty "to the machinations of our false friends in the village (Sappari), who directed on to the precipitous path we had to ascend a stream of water which soon turned into a sheet of ice." (*Forty-One Years in India*, vol. ii. ; p. 153.)

<sup>2</sup> "It was believed that these few men were shepherds herding their flocks, and so no further notice was taken of them or their movements." (*With the Kuram Field Force*, by Major Colquhoun, p. 140.)

"In fact so peaceful did it all seem that Brabazon and I, preferring walking to riding on a cold morning, entered occasionally into conversation with some of the groups, though, our knowledge of their lingo being limited, we did not gain much information." ("Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough ; *The Pall Mall Magazine*, June 1898, p. 203.)

<sup>3</sup> Roberts himself mentions that they had cut down two camp-followers who had lingered behind, but he probably learnt this fact later in the day.

<sup>4</sup> "The troops, with the exception of the 5th Gurkhas, were allowed to push ahead of the baggage, and to make their way to camp, which was pitched at a place called Keraiah." (*With the Kuram Field Force*, by Major Colquhoun, pp. 140, 141.)



guard. "The ruined staircase, with its missing steps,"<sup>1</sup> which had no terrors for active men and sure-footed mules, was a fearful trial to the camels. Slowly, painfully, with many halts and mishaps, they stumbled down it, and, as the last weary beast disappeared into the shadow of the defile, the peaceful herdsmen who for hours had sat quietly watching their movements, sprang to their feet, the hidden weapons flashed out, and a sudden rush was made to seize the stores that had so long tempted their cupidity; at the same time, from every projecting crag commanding the road—deep-sunken between towering rock-walls, and so narrow that the camels had to squeeze their way along—bullets flew down into the gorge; for there were no flankers, no pickets holding the heights above the defile to make such vantage-points untenable by the foe.<sup>2</sup> Captain Goad did his utmost to keep order among the animals, and the Gurkhas, distributed in strong parties along the column, protected its rear and warded off flank attacks from the side ravines which, running far back into the hills, gave the Mangals access to the defile at many points. Fighting and running, now turning to fire a volley, now charging back with the bayonet, leading with their own hands the camels whose drivers had deserted—for five long miles, the gallant regiment covered the Transport Train's advance. Captain C. F. Powell, commanding the rear-guard, was twice hit, and both he and Captain Goad, who was shot through both legs, and only saved from falling into the enemy's hands by the courage and devotion of Sergeant William Greer<sup>3</sup> and three men of the 72nd Highlanders in charge of the regimental baggage—subsequently succumbed to their wounds. At last, the rocky

<sup>1</sup> See *Forty-One Years in India*, vol. ii. p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> "The Commissioner, Colonel Waterfield, who had gone on with the advance guard, had assured the General that no resistance was likely, hence there was some relaxation of the extra precautions taken in clearing the defile, nor were the heights crowned as had been first intended by the General." (See *Times Correspondent's* letter, dated January 5, 1879.)

<sup>3</sup> A Commission in the army was subsequently conferred upon this gallant non-commissioned officer.

walls receded, the pathway widened out, and the harassed column issued from the defile in which, in addition to the two British officers mortally wounded, it had lost three Gurkhas and two camp-followers, killed, and eleven Gurkhas wounded, but, to its honour be it spoken, not a single baggage-animal.<sup>1</sup>

That it should have escaped from such a trap at so small a cost was due primarily, of course, to the courage and coolness of the troops, but also, in part, to the superiority of their weapons,<sup>2</sup> and, in part, to the difficulty experienced by the Mangals in firing from the top of lofty perpendicular rocks into the narrow cutting below; luckily, they did not resort to the hillman's usual habit of hurling down stones, which would have done far more damage than their bullets.

News that fighting was going on in the defile, reached Roberts early in the afternoon, and he at once sent back two hundred Highlanders and two hundred Pioneers; but the column had extricated itself from its difficulties before this relief-party came on the scene.<sup>3</sup> Tribesmen were still, indeed, following it at a respectful distance, who disappeared at sight of reinforcements, but attacks on the baggage-train had ceased as soon as the gorge had been left behind.

On the 14th, the General and his staff rode on twenty-one miles

<sup>1</sup> In his despatch of the 18th December, Roberts showed his sense of obligation to the 5th Gurkhas for saving him from the discredit of losing a large part of his baggage, by warmly praising the gallantry of the whole regiment, and by naming, individually, every officer who had been present with it at the Manjjar Defile, viz. : Major A. Fitzhugh, Captain T. Cook, Captain C. F. Powell, Lieutenant A. R. Martin, Lieutenant C. C. St. E. Lucas, and Surgeon-Major G. Farrell.

<sup>2</sup> "To the fact that the Mangals are but scantily furnished with fire-arms must be attributed the smallness of our loss." (The *Times* Correspondent, January 10, 1879.)

<sup>3</sup> "We passed on, and had barely reached camp when the alarm was raised that the Mangals had attacked the baggage and rear-guard, consisting of the 5th Gurkhas. Heavy firing was heard, and reinforcements were at once sent back. As soon as they appeared in sight the Mangals retired. ("Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough; *The Pall Mall Magazine*, June 1898, p. 203.)

to the Kuram Forts, following a track on the left bank of the river, which proved to be impracticable for wheeled carriage. The troops remained for a day or two longer at Kerariah whilst Captain R. G. Kennedy reconnoitred the adjacent country with a view to discovering whether it would be possible to punish the Mangals for their treacherous conduct ;<sup>1</sup> but as soon as it had been ascertained that the offenders possessed no property to confiscate and no villages to destroy, except one in an inaccessible nook of the Laggi Glen, all thoughts of retribution were abandoned, and the little force rejoined its Commander ; the whole result of the difficult and dangerous march thus brought to a conclusion, being the certainty attained to that there was no alternative road to the Shutargardan, and that, in the event of an advance on Kabul, both troops and convoys must keep to the Peiwar route.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was said that the Mangals were assisted by the Jajis and Chakmanis and some of the Amir's soldiers who had remained in hiding near the Peiwar. As regards the presence of regular troops on this occasion, the only evidence consists in the fact that an Enfield rifle was picked up, and a few men partially dressed in uniform were seen.

<sup>2</sup> Much dissatisfaction was rife in camp owing to the way in which the whole affair had been mismanaged. Writing on December 19th, the Special Correspondent of the *Standard* says :—“ I heard such questions as these asked over and over again—‘ Why did we recklessly expose our small force in an unknown country, the inhabitants of which might have massacred nearly every soul ? Why, if it was considered necessary, for deep political reasons, that we should brave the Mangal in his den, were inquiries not made about the character of the road, so that it might have been seen whether it would not be desirable to send the convoy round, easily and safely, by Alikhel and the Peiwar ? And why, above all things, were proper precautions not taken to have the convoy protected the whole way through the defile, instead of leaving it solely to the care of a rear-guard, in a declared hostile country ? ’ It is the absence of any satisfactory answer to questions like these, that makes attached friends use such violent language as ‘ down-right murder,’ when talking of the death of those unfortunate officers who were killed by the Mangals.”

“ Although men were seen perched on the crags, beetling over the river below, in a position described by an eye-witness as the ‘ nastiest one many of us had ever seen,’ no steps were taken by the General to cover the retreat of the rear-guard, because he had been assured that resistance was unlikely. There was, in fact, a relaxation of the usual precautions adopted in hill warfare ; the heights covering the pass were not even crowned . . . This affair calls for searching

On his return to Kuram, General Roberts convened two Courts;—the one, a Court of Inquiry to investigate an unpleasant incident which had occurred in his absence, the stealing of all the Government's bank-notes from the field treasury chest, whilst in the charge of a guard furnished by the 29th Punjab Infantry; the other, a Court-Martial for the trial of a Native officer and twenty men of the same regiment for the crime of treachery committed on the night-march to the Spin Gawai Kotal, and at the subsequent storming of the Afghan position. The Court of Inquiry reported that the notes had been kept in an ordinary mule-trunk instead of in a proper treasure-chest, but came to no conclusion as to how and by whom they had been abstracted; subsequently, however, they were traced to the Native non-commissioned officer in command of the guard, some, if not all, of the men composing which must have been privy to the theft. The Court-Martial found all the accused guilty, and the severity of the sentences it passed on the offenders, marked its sense of the extreme gravity of their crime. Sepoy Hazrat Shah, the man who had fired the first of the two shots which so nearly betrayed the approach of a British force to the garrison of the Spin Gawai Kotal, was condemned to death, and Razan Shah—the officer who had failed at the time to point out the offender, and had continued to screen him till he became aware that a wounded sepoy had given evidence by which he himself was inculpated—to seven years' transportation. The remaining nineteen men were sentenced to punishments varying from one year's imprisonment to fourteen years' transportation. Sepoy Mira Baz, who had fired the second shot, pleaded that he had done so without criminal intent in the surprise caused by hearing a rifle go off close to his ear, and as he had shown conspicuous bravery investigation. The commonest rules of hill warfare were neglected. An unknown defile, with a hostile population, was traversed as if an ordinary route march were being executed . . . Hurrying on with the main body, he (Roberts) had actually reached the camp, eight miles from the defile, when his rear-guard was heavily attacked." (The *Times* Correspondent, January 8, 1878.)

in the fighting of the 28th November, he escaped with the comparatively slight penalty of two years' imprisonment with hard labour. The sentences were confirmed by General Roberts, who declared that the Court-Martial would have been justified in condemning every one of the prisoners to death, and Hazrat Shah was hanged in the presence of all the troops who could be brought together to witness his execution.

Affairs had now assumed such an aspect in the Kuram as appeared to Roberts to justify him in carrying out that portion of his instructions which related to the occupation of the adjacent Khost Valley ; but, before entering on a second campaign, he desired to mark, in an official manner, the successful conclusion of the first. He, accordingly, called together the chief men of the tribes whose lands he had traversed or had overrun, and announced to them the definite and unalterable substitution of British for Afghan rule in the whole country lying between Thal and the Shutargardan, and the determination of the Indian Government to permit no further meddling, on the part of the Amir of Kabul, with the Independent Tribes bordering on the annexed territory. To allay any alarm that these declarations might arouse in the minds of his hearers, he enumerated the blessings that they would enjoy under a British administration, and assured them that their religion would never be interfered with, that their prejudices would be respected, and that they would be allowed as much liberty as was compatible with good order. For evildoers, he had words of warning : headmen were reminded of the punishments that had been inflicted on two villages which, trusting to the remoteness of their situation, had dared to connive, the one, at the cutting of the telegraph line, the other, at an attack upon a cavalry post ; priests were told that the undertaking not to interfere with the religion of the people contained no promise to tolerate attempts on the part of their religious instructors " to preach politics and oppose the ruling power." " Government," so General Roberts

went on to declare, " must prevent the ignorant from being misled," and, in proof of its power to do so, he cited the case of a Mulla<sup>1</sup> who was in confinement to keep him from doing harm, and of another, " notorious as an ill-wisher of the British Government," who, having failed to pay his respects when called upon to do so, and having left his home, " had had his house burned as a warning to others." " Mullas," he added in conclusion, " who are dissatisfied with British rule, should leave the country." <sup>2</sup>

With the distribution of presents which followed this address, the gathering came to an end; and the political annexation of the Kuram was thenceforward an accomplished fact.

#### OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. That General Roberts should have wished to examine the Sappari Pass with a view to ascertaining if it could serve as an alternative route to Kabul, was natural and right; but to encumber the exploring column with a large commissariat convoy, especially as the transport animals consisted of camels, was most unwise and played into the enemy's hands. As the expedition was only to last a few days, the regimental transport should have been cut down to a minimum, and the surplus baggage, together with the convoy, should have been sent round by the Peiwar route.

OBSERVATION II. The occupation of the Sappari Pass by the Pioneers on the afternoon of the 12th of December, was a serious error. To break up a small force in a country known to be ill-disposed was, in itself, a dangerous thing to do, but to break it up at night and under local conditions that rendered it equally impossible for the main body to hasten forward to the relief of the advanced guard, or for the advanced guard to hurry back to the assistance of the main body, was to run a great risk for no useful end; and the measure deserves condemnation on the further ground of having exposed the troops to intense cold without shelter of any kind.

<sup>1</sup> Mulla, Priest.

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan*, No. 4 of 1879.

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The despatch of the baggage in advance of the troops, on the morning of the 13th, was a no less faulty disposition. Had the Mangals showed as much enterprise when the convoy was struggling up the slippery ascent to the top of the pass, as they displayed later in the day, they would undoubtedly have stampeded a number of camels and secured a considerable amount of loot.

To abstain from crowning the heights was a yet more serious mistake; and to march away with the main body, leaving the transport train and the rear-guard without support, showed either an ignorant contempt for the warlike aptitudes of the tribesmen, or an equally ignorant trustfulness in their goodwill. The loss of life on this occasion, was entirely due to the omission of military precautions which are always imperative when troops are acting in a hostile, or semi-hostile, country. Colquhoun excuses this neglect on the ground that it would have been difficult to crown the heights on each side, as these, in their turn, were commanded by successive ridges or spurs, running parallel to the ravine, on all of which it would have been necessary to place troops; but such is almost always the case in mountain warfare, and however difficult the duty of securing the flanks of a force may be, it must be done before troops, especially if encumbered with a convoy, should be permitted to enter any narrow defile.

To the non-performance of this duty was due the destruction of the Italian army by the Abyssinians a few years ago, and the fatal consequences of its neglect were shown, on a smaller scale, during General Sale's retreat to Jellalabad, in October 1841. That officer did, indeed, picket the heights overlooking the defile between Jagdalak and the river Surkhab; but, that done, he and his main body marched on, leaving the posts and rear-guard to withstand the whole force of the enemy, now concentrated at the exit of the pass. The pickets, finding themselves unsupported, soon fell back on the rear-guard, which, seized with panic, rushed blindly forward, while

the Ghilzais fired into the fugitives from above, and pressed them in rear. "During this scene of terror all who fell wounded were abandoned, the enemy, as they came up, falling upon them in heaps like hounds on a fox."<sup>1</sup> In the Manjiar Defile it may have been impossible, owing to lateral ravines, to move flanking parties along the cliffs overlooking it; but there was no reason why pickets, protected by *sangars*, should not have been established on those cliffs at convenient points, such pickets eventually falling back on the rear-guard; and the main body should have held the lower end of the pass until the baggage and rear-guard were clear of the hills.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Career of Major Broadfoot, C.B.*, by his son, Major W. Broadfoot, R.E., p. 36 That the disaster was not greater was largely due to the courage and skill of that officer, who was afterwards the moving spirit in the defence of Jellalabad.—H. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> *Lord Roberts, in Forty-One Years in India*, vol. ii. p. 153, thus describes the passage of the Manjiar Defile:—"It was important to secure the exit from this gorge without delay, and for this purpose I pushed on four companies of the 23rd Pioneers, and, in support, when the ravine began to widen out a little, I hurried on the Highlanders and the Mountain Battery, leaving the Gurkhas to protect the baggage and bring up the rear. We only got possession of the exit just in time. The Pioneers, by occupying commanding positions on either side of the opening, effectually checkmated several large bodies of armed men who were approaching from different directions, and whose leaders now declared they had only come to help us! Later on, we discovered still more formidable gatherings, which, doubtless, would all have combined to attack us had they been able to catch us in the ravine." But *General Roberts*, in his despatch of the 18th December, 1878, says not a word about seizing the exit of the defile, and omits all reference to the Pioneers and Highlanders in connexion with the action; while the evidence of the witnesses present establishes, beyond all dispute, the fact that he and the main body marched straight away to the new encamping ground, leaving the rear-guard unsupported, and that it was not until the middle of the afternoon, when news reached the camp of the perilous position of the Gurkhas, that re-inforcements of Highlanders and Pioneers were hastily prepared and sent to the rescue of that gallant regiment, which meanwhile had succeeded in extricating itself from its difficulties.

To re-write despatches, after a lapse of nearly twenty years, is a dangerous thing. Memory is not always trustworthy; and moved by the desire to meet or to forestall criticism, a man is apt to write not what he did, but what he now sees he ought to have done.—H. B. H.



## CHAPTER XII

### Occupation of the Khojak Pass

AT dawn on the 21st November, just when Sir S. Browne's Division was starting from Jamrud, and Roberts's troops were crossing the Kuram River, a portion of the Force which Major-General Biddulph had succeeded in échelonning along the Quetta-Pishin road, issued from Kuchlak under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel H. Fellowes, passed the Anglo-Afghan frontier into the wilderness of sandhills lying on its further side, and, after an unopposed but heavy march of eight miles, pitched its camp near the village of Haramzai on the Kakar River where, on the morrow, it was joined by the General with the remainder of the Infantry. The advance, however, was merely a nominal one, intended to satisfy Lord Lytton's dramatic instinct, by carrying out, to the letter, his programme of a threefold invasion of Afghanistan, on one and the same day; for the Cavalry which had been sent back to Mustang in search of grass had to rejoin, and supplies of food, forage and fuel to be procured before any serious forward movement could be begun. The small reserve of those necessaries of existence with which Biddulph had entered Quetta had soon run out—all the sooner, because, in the first instance, he had with him not a single Commissariat Officer to check waste by organizing a proper system of distribution; and when the Principal Commissariat Officer did appear on the scene, being without assistants, subordinates and clerical staff, he could do but little to mend matters. Fortunately, the Governor-General's Agent in Beluchistan—Major R.

Sandeman—whose activity in collecting supplies has already been mentioned<sup>1</sup>—was able to furnish the reinforcements with seven days' rations and two days' fuel; and the foraging parties that scoured the country in all directions, accompanied by officers acquainted with the language of the inhabitants, succeeded in purchasing, at exorbitant rates, sufficient grain and bousa (chopped straw) to save the Cavalry and Artillery horses from actual starvation.<sup>2</sup> But as no price, however high, could induce the people to part with their own winter-stores, and as General Biddulph was too wise and too humane a man to sanction their being deprived of them by force, the troops that were hurried forward into Afghanistan, would have been in evil case if Sandeman had not again come to their assistance by stacking at Kuchlak, out of his Quetta magazine, just sufficient supplies to meet their more pressing needs till the provision convoys from India should begin to arrive—a very considerable interval, as the first of these convoys came up the Bolan in the wake of Stewart's Division.

On the 25th November, the British camp was shifted to the further side of the Kakar River, and, on the 27th, the whole force crossed the Anjeran range of hills into Pishin. A more desolate spot for a winter sojourn can scarcely be conceived than this upland valley. Of considerable extent—thirty miles broad by sixty long—its treeless surface is intersected in all directions by formidable gullies. Down these, when the snows melt in the encircling hills, raging torrents rush along to swell the Kakar Lora River, chafing against its high restraining banks; but, at all other seasons of the year, main streams and tributaries are alike empty of water, save for a few standing pools all more or less impregnated with medicinal salts. Irrigation being

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 316.

<sup>2</sup> "In 1839 the Cavalry and Artillery horses belonging to Keane's Army had no grain for twenty-seven days, and were in such a state of weakness on arriving at Kandahar that not a single troop was fit for detached duty." (*The March of the Indus Army*, by Major Hough.)

thus nearly everywhere impracticable, and the rainfall light, but few of the inhabitants are cultivators of the soil, and the traders and shepherds who resort thither in the summer-time disappear before the icy winds which blast all vegetation and make life almost impossible for man, and quite impossible for his herds and flocks. How deadly their breath, the British invaders learnt to know, when, day after day, scores of famished camels were found of a morning dead, frozen fast to the ground on which they had sunk down the previous evening.

The site of the new camp was close to the village of Haikalzai, a spot of much historic interest, since on the hills overlooking it could be discerned the *sangars*, still in a fair state of preservation, which, in the year 1840, the Afghans defended so stubbornly against General England that that Commander fell back upon Quetta, and refused to renew the attack, though well aware that the ammunition and treasure he was escorting, were urgently needed by General Nott at Kandahar.<sup>1</sup> Here, on the 28th of November, Biddulph made over the command of the Division to Colonel H. de R. Pigott, the senior officer present at the time, and joined Clay's column which, so far, had been covering the right flank of the main body. With this he proceeded to reconnoitre towards the territory of the Kakars, lying some thirty miles to the east of Haikalzai, with the object, as he has himself stated, of "making our presence felt on the Kakar border, of examining the passes leading towards Sibi and to the historic Thal-Chotiali route, and at the same time of defining the limits of the plains of the province along the east and north-east."

The movements of the column were kept within the limits of the Afghan province of Pishin, whose inhabitants, even in the more remote

<sup>1</sup> During the halt of Biddulph's Division at Haikalzai, the scene of this action was a favourite resort of officers and men. It was easy to trace the broken track by which the gallant Apthorpe advanced to the attack, in which he fell, and a hundred of his men were killed or wounded.—H. B. H.

districts, gave the troops a more friendly welcome than had been anticipated. Nowhere was their march impeded, and the only baggage plundered had been left all night unguarded among the hills, and may well have appeared to the inhabitants legitimate treasure-trove. Its owners, however, took a different view of its character, and as the two villages implicated in the theft failed, after notice given, to restore the stolen property, their cattle were driven in and sold to adjust the loss. The fort of Khushdil Khan-Ka-Killa, 40 miles north of Quetta, which appeared to General Biddulph a point of sufficient strategic importance to warrant its being put in repair, and garrisoned by a company of native troops, was, a few months later, to be the point of assembly for his Division on its return march to India.

Whilst this expedition which occupied a week, was in progress, Major H. B. Hanna and Captain C. A. de N. Lucas, with fifty sabres 3rd Sind Horse, reconnoitred the Khojak Pass, and Colonel T. G. Kennedy, with the 2nd Punjab Cavalry, the Rogani and Gwaja Passes, with a view to determining the best route, or routes, for the impending advance on Kandahar. The first of these reconnoitring parties rode one afternoon across the valley to Arambikarez, fifteen miles north-west of Haikalzai, where the Political Agent had pitched his tents; and the following morning, accompanied by Sandeman and some of his Baluchi chiefs, it entered the long defile at the lower end of the Khojak Pass, exchanging, in a moment, warmth and sunshine for darkness and cold. Not a ray of light fell across the path, which lay in the bed of a rapid brook, shut in by towering cliffs devoid of all vegetation, save where a weather-beaten olive, with spectral foliage and gnarled and twisted trunk, grew out of some narrow cleft. Now and again, a pair of magpies flew from among the rocks, and alighted on a boulder a few hundred feet ahead of the column, but no other living creature was to be seen, and the rush of the water and the crunching of the shingle

under the horses' hoofs were the only sounds. As, however, any number of Afghans might be lurking near, the advance was made with great caution, and, at every mile or so, on some projecting crag, a couple of videttes took up a position whence to watch the defile and give notice to the reconnoiters of the approach of an enemy from the rear, or down some side ravine.

After a five or six miles' ride, the party, now considerably reduced in numbers, emerged from the defile, and saw before them the rugged hillside up which the track rose steeply to the summit of the Khojak Pass, seven thousand three hundred and eighty feet above sea-level. Dismounting and leaving their escort and horses in the bed of the stream which here widens out sufficiently to form a good camping-ground, the three officers and their native companions climbed to the kotal and looked down over the vast, treeless waste broken, here and there, by fantastic-shaped hills of marvellous hues, their jagged outlines standing out sharply against the cloudless sky, which constitutes the major portion of the Province of Kandahar. Looked at from above, that wide plain seemed to the beholders as lifeless as the mountains among which they stood, for the few hamlets scattered over its surface, were too small to be distinguishable, and one of those weird ranges hid the embattled walls of the city of Kandahar from view.

Turning from the contemplation of this strangely varied and beautiful desert—for desert it may be termed, since its intermittent rivers and scanty rainfall can endow it with but brief and fitful life—the English officers carefully examined the reverse side of the pass, and convinced themselves that, with time and labour, the long abandoned track could be fitted for the use of the troops, baggage and guns, but not for that of a siege-train. Luckily, however, Colonel Kennedy's reconnaissances showed that, although the Rogani Pass could only be used by Infantry and dismounted Cavalry, the Gwaja Pass, owing to its easier gradients, would admit of the passage of

the heavy cannon which were coming up with General Stewart, and in expectation of which Biddulph's men had been busily at work improving the road from Quetta into the Pishin Valley, *viâ* the Ghazaband Pass.

When the reports of the three reconnaissances were laid before General Biddulph on his return to camp, he had no hesitation in deciding that the advance of his Division should be made by the Khojak, as the most direct and best watered road to Kandahar, and he at once hurried forward a strong detachment to occupy the pass. On the resumption of the advance, on the 12th of December, the Force was somewhat better off in the matter of superior officers than had hitherto been the case, for Brigadier-General C. H. Palliser, C.B., commanding the Cavalry, and the two Infantry Brigade Commanders, R. Lacy and T. Nuttall, had arrived in camp during Biddulph's absence, and, though each was without his proper Staff, they had been able to do something towards putting the organization of their respective Brigades on a proper footing.

On the 12th of December, Biddulph took up a new position at Abdulla Khan-ka-Killa, a well watered spot about three miles from the mouth of the Khojak Defile; Clay's column, which he had left at Khushdil Khan-Ka-Killa,<sup>1</sup> covering his right flank, whilst at Gulistan Karez, on his left, General Palliser watched the outlets of the Gwaja and Rogani Passes. Thus protected, the 5th and 9th Companies of Bengal Sappers and Miners, the 32nd Pioneers, the 26th Punjab Infantry and a gang of Ghilzai labourers, set to work to restore the nearly obliterated path on both sides of the pass, and, notwithstanding a heavy fall of snow and the extensive blasting operations rendered necessary by the hardness of the rock, on the 14th, the Engineers were able to report that, though impracticable for the Field Battery, the road could safely be used for the passage of the Mountain Guns,

<sup>1</sup> At this place Colonel Clay discovered and seized a large quantity of barley and corn belonging to the Amir—a great windfall for the troops.

Cavalry and loaded transport. The following day, Colonel Kennedy, with two Mountain Guns, the 2nd Punjab Cavalry and the 26th Punjab Infantry, crossed the Pass, and occupied Chaman on the western side of the Khwaja Anran Mountains, pushing out examining parties well to his front and flanks.

General Biddulph, in consultation with his principal Engineer and Artillery Officers, Colonels W. Hichens and C. B. Le Messurier, now decided to form a ramp, or slide, on the further side of the pass, and down this, on the 18th December, the guns were successfully lowered by the ropes which Captain W. G. Nicholson's foresight had provided;<sup>1</sup> but as the slide was, at best, but a temporary expedient, and provision would ultimately have to be made for the passage of wheeled carriage, the Commanding Engineer was directed to select a good alignment for a new road; and when a thirteen-foot track, with a maximum gradient of 1' in 10', had been properly traced, Lieutenant H. L. Wells, R.E., came up from Quetta with a gang of Ghilzai labourers, to complete the work.<sup>2</sup>

The lowering of the guns down the ramp, and the initiation of the permanent roadway which was to supersede it, were the last acts of General Biddulph's independent command, for General Stewart had now arrived at Quetta, and assumed supreme control of all the British Forces in Southern Afghanistan.

#### OBSERVATION

Though the reconnaissance of the Kakar country doubtless added to our geographical knowledge of Afghanistan, it was not demanded by the circumstances of the moment, and it had the worst possible effect on the neighbouring tribes, rousing in their minds well founded

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 302.

<sup>2</sup> General Biddulph had the satisfaction of inspecting this road on his return to India, in March 1879, and of seeing the first wheeled carriages—a train of carts laden with telegraph material—safely cross the pass.—H. B. H.

suspicious of ulterior objects inimical to their independence ; and if it had been an absolutely necessary operation, it was not one which the General should have undertaken in person. The proper place of a Commander moving in an enemy's country, especially if ignorant of that enemy's whereabouts and intentions, is with his main body. Not only was Biddulph quite in the dark as to whether the mountains in his front were held by the enemy and as to hostile gatherings beyond them, but his communications with Quetta were none of the surest, and an enterprising foe might have cut them at any moment by occupying the Gazaband Pass.



## CHAPTER XIII

### Concentration of the Kandahar Field Force in Pishin

THE truth that the real difficulty and danger of the war lay, not in the organized resistance which the Amir could offer to the British advance, but in the extent and nature of the country to be traversed, and in the character and habits of the tribes distributed over its vast surface, was destined to be as fully realized by the troops belonging to Stewart's Division as by those who, under Browne, Roberts and Biddulph, had preceded them into Afghanistan. At Rohri, on the left bank of the Indus, they had been delayed for a considerable time by the scanty provision made for conveying them and their stores to the opposite shore, and at Sukkur, on the right bank, by the unwillingness of the Sind camel-owners to furnish the transport needed to enable them to take the next step towards their distant objective—Kandahar—an unwillingness only overcome by the Sind Government's solemn promise that their animals should not be required to go beyond Dadar, where hill-camels would be waiting to take their place. As the reluctantly accorded supply came slowly in, the troops were moved forward in small bodies, across a fœtid swamp reeking with poisonous emanations from millions of dead fish left behind by the subsiding floods, to Jacobabad (forty-five miles); through a belt of jungle

interspersed with slimy pools, to Nusserabad (eleven miles); and lastly through the horrible Kachi desert,<sup>1</sup> where dust storms often obliterate the only track, and where the length of each day's march—twenty-eight miles in one instance—is regulated by the wells and pools of brackish, turbid water scattered, at irregular intervals, along its course, to Dadar (one hundred and thirteen miles), that “hell upon earth” already described in Chapter XVI., Vol. I.

Starting a month later than Biddulph's Force, they had less to suffer from heat, but more from cold, the thermometer often falling below freezing-point at night; and though they had no single experience to be compared to the terrible march from Bandowali to Kabradani, their trials were of longer duration and their daily fatigues even greater, for, early and late,<sup>2</sup> they were engaged in helping forward the Heavy Guns, whose carriages and ammunition waggons were perpetually sticking fast in swamps and pools, lying helpless at the bottom of the deep nullahs with which the flat surface of the desert is intersected, breaking through that desert's hard upper crust, known locally as *pât*, and sinking up to their axles in the loose sand below.<sup>3</sup> So great were the delays thus occasioned, that rear-guards had hardly

<sup>1</sup> “It,”—the Kachi desert—“is, in the hotter and drier months, a plain of arid sand, but is converted by the first heavy fall of rain into a salt marsh. The whole of it is swept at periods by the fatal *simoon*; it is pestilential amidst the extreme heats of April and May; not less so when its sands have been converted into swamps by the rains of June, July, August and September, or when the exhalations rise in dense vapour from it a month later.” (Havelock's *History of the First Afghan War*).

<sup>2</sup> Asked by a comrade in the Infantry why his Battery—a heavy one—was called 5-11, a gunner promptly replied, “Why, to be sure, we march at five o'clock in the morning, and don't get into camp till eleven at night.”

<sup>3</sup> “The siege-train I have given up as hopeless for the next two months, but if I can get on the two elephant batteries, I hope to be in a position to take Ghazni as well as Khelat-i-Ghilzai before the spring. . . . Men and officers have been employed in hauling guns through the sand, and the officers themselves had to put their hands to the rope and pull. I must say all have shown the best spirit.” (Ehnie's *Life of Sir Donald Stewart*, p. 233.)

arrived in camp before they were called upon to load up again, and resume their march. Over-work soon bore its natural fruits. Many men went sick, and each day showed larger gaps in the ranks of the camp-followers and transport-animals. The mortality among the latter filled their drivers with angry alarm; and when rumours reached them that no hill-camels had been collected at Dadar, and they began to understand that they and their exhausted and over-laden beasts would have to go on through the pass, in which, just forty years earlier, so many of their fathers had perished, they took every opportunity of stealing away from the line of march by day, or from the camping-grounds at night; and their desertions meant not only the loss of valuable baggage and stores, but a serious addition to the labours and responsibilities of the troops, who dared not lose sight of their transport, lest man and beast should vanish in the trackless desert.

On arriving at Dadar, it proved only too true that the Baluchi chiefs, still uncertain whether they would, or would not, throw in their lot with the British Government, had failed to keep their promise to provide camels of hardier breed; and, notwithstanding the despairing protests of their owners, the remnant of the twenty thousand Sind camels, together with many thousands brought from the Punjab, were ordered to proceed to Pishin. The step, inevitable under the circumstances, had serious consequences apart from the discredit which it brought upon British honour.<sup>1</sup> All the arrangements for keeping up a constant stream of supplies between India and the Forces in Southern Afghanistan, had been based upon the expectation that the plain-camels, after making over their loads to animals better adapted than they to tread rough mountain-paths, and endure the

<sup>1</sup> "But of all the evils which beset the fair progress of the Expedition, there is nothing to my mind, so disgraceful as the breach of good faith committed with the camel-men. . . . A native will stand by the *Sirkar* (Government) because he believes its word, but here, at the outset, was a distinct breach of faith." (Major Le Messurier, *Kandahar in 1879*, p. 23.)

intense cold of an Alpine winter, would return to Sukkur, where vast quantities of military and commissariat stores were daily accumulating, to re-load, and were to continue plying between the Indus and the foot of the Bolan, so long as the war should last. Now, however, the transport which was to have played a similar part between Multan and Rohri, had to cross the river and go on, in its turn, to Pishin; and the Indian Government found itself driven to make a great effort to replace it with inferior animals, purchased at enhanced prices. The measure must have been a bitter pill to Lord Lytton, whose pleasing dream of war waged at no expense worth mentioning, was fast melting away on every side; but, having once launched troops into regions where food of every description was non-existent, no cost could be allowed to stand in the way of providing for their necessities; and it shows what pressure must have been put upon the Punjab peasant to compel him to part with his remaining stock of camels, that the Kandahar Field Force escaped starvation, for the leakage of stores by the way, was simply enormous. It was not merely that the loads of thousands of the transport-animals whose corpses strewed the road from Sukkur to Pishin, had to be left lying in the desert or on the mountain-side—but that the Baluchis, not content with these windfalls, were very active in plundering the convoys whose scanty escorts could neither protect them on the march, nor effectually guard their camping-grounds. After a time, two causes brought about a marked improvement in a state of things which was threatening to reduce Stewart's and Biddulph's Divisions to a state of impotence: Sandeman, at last, succeeded in inducing the Baluchis to keep their promise to supply hill-transport, and the Bombay troops to whom the duty of guarding the communications of the Kandahar Field Force had been assigned, began to appear on the scene. Of course, Baluchi aid had to be dearly bought; the rates asked—eight rupees for the conveyance of a camel-load (three hundred and twenty pounds) from Dadar to Quetta—staggered the British

negotiator; but the wily old Brahui<sup>1</sup> chief, who had been the first to consent to treat, knew the state of things prevailing along the whole line of advance, too well, to abate one tittle of his demands; and the prices agreed upon with him, had to be conceded to all. The arrangements once concluded, thousands of hill-camels poured into Dadar, and the Sind and Punjab camels were relegated to their proper sphere of work.

The Bombay Division, details of which are given in the accompanying table, established its headquarters at Jacobabad about the middle of December, and from that point the troops belonging to Brigadier-General Phayre's Brigade, spread gradually along the entire line of communications :—

BOMBAY DIVISION.

Major-General J. M. Primrose . . . . .	Commanding.
Lieutenant E. O. F. Hamilton . . . . .	Aide-de-Camp.
Colonel E. A. Green . . . . .	Assistant Adjutant-General.
Major Lloyd . . . . .	Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General.
Captain A. B. Stopford . . . . .	Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General.
Lieutenant-Colonel A. M. Shewell . . . . .	Principal Commissariat Officer.

ARTILLERY.

B-B Royal Horse Artillery . . . . .	Major W. H. Caine, Commanding.
H-I Royal Artillery . . . . .	Major H. F. Pritchard, Commanding.

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<sup>1</sup> The Brahui is not a true Baluch, but the two races intermarry, and the differences between them are fast disappearing. Thornton, in his *Life of Sir R. Sandeman*, writes (page 110):—"In character, both Brahui and Baluch are frank and open in their manner, and their hospitality is proverbial; they are brave and enduring, predatory, but not pilferers; vindictive, but not treacherous. With all the virtues of their neighbours, the Afghans, they are more reliable and less truculent; and on two points, which have an important bearing on their management, they differ widely: the Baluch is amenable to the control of his chief; the Afghan is a republican and obeys the Jirga, or council of the dominant faction of his tribe. The Afghan is fanatical and priest-ridden; the Baluch is singularly free from religious bigotry."

## CAVALRY.

14th Hussars.

1st Sind Horse.

## INFANTRY BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General R. Phayre . . . Commanding.

Major C. J. Burnett . . . . . Brigade Major.

83rd Foot.

1st Bombay Grenadiers.

19th Bombay Infantry.

Two Companies Bombay Sappers.

Their presence soon insured the safety of the convoys, and their labour, in due time, facilitated their movements, for the 1st Bombay Grenadiers and the 19th Bombay Infantry so widened and repaired the road up the Bolan, modifying gradients, ramping ravines, bridging the river at many points and clearing away shingle and boulders along an aligned route extending for nearly seventy miles—a work which it took them six months of incessant toil to complete—that, just at the very time when the mortality among the camels had thinned their ranks beyond all hope of replenishment, it became possible to replace them by bullock-carts.

At Dadar, confusion still reigned supreme. There had been no leisure in which to arrange for proper commissariat and conservancy establishments; no opportunity of procuring and stacking fuel and forage for the use of the regiments that emerged from the hot plain one day, to disappear the next into the cold hills; and the few fields of *jowari*, now ripe along the river-banks, had to be reaped, without sickles, by the men themselves, and the crop carried on their pack-animals, without ropes to secure, or saletas (coarse canvas bags) to contain it. Again and again, it looked as if the troops could never be got to the front; yet, the stream of men and beasts never actually stopped, and, by the latter half of December, after much suffering and the loss of a large part of its transport, the 1st Division of the Kandahar Field Force had arrived at Quetta.

General Stewart, who, with his Staff, had hurried forward in advance of the troops, had reached that town on the 8th of December. It must have been a relief to his mind, harassed by a load of military cares, to find a man of Sandeman's experience, tact, and resolution, waiting there to discuss the political situation, and soon to have proof in the conclusion of the transport arrangement already chronicled, of his great influence over the Baluchis. Unfortunately, the General's relations with his Second-in-Command were less satisfactory. On his way up the Bolan, Stewart had been much shocked by the foul and insanitary state of the camping-grounds, and the number of dead camels lying unburied in the pass. New to such scenes, and not suspecting that, if there were any fault in the matter, his own troops would shortly deserve far greater condemnation, he hastily concluded that the Quetta Reinforcements had neglected their duty, and wrote his displeasure in strong terms. Biddulph, a proud and sensitive man, bitterly resented the undeserved rebuke, and the absence of all recognition of the great services which his tired and sickly troops had rendered to Stewart's Division by smoothing the way for their advance. His vexation was natural ; yet, to some extent, he had himself to blame. Had he gone to Quetta to meet his Chief, a few words of explanation would have shown Stewart his mistake ; but he could not bring himself to take this step, and there was no meeting between the two Generals till the senior rode into the junior's camp, by which time their mutual feelings had been so much embittered as to injure, permanently, their relations to each other, and to impair the cordiality which, under other circumstances, would have existed between their respective Staffs, and between the rank and file of their respective Forces.

If the state of the Bolan had alarmed General Stewart, the condition of Quetta was not such as to lessen his disquietude. Outside that town, lay the corpses of the six or seven hundred camels which Biddulph, having neither labour at his command to bury, nor fuel to burn them, had

caused to be dragged to leeward of the station.<sup>1</sup> The sight was a sickening one, though, owing to the unusual dryness of the season, the bodies, instead of decaying, shrivelled up in the sun and wind, and did little to poison either the air or the water; but the filth which abounded on every side, was a real and most serious danger. In vain the medical officers offered suggestions, and the military authorities issued stringent orders for its disinfection or removal; the evil which grew rapidly as more and more troops passed through the valley, was beyond all cure; and Quetta had to continue a hot-bed of disease throughout the entire campaign.<sup>2</sup>

On the 14th of December, General Stewart and his Staff left Quetta, Deputy Surgeon-General Alexander Smith remaining behind to subject the Kandahar Field Force to the same rigorous inspection which the Quetta Reinforcements had already undergone at his hands. The result so far as the European regiments were concerned, proved satisfactory. The keen air of the Bolan had so braced and invigorated the men, that but few had the mortification of hearing themselves pronounced unfit to go further; but among the Native troops, to whom cold is a poison—not a tonic, there was much sickness; and many

<sup>1</sup> “ Experience showed that when fuel was available (which was very seldom) the easiest mode of disposing of dead animals was to disembowel them, fill their interiors with dry straw, grass, thorns, or any other inflammable materials available, which, when fired, gradually consumed the whole body.” (Deputy Surgeon General A. Smith.)

<sup>2</sup> If stringent orders could have ensured the health and well-being of the Force, its condition should have been perfect, for plenty of them were issued. Major Le Messurier, writing from Dadar, gives a caustic account of one batch of them. “ These orders,” he writes, “ which, by the way, were handed to us on several pieces of paper and disconnected, desired, or, rather, laid down that all followers were to be clothed:—admitted; but where the clothing? That all camels were to be protected by a jhool (covering):—good again; but where the jhools? That so many days’ provisions were to be carried through the Pass:—excellent; but where the rations and forage? That all camps on being abandoned were to be thoroughly cleaned:—but where was the conservancy staff?” (*Kandahar in 1879*, p. 23.)



of them, and still larger numbers of the camp-followers, had to be detained in Quetta for medical treatment.

At Abdulla Khan-Ka-Killa, Stewart found himself confronted with the same difficulties which he had had to face at Quetta. The hospitals were full; deaths had been numerous among troops and followers; many of the Cavalry-horses had died or broken down; much of the original transport had perished, and little had been done to renew it;<sup>1</sup> and the one fresh element in the situation—the attitude of the Pathans in the Native regiments—was far from re-assuring. The men could not be called disaffected, for they were loyal to their officers and quite ready to fight against the Amir; but they were restless and uneasy with the consciousness that scenes like to those in which they were bearing a part, were being enacted in the Khyber, where many of them had their homes. The news of Maude's expedition into the Bazar Valley, so increased their alarm that many Afridis came boldly forward to ask for leave of absence in order to place their families in safety, promising to rejoin as soon as this duty had been accomplished. On the refusal of their request, these men deserted in a body, leaving however, their rifles, ammunition, and accoutrements behind them, as a proof that they were acting in good faith, and had no intention of turning traitors to their salt.

After visiting Chaman to select a site for a redoubt, which was to cover the western end of the Khojak Pass and to contain a large commissariat dépôt, General Stewart addressed himself to the task of re-organizing the whole of the troops now under his command, into two bodies, which were thenceforward to be known as the 1st and 2nd Divisions of the Kandahar Field Force; the former, to continue

<sup>1</sup> General Stewart to the Adjutant-General of the Army in India :—

“ Camp, Killa Abdulla, 22nd December, 1878.

“ We are halted here because we have no money and our transport is in pieces—due no doubt to scarcity of forage and cold. . . . Many of the poor brutes were unfit for the hard work of knocking about Pishin, and have died of exhaustion.” (*Life of Sir Donald Stewart*, page 232.)

under his own immediate command, the latter, under Biddulph's ; no change being made in the Divisional Staff of the respective Generals.

TABLE SHOWING THE CONSTITUTION OF THE KANDAHAR  
FIELD FORCE.

1ST DIVISION.

*Royal Engineers.*

Colonel R. H. Sankey . . . . .	Commanding.
Major A. Le Messurier . . . . .	Brigade Major.
Lieutenant C. F. Call . . . . .	Assistant Field Engineer.
Lieutenant E. S. E. Childers . . . . .	Assistant Field Engineer.
Lieutenant G. R. R. Savage . . . . .	Superintendent of Field Telegraphs.
Three Companies of Sappers and Miners.	
Engineer Field Park.	

*Artillery.<sup>1</sup>*

Brigadier-General C. G. Arbuthnot, C.B. . . . .	Commanding.
Captain A. D. Anderson . . . . .	Brigade Major.
Major C. Cowie . . . . .	Commissary of Ordnance.
Captain R. A. Lanning . . . . .	Adjutant.
Colonel A. C. Johnson . . . . .	Commanding Royal Horse and Field Artillery.
Colonel A. H. Dawson . . . . .	Commanding Heavy Artillery.
5-11 Royal Artillery (Heavy) . . . . .	Major C. Collingwood, Commanding.
6-11 Royal Artillery (Heavy) . . . . .	Major J. A. Tillard, Commanding.
11-11 Royal Artillery (Mountain) . . . . .	Major N. H. Harris, Commanding.
Ordnance Field Park.	

*Cavalry Brigade.*

Brigadier-General W. Fane, C.B. . . . .	Commanding.
Captain H. H. F. Gifford . . . . .	Brigade Major.
15th Hussars . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel J. E. Swindley, Commanding.
8th Bengal Cavalry . . . . .	Colonel B. W. Ryall, Commanding.
19th Bengal Lancers . . . . .	Colonel P. S. Yorke.
A.B. Royal Horse Artillery . . . . .	Colonel D. MacFarlan.

<sup>1</sup> *Siege Train en route from India.*

Colonel E. J. Bruce . . . . .	Commanding.
Major W. H. Noble . . . . .	Staff Officer.
13-8 Royal Artillery (Siege) . . . . .	Major E. S. Burnett, Commanding.
16-8 Royal Artillery (Siege) . . . . .	Major J. H. Blackley, Commanding.
8-11 Royal Artillery (Siege) . . . . .	Major H. H. Murray, Commanding.

*1st Infantry Brigade.*

Brigadier-General R. Barter . . . . .	Commanding.
Captain C. M. Stockley . . . . .	Brigade Major.
2nd Battalion 60th Rifles . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel J. J. Collins, Com- manding.
15th Sikhs . . . . .	Major G. R. Hennessy, Commanding.
25th Punjab Infantry . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel J. W. Hoggan, Commanding.
I-1 Royal Artillery . . . . .	Major H. B. Lewes, Commanding.

*2nd Infantry Brigade.*

Brigadier-General R. J. Hughes . . . . .	Commanding.
Captain A. G. Handcock . . . . .	Brigade-Major.
59th Foot . . . . .	Major J. Lawson, Commanding.
1st Gurkhas . . . . .	Colonel R. S. Hill, Commanding.
3rd Gurkhas . . . . .	Colonel A. Paterson, Commanding.
12th Bengal Infantry . . . . .	Colonel R. H. Price, Commanding.
D-2 Royal Artillery . . . . .	Major E. Staveley, Commanding.

2ND DIVISION.

*Royal Engineers.*

Lieutenant-Colonel W. Hichens . . . . .	Commanding.
Captain W. S. S. Bisset . . . . .	Field Engineer.
Captain W. G. Nicholson . . . . .	Field Engineer.
5th Company Bengal Sappers and Miners.	
Engineer Field Park.	

*Artillery.*

Lieutenant-Colonel C. B. Le Messurier	Commanding.
Lieutenant F. H. G. Cruickshank . . . . .	Adjutant.
Major F. V. Eyre . . . . .	Commissary of Ordnance.
E-4 Royal Artillery . . . . .	Major T. C. Martelli.
No. 2 Jacobabad Mountain Battery . . . . .	Captain R. Wace.
No. 3 Peshawar Mountain Battery . . . . .	Captain J. Charles.
Ordnance Field Park.	

*Cavalry Brigade.*

Brigade-General C. H. Palliser, C.B. . . . .	Commanding.
Captain H. R. Abadie . . . . .	Brigade-Major.
1st Punjab Cavalry . . . . .	Major G. S. Maclean, Commanding.
2nd Punjab Cavalry . . . . .	Colonel T. G. Kennedy, Commanding.
3rd Sind Horse . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. P. Malcolm- son, Commanding.

*1st Infantry Brigade.*

Brigadier-General R. Lacy . . . . .	Commanding.
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Captain M. H. Nicolson . . . . .	Brigade Major.
70th Foot . . . . .	Colonel H. de R. Pigott, Commanding.
19th Punjab Infantry . . . . .	Colonel E. B. Clay, Commanding.

*2nd Infantry Brigade.*

Brigadier-General T. Nuttall . . . . .	Commanding.
Captain W. W. Haywood . . . . .	Brigade-Major.
26th Punjab Infantry . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel M. G. Smith Commanding.
32nd Pioneers . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel H. Fellows, Com- manding.
29th Baluchis . . . . .	Lieutenant-Colonel G. Nicholetts, Commanding.

*Quetta.*

Two Guns Jacobabad Mountain Battery	} Major F. T. Humphrey, Commanding.
30th Bombay Infantry (Jacob's Rifles)	

*Moveable Column in Pishin.*

Two Guns Peshawar Mountain Battery	} Major F. J. Keen, Commanding
1st Punjab Infantry . . . . .	

*Chaman Fort.*

Two Guns Jacobabad Mountain Battery	} Lieutenant-Colonel A. Tulloch, Commanding.
One Troop 3rd Sind Horse . . . . .	
Two Companies 26th Punjab Infantry	

Hand in hand with this measure, went the working out of a simple but effective plan of campaign, its twofold object being *speed* in its earlier stages, attained by a separation of the invading forces, and *strength*, in its final stage, by their re-union at Takht-i-Pul, thirty-two miles short of Kandahar, and still outside the zone in which organized resistance might be expected, if the Amir's father-in-law, Sirdar Afzul Khan, carried out the peremptory instructions which he was known to have received from Kabul, to oppose with his cavalry the British advance.

The First Division was to cross the Khwaja Amran mountains by the Gwaja Pass—its commanding Engineer, Colonel R. Sankey, had confirmed Colonel Kennedy's report as to the practicability of

that Pass for Heavy Artillery;—the Second, by the Khojak.<sup>1</sup> The working parties required to complete the work of widening the road through the Gwaja and reducing its gradients, were to be furnished by the Second Division, as the First was only just beginning to concentrate at Gulistan Karez; and Major A. Le Messurier, with a party of sappers, was to be sent forward to develop and regulate the water supply which, contained in deep wells varying in depth from a hundred and fifty to three hundred feet, and yielding about eight hundred gallons at a time, would have to be drawn and stored in puddled tanks, the process being repeated as fast as the wells refilled.

<sup>1</sup> Stewart's original intention was to send the Heavy Guns along the foot of the mountains to Chaman—from the exit of the Gwaja Pass to Chaman was about twenty-eight miles—thus avoiding the long and waterless march between Gwaja and Konehai; but a reconnaissance made by Major C. S. Maclean with his regiment, the 1st Punjab Cavalry, showed that it was not practicable for wheeled carriage, and no time could be spared to improve it.

FROM QUETTA TO KANDAHAR.

GWAJA ROUTE			KHOJAK ROUTE		
Heights in Feet	Distance in Miles	Posts	Posts	Distance in Miles	Heights in Feet
5624		Quetta to— . . .	Quetta to— . . .		5624
—	14	Gazarband . . .	Kushlak . . .	13	5282
—	16	Khwardah . . .	Syud Yaru . . .	11	5046
4997	10	Gulistan . . .	Haikalzai . . .	10	4977
6211	11	Gundawanni . . .	Arambi Karez . . .	14	5076
6996	2	Gwaja Kotal . . .	Killa Abdulla . . .	5	5138
6240	2	Spintaza . . .	Khojak Post . . .	9	6929
4571	7	Gwaja . . .	Khojak Kotal . . .	1	7380
4013	21	Konchai . . .	Chaman . . .	4	5660
3727	14	Shahpasand . . .	Gatai . . .	17	4050
3613	16	Takht-i-pul . . .	Mehmandu . . .	19	—
—	7	Abdul Rahman . . .	Abdul Rahman . . .	11	—
3308	15	Khusab . . .	Mand-i-Hissar . . .	17	—
3426	10	Kandahar City . . .	Kandahar City . . .	11	3426
	145			142	

Table compiled by Major A. Le Messurier from Captains Bevan's and Roger's Surveys.

On the 26th of December, General Stewart transferred his Headquarters to Gulistan Karez, and the same day the survivors of the regimental and commissariat camels—in a single march thirty-five had died, eight strayed, and twenty-one been incapacitated<sup>1</sup>—were sent back to Abdulla Killa to load up and take forward the supplies with which it had been decided to provision the different camping-grounds—an excellent arrangement that had been rendered possible by Sandeman's successful handling of the Achakzais, a nomadic tribe which in 1839, had given Keane's army endless trouble, but now, for the moment, was showing itself friendly.<sup>2</sup> On the 30th of December, Sankey reported that the Pass was ready for the advance of the troops and baggage, and the last day of the year saw the First Division concentrated at Gulistan Karez, with its advanced guard on the western slopes of the Khwaja Amran Mountains, and the Second Division, at Chaman, re-inforced by A.B. Royal Horse Artillery (three guns), I. 1 Royal Artillery, II. 11 Royal Artillery, and the 15th Hussars, transferred on account of the scarcity of water in the Gwaja Pass.

Water was not the only necessary of life of which there was a deficiency; only ten days' supply of food remained to the whole Force, and the mind of its Commander-in-Chief was heavy with anxious thought as he looked forward to the long march that still lay before

<sup>1</sup> The mortality amongst the transport animals had been now increased by the prevalence of a poisonous bush in appearance like a bastard indigo, with a small hard grain, which the camels eat with avidity. The Anglo-Indian Press about this time, teemed with accounts of their sufferings over the whole area of operations. The *Pioneer*, after giving the case of an officer who started from Mithankote with five hundred and twenty camels and lost them all before he got to Quetta, and quoting from a correspondent at Jellalabad the statement that the camels in the Khyber were dying at the rate of two hundred a day—ended a leading article with the words: "Losses of this kind are not only wasteful but shameful."

<sup>2</sup> According to Major H. B. Lumsden, the tents of the Achakzais, each one containing a family, number 14,000.

it, and to the chance that bad weather might cause delay, and leave him no choice but to put his troops on half rations.<sup>1</sup>

To complete the history of the military movement connected with the advance of the Kandahar Field Force, it remains only to state that Sibi was occupied by a detachment of Bombay troops, and the Bhawalpur Contingent which had temporarily garrisoned Multan, was relieved, early in December, by a Brigade from Madras commanded by Brigadier-General A. C. MacMaster, consisting of the following Staff and Troops:—

STAFF.

Captain S. W. Bell, Brigade Major.

CAVALRY.

1st Madras Cavalry.

INFANTRY.

67th Foot. Lieutenant-Colonel C. B. Knowles,  
Commanding.

30th Madras Infantry.

36th Madras Infantry.

Two Companies Madras Sappers.

OBSERVATION

The importance of the work performed by troops employed on lines of communication is so great and so often overlooked, that it is well to emphasize it by a brief summary of the duties discharged by the Bombay Division. On it devolved:—

1. Every arrangement connected with the prompt, efficient and safe transmission of troops, transport and supplies of every kind to the Advanced Force.

<sup>1</sup> "Camp, Gulistan Karez.

"December 31st, 1878.

"I am very down in my luck to day, owing to the breakdown of the Commissariat. . . . We are now in possession of only ten days' supplies, and we may have to go on half rations if we are snowed up, or anything of that sort. (*Life of Sir D. Stewart*, pp. 232-233.)

2. The construction and garrisoning of the fortified posts along the whole line of communications.
3. The provision of troops for the various moveable columns.
4. Road and bridge making.
5. Furnishing escorts for convoys, survey parties, officers, etc.
6. Escorting sick and wounded to the base hospitals.
7. Patrolling and outpost duty.
8. Telegraph arrangements.
9. Signalling.
10. Reconnoitring.
11. Minor expeditions against recalcitrant tribes.
12. Re-inforcing the Main Army at any time, and at a moment's notice.



## CHAPTER XIV

### Public Opinion in England

#### DEBATES IN PARLIAMENT

THE indifference which prevailed in the United Kingdom during the weeks of grace accorded by Lord Beaconsfield's Government to Shere Ali, contrasts strongly with the excitement pervading all classes of society before the late South African war; but the reason for the difference is not far to seek. In 1899, military preparations were carried on under the eyes of the people of these islands, whose hearts were daily thrilled, or wrung, by the sight of their sons, husbands, brothers, friends, starting forth to meet unknown dangers. In 1878, there were no martial scenes in the streets to arouse popular passion, no public partings to touch the springs of deeper feeling, and to the great mass of Englishmen the prospect of a conflict with Afghanistan brought no fear of personal loss. India has never filled a large place in the mind of the British public, and with trade stagnant, manufactures crippled, agriculture—despite a good wheat-harvest—depressed by unseasonable weather and disastrous floods, home troubles would have left little time for weighing Lord Lytton's conduct to Shere Ali against Shere Ali's attitude towards the British Government, even had men been in possession of the facts essential to the forming of an independent judgment on either point. And no one had any knowledge of those facts; even the Indian experts who fought against the coming war in the columns of the daily press, even Lord Lawrence and Lord Northbrook, had only their own former experience to go on in arguing that Shere Ali was no enemy of the British Empire, and

that if he had come to look like one, it was because Lord Lytton had forced him to assume a character which he had no desire to wear. It was a year and a half since British relations with Afghanistan had been last discussed in Parliament, and dismissed by Lord Salisbury with the assurance that Great Britain was still on good terms with that country and its ruler, and since then, beyond the bare fact that a Russian Mission had visited Kabul, and a British Mission been refused a passage through the Khyber, not a crumb of information to account for the imminence of hostilities with a government so recently friendly, had been vouchsafed to the British people or its representatives; not even the withdrawal of the Vakil from Kabul, having been allowed to transpire.

This lack of data from which to reason, coupled with the prevailing belief that war, if it came, would be short, bloodless, and cheap, deprived those who sought to avert it, of the advantage which the absence of popular excitement might otherwise have given them. It is ill standing for principles, when the case to which they have to be applied, is shrouded in obscurity; yet, there were men who did not shrink from the task. Dean Plumtre, preaching in St. Paul's Cathedral on the 17th of November, from the text, "Shall we smite with the sword?" reminded his hearers that they who sowed the wind of aggressive ambition, must look to reap the whirlwind of disastrous failure; and Dr. Fraser, the Bishop of Manchester, in a pastoral letter, bade Englishmen ask themselves whether the rectification of a frontier, or the desire to avenge an insult to an envoy—if insult had been offered, of which there was no proof—was a sufficient reason, in the sight of God, for plunging into the unspeakable horrors and incalculable consequences of war. There were other ministers of the Church of England who appealed earnestly to their congregations to use their influence to induce the Government to delay hostilities until the Amir's reply to the ultimatum had been received and made public; but, as a body, the clergy of the National

Church remained passive and mute, leaving it to the pastors of the dissenting churches to take anything like united action in vindication of the fundamental principles of the Christian religion, those of the Midland Counties lodging a strong protest against the war, whilst, all over the country, individuals like Paxton Hood and Baldwin Brown, boldly denounced it from their pulpits.<sup>1</sup>

On the 21st November, when the war had already begun, the Government broke its long silence by the publication, in the *Times* and other leading journals, of the very latest document relating to Afghan affairs—a secret Despatch, but three days old, addressed by Lord Cranbrook, Secretary of State for India, to Lord Lytton. This document, which professed to be a true summary of the events that had led to the rupture with the Amir, was merely the echo of Lord Salisbury's Despatches to Lord Northbrook, of his letter of instructions to Lord Lytton, and of that Viceroy's letter of instructions to Sir Lewis Pelly, and it was marked by the same misstatement or concealment of facts at variance with the impression it desired to convey, the same skill in drawing false conclusions from those it could not omit or

<sup>1</sup> In a speech delivered by Sir William Harcourt at Oxford, on January the 17th, 1879, he commented severely on the attitude taken up by the Bishops regarding the war:—

“The Viceroy” (he said) “declared at the outset that we had no quarrel with the people of Afghanistan, but only with Shere Ali. Shere Ali is gone, and we are now waging hostilities against a people with whom we had no quarrel . . . whose homes we have invaded and whose territory we have annexed; and when they resist—not, perhaps, an unnatural thing—we find it necessary to cut their throats and exterminate their villages. To my conscience, this sort of thing, though it may be very scientific, is not altogether comfortable or pleasant; but I suppose I am wrong, for I find the Bishops approve and vote for it (laughter). One of them, I think, has said it is the best way of propagating the Gospel (laughter). I don't mean all the Bishops, for I am glad to think there was one Bishop, who, at this Christmas time, voted for “peace on earth and goodwill to men”; and I am proud to remember that prelate was the Bishop of Oxford” (cheers). (The *Times* report.)

Unfortunately, the Bishop of Manchester was too ill to record his vote against the war.

distort, which distinguished those documents. It emphasized the Treaty of 1855, where all the obligations were imposed on the Amir, and ignored the Treaty of 1857 by which the British Government bound itself to send none but a Native Envoy to Kabul, although the subsequent attempt to escape from that pledge, lay at the root of the misunderstanding that had now culminated in war. It repeated the assertion that the Simla Conference owed its origin to Shere Ali's anxiety to obtain from Lord Northbrook a distinct promise of assistance against Russia, though Nur Mahomed had had no difficulty in showing at Peshawar that it was Lord Northbrook, not the Amir, who had desired to draw closer to Afghanistan, and taken steps to bring the two Governments into direct communication. It dwelt on Lord Lytton's eagerness to assure Shere Ali of the British Government's friendly feeling towards him, and omitted all mention of the threats in which that eagerness manifested itself. It re-asserted the accusation of ambiguous conduct on the part of the Amir prior to the Peshawar Conference, and branded his subsequent attitude as openly inimical, and it had not a word to say about the numerous unfriendly acts which had robbed him of his faith in the value of the British alliance. It reproached him with having received the Russian Mission with hospitality, and made no mention of the displeasure with which he had viewed its approach, or of his attempts to delay its arrival in his capital. In a word, from the first paragraph to the last, it represented the British Government as a benefactor, seeking to confer favours on a valued ally, and Shere Ali as a treacherous ingrate, plotting to rid himself of his obligations towards a generous friend, though its author had before him official proof that, for years, British benefits had only taken the form of pious wishes for his prosperity.

It may seem strange that Lord Cranbrook should have ventured to publish such a travesty of British relations with the ruler of Afghanistan, when the means of testing its value would soon be within the reach of all who cared to compare it with the documents which it

distorted. It must be remembered, however, that Lord Cranbrook could reckon on an enormous disproportion in his favour between the readers of a Parliamentary Blue Book, and the readers of a document published in the public Press; and that the latter had on its side, the immense advantage of being the first in the field. Eight days later, when the first batch of Afghan papers was issued, the tale of Shere Ali's duplicity and ingratitude had already sunk deep into the public mind; and he himself had to pass away and the objects for which his ruin had been compassed, to fade out of men's recollection, before it could give place to a truer picture of his character and conduct.

The Afghan papers appeared on the 29th of November, and on the 5th of December, Parliament met to receive from Ministers an announcement of the outbreak of hostilities between Great Britain and Afghanistan, and to record its judgment on the policy which had brought about so unexpected a state of things. On the opening day of the Session, Lord Grey moved an amendment to the Address, censuring the Government for entering upon hostilities, without affording Parliament the opportunity of expressing an opinion on their expediency. On the 9th, Lord Halifax met Lord Cranbrook's resolution asking the Peers to consent to the debiting of the Indian revenues with the expense of the Expedition against Afghanistan, by an amendment which declared that the House of Lords, whilst ready to consent to provide means to carry on the war to an honourable conclusion, regretted that the conduct of the Government had involved the country in an unnecessary conflict. Lord Grey's amendment was negatived without a division; that of Lord Halifax, after a two days' debate, in which every man of special experience in Indian affairs on both sides had taken part—by a majority of one hundred and thirty-six—the figures being two hundred and one, against sixty-five. The first sitting of the House of Commons was marked by a sharp discussion, in the course of which the Government was vigorously attacked by Mr. Fawcett,

Lord Hartington, Mr. Gladstone,<sup>1</sup> and Sir C. Dilke, and equally vigorously defended by Mr. Stanhope, the Under Secretary for India ; but no direct vote of censure was proposed till four days later, when, on the Report stage of the Address, Mr. Whitbread moved a Resolution disapproving of the conduct of her Majesty's Government in bringing about war with Afghanistan. After a discussion lasting four days, this Resolution was defeated by three hundred and twenty-eight votes to two hundred and twenty-seven, and an amendment, moved by Mr. Fawcett to Mr. Stanhope's proposal to saddle the revenues of India with the cost of the war, shared the same fate ; though Government met its supporters so far as to promise that, in case the war should assume larger dimensions and last longer than was then anticipated, the question of transferring some portion of its expense to the British Exchequer, should be favourably considered. The original Resolution was then agreed to, and the Government being now free to prosecute the war to any end, and at any cost which the course of events might make desirable or necessary, Parliament adjourned.

The first impression made on the mind of the student of history who goes back to these debates, is one of astonishment at the large part played in the discussions of both Houses by questions of fact. The conflicting principles underlying the old and the new Afghan policies, were indeed more or less clearly in the mind of every speaker, and some, notably Lord Lawrence and Lord Beaconsfield, defined and defended them with precision and force ; but more time and more

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gladstone strongly condemned the Government's policy in Afghanistan and its treatment of her ruler, and the House on both sides cheered long and warmly the noble peroration which concluded his speech :—" Those members of this House "—he said in deep and solemn tones—" those members of this House who oppose your course will believe that they have performed a solemn duty incumbent on men who believe that truth and justice are the only sure foundations of international relations, and that there is no possession so precious, either for peoples or men, as a just and honourable name."

passion were spent on wrangling over whether the Government had, or had not, deceived Parliament with regard to Afghan affairs; whether attempts had, or had not, been made to coerce Shere Ali into receiving British Officers; whether that Prince had been ill-disposed towards the British alliance since the days of the Duke of Argyll and Lord Mayo, or only since those of Lord Salisbury and Lord Lytton; whether he had welcomed a Russian Mission, or received it under the stress of circumstances beyond his control. It would seem as if, when both parties had access to the same sources of information, there ought to have been agreement as to the facts to be found in them; but the speeches show that the speakers on the Opposition side based their attack on the enclosures contained in the Despatches, and the speakers on the Government side, on the Despatches themselves; between enclosures and Despatches, however, as has been previously pointed out, there exists a divergence amounting, at times, to contradiction. It was natural that Ministerialists should have stuck to the brief so carefully prepared for them by Lord Lytton and two successive Secretaries of State for India, and no one will feel surprise that Lord Salisbury and Lord Cranbrook should, in a general way, have repeated their former statements and arguments with unshaken faith in their truth and validity. Yet, there was one point on which change might have been looked for: in the Despatch which led to the resignation of Lord Northbrook, Lord Salisbury had declined to believe that the Amir's disinclination to allow the establishment of a British Agency in his capital, was more than a passing sentiment, and in his Letter of Instructions to Lord Lytton he had spoken of the "apparent reluctance" of Shere Ali to receive British Officers; now, with the record of Nur Mahomed's long struggle against the "essential preliminary" in his hands; after a rupture with Afghanistan which had for its immediate cause and excuse the attempt to send a British Mission to Kabul—he was still found asserting that it was "pure imagination" to say that the Amir had any real aversion to a British Resident; a

truly amazing example of the power of opinion to blind men to the most patent truth—truth that, in this instance, went deeper than the mere personal feeling of a single ruler since, in opposing the intrusion of British Agents into his country, Shere Ali was the embodiment of that jealous dread of the foreigner which had possessed his people long before he came to the throne, and was to lose none of its force under his successors.

But if the first thing to strike the reader of these debates, is the want of agreement as to the facts upon which they turn, what remains with him when he has finished studying them, is a strong impression of the lack of insight and foresight displayed by all the speakers on the Ministerial side. Not a man among them seems to have been able to catch so much as a glimpse of the Afghan view of the policy which had brought about the war; and inability to understand the feelings and aims of one party to the strife, rendered them incapable of looking beyond the temporary successes of the moment achieved over the Armies of the Amir, to the inevitable failure in store for Great Britain, when her forces should find themselves confronted by a nation in arms. And if they were blind to the issue of their policy, they were ludicrously wrong in their assumption of its importance. Prophecies of danger to India and the Empire which the presence of a British Agent at Herat alone could dissipate; solemn assurances that it was no longer possible to maintain satisfactory relations with Afghanistan unless a British Resident were permanently established in Kabul—read in the light of subsequent events, would provoke a smile, did not the recollection of the price paid for opening men's eyes to their futility, check any inclination to mirth. Twenty-five years have passed since, trusting to those prophecies and assurances, the two Houses of Parliament gave to Lord Beaconsfield and his colleagues the moral support which they claimed for their Afghan policy, and the material means to enable them to enforce it; and yet though, from that day to this, there has never been a British Agent in Herat, and,



only for the shortest interval, a British Resident in Kabul—India's security has not been imperilled, and, in the eyes of her inhabitants, the British Empire has suffered no loss of prestige.

There were fair grounds for disagreement between speakers on the Ministerialist and speakers on the Opposition side, as to whether Ministers had, or had not, exceeded their powers in going to war without having first obtained the sanction of Parliament, for the "Act of 1858," transferring the Government of India from the Company to the Crown, on which both relied, contradicts itself on the point<sup>1</sup>; but there could be no question as to the illegality of the treatment which the Indian Council had suffered at the hands of Lord Cranbrook. That Council, created by the above named Act, consists of fifteen men whose long and intimate acquaintance with India fits them, above all others, to assist inexperienced Secretaries of State in the task of ruling the greatest dependency for which any modern State has ever been responsible. Its functions, except in the province of finance, are purely advisory, and even in that province, though by Article 41 "no grant or appropriation of any part of the revenues of India . . . can be made without the concurrence of a majority of votes at a meeting of the Council," its control over its Chief is really illusory, since, by simply transferring

<sup>1</sup> Article 55 of that Act by which the Government of India was transferred from the Company to the Crown directs that "except for preventing or repelling actual invasion of Her Majesty's Indian possessions, or under other sudden and urgent necessity, the revenues of India shall not, without the consent of both Houses of Parliament, be applicable to defray the expenses of any military operation carried on beyond the external frontiers of such possessions by Her Majesty's Forces charged upon such revenues"; whilst Article 54 declares that "when any order is sent to India directing the actual commencement of hostilities by Her Majesty's Forces in India, the fact of such order having been sent shall be communicated to both Houses of Parliament within three months of the sending of such order if Parliament is sitting, unless such order shall have been in the meantime revoked or suspended; and if Parliament be not sitting at the end of such three months, then within one month of the next meeting of Parliament."

business to the Secret Department of his office, the Secretary of State for India can escape from it until the time for enforcing it has gone by. It was by the exercise of this power of transference, that Lord Salisbury and Lord Cranbrook had been able, without overstepping the letter of the Act of 1858, to keep their Council for three years in ignorance of the disquieting change which was passing over the relations of the Indian Government to that of Afghanistan; but when, early in October, 1878, Lord Lytton added ninety-six men to every Native Cavalry, and two hundred men to every Native Infantry regiment north of the Narbudda, thereby increasing the military expenditure of India by two hundred and seventy thousand pounds,<sup>1</sup> and Lord Cranbrook kept to himself the telegram asking for his sanction to the measure—the Secretary of State was guilty of an illegal act, for the exceptional case had arisen in which he could only take a decision in conjunction with his Council, and in accordance with the views of a majority of its members. The result of the voting, when, on the 4th of December, the Council was at last consulted, affords good ground for believing that, but for this illegality, there might have been no war; for its consent to the augmentation of the Indian Army was given by a majority of one vote only; and the Minutes in which two of the members who voted for it—Sir Erskine Perry and Sir William Muir—recorded their reasons for doing so, show conclusively that had hostilities been in prospect, instead of in progress, their votes would have been given against it.<sup>2</sup> Neither of them called

<sup>1</sup> This method of augmenting the Native Army had the merit of simplicity, but it had two serious defects: it increased the disproportion between the Native troops and the British officers, a disproportion already dangerously large, and it discontented the rank and file of every affected regiment by diminishing each man's chances of promotion.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Barrow H. Ellis and Sir R. Montgomery, though approving of the Government's Afghan policy, protested against placing on India any part of the extraordinary charges connected with a war which they believed to be due entirely to European complications.

attention to Lord Cranbrook's unconstitutional action ; but Sir Erskine Perry gave strong expression to the feelings of mortification with which all the members of the Council regarded the position assigned to them by law, and to his own personal desire that Parliament should be made clearly to understand that the Secretary of State had been under no obligation to consult them in regard to his Afghan policy. The desire was a very natural one, for, in the absence of an official proclamation of their impotence, it was impossible for the general public to believe that the men who knew most about India, were debarred from expressing any opinion on matters in which that country's gravest interests were involved ; but, however natural, it does not seem to have been gratified, and the anomaly, which hurt the dignity and shocked the common sense of the Indian Council in 1878, remains untouched up to the present hour.

## CHAPTER XV

### The Last Days of Shere Ali

#### REGENCY OF YAKUB KHAN

WHILST the friends of peace in England were pleading Shere Ali's cause before the tribunal of public opinion in their own country, that prince sat silent in the capital of his threatened kingdom. The ultimatum must have been in his hands by the 4th or 5th of November, but he made no attempt to answer it. Another decision had to be come to before he could determine the nature of the reply to be given to its demands. He himself was a broken man ; broken in health, broken in heart, by the death of Abdullah Jan ; it behoved him to choose a successor quickly if the sceptre of Afghanistan was not to pass away from his family, and on whom could his choice fall save on the son who had sinned against him, and against whom he himself had sinned ? It was, perhaps, bitterer to him to yield as a father than to yield as a Prince<sup>1</sup> ; and the thought that, by bowing to British pressure, he might escape the necessity of accepting Yakub Khan as his heir, must often have crossed his mind, since, to oppose a British invasion, he must have behind him a united people and a united Royal House ; but the pecuniary assistance which a British Envoy would be empowered to grant to a submissive Amir, might enable him to dispense with unity

<sup>1</sup> It is curious that the one proof of British ill-will named in the answer to the ultimatum, should have been Lord Northbrook's intervention in favour of " my undutiful son, that ill-starred wretch Yakub Khan," epithets which show that the Amir's feelings towards the rebellious prince had undergone no change.—H.B.H.

in either.<sup>1</sup> In the end, national feeling triumphed over personal prejudice ; Yakub Khan was not, indeed, immediately set free, but his release was involved in the tone and tenour of the letter which, on the 19th of November, after the period of grace accorded to him had virtually expired,<sup>2</sup> he at last brought himself to write to Lord Lytton ; for its key-note was resentment for wrong done to him and his country, not contrition for the offences with which he himself was charged. In it he offered no apology for the rebuff administered to Sir Neville Chamberlain and his companions ; on the contrary, he defended the refusal to allow them to enter the Khyber, on the ground of the fear felt by the officials of his Government that the coming of the British Mission would affect injuriously the independence of Afghanistan, and her friendship with Great Britain ; he declared that he cherished no feelings of hostility and opposition towards the British Government, that he sincerely desired to be on good terms with it, but its officials must refrain from inflicting injury upon well disposed neighbours. Let them do their part towards maintaining good relations between the two Governments, and then, if they should desire to send a purely friendly and temporary Mission to Kabul, with a small escort, not exceeding twenty or thirty men, similar to that which attended the Russian Mission, he would undertake not to oppose its progress.<sup>3</sup>

There was nothing of a conciliatory nature in this letter, yet it seems to have undergone some softening modifications. "Make peace with the English if they offer it," Kaufmann had written on the 4th of November ; and on the 20th, Shere Ali replied that the advice had

<sup>1</sup> Yakub Khan's mother was a Mohmand Princess, and Shere Ali had alienated the Ghilzais by imprisoning his son in violation of a promise given to certain of their chiefs.—H.B.H.

<sup>2</sup> The Amir's letter could, in no case, have reached the nearest British authorities in time to hinder the invasion of his dominions ; as it happened, however, it was not delivered at Sir S. Browne's headquarters till the 30th of November, the messenger to whom originally it had been entrusted, having returned with it to Kabul on learning, at Basawal, that Ali Masjid was already in British hands.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix I.

reached him whilst he was engaged in answering a letter "from the Officers of the British Government, containing very severe, harsh and hostile expressions," and that though he knew "from the conduct and manners" of that Government that it was vain to attempt to disarm its enmity, he had "made overtures for peace according to the advice given him by command of the Emperor; that was to say," he had "sent a friendly reply to their letter, containing civil and polite expressions." If the "civil and polite expressions" contained in that reply, were inserted in it in deference to Russian counsels, then, in its original form, it must have been a declaration of war, since, after their insertion, it remained an acceptance of the hostilities with which the ultimatum had threatened him.

Shere Ali may have flattered himself that his newly created army would prove a match for British troops, but the fate of Ali Masjid must quickly have undeceived him; and, though the news of Roberts's discomfiture, on the 28th of November, revived his hopes, the final issue of the fighting on the Peiwar Kotal extinguished them for ever.<sup>1</sup> For the moment, he met the crisis with energy and decision. He ordered his people of all ranks to send away their wives and children and to prepare to meet the invaders; he reminded the Russian Government of the dishonour it would incur should ruin overtake Afghanistan; and he requested Kaufmann to assist him by despatching all his available troops to Afghan Turkestan. Yet, on the 10th of December, only two days after the letter to Kaufmann had been written, Shere Ali held a durbar in which he announced his intention of travelling to St. Petersburg, there to lay his case against the English before a Congress to be summoned by the Czar.

<sup>1</sup> The spirited letters of thanks and encouragement addressed to the Afghan officers and troops in the Kuram after the news of the repulse of Roberts's first attack on the Peiwar Kotal, were written, not by Shere Ali, but by his wife, the bereaved mother of Abdullah Jan. These letters were found in the Afghan camp on the Peiwar Kotal, and are now in the possession of Major-General Barry-Drew, C.B.

Such a radical change of plans, taking place apparently in the short space of two days, may seem unaccountably sudden; it is probable, however, that it had been long in the background of the Amir's thoughts. The breach in his diplomatic relations with India had not shut him out from all knowledge of what was passing in that country, and in the world beyond. Both from British and Russian sources, he had heard of the Berlin Congress, and, in Stolietoff and Rosgonoff he had at his elbow men who would make the most of the part played at it by Russia, and teach him to see in its decisions a proof of her moral victory over Great Britain. Out of such lessons, there must have dawned upon him the thought of appealing, under Russian protection, to a similar assemblage of Powers; and the confusion into which his kingdom seemed falling under the shock of a threefold invasion, the loosening of the ties of discipline among his troops,<sup>1</sup> the knowledge that, if he delayed too long, the passes of the Hindu Kush would be closed against him, the desire not to part from Rosgonoff, who had received imperative orders to return at once to Tashkent,<sup>2</sup> above all, the repugnance with which he faced the prospect of remaining in Kabul to share his authority with Yakub Khan—turned thought into resolve.

When once the Amir's journey had been sanctioned by his principal chiefs and officials, the release of Yakub Khan could no longer be delayed. He was sent for to the durbar which had just taken so momentous a decision, and, having solemnly pledged himself to obey all instructions that he might receive from his father, was formally invested with the civil and military powers pertaining to Afghan sovereignty. The change which a single hour made in his position was enormous, but it must not be imagined that he exchanged a dungeon for a throne. His captivity had never been rigorous,<sup>3</sup> except,

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan*, No. 7 (1879), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> The Amir had refused to allow Rosgonoff to depart, and the latter may have encouraged the former's plan of proceeding in person to St. Petersburg, with a view to securing his own return to Russia.

<sup>3</sup> Letter of *Times* special correspondent, January 3rd. 1879.

in the sense, that he was not allowed to go beyond his own garden, and that opportunities of intriguing with his former adherents were denied him. His prison was his own house, and news from the outer world must sometimes have penetrated within its walls. The din of war can certainly not have been excluded from it; and the captive prince may have known enough of the troubles in which the kingdom was involved, to guess that he himself might be called upon to assist in facing them.

The meeting between father and son must have been painful and embarrassing to both, and Shere Ali's departure may have been hastened by his desire to escape from the necessity of publicly honouring his now acknowledged heir. All the preparations for the great journey that lay before him, were completed in three days' time, and, on the 13th of December, he left Kabul, his last act of sovereignty being to write a letter to the officers of the British Government informing them of the step he was taking, and challenging them to establish their case and explain their desires before a Congress to be held at St. Petersburg.<sup>1</sup> He was accompanied by his family, by the Mustaufi and other great Officers of State, and by Colonel Rosgonoff and the remaining members of the Russian Mission, and he took with him his treasure, amounting, according to rumour, to seventy lakhs of rupees.<sup>2</sup> On the 22nd of December, from some unnamed halting-place, he wrote to General Kaufmann announcing his approach and issued the following Firman:—

“Let the high in rank, etc., Sirdar Muhammad Omer Khan, the Governor of Herat, Tolmshir Sahib and Hasan Ali Khan, the Sipah Sala-i-Aazim, be honoured by this Royal Firman and know—

“That, having previously announced the result of the fights of our victorious troops to-day, also that by the Grace of God a series of victories have been won by the lion-devouring warriors, we have

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan*, No. 7 (1879), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> More likely seven.



deemed it necessary to announce the details of the same to you, so that you may be made fully aware of the facts.

“The state of affairs and of hostilities on the Khyber frontier line are as follows :—At the outset there were only five regiments stationed at Ali Masjid as a permanent garrison when the British troops advanced to attack them. The said five regiments gave battle to fourteen of the infidel white regiments, and for about eight hours the roaring of the cannon and musketry, together with the clashing of the swords, were incessant ; till, in accordance with the words of the holy verse, ‘There is no victory except that which comes from God,’ the goodness and strength of the Almighty aided the lion-catching warriors, and they totally defeated the English army, when a considerable number being killed and wounded on both sides, a stop was put to further fighting and each side retired to his own camp.

“Six days after, two other engagements took place at Peiwar, where the victorious troops, again in their zeal to push back the infidel army, brought on a day like that of the Day of Judgment, and rushing on like a torrent compelled the infidels to fall back.

“Since then to the present moment the English troops have not dared to show fight, nor to make any advance. In fact, on account of the severity of the winter and especially by the action of Ooloosat people and the Afridi tribes, who are anxious for the infliction of loss on their (the English) lives and property, it is quite certain that they will not make any forward advance.

“As perfect harmony exists in all the affairs of this mighty Government, most of the Nobles and Chiefs of this country have made certain representations to us in person with the view of putting a stop to this mischief which may affect the peace of this Government. The opinion of our ministers and military officers being also in conformity with our royal views, we have decided that to put a stop to the present trouble there is no alternative but to have recourse to friendly negotiations as opposed to hostility and warfare ; for instance, although our enemy

should give up his hostile attitude and the idea of interference in Afghanistan, yet having taken up arms against us he ought to be bound down by diplomatic action.

“It now being winter and his advance difficult, and, as in the spring this evil will be sure to break out afresh, there is no better opportunity than the present, when the enemy has not the power of moving in consequence of the severity of the winter, that our royal self should proceed to the capital of Russia, and open an official correspondence with the British Government. We have accordingly, in conformity with the approval of our ministers and a number of our well-wishers, decided on proceeding to St. Petersburg, the capital of the Russian Emperor, and have appointed our elder and beloved son, Sardar Muhammad Yakub Khan, to act in our absence, leaving the whole of our Sardars . . . under his immediate orders. We also, under an auspicious fortune, and putting our trust in Almighty God, left Kabul, on the 13th December, accompanied by our illustrious brother (*sic*) Sardar Sher Ali Khan, Shah Muhammad Khan, our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mirza Habibullah, the Mustaufi-ul-Momalek, Kazi Abdul Kadar Khan, a few servants, and one ‘Namadek Kadek Uptur,’ the Russian envoys who also took part in the council we held respecting this journey, together with the High Princes, Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan and Sardar Muhammad Taki Khan.

“We received letters from the Governor-General, General Stolietoff, at the station named Sir Cheshmeh; Stolietoff, who was with the Emperor at Livadia, having written to us as follows :—

“The Emperor considers you as a brother, and you also, who are on the other side of the water,<sup>1</sup> must display the same sense of friendship and brotherhood. The English Government is anxious to come to terms with you through the intervention of the Sultan, and wishes you to take his advice and counsel; but the Emperor’s desire is that you should not admit the English into your country, and, like last year,

<sup>1</sup> i. e. Oxus.

you are to treat them with deceit and deception until the present cold season passes away, then the Almighty's will will be made manifest to you, that is to say, the (Russian) Government having repeated the Bismillah, the Bismillah will come to your assistance. In short, you are to rest assured that affairs will end well. If God permits, we will convene a Government meeting at St. Petersburg, that is to say, a congress which means an assembly of powers. We will then open an official discussion with the English Government, and either by force of words and diplomatic action we will entirely cut off all English communication and interference with Afghanistan for ever, or else events will end in a mighty and important war. By the help of God, by spring not a symptom or vestige of trouble and dissatisfaction will remain in Afghanistan.

“It therefore behoves our well-wishing servants to conduct the affairs entrusted to them in a praiseworthy and resolute manner better than before, and having placed their hopes in God, rest confident that the welfare and affairs of this glorious Government will continue on a firm footing as before, and the mischief and disaffection which seem to have arisen in the country will disappear.

“Let it be known to the high in rank, Tolmshir Bahadur and Hafizulla Khan, Secretary to the Sipah Salar-i-Aazim, that, thanks to God, the trouble we have been taking for a series of years in instructing and improving the officers of our victorious regiments has not been lost, and in fighting the English troops they have displayed the same bravery as the force of the civilized nations. Not one of the victorious troops went to Heaven until he had himself slain three of the enemy. In short, they fought in such a way, and made such a stand, that both high and low praised them. We are fully confident that our victorious troops wherever they may fight will defeat the enemy.

“The Herat Army is also noted for its bravery and discipline, a result of your devoted services. You will convey our royal satisfaction to all the troops and inhabitants of Herat, high and low, and tell them

that our hope is that God and His Prophet may be as satisfied with them as we are.”<sup>1</sup>

The interest of this Proclamation lies not so much in its distortion of the facts of the war—for the device of keeping up the spirits of an army, or a nation, by concealing defeat or exaggerating successes, is not confined to Eastern potentates—but in the use made in it of Stolietoff’s letter of the 8th of October to Wazir Shah Muhammad Khan, the vague promises in which it translated into the proposal of a Congress, and an invitation to the Amir to visit St. Petersburg.<sup>2</sup> It may be that the Amir read into the letter what he desired to find there; it may be that he deliberately falsified its tenour; in either case the paraphrase of it given in the Firman, shows how keenly he felt the need of strengthening the defence of his conduct in abandoning his country, by adducing evidence to prove that he had reason to believe that he could best serve his people by leaving them.

The 1st of January, witnessed Shere Ali’s arrival at Mazar-i-Sharef, the chief town of his province of Turkestan. Only three hundred and eighty-one miles of the five thousand seven hundred which separate Kabul from St. Petersburg, lay behind him, and already his strength was failing fast. A pause for rest and medical treatment had become imperative, and during the first weeks of that pause he received, in rapid succession, three letters from Kaufmann, which destroyed the

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan*, No. 7, pp. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. i. pp. 252, 253. The second half of Stolietoff’s letter, which is the part epitomized in the Firman, runs thus:—“ Now, my kind friend, I inform you that the enemy of your famous religion wants to make peace with you through the Kaiser (Sultan) of Turkey. Therefore you should look to your brothers who live on the other side the river. If God stirs them up and gives the sword of fight into their hands, then go on in the name of God (*Bismullah*); otherwise you should be as a serpent; make peace openly and in secret prepare for war; and when God reveals His order to you, declare yourself. It will be well when the envoy of your enemy wants to enter the country, if you send an able emissary, possessing the tongue of a serpent and full of deceit, to the enemy’s country, so that he may, with sweet words, perplex the enemy’s mind and induce him to give up the intention of fighting with you.”

hopes that had so far supported him.<sup>1</sup> The first of the three, dated the 2nd of January, 1879, written after Kaufmann had heard that the Amir had come out of Kabul, but whilst he was still in the dark as to the motive which had prompted that step, did, indeed, contain the good news that the British Ministers had promised the Russian Ambassador in London not to injure the independence of Afghanistan; but it also conveyed the information that the Emperor had decided against the possibility of assisting him with troops. The second, dated the 7th of January, urgently entreated him not to leave his kingdom, but to preserve its independence by coming to terms with the English, either in person or through Yakub Khan, and ended with the warning that his arrival in Russian territory would make things worse. The third, written on the 11th of January, curtly informed him that the writer had been directed by the Emperor to invite him to Tashkent, but that he had received no instructions with regard to his journey to St. Petersburg.

Shere Ali must have felt that the advice to preserve the independence of his kingdom by making terms with the English, was a mere mockery of his troubles. If he had not been convinced that the British Government's terms, whatever form they might assume, would be such as he could not accept, he would not have allowed himself to be goaded into war, and the promise given to the Russian Ambassador failed to reassure him. Independence was an elastic term that might mean much or little, and he could not trust the Russian Government to look too closely into the interpretation that the British Government might see fit to give to it. Kaufmann's second letter made it too clear that the Amir would be an unwelcome guest, for the permission to visit Tashkent, contained in the third, to afford him any gratification. Yet his disappointment found no expression in the one letter—his last—which served as an answer to the three communications.<sup>2</sup> In his

<sup>1</sup> *Central Asia*. No. 1 (1881), pp. 24, 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 25.

correspondence with Foreign Governments he had always maintained a dignified reserve, more or less tinged with irony, and he preserved that attitude to the last. There was irony in his brief acknowledgment of "the royal favours of the Emperor," and of Kaufmann's "sweet expressions," and in his assurance of his own "desire for a joyous interview with the latter"; and no one can deny dignity to the brief reference to his own illness, "sent by the decree of God," to the request to Kaufmann to consider as true whatever the Ministers whom he was despatching to wait upon him, might state regarding the affairs of his kingdom, or to his praise of the "noble qualities and good manners" of General Rosgonoff and his companions. Sick, helpless, and deserted, he was yet a prince whose word was to be accepted, and whose praise honoured him on whom it was bestowed.

Shere Ali might write that his intention to continue his journey was unchanged, but he knew that his travels, hardly begun, had already ended. There was nothing to be gained by going on, and it was idle to think of going back. A sovereign who, in the crisis of his country's fate, had misjudged his duty, could never again sit on the throne of Afghanistan. The news that continued to reach him from Kabul, must have added to his self-reproach. Everywhere the English advance had been checked by natural difficulties. One part of Stewart's army, which had begun to push forward towards Herat, had come to a standstill on the Helmand; another portion had occupied Khelat-i-Ghilzai, only to fall back upon Kandahar. Browne's forces were still stationary at Jellalabad, unable to move for lack of carriage. Roberts's troops, compelled to withdraw from Khost and weather-bound on the Peiwar Kotal, were daily being thinned by disease; there was no sign of that rapid advance on Kabul, of that general occupation of Afghanistan, the expectation of which had seemed to justify him in placing the Hindu Kush between himself and his enemies. What might not have been achieved against them if he had remained at Kabul, and, sinking his differences with his son, who had even less love of British

domination than himself, had worked with him for their common cause ?

It is easy to believe that thoughts such as these must have crowded upon the Amir's failing mind and reconciled him to death ; and there is nothing improbable in the story told by one of his companions at Mazir-i-Sharif to an officer of the British Survey Department,<sup>1</sup> of how he made no effort to recover, but refused food, medicine and consolation, and died lamenting his folly in having left his friends to seek aid from his enemies. He passed away on the 21st of February, 1879, in his fifty-sixth year, after a life of exceptional activity, marked by varied vicissitudes of fortune. In his childhood, he had witnessed the first British invasion of Afghanistan, and had shared his father's Indian exile. In his early manhood, he had contributed to the successes which crowned Dost Mahomed's steady determination to reconstitute and consolidate his former kingdom, and on the death of his brother, Gholam Hyder Khan, he was rewarded for his ability and valour by being appointed heir to the throne ; a costly reward, which involved him in years of sanguinary struggle with his two elder half-brothers, who had been passed over in his favour. Driven from his capital and, again and again, defeated in his attempts to return thither, he showed himself resourceful in raising fresh armies, and brave and skilful in leading them ; and though, in his nephew, Abdur Rahman, he encountered a man as bold and capable as himself, that prince, handicapped by the tyranny of his uncle Afzul and the vices of his father, Azim Khan, had to fly the field when popular feeling in Kabul veered round to the side of the legitimate ruler of Afghanistan.

The subsequent events of Shere Ali's life, so far as they brought him into contact with the British and Russian Governments, have been told in the foregoing pages. Of his internal government comparatively little is known, but that it did not entirely disappoint the hopes with which he had inspired Lord

<sup>1</sup> Mr. G. B. Scott.

Mayo, is proved by the testimony borne to its fruits by Lord Northbrook, in 1876. He may not always have shown himself perfectly just and merciful; but, at least, he consolidated his kingdom, commanded the loyalty and devotion of the officers who helped in its administration, and taught the most lawless of his subjects to appreciate the advantages of a firm rule.<sup>1</sup> If his firmness effected fewer improvements in the condition of his people than Abdur Rahman afterwards carried through, it must be remembered that he had a much shorter reign, and, that by entering into an alliance with a civilized State, he deprived himself of the liberty to clear the ground for reforms by cutting off the heads of all who might be suspected of wishing to oppose them.

A man of strong affections and violent passions, Shere Ali's private life was darkened by sorrows, many of which he brought upon himself. When the battle of Kajbaz seemed to be going against him, he overwhelmed his idolized son, Prince Mahomed Ali, with such bitter reproaches that the high-spirited youth rushed madly into the thickest of the fight, and singling out his uncle, Mahomed Amir, engaged him in single combat, and perished by his sword; the victor in this unnatural combat being at once slain by the victim's enraged followers. The double tragedy so affected its unhappy author's mind that for many months he was practically insane, fits of deepest gloom alternating with outbursts of frenzied grief. His son, Yakub Khan, who had been his right hand during the last years of his struggle for the throne, turned against him as soon as he had regained it; and when he stooped to treachery to punish the traitor, he became his own worst enemy, since, by shocking Lord Northbrook's moral sense, he drew upon himself remonstrances, coupled with threats, that shook his confidence in the British Government, and led him to adopt towards it an aloofness of attitude in which a later Viceroy was to find the best defence of the

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan*, No. 1 (1878), pp. 147-149.



policy that brought about the war. He had nothing to reproach himself with in the death of the darling of his later days, Abdullah Jan, but his sorrow for the boy's death was intensified by the knowledge that its untoward political consequences were of his own creating. The place in history to be finally awarded to Shere Ali will be determined, however, not by the achievements or failures of his internal administration, not by the loves or hatreds of his private life, but solely by his foreign policy, and more especially by his refusal to yield one jot of his own dignity and his country's independence to the demands of the British ultimatum. That refusal may stamp him as a madman, or a fool, in the eyes of those who look merely to the sequel of events as they affected him and his dynasty; but viewed in the broader light of subsequent history as it affected Afghanistan, his unbending attitude bears testimony to his foresight and patriotism. The choice offered him, as he understood it, was not between war and peace, but between war then, and war at some not distant date. He knew that if he apologized for the conduct of his officers, who had done their duty in upholding his authority and dignity, he would forfeit their respect; he felt sure that if he consented to receive a British Envoy in his capital, he would soon be called upon to permit British officers to reside in his frontier towns, and that when their presence had inflamed to the highest point his subjects' hatred of foreigners, and that passion had found its natural expression in the murder of the intruders, he would either have to bear the responsibility for their deed, or to become the instrument of British revenge; and whether he elected to side with, or against, his people, the result would still be the same—for them, war; for himself, the certain loss of reputation, the probable loss of life. And underlying these considerations, was his profound conviction that the new policy of the British Government aimed at destroying the independence and integrity of his kingdom, and that he himself was the object of that Government's special ill-will, or, at least, of the ill-will of the man through whom

alone he was able to approach it ; and thus his personal interests and the interests of his people alike led him to the conclusion that it was better to have war before suffering humiliation, than after. That he did the intentions and aims of the British Government, so far as they were represented by Lord Lytton, no injustice, must be admitted by all who have read the letter in which the Viceroy, writing to the Secretary of State for India, in January, 1879, declared that the three main points for which the war had been undertaken were (a) the punishment of Shere Ali ; (b) the permanent improvement of India's present frontier ; (c) the establishment of paramount (British) political influence over all the Afghan territories and tribes between our present frontier and the Oxus.<sup>1</sup> Shere Ali's mistake lay, not in mistrusting one of his neighbours, but in placing too much trust in the other. He had undoubtedly a strong moral claim on the Russian Emperor ; but, as an experienced statesman, he ought to have known that no prince will ever allow his regrets and sympathies to override the interests of his country. He should have remembered, too, that armed intervention on his behalf would have meant, in the end, the same danger from the North-West which was then threatening him from the South-East, and that the only assistance Russia could safely give, and Afghanistan safely receive—money and arms—was more likely to be accorded to him, secretly, in his own land than, openly, on Russian soil. Had he been as clear-sighted in judging one side of the situation as he was in judging the other ; had he remained with his people ; had he held on to his capital to the last possible moment ; and had he then retired to Ghazni, or beyond the Hindu Kush—the national resistance would have centred round him, and he, not Abdur Rahman, would have reaped the fruits of the difficulties which, a year later, were to gather so thickly round the British forces, that how to retire from Afghanistan, not how to stay there, became the problem for which the British Government had to seek a solution.

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, p. 312.

## CHAPTER XVI

January, 1879

THE new year brought with it no improvement in the situation by which the Government of India had been confronted in the old. The winter rains had failed in the Punjab, the North-West Provinces and Oudh; the death-rate throughout the three Presidencies was abnormally high, the poverty of the people widespread and acute. Money, judiciously expended, might have done much to lessen misery and restore health; wise remissions of land revenue would have saved thousands of peasants from the clutches of the village usurer; but no money could be spared for commonplace, every-day objects of utility whilst the war continued to shake credit, depreciate securities and swallow up the cash balances in the Civil Treasuries; and instead of a generous lightening of the burdens of the people, old taxes were relentlessly collected, and every rupee produced by fresh taxation, nominally imposed to form a fund for the protection of the country against famine, was quickly diverted to military purposes.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "India seems to have fallen on evil days. It has often been observed that in the wake of an iniquitous and foolish war follow a train of internal calamities which, though not always to be traced to a blundering foreign policy, are still none the less disastrous and aggravate the calamities which have been wantonly invited. The threatened dearth in the North-West Provinces, now officially recognized, the deficiency of crops now feared in the Punjab, are circumstances sufficient to cause uneasiness, and deserve anxious attention on the part of our rulers. . . . But are the local authorities really aware of the agricultural and other difficulties at our doors? Have they received any official intimation of the calamities that threaten the eastern and south-eastern parts of our own Presidency? The Kharif (autumn) crop in these parts is said not to have yielded more than a two annas proportion, (one-eighth), and even this miserably small yield has been damaged by *tob*, little beast-like

But the injury inflicted upon the civil population by the war, was, for the moment, less embarrassing to the Government than the military perplexities to which it was daily giving birth. Though the peasant and the trader should suffer from lack of beasts of draught and burden, yet agriculture and trade would be carried on after a fashion; but a dearth of transport animals might, at any moment, bring a moving army to a standstill, or threaten the existence of a stationary force; and whilst, from each of the lines of communication came the cry for more mules, more camels, the difficulty of responding to it steadily increased. Already, on the 1st of the year, when the campaign had lasted barely six weeks and before snow had fallen, Colonel J. V. Hunt, Sir S. Browne's Principal Commissariat Officer, had complained that his camels were going to ruin in the Khyber, and that, unless he could get them back to the plains for a fortnight's grazing, he should want a fresh lot for work in the spring, and that the carcasses of the thousands that would have died, must inevitably breed a pestilence. Similar complaints came from the Kuram, and the state of things on the Kandahar route was even more disheartening. Supplies of every description were rotting at Bukkur, on the left bank of the Indus, for want of a bridge,<sup>1</sup> and at Sukkur, on the right bank, for lack of camels. At Dadar, at Jacobabad, at Quetta, there was the same dearth of transport facilities, and desert and pass were strewn with dead camels and aban-

insects. . . . As to *rabi* (spring crops) three-fourths of the fields lie covered with rank weeds and grass. . . . In the beginning the *rabi* crop promised well, especially where ryots (peasants) could afford to prepare the land. But since the middle of December, rats, in millions, have poured into the fields and destroyed the crops. . . . The people have been suffering during the last two years; their resources are exhausted; migration has recommenced as the only means of escape from starvation and death—for death overtakes many victims of privation." (*Bombay Review*, February 1st, 1879.)

<sup>1</sup> The railway had been completed between Kurachi and Multan, but the Indus was not bridged till after the war.

doned stores. The advantages to be reaped from General Andrew Clarke's scheme of a railway, connecting the Indus with the Bolan, had, by this time, become too apparent for Lord Lytton to continue to oppose it, and Colonel G. Medley, Consulting Railway Engineer to the Government of India, was hurriedly despatched to examine the ground and prepare plans and estimates. But the hot weather had begun before he could complete his survey and present his report, and the work had to be postponed until the following cold season. Meantime, the Governor of Bombay, Sir Richard Temple, was struggling, in person, with the supply chaos at Sukkur,<sup>1</sup> and Colonel Hogg, Deputy Quarter-Master General of the Bombay Army, with the reorganization of the Transport Service. The Commissioner of Sind, having provided the military authorities with six thousand camels over and above the thirteen thousand originally demanded from him, had desisted from efforts which were ruining his district ;<sup>2</sup> now, under the double pressure brought to bear upon him, he succeeded in getting together an additional six hundred, and sent up two hundred and fifty carts to clear out some of the stores that had accumulated at Jacobabad. But no zeal on the part of the military officers, no assistance rendered by civil officials could keep the supply of transport equal to the demand, and, given a sufficient duration of

<sup>1</sup> "Sir Richard Temple has had to send all the way to Bombay for carts ; he has had camel-drivers engaged in northern Gujerat at extravagant pay, and his emissaries are now scouring Rajputana in search of more camels." (*Bombay Review*, January 25th, 1879.)

<sup>2</sup> "One hears the Commissioner loudly abused on all sides for having so suddenly stopped collecting transport animals, but one must bear in mind that he looks at the case from a purely civil point of view, and naturally does not wish to denude the whole of his district of its beasts of burden, representing, as they do in many instances, the sole means of subsistence of the inhabitants. The military estimate, framed in solemn conclave at Sukkur, was under 13,000 camels, and when the Commissioner had handed over 19,000, he fancied he had done his duty, and allowed a very liberal margin for all sorts of casualties." (*Correspondence Times of India*.)

hostilities, the coming of a day when the invading forces must lose their mobility could clearly be foreseen.

The prospect as regarded the continued efficiency of the troops was little brighter. Despite, or perhaps in consequence of, the mildness of the season, there was much sickness in all the columns, more especially among the men employed on the lines of communication whose lot was cast in the most unhealthy districts. On all three lines of advance, there were regiments so sickly as to be unfit for active service; and though the courage and resolution of officers and men enabled some of these to hold out to the end of the campaign, there were others, no less brave and zealous, who had to submit to the humiliation of being ordered back to India. In Maude's Division, this was the fate of Her Majesty's 81st Regiment; in Browne's, of the 14th Sikhs; in Stewart's, of the 12th Khelat-i-Ghilzai;<sup>1</sup> and the carriage of all supply convoys, on their return march, had to be utilized for the conveyance of invalids, pronounced medically unequal to further duty in the field. Recruiting for the Native Army had already begun to fall off; the drafts sent from India to make good gaps caused by disease in both British and Native corps, were not in proportion to the casualties incurred; and though many of the Independent Princes were eager to take part in the war, considerations of distance and expense had made it impossible for the Indian Government to accept more than the services of a Contingent furnished by six Punjab Chiefs<sup>2</sup>—the Rajahs of Patialla, Nabha, Jhind, Kappathala, Nahun and Farid Kot. The four thousand four hundred and sixty-six troops composing this Force, after undergoing a course of instruction in the use of the Enfield rifle, were sent to guard the communications of the Kuram Force and to strengthen the garrison of Bunu, a British frontier station whose safety had been endangered by tribal discontent, due to the war.

<sup>1</sup> This regiment had greatly distinguished itself in the First Afghan War.

<sup>2</sup> The Maharajahs of Hyderabad and Baroda were among the Native Rulers whose offers of troops were declined.

TABLE SHOWING THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PUNJAB CHIEFS' CONTINGENT AS REVIEWED BY LORD LYTTON AT LAHORE IN DECEMBER, 1878.

13 Guns	10 Elephants
868 Cavalry	1,145 Horses
2,685 Infantry	825 Camels
1,913 Followers	240 Mules and Bullocks

*Principal Officers.*

Bunshee Gunda Singh . . . . .	}	Patiala Contingent
Syud Jurdan Ali . . . . .		
Lalla Bhugman Doss . . . . .		
Sirdar Juggat Singh . . . . .	}	Jhind Contingent
Sirdar Ruttar Sing . . . . .		
Dewan Beshun Sing . . . . .	}	Nabha Contingent
Bunshee Budroodun Khan . . . . .		
Lalla Nuthoo Lall . . . . .		
Dewan Ram Jas . . . . .	}	Kapathala Contingent
Sirdar Nubbi Bux . . . . .		
Colonel Mahomed Ali . . . . .		
Sirdar Golun Singh . . . . .	}	Farid Kot Contingent
Sirdar Albail Singh . . . . .		
Sirdar Buh Singh . . . . .		
Colonel Whiting . . . . .		Nahun Contingent

*British Officers attached to Contingent.*

- Brigadier-General J. Watson, V.C., C.B., Commandant and Chief Political Officer.
- Major W. C. Anderson, 3rd Punjab Cavalry, Assistant Adjutant-General.
- Captain V. Rivaz, 4th Punjab Infantry Deputy Assistant Quarter-Master General.
- Captain J. Pearson, R.A., Brigade-Major.
- Captain F. C. Massey, Political Officer.
- Captain J. D. Turnbull, 15th Bengal Cavalry, A.D.C.
- Surgeon-Major J. R. Drew, in Medical Charge.
- Captain F. Burton, 1st Bengal Cavalry, and Captain A. K. Abbott, 42nd Bengal Infantry.

*Native Aides-de-Camp to the General.*

- Sirdar Mahomed Enzat Ali Khan.
- Sirdar Gholab Singh.

That discontent extended the whole length of India's North-West frontier. In Buner and Swat *mullahs* were preaching a *jehad* against the enemies of their religion, and only the influence of some of the chiefs kept the people's excitement within bounds. Mohmands and Afridis were vying with each other in obstructing the movements of Maude's and Browne's forces. The Orakzais, long friendly, were preparing to raid upon Roberts's communications, and the Zymukhts, a tribe that had given no trouble since 1856, were busy attacking that General's convoys and driving off his camels from their grazing-grounds. Last, but not least, four thousand Mahsud Waziris, consisting largely of Powindars—men of the carrier class—many of whose camels had been seized for Government purposes, had entered British territory on New Year's day, burnt Tank, and taken up a strong position between that town and the Zam Pass; and, though General G. J. Godby employed five thousand Infantry and two hundred Cavalry against them, it was not till the 20th of January, and after several skirmishes, in which the British loss was two men killed, and Captain T. Shepperd and nine men wounded, that the invaders were finally driven back into their hills.

A further source of increasing regimental weakness was the growth in the normal disproportion between the Native troops and their European officers. Not a single Native corps had taken the field with its full complement of British Officers, and many of these had already been removed by death, wounds, or sickness, or had been absorbed by one or other of the Army Staffs. At the attack on the Peiwar Kotal, the 29th Punjab Infantry had gone into action with only five European Officers, the Gurkhas, with but four; and according to a report furnished to Government by General Maude, four came to be the number both in the 10th Bengal Lancers and the 24th Punjab Infantry—a state of things aggravated by the fact that each of these regiments was broken up into small, widely separated detachments, so that many of the men were entirely removed from what ought always to be the ruling



influence of the sepoy's professional life.<sup>1</sup> Maude's report was not written till almost the end of the first phase of the war, but he and the other Commanders had all along striven to impress the Indian Government with the evils resulting from the paucity of European Officers; and though Lord Lytton could not be brought to face the expense of a permanent addition to their number, he did, in January, throw open the Indian Staff Corps to Officers of British regiments other than those serving in India. Little advantage, however, was taken of the concession, and the failure of what was, at best, but a temporary expedient, can hardly be regretted, for, if successful, it would have furnished the Native regiments in the field with leaders ignorant of the country in which they had been called upon to serve, and of the language, character and habits of the men whom they were expected to command.

Under the sobering influence of growing difficulties and waning resources, the thoughts of the Home and the Indian Governments had begun to turn towards peace, only to discover that it was easier to begin a war than to end one. "We cannot"—wrote Lord Lytton to Lord Cranbrook—"we cannot close the Afghan war satisfactorily, or finally, without an Afghan Treaty; we cannot get an Afghan Treaty without an Afghan Government willing to sign and fairly able to maintain it. It is only, therefore, in the early establishment of such a Government that we can find a satisfactory solution of our present difficulties. Its early establishment mainly depends on our policy; and we must, I think, be prepared to do whatever may be necessary on our part to promote and maintain the existence of such a Government at Kabul."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Under the foregoing circumstances, I am at a loss to understand how either of these two fine regiments can be considered to have been in a state of efficiency for active service in the field as regards the number of British Officers, on whom devolves the all-important duty of commanding and leading their men in the day of battle." (*Report of Sir F. Maude*, May, 1879.)

<sup>2</sup> *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, p. 312.

By the expression, "whatever may be necessary on our part," Lord Lytton evidently meant promises of support, and gifts of money and arms. To the gifts the Beaconsfield Ministry were not likely to take exception; however large, they would be cheap compared to the expense of an indefinite prolongation of the war; but where was the Amir on whom to bestow them? No sooner had the news of Shere Ali's virtual abdication reached India than Cavagnari had been instructed to make cautious advances to Yakub Khan, but Yakub Khan had shown no inclination to allow himself to be approached. His coldness might be due to the pledge exacted from him by his father, and might disappear if circumstances should release him from his oath; but he was known to be incensed at the invasion of his country, and Lord Lytton doubted his ability to maintain himself in power, and thought it probable that he would soon follow his father into exile. Actuated by these misgivings, the Viceroy looked about for some member of the Barakzai House whom he could have under his hand, ready, at an opportune moment, to be put forward as a successor to Shere Ali; though, meantime, he left the door for negotiations with Yakub Khan open, and, to avoid complicating an already tangled situation, ordered Cavagnari to abstain from intriguing either with parties in the Afghan capital or with any of the Afghan tribes. The Viceroy's choice of a possible British nominee fell upon Shere Ali's half-brother, Wali Mahomed Khan, who had let it be known that, if he could escape from Kabul and reach the protection of a British Force, he would be found willing to play the part filled by Shah Sujah in the first Afghan war.

There had been a difference of opinion between the Viceroy and the Home Government as to the lines on which Afghanistan should ultimately be re-settled; the former desiring to split her up into several weak states, the latter preferring to retain her as a strong and united kingdom. The views of the higher authority had prevailed on paper; but when Lord Lytton, in recommending his protégé,

honestly warned Lord Cranbrook that Wali Mahomed, though probably strong enough to establish himself in Kabul, was hardly the man to extend his rule to Kandahar and Herat, Ministers, having no one else to propose, gave a provisional consent to the Viceroy's request to be allowed to make use of the uncle against the nephew, should circumstances seem to render such a course advisable.<sup>1</sup>

It must have added to Lord Lytton's vexations, if not to his anxieties, to know that whilst he was casting about to find some safe ground from which to take the initial step in the direction of peace, the Government Press, both at home and in India, was treating the war as a thing concluded and done with, and counting up the gains, financial and political, which must accrue to India from a rectified frontier.<sup>2</sup> It was hard for a man oppressed by the knowledge of India's growing expenditure, and harassed by the difficulty of temporarily keeping open the Khyber, to be told that, as a consequence of the permanent occupation of that and other passes, he would be able to reduce the Indian Army and cut down Indian

<sup>1</sup> It is curious that Lord Lytton, whose policy of weakening Afghanistan was based on the conviction that, if strong, she would gravitate towards an "alliance with the ambitious, energetic and not over-scrupulous Government of such a military empire as Russia," rather than towards an alliance "with a Power so essentially pacific, so sensitively scrupulous as our own," (*Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, p. 311) should have failed to perceive that the disintegration he aimed at was incompatible with one of the three main objects of the war; yet it is an absolute certainty that a break-up of Afghanistan would have resulted then, would result now, in the annexation of Herat and Afghan Turkestan by Russia, after which annexation there could be no more dreams of extending British influence to the Oxus. Even Lord Lytton could see that, when Russia was once in actual possession, it was vain to think of ousting her influence by ours. (Vide the allusion to Merv on page 254 of *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*.)

<sup>2</sup> See *Times* and other Journals for January and February, 1879.

"The war arose from a conviction that, so long as our frontier was fixed on the eastern side of great passes into Afghanistan, our military security was dependent upon the degree in which we could rely upon the friendliness of the Amir of Kabul. This alliance, . . . at a critical moment, broke down, and it consequently became necessary that we should rectify our frontier in such a

taxation.<sup>1</sup> The pleasant stories sent home by special correspondents at Jellalabad of regimental sports, of hunting parties, of scientific and historic explorations, stories which seemed to readers in India and England conclusive testimony to the completeness of British success, had a different meaning for the man who read them in the light of Browne's Despatches and Cavagnari's Reports. The obstacles in the way of making a fresh advance was the ever recurring theme of the former; the difficulties attendant upon keeping a hold on the short and narrow stretch of country already occupied, of the latter. How to accumulate stores and transport whilst working under conditions which perpetually exhausted both, was the problem that pressed, day and night, on the Military Officer; how to induce the tribes to facilitate this accumulation, the task at which the Political Officer incessantly toiled.

The negotiations with certain Afridi tribes, begun to smooth Sir Neville Chamberlain's passage through the Khyber, had widened out into a scheme which embraced all the subdivisions of that powerful clan, as well as other tribes occupying territory within striking distance of the Pass. Its arrangements, similar in their general character to those devised for a like purpose forty years before, had a twofold aim—to attract the individual tribesmen of warlike proclivities to the British side by the offer of well paid<sup>2</sup> military service,

manner as to make its security independent of anything so capricious as the will of an Asiatic Prince. This has now been done." (*Times* article, February 21st, 1897.)

<sup>1</sup> "Those passes have now been seized by us and we shall not relinquish them. We have thus secured what was described beforehand as a 'scientific frontier,' and military men are agreed that a moderate force in the strongholds thus occupied will suffice to insure us against all external danger from Central Asia. . . . More money cannot be raised, and the expenditure therefore must by some means be reduced. The means for that reduction are opportunely afforded by the security which our recent acquisition of a satisfactory frontier has given to our military position." (*Ibid.*)

<sup>2</sup> The monthly cost of this force was 2,740 rupees.

under their own Officers, and to disarm the hostility of the tribes, as a whole, by the payment of a monthly subsidy of seven thousand six hundred and sixteen rupees, in return for which each tribe possessed of land bordering on the Khyber, was to furnish a certain number of chowkidars (watchmen) to protect its section of the Pass; the largest number demanded from any one tribe being sixty, the smallest, twelve. No difficulty was experienced in raising and maintaining the three hundred and twenty Jezailchis—matchlock men—and their fifteen Officers; and Cavagnari was able to report, when handing over political charge of the Khyber to Mr. Donald Macnabb, that they had given satisfaction to the Military Commanders, and considerably relieved the troops in the matter of convoy duty; but the subsidy negotiations proved exceedingly troublesome. It was no easy matter to decide the proportion in which the whole sum allowed should be divided among the different tribes; it was harder to discover to which party in each tribe that proportion should be paid, for, in every case, the party inclined to look favourably on British overtures of friendship, proved to be the weaker, therefore of less value as an ally, than the party which held aloof. In the end, however, a division based upon some rough appraisement of the claims and merits of each recipient, was arrived at, but the plan, so far as the return to be made for the money was concerned, proved worse than a failure. The chowkidars were utterly untrustworthy, a danger instead of an assistance to the British Forces, as their licensed presence in the passes enabled them to keep a watch upon the movements of convoys and troops, and to signal the approach of the one, and the withdrawal of the other to their friends lurking in the hills above; and the chiefs and headmen soon learned that they could make double profits by sending one half of a tribe to make submission and finger the Government rupees, while the other half harried

<sup>1</sup> Cavagnari's *Report on Matters relating to Arrangements with the Khyber Tribes*, dated Safed Sang, April 28, 1879.

the road and, by night, even ventured to attack the British outlying pickets.<sup>1</sup> The wiser policy would have been to give the subsidy freely, as an acknowledgment of the Afridi and Shinwari claim to levy tolls on a road the use of which was being monopolized by the British Forces, withholding or redistributing it as a punishment for breaches of faith, and to forbid armed Natives, under the severest penalties, within the British outposts. These measures would have done as much as those adopted to influence the tribes through the hope of gain, and more to check their power to harm and harass; thus diminishing the temptation to indulge in punitive expeditions to which Cavagnari, by reason of his exceptional position, was peculiarly exposed. One such expedition—the first invasion of the Bazaar Valley—has already been chronicled; the story of three others has now to be told.

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Captain Tucker to Major Cavagnari*, dated Lundi Kotal, April 9th, 1879.

## CHAPTER XVII

### Punitive Expeditions

#### MOHMAND, SHINWARI AND BAZAR EXPEDITIONS

ON the first day of the year 1879, Sir S. Browne held a Durbar at Jellalabad, at which Cavagnari explained to a few, by no means very representative Afghan Chiefs, the reasons which had led the British Government to go to war with Shere Ali, and its intentions towards the tribes with whom, in the course of certain military operations, it must come into temporary contact. Those reasons embraced all the impugments of the Amir's character and conduct which figure in Lord Lytton's Despatches, with the addition of the entirely new charge of having put to death, mutilated, imprisoned, or fined all persons whom he suspected of supplying the British authorities with information as to the state of Afghan affairs. There exists no official or private confirmation of this charge which has, therefore, no more claim to credence than hundreds of other rumours, most of them palpably false, which were put into circulation by the enemies of Shere Ali after the withdrawal of the Native Envoy from Kabul; but to appreciate its value, if true, it must be understood that, in the East, so-called news-agents are simply spies, who earn large rewards by a trade which men in all countries carry on with the fear of death before their eyes. To Cavagnari's auditors, however, it mattered

little whether this or any other accusation brought against the Amir was true or false, since none of them would strike them as reflecting on his character ; even the distinction drawn by the Viceroy's proclamation between the Sovereign and the people of Afghanistan had little interest for them, for they knew that, whatever the action of the tribes, as tribes, the conduct of the British Forces towards them would be determined, in part, by the latter's need of their neutrality, in part, by the acts of individual tribesmen whose predatory instincts, stimulated by opportunity, might at any moment embroil them with these would-be well-wishers and friends. Nevertheless, by the mouth of Abdul Khalik, Khan of Besud, the assembled Chiefs accepted Cavagnari's enumeration of their Sovereign's misdeeds, denounced the oppression which they themselves had suffered at his hands, and expressed their thankfulness for the prospect of the even-handed justice and kindness which the arrival of the British in their districts was to ensure to them.

The relations between the Mohmands, the tribe to which Abdul Khalik belonged, and the British troops, had been peaceful ever since Mahomed Shah, the Khan of Lalpura, had paid his respects to Sir S. Browne at Dakka ; for though Moghal Khan of Goshta, the Chief second to him in authority, had held aloof from the British authorities, he had not shown himself openly hostile. That those relations should remain peaceful was of vital importance to a Force whose communications, separated from Mohmand territory only by the Kabul River, lay for forty-two miles open to attack ; yet, eleven days after the Durbar, they were disturbed by a punitive Expedition, the first of many which were to prove a source of anxiety to the Commander, and of worry and fatigue to the troops. The occasion for the expedition was an attack made by some hillmen on a lowland village ; the raiders and the raided alike were Mohmands. The incident was an entirely domestic one, calling for no foreign interference ; but Cavagnari saw in it an opportunity for putting pressure on Moghal Khan, who was



suspected of having instigated the outrage,<sup>1</sup> and at his request a small force, under the command of Brigadier-General Jenkins, consisting of two guns, Hazara Mountain Battery, fifty men of the Guide Cavalry and three hundred of the Guide Infantry, crossed the river, surprised the village of Shergarh, where the raiders were supposed to be hidden, and failing to capture the offenders, carried off as prisoners the headmen who had given them shelter, and had possibly connived at their offence, and sent them prisoners to Peshawar.

On the 24th of January, a punitive Expedition, consisting of three hundred and fifty men, drawn from the 17th Foot, the Rifles, 4th Gurkhas, Guide Cavalry and Sappers, and commanded by Lieutenant Colonel A. H. Utterson, entered Shinwari territory to avenge the death of the regimental Bheestie of the 17th. The column surrounded and burned the villages of Nikoti and Raja Miani, killed five men who tried to escape, and returned to camp with seventy prisoners and two hundred head of cattle, and some sheep and mules. The latter seem to have been retained; the former, except two who were believed to be implicated in the murder, were soon released.

Between these two incursions into tribal territory, an expedition of a far more serious character had been planned and begun. The invasion of the Bazar Valley, in the month of December, had exasperated instead of cowering the Afridis, who had seized the opportunity afforded them by the absence of some of the best troops of the 2nd Division, to cut telegraph wires, attack small detachments and ill-guarded convoys, fire into standing camps, and temporarily close the pass. Their depredations were checked by the return of the punitive Force, and after a while they were coaxed or threatened into tranquillity, with the exception of the Zakka Khel who continued to give trouble whenever they saw the chance.

<sup>1</sup> Moghal Khan was also suspected of being concerned in the death of two camel-men belonging to the Jellalabad Force, who were murdered about this time, but there was no proof of his complicity—none, even, that the murderers were Mohmands: they may just as well have been Shinwaris.

Early in January, an important step had been taken in the direction of efficiency and economy by the appointment of Lieutenant-Colonel Charles M. Macgregor, an Officer of great energy and experience, to the charge of the communications between Jumrud and Jellalabad. So far, Brown's and Maude's independence of each other had extended to their supply and transport; now, in all that regarded these departments, Macgregor became a connecting link between them, and in that character was able to smooth away difficulties, diminish friction, and arrange for a more equitable distribution of work between the 1st and 2nd Divisions.<sup>1</sup> The new Officer in command of communications quickly discovered the insecure state of the Khyber, and at once wrote direct to Cavagnari recommending a second invasion of the Bazar Valley, and the occupation both of it and the adjoining Bara Valley till the complete submission of the Zakka Khel had been obtained. The suggestion fell in so entirely with Cavagnari's own aims, that he hastened to draw up a memorandum setting forth the reasons for the proposed expedition, and calling upon General Maude to arrange for its despatch. That Commander's task had not grown lighter since his return from Bazar. Every day, men were breaking down from exposure and over-work, and the duties which had to be performed by those who kept off the sick-list, became, proportionally, heavier. Reinforcements were urgently needed to bring the 2nd Division up to full working strength, and when, instead of additional troops, he received an invitation to divert a large part of his already over-taxed Force from work which could not for a moment be lessened or put aside, to an undertaking of unknown magnitude and duration, his astonishment and displeasure were very great. Whatever his feelings, however, he kept them to himself, and, in obedience to the instructions he had received to act in conformity with the wishes

<sup>1</sup> Macgregor had seen a great deal of active service, and in the famine of 1874 he had filled the important post of Director of Transport. He had an efficient assistant in Major J. D. Dyson-Laurie.

of the political authorities, he lost no time in considering how he could best fulfil the Political Officer's clearly implied desire. On the 15th of January he telegraphed to Colonel C. C. Johnson, Quarter-master-General in India, recapitulating the substance of Cavagnari's memorandum, and stating that, with the Commander-in-Chief's sanction, he intended to carry out the suggestions it contained with two columns from his own Division, the one starting from Jumrud, the other from Ali Masjid, in conjunction with a Force from Basawal, under Brigadier-General Tytler; each column to visit the villages that lay within reach of its line of march, so that the concentration of the troops would not take place till the fifth day. Once concentrated, he thought that three days would suffice to complete the work which had to be done in the Bazar Valley, but that as regarded the operations in Bara, he was not yet in a position to form any plan, and could only say that he thought the Force he intended to employ would be equal to any demands that might be made upon it.

Though General Maude had wisely refrained from hazarding an opinion as to the length of time that would be required to execute the second part of his programme, it was clear to him, and ought to have been equally clear to the authorities at Headquarters, that it would take longer to penetrate into and subdue Bara, an utterly unknown country, further removed from the invading Army's base, than to overrun Bazar for the second time; yet the Government's sanction to the scheme was clogged by the extraordinary proviso that the time devoted to the whole expedition was not to exceed ten days, accompanied by the contradictory comment that the Commander-in-Chief thought three days too short a time to do the work needed in Bazar. General Maude felt strongly that the imposition of a time-limit on a Military Commander was absolutely unprecedented, and that, in this particular case, it must result in placing him in a position of great perplexity, since it virtually vetoed a part of the plan which had professedly been sanctioned in its entirety; but being unwilling to "foreshadow

difficulties," he accepted the decision of the Government, and did his best to make the short campaign as successful and complete as possible.

The Jumrud column, consisting of twelve hundred and thirty-five men of all ranks, commanded by the Lieutenant-General in person, started on the 24th of January, and followed the road by the Khyber stream which runs, at first, through Kuka Khel territory. Here no opposition was met with, the tribe being classed as "friendly," and having been warned by Captain Tucker that armed men were not to show themselves. This column spent the first night in the bed of the river—below the Shudanna tower, and the second, at Barakas, where it was joined by the baggage-camels of the Ali Masjid Force. The baggage-party had been fired on, about a mile from camp, and, after dusk, shots were fired into the camp itself.

The Ali Masjid column, under Brigadier-General Appleyard, advanced by the Alachai road to Karamna, where it effected a junction with the 6th Native Infantry, under Colonel G. H. Thompson, which had marched the same morning from Lundi Kotal. The Force, now numbering twelve hundred and five officers and men, blew up the towers of Karamna, and on the following day those of Burj, at which village it was met by a detachment from the Jumrud column, and then entered the Bazar Valley and joined General Maude. Tytler's column, twelve hundred and eighty-three strong, which had to cross the Sisobi Pass, did not arrive till the afternoon of the 27th. Whilst waiting for it to appear, General Maude sent out three hundred men, under Colonel Ruddell, to scour China, and a detachment of Cavalry, under Lieutenant-Colonel R. G. Low, 13th Bengal Lancers, to the west of that hill to cut off fugitives; also three hundred men, under Major E. B. Burnaby, to clear the hills to the south-east of the valley, from which the rear-guard had been harassed the previous day. On China, a few Zakka Khel were found and killed; but Burnaby's party did not come into contact with the enemy. When the concentration

of his troops had been accomplished, Maude moved the united Force to a strong position in the centre of the valley, out of range of the hills—a necessary precaution, as the Zakka Khel had already shown unmistakably that they had no intention of submitting tamely to this second invasion of their territory; baggage had been attacked, rear-guards harassed and camps kept on the alert at night by constant firing. Perhaps the clearest proof of their determination to offer a stubborn resistance to the advance of the expedition, was to be read in the fact that, in the Bazar Valley, all the villages were found in flames, fired by the hands of their own inhabitants. Foreseeing such a catastrophe, and anxious to avert it, Captain Tucker had instructed Malik Khwas, the Zakka Khel Chief of evil repute whom the tribe had been ordered to accept as its head, to assure his clansmen that their dwellings would be spared. Possibly Malik Khwas never gave the message; possibly he gave it and was not believed; whatever the truth of the matter, the Political Assistant's humane intentions were frustrated.

On the 28th of January, General Maude reconnoitred in person the Bukhar Pass, through which runs the road to Bara. Tytler was in command of the covering party, fortunately a strong one—a thousand men of all arms—as the enemy held every hill-top on the line of advance, from which they had successively to be driven, and they followed up the troops as they retired, to within two miles of the camp. The next morning, when Colonel G. H. Thompson led a detachment to Hulwai, to blow up the towers of that village, the tribesmen showed in much greater numbers, and Lieutenant-Colonel Low, who was sent out with a squadron of his regiment to look for a site with water suitable for a camp near the Bara Pass, found the hills beyond the point to which General Maude had penetrated the previous day, occupied by strong parties. All this showed that the numbers of the enemy were daily increasing, and pointed to the probability that neighbouring tribes were coming to the help of the Zakka Khel, though Major Cavagnari

had positively asserted that nothing of the kind would occur. Bearing in mind that five days of his allotted time had already expired, and fearing that the invasion of Bara would be the signal for a general rising of the Afridis, the extreme inopportuneness of which, at this particular juncture, he could well appreciate—General Maude, though doing full justice to the energy of Captain Tucker, judged that, before proceeding further, he ought to have the opinion of an older and more experienced Political Officer; and he therefore sent a telegram to Major Cavagnari asking him to come at once to the Bazar Valley. But Cavagnari was busy at Jellalabad with work which he deemed more important, and declined to comply with the summons; ridiculing in his telegraphic answer the idea of an Afridi war, and referring the General back to Captain Tucker for advice on all political matters. Maude, however, whose views on the gravity of the situation were shared by Brigadier-General Tytler and Colonel Macgregor, both men well versed in frontier affairs, was no longer inclined to allow the movements of his Force to be decided for him by an officer of Captain Tucker's standing, and he therefore resolved to lay the question of the invasion of Bara before the Indian Government. If he had felt any doubts about taking this step, they must have been dispelled by the receipt of a circular letter from the Quartermaster-General in India, dated the 26th of January, and addressed to him—General Maude—by name, in which he was reminded of the terms of the Viceroy's proclamation of the 21st of November, 1878, requested to bear in mind that "the British Government had declared war, not against the people of Afghanistan and the adjoining tribes, but against the Amir and his troops," and desired to use his best endeavours to avoid unnecessary collisions with the tribes and other inhabitants of the country, and to render its occupation as little burdensome to them as possible, "for the British Government was anxious to remain on friendly terms with the people of Afghanistan."

Such a letter, reaching a Commander in the midst of a punitive Expedition against one of these very adjoining tribes—an Expedition sanctioned only seven days earlier by the Government which now, by implication, condemned it—must necessarily compel him to ask for definite instructions ; and this General Maude accordingly did in the following outspoken telegram :—

“ 1. 30th January, 1879, from General Maude to Quartermaster-General and Viceroy.

“ Your letter 327H, 26th inst., was received last evening, directing me to use my utmost endeavours to avoid provoking unnecessary collisions with the Tribes.

“ 2. In my telegram to you, dated 15th inst., I proposed, at Major Cavagnari's suggestion, to visit Bazar, Bara and other villages.

“ 3. I proposed on the 8th day, should my information be sufficient to proceed to Bara, an unknown place. The number of days required to embrace the execution of my plans could not be named on account of want of information, which could only be obtained after my arrival here, but it evidently embraced from sixteen to twenty days. In reply I was informed that the Government sanctioned my being out for ten days only.

“ 4. I conclude Government fixed ten days to cut short the extent of my programme, and as your 327H throws all the responsibility of collisions with the Tribes on me, and as every time my troops proceed from camp one mile in any direction, they come into collision with the Tribes, and at night my pickets round the camp are attacked by them, I require specific instructions as to my future proceedings, whether I am to force my way to Bara against such opposition as I may meet.

“ 5. The report of my reconnoissance on the 28th, will have informed you of the opposition I am likely to meet. Yesterday, further

reconnaissances showed the enemy to be on the alert in every direction.

“6. I am ready and willing to carry out any orders I may be entrusted with, but I decline, at the suggestion of a Political Officer, making a raid into a country which I am instructed to avoid provoking unnecessary collision with, unless I receive distinct orders to that effect from competent authority. I wait here for orders.”

The answer to this telegram was not received till the 2nd of February, and meantime circumstances had occurred which obliged Maude to settle the matter for himself. On the 30th, Captain Tucker, who hitherto had maintained that only the Zakka Khel were assembled to dispute the British advance, informed the General that members of other tribes were present with them, some from a considerable distance, thus confirming the opinion of the Military Officers that the resistance of the inhabitants of a single valley might grow into a great Afridi war. It subsequently transpired that detachments from the Kuki Khel, Aka Khel, Kambar Khel, Malik Din Khel, and Sipah Afridis, as well as from the Sangu Khel Shinwaris and the Orakzais, were assembled in the Bara Passes. This information was brought in by Jemadar Yussin Khan, who, with Subadars Said Mahomet, Sultan Jan and Kazi Afzal, had been sent out by Captain Tucker to try to establish friendly relations with the headmen of Bazar, an attempt in which they met with unexpected success. As a first result of their representations there was no firing into the camps on the night of the 30th, and on the 31st, the Jirga of the Zakka Khel of Bazar came into camp, followed, on the 1st of February, by the Jirga of the Zakka Khel of Bara. Whilst the Political Officer was busy negotiating with these representative bodies, the camels, which had been sent back to Ali Masjid for fresh supplies, returned, bringing only half the quantity expected, and General Maude saw himself compelled to place his British troops on half rations; and—a still more serious matter so far as the question of a further advance was concerned—Sir S. Browne



alarmed by a rumour that the Mohmands and Bajauris were to make a simultaneous attack on Jellalabad and Dakka, on the 7th of February, telegraphed an urgent request for the return of Tytler's troops. Now, as the Letter of Instructions which directed Maude "to act in conformity with the views of the political authorities," also ordered him "to strengthen troops in advance, if required"—i.e. Sir S. Browne's Division—this telegram imposed upon him the necessity of coming to an immediate and definite decision on the very point which he had referred to Government; for to let Tytler's Brigade go, was to abandon the Expedition, which could certainly not be carried further without its co-operation in the face of the formidable opposition that was developing. When it came to be a question between the safety of the 1st Division and the desire of Major Cavagnari to see Bara invaded, Maude was not likely to hesitate. He telegraphed to Browne that Tytler's Brigade should return to Dakka in time, and he informed Captain Tucker that no further advance was possible. That Officer seems, for the time being, to have been quite in accord with the General as to the wisdom of bringing the Expedition to a speedy end; anxious even to take the credit of the withdrawal to himself, since he wrote as follows in a letter to Maude, dated Camp Bazar, 2nd of February:—

"I myself think that a more lengthened occupation of the valley will arouse much irritation, and suggest that the Army which has now been here a full week, should march to-morrow, the Afridis undertaking to supply escorts whose business it will be to see that no attack is made on the retiring columns. I am led to recommend this—firstly, on *account of the risk of a collision with other Pathan Tribes*, which I believe Government is anxious to avoid; and secondly, on account of the threatened attack on Dakka and Jellalabad, and necessity of weakening the Force by sending back General Tytler's Brigade which Sir S. Browne has recalled.

“ I have, therefore, felt myself bound to make a somewhat hasty settlement, but I trust it may, nevertheless, be lasting.”

This hasty settlement was based on the restitution of some camels stolen by the Zakka Khel in recent raids in the Khyber, and an undertaking on their part to send two representatives to Jellalabad to lay before Major Cavagnari their claim to a portion of the subsidy promised by the Indian Government to all tribes possessing land in the Passes ; and even these tokens of submission were qualified by the declaration of the headmen that “ they were unable long to restrain the mixed inhabitants of the country from acts of hostility.” This warning probably referred to the state of things then existing in the Bazar Valley, but it contained a truth of wider application. Among all the independent Tribes the power of the Chiefs is small, the licence claimed, or exercised by individuals, very large. As a clan, the Zakka Khel had at no time opposed the British occupation of the Khyber, but bold and stirring spirits among them had been busy cutting telegraph wires, plundering convoys, and murdering camp-followers ; and this they were likely to do on every favourable opportunity, whatever arrangements their headmen might come to with the British Political Officers.

On the 2nd of February, when terms had been settled and the return of the three columns fixed for the morrow, General Maude received from the Quartermaster-General the following answer to his telegram asking for explicit orders :—

“ The instructions of Government regarding avoiding collision with people of Afghanistan are accepted as general and applicable more particularly to tribes which have hitherto been directly under Afghan rule. Your Expedition was undertaken entirely on the advice of the local and political authorities with a view of more efficiently controlling the Khyber and its Tribes. Mr. Macnabb, invested with

full political authority, has been directed to join you at once, and, on consultation with him, you are left entirely free to act on your own judgment in carrying out the intention for which the Expedition was planned.”

No better man than Donald Macnabb could have been selected to assist General Maude with his counsel and influence, and it was reasonable that the latter, after consultation with his new adviser, should be accorded complete freedom “to act on his own judgment in carrying out the intention for which the Expedition was planned”; but the adviser and the permission came too late: the time-limit and the recall of Tytler’s Brigade, between them, had killed the Expedition; and though the former was now virtually cancelled, it would have been a breach of faith to persist in entering Bara after an agreement had been come to with its inhabitants. So, early on the 3rd of February, the Force broke up, each column returning to its starting-place. On the 4th, General Maude met Mr. Macnabb at Ali Masjid, and had the satisfaction of hearing from his own lips that he considered the solution arrived at satisfactory under the circumstances; whilst on the 5th, the telegraph brought him the assurance of the full approval of the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>1</sup>

There were no engagements to which names can be given, in the Second Bazar Expedition, any more than in the First; but there was constant skirmishing, in which five men were killed, and one Officer, Lieutenant H. R. L. Holmes, and seventeen men were wounded.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The same day Maude received a letter from Macnabb, in which he wrote that he was sure the Government would be very glad that the Bazar Expedition terminated without a serious collision with the Afridis, for he had got a telegram, on returning home the previous night, saying that they particularly wanted to avoid anything of the kind, if consistent with military exigencies.

<sup>2</sup> “It is highly interesting to note the result of this short Expedition, without tents, on the Khyber Hills. The 17th were a singularly fit regiment, and for

The loss in life to the Zakka Khel was far larger, and much suffering must have been inflicted on the women and children of the Bazar Valley by their hasty flight to the hills in mid-winter.

In his report to Government of the 13th of February, General Maude, whilst admitting that "the operations in Bazar did not afford the troops opportunities for the display of much gallantry," claimed that "both Officers and men showed themselves possessed of high military qualities," and that "all ranks gave proof of the greatest anxiety to meet the enemy on all occasions"; and he spoke warmly of the "gallant and devoted spirit of those of the men who ran the gauntlet of the enemy carrying letters. It was in rescuing one of these, that Lieutenant R. C. Hart, Royal Engineers, won the Victoria Cross whilst serving with a Company of the 24th Native Infantry, under Captain E. Stedman, engaged in covering the rear of the convoy of supplies that arrived in camp on the 31st of January. The convoy had cleared the hills and entered on the plain, when, half a mile in its rear, post-runners, escorted by troopers of the 13th Bengal Cavalry, came cantering down the defile, and were fired on by the Afridis who had been lying in wait for the convoy, but had not dared to attack it. The sound of shots attracted the attention of the covering party, and, looking back, they saw one of the troopers lying wounded on the ground, and some twenty Afridis rushing down the hill towards him. Lieutenant Hart instantly ran to the assistance of the defenceless man, followed by Captain Stedman and six men. He so completely outstripped them that when he reached the trooper, whom the Afridis had already surrounded and were slashing with their knives, he was alone. At his approach the murderers ran off to a little distance and opened fire; but Hart had already dragged several days after their return did excellently well; but when the excitement passed off, the wear and tear and the exposure to the biting cold began to tell, and 31 cases of pneumonia resulted, with 11 deaths."—"Recollections of the Afghan Campaign of 1878, 1879, and 1880," by Surgeon-Major J. H. Evatt, *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, 1890, vol. xix. No. 82.

the wounded man behind a rock, where the two remained till Captain Stedman and his party came up and drove off the enemy. The trooper died whilst being carried into camp.

## OBSERVATIONS

**OBSERVATION I.** The first Expedition recorded in this chapter was uncalled for and unwise. By interfering in the domestic quarrels of the Mohmands, Cavagnari turned the whole tribe into enemies, and compelled Sir S. Browne to waste the strength of his troops in exhausting and futile operations.<sup>1</sup>

**OBSERVATION II.** There was good ground for the Expedition against the Shinwaris, but no excuse for burning down two of their villages, and turning their women and children adrift in midwinter. The proper punishments to be inflicted on a community which, by refusing to surrender a criminal, associates itself with his crime, are (*a*) fines ; (*b*) confiscation of arms ; (*c*) the blowing up of towers. These fall directly on the men of the tribes, and only indirectly affect its women and children. The two former penalties have the advantage of being revocable, for the hope of obtaining their full or partial remission may sometimes lead the tribal authorities to the act of submission originally demanded of them.

**OBSERVATION III.** The Second Bazar Expedition, like the First, was admirably planned, with one exception, for which General Maude cannot be held responsible—namely, the unsupported advance of Tytler's force from the distant bases of Dakka and Basawal, through a wild hill-country, where, had the enemy possessed a spark of military ability, it might easily have been overwhelmed. This movement was arranged by Cavagnari with Sir S. Browne, but its real authors were the Viceroy and his Government, who kept the 2nd Division so

<sup>1</sup> The relations between Cavagnari and Sir S. Browne are somewhat obscure. Nominally, the latter had been invested with full political powers ; practically, they would seem to have been exercised entirely by the former, who corresponded direct with the Government of India.

weak that its Commander had not sufficient troops to carry out single-handed the behests of the Political Officer to whom they had subordinated him. The Reconnaissance of the 28th of January was also an excellent military movement. The covering party, whilst not so numerous as unduly to weaken the camp, was large enough to enable General Maude to force his way, against strong opposition, to a point from which he could get a view of the passes into Bara, and to feel the strength of the enemy, knowledge without which he would have been unable to form a true estimate of the opposition that he must expect if the advance into Bara were persisted in.

OBSERVATION IV. The two Bazar Expeditions were merely episodes in the Khyber campaign, but episodes which deserved to be told in detail; partly, because, as military operations, they were conducted on right principles, with a due regard to the fact that Bazar was an enemy's country, praise which must be denied to much of the strategy and the tactics displayed in both phases of the war; partly, for the sake of several points which they suggest for consideration. The first of these is the vexed question of the relations between Military Commanders and Political Officers, a question which they go far to settle, since they are an object-lesson in the disadvantages and dangers of divided authority. Here was General Maude, a man of mature years, of great experience and ability, burdened with responsibility for the safety of the communications of the whole Khyber Force—compelled to take his orders from men, his inferiors in age, standing and experience. Bound by the Letter of Instructions, which he had received immediately after assuming the command of the 2nd Division, he carried out with singular loyalty the schemes of the Political Officers; but how inopportune, how foolish such raids into outlying valleys must have appeared to him, may be gathered from the fact that during the whole time occupied by the second Expedition he had to leave many of the guards and pickets in the Khyber standing, reliefs not being available. Maude knew the hard work his troops had

to perform, and the hardships to which they were subjected, for he had to take daily anxious thought for their health and efficiency. Major Cavagnari was ignorant of these matters, and indifferent to them. Altogether absorbed in his own schemes, he seems never to have asked himself—"Is the 2nd Division strong enough in numbers, strong enough in health, to be able to spare a thousand, or two thousand, men for a week, or a fortnight, or a month, or whatever the length of time necessary to occupy the Bazar and Bara Valleys *until all opposition is at an end?*" And what were the objects which he deemed sufficiently important to justify him in weakening the communications of an Army, and doubling the work of overtaxed troops? The Expeditions were intended to bring about the submission of the Zakka Khel, to avenge "*outrages committed by them during a period of over half a century,*" and to strengthen the Political Officer's arrangements with the Khyber Afridis. It is not too much to say that no man who had to bear both the political and the military responsibility for his actions, would have engaged in either Expedition on any such grounds. Feeling the heavy pressure of the present, he would have had no room in his mind for the petty offences of the past, and he would have trusted to severe and summary measures in the Khyber to keep the Zakka Khel and all the robber tribes in order. What was really wanted to check their raids—and beyond this there was no need for their submission to go—was not punitive expeditions to Bazar or Bara, or any other valley whose inhabitants had a natural hereditary tendency to possess themselves of other people's camels; but sufficient regiments in the Pass to make camel-raiding an altogether dangerous amusement. Yet General Maude, from whom so much was expected, asked in vain for a regiment to replace the 81st Foot which he had had to send back to India "*saturated with malaria.*" Political Officers are useful and necessary to furnish the General to whose force they are attached, with information and advice, supposing them to know the country in which war is being waged, better than he does, and to act as

intermediaries between him and its inhabitants ; but when it comes to military measures, great or small, only he who will be held accountable for their failure, should they fail, can justly be invested with the power to initiate, control, and end them. There may be safety in many counsellors, but there is nothing but weakness and blundering to be got out of many heads. In the field, a Commander should be an autocrat ; if a bad one, the remedy is not to give him a civilian, or, what is worse, a comparatively junior Military Officer as his master, but to recall him, and put a better man in his place.

The second point raised by the Bazar Expeditions is the wisdom of taking the Khyber tribes into some form of alliance with the Indian Government. Major Cavagnari seems to have been fairly satisfied with the arrangements made with them, but they amounted to very little, and the good got out of them could have been obtained in a much simpler and cheaper way. Had there been a really efficient British Force between Dakka and Peshawar, there would have been no need for this elaborate system of holding the passes through their own tribes, a system which kept them constantly on the skirts of the army, and gave them the opportunities of thieving, under pretext of protecting. An extra British or Native regiment would have been worth far more to the safety of Browne's communications than three hundred and thirty-five Jezailchies, and a handful of treacherous Chowkidars.

The third point which the Bazar Expeditions suggest for consideration, is the question why the Government which subordinated a General Commanding in the field to a Political Officer, and trusted so blindly to that Officer's judgment and knowledge that it took no trouble to form any opinion as to the justice and good sense of his schemes, but actually desired General Maude to attack Chura—a friendly village<sup>1</sup>—or any other locality at his bidding—why this Government did not

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter V.



choose the best man so fill so invidious a position. It is impossible that the Viceroy and his Council should not have known that Mr. Donald Macnabb was, of all men living in India at that time, the one most conversant with Border affairs, and possessed of most influence with the Border Tribes. He was a civilian of long experience, of ripe judgment—too well known in India to require to advertise himself by showy undertakings; too well known to the Afridis to need to fear that, in him, moderation and patience could be mistaken for weakness and timidity. If General Maude was to have a superior, that superior should have been the Civilian Commissioner of Peshawar, not the Military Deputy Commissioner, with his soldier's instincts still strong within him, and no military responsibility to hold them in check; a man whom Lord Lytton's favour had suddenly raised into notice, and who was, not unnaturally, eager to achieve such personal distinction as should justify his elevation. Then why was Macnabb left at Peshawar, and Cavagnari appointed Political Officer in the Khyber? The answer is not far to seek. Macnabb was known to disagree with the Afghan policy of the Viceroy, whilst Cavagnari was its enthusiastic supporter. So the comparatively untried man went to the front, and the tried man was kept in the background, till the former having brought the Government face to face with danger, the latter was asked to conjure it away. Fortunately, Macnabb's services were not required in Bazar, and it was only in April, when Cavagnari was sent to Gandamak to negotiate a treaty with Yakub Khan, that the management of affairs in the Khyber fell into the hands of the man who ought to have been entrusted with them from the beginning.

Lastly, it is worth noting that these Bazar Expeditions, though avowedly punitive in their nature, and directed against a tribe that really had been guilty of offences against us, were not stained by any acts of wanton cruelty. The reports both of General Maude and of Captain Tucker bear witness to the fact that, where the destruction of villages is spoken of, nothing more was meant than the blowing up

of the towers which are their defence. The only houses burned were those to which the inhabitants themselves set fire ; and, though large stores of boosa and grain were destroyed, or seized for the use of the troops, there was none of that injuring of fruit-trees and blowing up of wells which inflict permanent injury on a district. Judged both from the political and the military standpoint, there should have been no Bazar Expeditions ; but since they were undertaken, it is a satisfaction to be able to say of them, that they were conducted in a manner which reflects no discredit on the humanity of the authorities concerned.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### Alarms and Excursions

THE reports of the 28th of January, which had obliged Sir S. Browne to ask for the return of Tytler's Force, were of a very disquieting nature. Mohmands and Bajauris were said to have fraternized; the Mir Akhor, assisted by local mullas, was preaching a Jihad amongst the Shinwaris and Ghilzais; <sup>1</sup> whilst the Lagmani had already given proof of their ill-will by firing on British reconnoitring parties. On the 2nd of February came news that twenty thousand armed Mohmands and other tribesmen had been actually seen in the mountainous country near the Kunar River, and that the friends of the headmen captured at Shergarh were inciting them to attack Jellalabad. At first, Browne contented himself with sending out reconnoitring parties in all directions, and with strengthening his own position which was far from strong—for a cluster of villages commanded his commissariat lines, and

<sup>1</sup> “The Ghilzais may, roughly speaking, be said to inhabit the country bounded by Khelat-i-Ghilzai and Poli on the south, the Gulkoh range on the west, the Suliman on the east and the Kabul River on the north. In many places they overflow these boundaries, as to the east, they come down into the tributaries of the Gomal, and, on the north, they in many places cross the Kabul River and extend to the east, along its course, at least as far as Jellalabad. This country is about 300 miles long and 100 miles broad in its southern portion, and 35 miles in the northern.” (SIR CHARLES MACGREGOR.)

Broadfoot estimated the number of the Ghilzais at 100,000 families, and Masson put down their fighting strength at 35,000 to 50,000 men. On the approach of danger the men hastily gather together their flocks, take up strong positions on the hills behind stone walls, and fight well, their women-folk bringing them ammunition, food and water, and not infrequently fighting by their side.

gardens which might afford good shelter to an enemy, lay between his camp and the town; but the time had come for assuming the offensive when, on the 6th, Captain W. North, who commanded the Sappers at Gidi Kach, on the right bank of the Kabul River, ten miles from Jellalabad, telegraphed that, on the opposite bank, five thousand footmen and fifty horsemen had passed within eye-shot of that post. The British Commander's plans were quickly made, and, very early next day, he sent out Macpherson, with four guns, Hazara Mountain Battery, and twelve hundred men, consisting of one troop 10th Hussars, one squadron 11th Bengal Lancers, one wing 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade, one wing 4th Gurkhas, one wing 20th Punjab Infantry, and two companies 1st Sikh Infantry, to attack the raiders. At the same time, he despatched Colonel Charles Gough to watch the fords at Ali Boghan, with two guns F. C. Royal Horse Artillery, a squadron of the 10th Hussars, and one of the 11th Bengal Lancers, and ordered Tytler, with three guns 11-9 Royal Artillery, a squadron of the Guide Cavalry, and a wing of the 1-17th Foot to move up the river from Basawal to Chardeh, opposite Goshta, through which place the enemy were known to have passed, with a view to intercepting them, should they try to retrace their steps.

Macpherson crossed the Kabul River by the new trestle bridge, and sent forward his Cavalry, supported by the 20th Punjab Infantry, to seize some high ground on the further side of the Kunar river, with the object of surprising the Mohmands and cutting off their retreat from Shergarh and the neighbouring villages; their advance, however, was checked by numerous irrigation-channels and retarded by the boggy nature of the ground,<sup>1</sup> and when, at last, the river was reached, its channel proved to be so wide, its current so swift, that the Commanding officer wisely decided not to attempt to cross it in the dark. In the interval, the Infantry, unencumbered by baggage and doolies which,

<sup>1</sup> Many of the mounted men slipped into the bog and were with difficulty drawn out again.

under a strong escort, had been left to follow, came up, and at dawn the whole Force was thrown across the stream—not without many accidents, though none of them, fortunately, of a fatal character ;<sup>1</sup> but the enemy had got wind of its approach, and had disappeared, leaving only a few men to cover their retreat. The 10th Hussars, with their Martini-Henry carbines, got a few shots at this rear-guard, whose position was betrayed by the glittering of its weapons, and Major E. J. de Lautour's mountain-guns dislodged another small party from a higher peak beyond ; but the main body had secured too good a start to be overtaken, and so the Cavalry, after a pursuit of some miles, turned back, and joined by the guns and the 1st Sikhs, returned the same day to Jellalabad. The rest of the Infantry bivouacked in a raging north wind, and the next morning Macpherson himself superintended its re-passage of the Kunar River, which was again effected without loss of life, though several men were carried off their feet, and many rendered nearly insensible by the intense cold of waters which flow direct from the great glaciers of the Hindu Kush.

As the tribesmen retired by a different route from that by which they had advanced, neither Tytler's nor Gough's co-operation was required ; but the former's column came in for its share of difficulties, for, after marching down to Chardah in the dark, and crossing three channels of the Kabul River, it was brought to a standstill by a fourth, which was too deep for the Infantry and guns. Major Battye, with the Cavalry, however, managed to get over, and reconnoitred to the foot of the hills, three miles away. No enemy was met with, but it was discovered that, the previous day, the invaders had attacked a group of villages called Maya, lying to the west of Goshta, one of which they had burned after killing and wounding a score of its defenders, a son of the Chief being among the dead.

The danger that had threatened Sir S. Browne's Forces had been for

<sup>1</sup> Three camp-followers and some mules that were carried away and reported drowned, were subsequently recovered and resuscitated.

a short time very grave, for later information left no doubt that the Mohmand raid was part of a scheme for an attack upon Jellalabad, planned by the Mir Akhor, in which the Mohmands and Bajauries, the Ghilzais, Shinwaris and Kujianis were to have taken part. The death of its author, who was accidentally killed before it could be put into execution, led to its abandonment, and Macpherson's Expedition broke up, for the time, the confederacy of the tribes, and relieved the pressure on Jellalabad and its communications. Other troubles, however, soon cropped up. Azmatulla, the chief of the northern section of the Ghilzais, was reported to be busy in the populous and fertile Lagman Valley, arranging for a fresh rising, and on the 22nd of February, Jenkins, with a small column, penetrated into and reconnoitred it for a distance of thirty miles. Crowds of armed men were seen, but they kept beyond the range of the British rifles, and though a number of headmen were seized and carried off as hostages for the good behaviour of their respective clans, Azmatulla and the Lagman Chief made good their escape. The intelligence that the eldest son of the Akhand of Swat, with a following of five thousand men, had entered Lalpura territory, and was trying to induce Mahomed Shah Khan to make common cause with him and the Afridis against the British, was not re-assuring; nor yet, the news that Yakub Khan was working hard to re-constitute the Afghan Army, and that the seven thousand Cavalry and twelve thousand Infantry, with sixty guns, already concentrated in and about Kabul and Ghazni, were in high spirits and eager to avenge the defeats of Ali Masjid and the Peiwar.

Each of these reports, emanating, as they all did, from Native sources, was accepted with large deductions; but, even after due allowance had been made for intentional, or natural exaggeration, the cumulative effect of so many was to add heavily to the burden of care borne by the British Commander, and to the labours and fatigues of his troops; yet, as if the dangers inevitably attendant on an occupation of tribal territory were not sufficiently numerous, the passion of the

Survey Department for adding to its knowledge of the topography of the country, gratuitously provoked others. Mr. G. B. Scott and his assistants when sketching near Michni Fort, on the 26th of February, were fiercely attacked by a number of hillmen, probably Mohmands. Scott, though a civilian, at once took command of the escort, consisting of twenty men of the 24th Punjab Infantry, and by his coolness and skill brought off his party, not, however, without loss, four of the escort being killed and two wounded.<sup>1</sup> Three weeks later, a similar incident occurred in Shinwari territory. A survey party, in charge of Captain E. P. Leach, escorted by a troop of the Guide Cavalry, under Lieutenant W. R. P. Hamilton, and a Company of the 45th Sikhs, commanded by Lieutenant F. M. Barclay, started on the 16th of March from Barikab, a British post midway between Basawal and Jellalabad, and encamped for the night near the village of Chilgazai. The next morning, leaving half his infantry and a few sabres to guard his camp, Leach pushed on to a hill lying about four miles to the south. On the further side of this hill, there is a group of villages called Maidanak, the inhabitants of which were thrown into a state of the wildest excitement at sight of the survey party and its escort. Swarming out

<sup>1</sup> "The Pathans have an inveterate hatred of the surveyor. They have an idea that Government sends a surveyor first, then an army. This is not the only time that Mr. Scott has been placed in the same predicament. In August 1868, when surveying the Khogam Valley, he was attacked by a large body of Cis-Indus Swatis. He was accompanied by a small escort of the 2nd Punjab Infantry (5th Gurkhas ?), who behaved in the most gallant manner, and though harassed for many miles by several hundreds of hillmen, he succeeded in beating them off and reached camp at Oghi without loss, though not without casualties. The men of the escort received substantial rewards; the Non-commissioned Officer in charge was decorated with the Order of Merit, and Mr. Scott received the warm acknowledgements of the Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence. It was rumoured that he was recommended for the Victoria Cross, but there were difficulties in the way which proved insuperable." (*Times* Correspondent, 8th of March, 1879.) The Sepoys on this occasion refused to leave Scott when he urged them to secure their own safety by abandoning him. The retreat to Oghi lasted several days.

of their houses like angry bees, they made a rush for some rising ground that commanded the eminence occupied by the intruders. In vain the Malik of Chilgazai was despatched to calm and reassure them, —they continued firing volley after volley. Barclay soon fell, dangerously wounded, and Leach, assuming command, ordered the handful of Infantry to fall back on the Cavalry which had been left with Hamilton at the foot of the hill. Instantly the villagers began gathering from all directions round the retreating troops, and one compact body of fifty men were advancing boldly to the attack, when Leach shouted to the Sikhs to fix bayonets, and, charging at their head, drove back the assailants. The hesitation which followed on this spirited counter-attack, lasted long enough to enable the survey party to rejoin the Cavalry; and, when once the escort was re-united, the villagers lost courage and ceased to pursue. Barclay succumbed to his wounds, and the gallant conduct of Leach who, in the charge, had received a severe cut from an Afghan knife, was brought by Sir S. Browne to the notice of the Commander-in-Chief, and rewarded by the bestowal of the Victoria Cross.<sup>1</sup>

Sir S. Browne, whose earnest desire it was to avoid an open rupture with the Shinwaris—a powerful, well armed clan, a portion of whose scattered territory commanded the left flank of his communications—was glad that the attack on Leach's party had been so clearly unpremeditated, and due to surprise and alarm as to call for no heavy punishment. Some notice he was obliged to take of it, but he instructed Tytler, to whom he committed the task of obtaining reparation, to avoid bloodshed, and to use no unnecessary severity. With four guns and twelve hundred men, Tytler marched quickly to Maidanak, blew up the towers, levied small fines on the villagers, and, thanks to the

<sup>1</sup> In recommending Captain Leach for this honour, Sir S. Browne wrote :—  
“ In this encounter Captain Leach killed three or four of the enemy himself, and he received a severe wound from an Afghan knife in the left arm. Captain Leach's determination and gallantry in this affair, in attacking and driving back from the last position, saved the whole party from annihilation.”



excellence of his dispositions and to the tact shown by Captain E. R. Conolly, the Assistant Political Officer attached to his force, returned to his Headquarters at Basawal without having fired a shot, though, from all the hills around, crowds of armed tribesmen had watched his proceedings. It was mortifying to find that, during his short absence, a convoy had been waylaid and plundered near Deh Sarak by the inhabitants of another group of Shinwari villages, and to have to enter at once on a second punitive Expedition.

Misled by his experience at Maidanak, Tytler, on this second occasion, took with him only seven hundred men and two guns. The start was made at 1 a.m. ; at daybreak, Mausam, the principal village of the offending group, came into sight. At the first glimpse he caught of its strong defences and commanding position, high up on a slope of the Safed Koh, with a great drainage line protecting it on either side, Tytler understood his mistake ; and his anxiety deepened when he saw the villagers hurrying to man the walls, and streaming through the gate to take up a position outside. From the high ground on which he had halted, he could see a troop of the 11th Bengal Lancers working up one of the nullahs, and in imminent danger of being cut off and overwhelmed. Hastily recalling them, he waited for the rest of his Force to come up, and then ordered the Infantry, under cover of the fire of the guns, to make a direct assault on the village, and sent Captain D. H. Thompson, with the Cavalry, to surprise the villagers collected on a plateau beyond it. Thompson carried out his instructions with promptitude and skill. Taking advantage of the accidents of the ground to conceal his movements, he crossed the nullah, circled round to his right, recrossed higher up and charged down upon the enemy, who, busily engaged in firing on the Infantry, had taken no heed of his approach.<sup>1</sup> Yet, though caught at unawares, the Shinwaris fired off their matchlocks, killing two men and wounding seven, before they broke and fled. The pursuit was short ; horses had no chance against

<sup>1</sup> Captain Thompson was highly commended for this gallant charge.

the nimble Afghans on a steep hillside, and the charge had effected its purpose. At sight of their friends' discomfiture, the men within the village, who had hitherto offered the most desperate resistance, abandoned their defences and fled ; all but a single man, who, for some time, continued to hold one of the towers and to keep the victors at bay. When he had been shot down, Mausam was in Tytler's hands, and he at once blew up its towers, as well as those of Darwaza, a neighbouring village whose people had fired on his rear-guard, and promptly began his retreat. The moment the troops were seen to be retiring, the men of Mausam rallied and became, in their turn, the assailants. By this time, the news of the British invasion had spread far and wide, and large reinforcements came hurrying up, many of the newcomers being inhabitants of Maidanak, eager to avenge the punishment to which a few days previously they had had to submit. All in all, Tytler reckoned that on that day he had had to deal with three thousand tribesmen ; and, though many of them were only armed with matchlocks and swords, their courage and determination and their skill in taking shelter made them formidable foes. So great was the peril, that only a General possessing the entire confidence of his men could have brought them safely through it. That confidence Tytler had won for himself ; and, secure in the certainty that he had nothing to fear from panic, he écheloned the Cavalry on his flanks, and coolly retired his Infantry by alternate lines, halting the whole Force, from time to time, to bring the guns into action against the enemy, pressing in upon his flanks and rear with such boldness that, at one point, they came within eighty yards of the troops. This running fight was maintained for nearly ten miles until, on high ground under the walls of Pesh Bolak, Tytler's men found safety, and the enemy drew off into the adjacent hills. In this expedition the British loss was only two killed and twelve wounded, but the Shinwaris buried one hundred and sixty men the following day, and they must have had at least three hundred wounded. Tytler had only been twenty-four hours away from his

Headquarters, and yet, in that brief interval, men of the same tribe had made a serious raid on his communications, in which two men of the 17th Foot were killed, and forty-four camels carried off.

## OBSERVATION

Tytler's column was badly constituted, as well as dangerously weak. In addition to the guns, it consisted of detachments drawn from no less than six regiments:—

11th Bengal Lancers . . .	1 squadron.
13th Bengal Lancers . . .	1 troop.
1/5 Foot . . . . .	2 companies.
1/17th Foot . . . . .	2 companies.
27th Punjab Infantry . . .	$\frac{1}{2}$ a company.
2nd Gurkhas . . . . .	$\frac{1}{2}$ a company.

The system of mixing up men of a variety of regiments is vicious in principle, as, so constituted, a Force lacks cohesion owing to the multiplication of Commanding Officers, and the fact that the different units have not been accustomed to work together. This faulty organization was of frequent occurrence during the war, on all three lines of advance. Sometimes it was unavoidable when, as in the case under review, the troops destined for an Expedition were scattered on the line of communication, though a better disposition of them on that line, with a view to such a contingency, might have been made. In the Peninsular War, the rule was that a company, or a troop, was to be regarded as the smallest unit for detached duty, and, if any increase was necessary, such increase was not to be less than the prescribed unit. In Afghanistan, the Indian Government was making war with inadequate armies, for neither Browne nor Maude was strong enough to form the moveable columns which should have been stationed at Jamrud, Lundi Kotal and Basawal, ready to move at a moment's notice, and they were driven to the dangerous expedient of weakening the posts guarding their communications, and getting up scratch Forces whenever an emergency arose.

## CHAPTER XIX

### The Invasion of Khost

#### ATTACK ON BRITISH CAMP AT MATUN

IF the condition of affairs in the Khyber at the beginning of the year 1879, was unsatisfactory, that in the Kuram was distinctly worse. Browne had in Peshawar, distant only a few miles from the Afghan frontier, a real base; Roberts's true base was at Rawal Pindi, 171 miles from Thal, and Thal was again 82 miles from the British outpost at Ali Khel. No river broke the communications of the former; those of the latter were cut by the Kuram and the Indus, the flooding of either of which streams would bring his Force face to face with starvation, since there were no local supplies to count upon, and no reserve of food had been accumulated in the valley.<sup>1</sup> The weather, though exceptionally dry, was very severe, and the health of the troops had suffered so grievously from exposure and fatigue that, although a large convoy of sick and wounded had left for India on the 2nd of December, a week later there were no fewer than five hundred and

<sup>1</sup> "My Commissary-General reported to me that only a few days' provisions for the troops remained in hand, and that it was impossible to lay in any reserve unless more transport could be provided. About this reserve, I was very anxious, for the roads might become temporarily impassable from the rising of the rivers, after the heavy rain to be expected about Christmas. Contractors were despatched to all parts of the country to procure camels, and I suggested to Government that pack-bullocks should be bought at Mirzapur and railed up country, which suggestion being acted upon, the danger of the troops having to go hungry was warded off." (*Forty-One Years in India*, p. 155.)

twenty-four officers and men in hospital. Great difficulty had been experienced in getting together the camels required for the above-named convoy, and a large proportion of the regimental transport and of the animals incessantly engaged in provisioning the scattered units of the Army, was non-effective.<sup>1</sup> The new road by which the double crossing of the Kuram River would be avoided, was still unfinished; and the old road, from end to end, was infested by Mangals and Zymukhts, who hung on the flanks and rear of the troops in movement, and murdered stragglers and carried off camels from under the very walls of Thal; even the friendly Turis were suspected of plundering whenever they had the chance.<sup>2</sup> Thus every circumstance connected with the Kuram Field Force, pointed to the need of consolidating the position it had won before calling upon it to extend the sphere of its operations; but the restless activity of its Commander could so ill brook delay that, within three weeks of his return to the Kuram from reconnoitring the Shutargardan, he had concentrated two thousand and eighty-two men, with eight guns, and transport amounting to fifteen hundred and thirty-nine camels and five hundred

<sup>1</sup> In six months the Kuram Field Force lost 8,828 out of 10,861 hired camels, besides a large number belonging to the Government." (*Commissariat Return of Camel Carriage, Kuram Field Force.*) "The position of the camp at Kuram . . . was not suited to keeping camels in a healthy condition. The distance of the nearest range of hills where brushwood, which would do for their food, was found, was about seven miles, and the camels had thus to walk fourteen miles, there and back, to their feeding ground daily; the cold, added to their change of diet, was trying to their constitutions, and the damage which was done in a few weeks at the commencement of the campaign from these causes, which were evident, and from other causes, which may not have been so clear, materially affected the movements of the Force later on." (*With the Kuram Field Force*, by Major Colquhoun, p. 150.)

<sup>2</sup> "Our line of communications was constantly harassed by raiders, convoys were continually threatened, outposts fired into and telegraph wires cut. The smallness of my force made it difficult for me to deal with these troubles, so I applied to the Commander-in-Chief for the wing of the 72nd Highlanders left at Kohat and the 5th Punjab Cavalry at Thal to be ordered to join me at Kuram." (*Forty-One Years in India*, p. 154.)

and sixty-five mules,<sup>1</sup> at Hazir Pir, and had completed the changes in the distribution of the troops to be left behind in the Kuram, rendered necessary by the withdrawal of a large part of its garrison.

TABLE SHOWING CONSTITUTION OF THE KHOST EXPEDITIONARY  
FORCE

No. 1 Mountain Battery.  
No. 2 Mountain Battery.  
1 Squadron 10th Hussars.  
3 Troops 5th Bengal Cavalry.  
200 men of the 72nd Highlanders.  
21st Punjab Infantry.  
28th Punjab Infantry.

TABLE SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF THE TROOPS IN THE KURAM,  
JANUARY, 1879

THAL

3 Guns F.A. Royal Horse Artillery.  
1 Troop 5th Punjab Cavalry.  
1 Company 8th Foot.  
Wing 29th Punjab Infantry.

HAZIR PIR

3 Guns F.A. Royal Horse Artillery.  
3 Troops 12th Bengal Cavalry.  
1 Company 8th Foot.  
Wing 29th Punjab Infantry.

DARWAZA PASS

23rd Pioneers road-making between Kuram Forts and Hazir Pir.

FORT KURAM

1 Troop 12th Bengal Cavalry.  
1 Company 72nd Highlanders.  
5th Gurkhas.

<sup>1</sup> "Total Regimental Carriage, which included sick and non-effective attached to the Kuram Field Force on January 1, 1879: 1257 camels, and 1169 mules." (Assistant Adjutant-General's Return.) Of these, 539 camels and 556 mules were absorbed by the Khost Expedition.

## PEIWAR KOTAL AND VICINITY

3 Guns C-3 Royal Artillery.  
 1 Squadron 12th Bengal Cavalry.  
 Wing 8th Foot.  
 3 Companies 72nd Highlanders.  
 1 Company Sappers and Miners.

Total strength : 5,694 Officers and Men, and 6 guns.

No maps of Khost, or of the district lying between it and the Kuram, were in existence,<sup>1</sup> but from Native sources it had been ascertained that the distance between the starting-point and the goal of the expedition was only thirty-five miles, divided into four stages :—

Hazir Pir to Jaji Maidan . . . . .	11	miles.
Jaji Maidan to Balk . . . . .	10	„
Balk to Khubi . . . . .	6	„
Khubi to Matun . . . . .	8	„

and Captain F. S. Carr, who had reconnoitred the road for fifteen miles, reported that it ran through fairly open country, and was practicable for Cavalry. No organized resistance was expected on the way, and Mahomed Akram Khan, the Afghan Governor of Khost, had signified his readiness to hand over the administration and the revenue records of the valley to General Roberts as soon as the latter could take charge of them, in return for an assurance that he himself should be free either to return at once to Kabul, or to take up his residence in India till the war should have come to an end.

Preceded by a squadron of the 10th Hussars with flanking parties furnished by the 5th Punjab Cavalry, the troops designed to add Khost to the British Empire, left Hazir Pir, at 9 a.m. on the 2nd of January, 1879, and pitched their camp early in the afternoon in the rice-fields that surround the cluster of villages known as Jaji Maidan—the plain of the Jajis—whose inhabitants brought in plentiful supplies of milk, fowls, etc.

<sup>1</sup> “The Khost country had till this time been represented on the map by a blank space. The streams which ran into the Kuram River at Hazir Pir were just marked at their embouchures as the roads by which the Amir’s Sirdars went to collect the revenue.” (Major Colquhoun, p. 181.)

The second day's march proved more trying: first, a network of small irrigation-canals so hampered and hindered the movements of the transport that it was noon before the rear-guard got clear of the camping ground; next, followed a long, steep, slippery descent, strewn with boulders and cut by water-courses, where the ice lay five to six inches thick; and, beyond this, the valley was shut in to the south, by a belt of rugged hills, four miles in depth, the path through which was so rough and broken that the 23rd Pioneers, who had been temporarily withdrawn from road-making in the Darwaza Pass, to smooth and widen the track leading into Khost, had hard work to render it practicable for camels.

Hearing on the northern side of this belt that Mangals had been seen in the neighbourhood, and feeling sure that it would be impossible to get the whole of his Force through the passes before dark, Roberts parked his supply-convoy near the village of Dhani, and leaving the rear-guard to protect it through the night, moved cautiously forward with the main body. No opposition was met with, and the troops, having threaded their way through the hills, passed down a wide drainage channel to Balk, a group of villages like those at Jaji Maidan, situated in a perfectly flat, cultivated plain. Here, there was a day's halt to give time for the supply-convoy to come up, and to rest the camels, which were already in miserable plight.<sup>1</sup> During this halt, a Non-commissioned Officer of the 28th Punjab Infantry was murdered within fifty yards of the camp sentries. The murderer escaped, but, fortunately for the villagers, there was strong reason to identify him with a man who, sometime before, had been flogged at

<sup>1</sup> "On the next day, the 4th, we were obliged to halt, owing to the done-up condition of the baggage-animals, and to allow the convoy and troops left behind the evening before to come up. When these arrived, which was about noon, the camels looked totally unfit to go another step, and a good many died the same night." (Surgeon R. Gillham-Thomsett's *Kohat, Kuram and Khost*, p. 161.) The same writer mentions having seen "lovely, fair children in Balk."



Hazir Pir, and who, quite recently, had been heard to threaten to avenge the deaths of four Natives, hanged under revolting circumstances for killing some camp-followers in the Darwaza Pass.<sup>1</sup>

On the 5th, the march was resumed, troops and baggage moving on a broad front, through open country, to the Kam Khost River, which, owing to the absence of the winter rains, they had little difficulty in crossing. At Khubi, on the southern bank, where the Force halted for the night, General Roberts and Colonel Waterfield, his political adviser, had an interview with the Governor of Khost, who came to renew in person the promises already made by him in writing. Next morning the Force marched for Matun in three columns, and, at the outset, in open order, the Infantry stretching right across a flat boggy plain<sup>2</sup> three miles in width; then, as the valley contracted, drawing closer together, till, on arriving at the foot of a low range of hills, pierced by a track scarce wide enough to admit of the passage of laden beasts in single file, a complete change of formation became necessary. Beyond these hills, the road descended into the rich and peaceful Khost Valley, with its terraced rice-fields, irrigated by numerous channels drawn from the streams that flow down into it from the surrounding mountains,<sup>3</sup> and dotted with pretty, clean,

<sup>1</sup> "Four of the prisoners were hanged, and the fifth, who was proved to be a milder offender, was doomed to be an eye-witness of the scene, and then stripped and horse-whipped. It was, indeed, a horrible sight; there stood the gallows—an unfinished one surely, but looking, perhaps, more grim in its simplicity than would be a better made one. In front and beneath the gallows were dug graves for the reception of the culprits: in fact, they were actually being made under their very eyes." The unfinished structure gave way, and only two of the men were hanged. "The other two actually got up and staggered about, and, amidst struggling and groaning, were brained by the Provost-Sergeant." (Ibid. p. 129.)

<sup>2</sup> "I saw two or three horses with their riders sink suddenly down for three or four feet deep and have the greatest difficulty in getting up again." (Ibid. p. 163.)

<sup>3</sup> "On arriving at the summit of the last hill, a beautiful view of the Khost Valley lay beneath us, which contrasted well with the surrounding mountains.

whitewashed villages; a smiling scene, pleasant to look upon, but with fever lurking in the fertile, water-logged ground.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst the troops halted to allow the baggage to come up, the General, accompanied by his Political Officer, Colonel Waterfield and his Staff, galloped on to Matun, where the Governor formally surrendered to him the dilapidated, unsanitary fort—a square enclosure with circular bastions at the corners, connected by curtain-walls a hundred feet long.

With the fulfilment of his own engagements, Mahomed Akram's power to serve the new Government of Khost was exhausted, and he had to warn the British General that the inhabitants of the valley, though peaceable enough when left to themselves, might be forced into resistance by their warlike neighbours, whom he knew to be gathering in the hills, attracted by the smallness of the British Force, which they believed to have "been delivered into their hands."<sup>2</sup> Roberts's personal observations confirmed the ex-Governor's warnings, so far as the uncertain temper of the people of Khost was concerned—he had noticed that many Maliks refrained from waiting on him till sent for, and that some of those who had come out to meet him had asked leave to return to their villages;<sup>3</sup> and though, as yet, no armed hillmen had been sighted, he knew by this time enough of their ways to be aware that there might be thousands of them close at hand, for,

The valley indeed looked very snug and peaceful. . . . As we descended into the valley signs of agriculture became very apparent. . . . Rice . . . is grown plentifully in the Khost district, and the inhabitants lay out the ground in tiers, one below the other, so that it can be well supplied with water by a stream running along the border of each tier. . . . The little white cottages, garnished as they were with cherry trees, looked uncommonly pretty in the distance." (Ibid. pp. 158-59.)

<sup>1</sup> "I discovered that there was water very near the surface of the ground upon which we had formed our camp. . . . This, doubtless, was the cause to a great extent of the malarious diseases which prevailed among the troops during our stay in the Khost Valley." (Ibid. p. 171.)

<sup>2</sup> Major Colquhoun, p. 189; *Forty-One Years in India*, vol. ii., p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> Despatch dated Matun, Khost Valley, Jan. 10, 1879.

in the mountains that surround Khost, dwell some of the most formidable of the Independent Tribes—Mangals, with whom he had already made acquaintance in the Sappari Pass, who could put some eight thousand fighting men into the field; Darwesh Khels, a section of the powerful Waziri tribe; and Judrans, a smaller people, but so uncouth and savage that Elphinstone had described them as more like bears than men.

In view of the grave uncertainties that overhung the fast approaching night, where to place the British camp was an anxious question. The fort had, for the moment, to be left in the hands of the ex-Governor and his two hundred native levies, whose loyalty was not so assured as to allow of taking up a position under its walls, and, in its neighbourhood, there was no good site. The imperative need of a large supply of water determined the one finally selected, which was defective from the fact that the southern side of the camp would rest on the edge of a deep, wide nullah, where the enemy might collect unobserved. Whilst the work of pitching and fortifying the camp was being pressed forward, Akram Khan sent in word that the Mangals were assembling in large numbers; that some of the Khost people had joined them; and that an attack on the British position might be looked for after dark. On receipt of this message the British General sent for the headmen of all the adjacent villages, and curtly informed them that they and their fellow-villagers would incur severe punishment if any hillmen were found next day within their boundaries. The terrified Maliks hurried away to see what they could do to avert the evils hanging over their homes, and returned before midnight bringing word that the Mangals had promised to leave the valley, and offering themselves as hostages for the good faith of their own people.<sup>1</sup> Their presence was some guarantee for the safety of the camp, and every precaution had been taken for its protection—rifle-pits dug, sentries doubled, strong pickets placed on either flank, each with two guns;

<sup>1</sup> Despatch, January 10, 1879.

nevertheless, the Infantry lay down with their arms beside them, and the Cavalry stood all night at their saddled horses' heads.<sup>1</sup>

Next morning Roberts sent out some of the Maliks to ascertain the position of affairs, and the news that they brought back was very disquieting:—the Mangals who, the previous evening, had pledged themselves to leave the valley, had, indeed, started for their homes, but, on meeting crowds of their kinsfolk streaming down from the hills, had turned back, and all Khost, with the exception of the villages nearest to the British position, was now swarming with armed men. At the time, it seemed strange that the camp should have remained unmolested during the night, but it was discovered later that, trusting in their numerical superiority, and believing that by daylight they could more easily compass the total destruction of the British Force, the tribesmen had deliberately put off attacking till morning; <sup>2</sup> when Roberts, who was not the man to wait inactive whilst dangers thickened round him, forestalled them by himself assuming the offensive.

The General's first step was to despatch a troop of the 5th Punjab Cavalry under Major J. C. Stewart, accompanied by Captain F. S. Carr, to test by a reconnaissance the truth of the Malik's report. Three miles from camp, the party came upon fifteen hundred to two thousand tribesmen, and as in the face of so formidable a body there was nothing to be done but to retire, Stewart having sent off a messenger to ask for assistance fell back slowly, till the appearance of Hugh Gough, at the head of two hundred and fifty troopers, turned the tables on the Mangals, who, quickly dispersing, made a rush for the hills. The Cavalry, admirably handled, gallantly followed them up,<sup>3</sup> and seizing

<sup>1</sup> Telegram to *Standard*, dated January 7th, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> Despatch of January 10, 1879.

<sup>3</sup> "A troop of the 5th Punjab Cavalry made a brilliant charge up a hill in the centre of the enemy's position, and rapidly dismounting, commenced to harass them in their retreat. This charge, which was personally led by Major B. Williams, struck me as one of the most gallant episodes in Cavalry<sup>7</sup> warfare I had ever seen." (Brigadier-General H. Gough's Report, dated 9th January, 1879.)

commanding positions with dismounted men, tenaciously held their ground, till the arrival of Colonel J. Hudson, with the 28th Punjab Infantry, and of Major Swinley's mountain-guns, compelled the tribesmen to retreat to still more inaccessible heights. Acting in accordance with instructions received from General Roberts, Gough at once withdrew the whole Force, covering its slow, steady retirement by the fire of the mountain-guns, and holding his Cavalry in readiness to charge should the enemy venture down into open ground.

Whilst one body of Mangals was drawing away a large part of the British Force, other bodies had stolen so secretly into the hitherto unoccupied villages that no one in camp suspected their proximity; even the hurried return of some camel drivers, who had been set upon, robbed of their camels, and one of their number killed, only half a mile from the British position, awakened so little suspicion of the true state of things that, about 1 p.m., Roberts rode out with his Staff to see how Gough had fared, leaving Colonel Barry Drew in charge with orders to stand on the defensive till he, the General, should return. Hardly had Roberts and his party disappeared from view, than large numbers of armed men<sup>1</sup> were seen to issue from the villages lying north-west of the British position, and to gather in dense masses in front of the nearest of them. The troops remaining in camp after the departure of the 28th Punjab Infantry and practically of the whole of the Cavalry, were too few in number to admit of any being held in reserve, but each side of the camp was adequately protected—the eastern, by a wing of the 21st Punjab Infantry and two guns, No. 1 Mountain Battery, under Major F. H. Collis, the southern, by the remaining guns of the Mountain Battery and the other wing of the 21st, under Captain J. G. T. Carruthers, the northern and western sides, by the 72nd Highlanders, under Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. J. Clarke—and the enemy, though bold and wary, never had a chance of deliver-

<sup>1</sup> Four thousand, according to Sir Hugh Gough. See article entitled "Old Memories," in *Pall Mall Magazine* for June, 1898, p. 207.

ing the intended assault. On the east, Captain Morgan's guns were quickly at work dropping shells into their midst, and as they streamed away southward, Captain Kennedy, with a handful of troopers, dashed out to cut them off, but was pulled up by the nullah that lay between him and them, and had to recognize that he was too weak to attempt to recapture the stolen camels, which could be seen moving away in a northerly direction. Meantime, a general fusillade had broken out from the Afghan Cavalry Lines beside the fort. Protected by the fire of the guns, a detachment of Highlanders and of Punjab Infantry, commanded by Captain N. J. Spens, soon drove the Mangals from their cover, but only for them to find fresh shelter in villages just out of range. The fort, so far as could be seen, was not occupied by the enemy, but from its roof the Governor's levies watched the fight, ready, should the attack on the British camp succeed, to come to the aid of the tribesmen, with whom they were suspected of having communicated during the preceding night by means of vivid flames, which, from time to time, had been seen to burst forth on the ramparts.

At 2.30 p.m., the General, having returned to find his camp intact, but the Mangals still in possession of the ground on three sides of it, gave orders to carry all the villages lying to the east and south of the British position, and to plunder and burn them as a punishment to their inhabitants for having admitted the hillmen within their walls ; but to spare those to westward, which had not been occupied by the enemy, and where, early in the day, camp-followers had been warned of danger.<sup>1</sup> Barry Drew, at the head of the 72nd Highlanders, and a wing of the 21st Punjab Infantry, drove out the defenders of the eastern villages and followed them up to the foot of the hills, three miles away, whilst two guns and the other wing of the 21st cleared the southern villages, from the back of one of which a large body of tribesmen was seen to issue. Roberts instantly ordered Captain

<sup>1</sup> Despatch of January 10th, 1879.

J. C. Stewart, who, with thirty men of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, had accompanied him back to camp, to charge, and, in answer to a question put to him by that Officer, directed him not to burden himself with prisoners. The sowars, dashing forward, overtook the enemy in a nullah, and drove them, with a loss of some sixty killed and wounded, up its broad, stony bed, till, in a village on its further bank, the fugitives found temporary shelter, and, opening fire on their pursuers, obliged them to withdraw out of range. The respite, however, was short; reinforcements of Infantry were already coming up, at sight of which the hillmen made a rush for another village beyond a second ravine. An attempt to intercept them proved partially successful. Eighty or ninety, cut off from their comrades, ran back to the refuge they had just deserted, and, after considerable hesitation, were induced to lay down their arms and give themselves up. The Military Officers on the spot, would have let them go, but Colonel Waterfield, discovering that they were Waziris, decided to have them taken into camp, where Roberts placed them in charge of the 21st Punjab Infantry, to be kept in captivity till ransomed by their tribe.<sup>1</sup> In addition to these prisoners, the enemy had, at least, eighty men killed and wounded in the course of the day, while the British casualties were only three killed and four wounded—an extraordinary disproportion;<sup>2</sup> but when Major Colquhoun, in his narrative of the Khost Expedition, declares that “not a man turned on the small handful of troops who were carrying fire and sword into their villages,” he misses the true explanation of the tribesmen’s apparent cowardice. It was just because the villages were *not* their own, that Mangals and Waziris—the latter, perhaps, the bravest of all the Pathan tribes—abandoned them to their fate, and recognizing that their attack upon the British

<sup>1</sup> Parliamentary Paper of 17th June, 1879, proceedings of Major-General Roberts in Khost on 7th and 8th of January, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> “Our casualties were very small indeed, which was no doubt due to the inferior weapons of the enemy, and to the longer range of ours.” (*Kohat, Kuram and Khost*, p. 190, by Surgeon R. Gillam Thomsett.)

camp had failed, hurried back to the hills to devise fresh schemes for driving its occupants from the valley. The people into whose homes fire and sword were carried, were really men of unwarlike disposition and habits, accustomed to look to the Afghan troops quartered in their midst, for protection against the very tribesmen who, having coerced them into a contest with their new rulers, now left them to bear the consequences of their weakness. There were no Afghan troops to defend them now; so they could but watch from afar, whilst eleven of the pretty villages that had charmed the eyes of the British soldier as he marched down into Khost only the day before, were burned to the ground, and all their treasured possessions, all their means of subsistence, "bullocks, sheep, goats, fowls, ponies, gunpowder, old-fashioned matlocks and swords of every Asiatic description,"<sup>1</sup> were carried off by camp-followers, to whom General Roberts had given leave to take whatever they could snatch before the torch was applied to the houses, and, in some instances, by soldiers to whom, apparently, such permission had not been accorded.<sup>2</sup>

Before dark the troops had been withdrawn to camp, the outposts strengthened, and a strong in-lying picket posted in readiness to proceed to their aid at a moment's notice. There was, however, so little chance that the enemy would renew the attack that night, and the brilliant moonlight and the glare from the burning villages made it so impossible for them to approach unnoticed, that all who were not on duty, could lie down to sleep with easy minds.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Special Correspondent of the *Standard*, dated Matun, January 11th, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> "When the first village had been occupied and set alight, the camp-followers, who had been on the watch for plunder, swooped down upon them and carried off whatever was portable, though there was nothing left in them to speak of." (*With the Kuram Field Force*, p. 199, by Major Colquhoun.)

<sup>3</sup> "The night that set in on that day of fighting and devastation was one of wonderful beauty. The moon shone in a blue sky, freckled with rippling snow-clouds. On the broad plain around the camp, villages were burning luridly. Sometimes a roof fell in, when sprays of fire shot high into the air. Altogether, the scene was one as suggestive of the horrors of war as remarkable for its terrible beauty." (Letter in *Standard* from "One who was Present.")



## OBSERVATION

Certain questions addressed by Mr. Anderson, M.P., to the Under-Secretary of State for India, on the 17th of February, gave General Roberts the opportunity of stating the grounds which he held to justify the order given to Stewart to refuse quarter to the enemy on the afternoon of the 8th of January, and the looting and burning of the villages in the neighbourhood of Matun.<sup>1</sup> Those grounds may be summed up in the words—"military necessity"; the position of the troops under his command in Khost, so he alleged, having been such that he could not afford to take prisoners, and was obliged to inflict "speedy and severe punishment" on "the tribes who had dared to organize an attack on his camp," and to plunder and destroy "villages which had harboured the enemy, and from which hostile shots had been fired."<sup>2</sup> This defence must be rejected as invalid, for the barbarities it sought to excuse cannot be shown to have lessened the hostility of the tribes, and they certainly destroyed any chance there may have existed, of retaining some kind of shadowy hold upon the valley till circumstances should permit of its effective occupation. General Roberts's reputation, however, would gain nothing by its acceptance, for it implied either that he did not know before entering on the Expedition that "the strength of his column was insignificant in comparison of the numbers that might be arrayed against it," and that "it would be separated by many miles of difficult country from its nearest supports"<sup>3</sup>—in which case he had neglected the first duty of a Commander in failing to acquaint himself with the conditions under which his projected operations would have to be conducted—or, else, that knowing what lay before him, he deliberately chose to run risks so great that, in his opinion, they must absolve him from the necessity of observing the honourable traditions of the Army to which he belonged. Those traditions dated from the days when the East India Company was

<sup>1</sup> Parliamentary Paper of 17th June, 1879, regarding proceeding in Khost.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.      <sup>3</sup> Ibid.

gradually extending its authority over a vast country, inhabited by an enormous population, differing from their new rulers in colour, customs, laws, and religion. The soldier-statesmen who wrought what, viewed as a whole, seems little less than a miracle, never forgot "the enormous disparity between their forces and those that might be arrayed against them," and always sought to disarm the hostility of the peoples with whose Governments they came in collision, by making the burden of war fall as lightly as possible on all non-combatants. In the campaigns against Sultan Tippoo Sahib, at the end of the eighteenth century, the troops of the East India Company not only abstained from inflicting injury on the unhappy peasantry of Mysore, but protected them, by force when necessary, against the lawlessness and cruelty of the contingent furnished by the Company's ally, the Nizam of Hyderabad. "A reputation for justice and humanity preceding an Army, is of more consequence than an advanced guard of 10,000 men,"<sup>1</sup> wrote John Malcolm in commenting on this episode in Indian history; and Malcolm's friend, Arthur Wellesley, to whom much of the credit of winning this reputation for the Company's Forces was due, carried faith in the same great truth back with him to Europe, and acted on it when, after a five years' struggle to free Spain from French domination, he followed Soult's retreating forces into France. The General Orders of England's greatest Commander teem with instructions as to the conduct of his troops now that they, in their turn, were operating in an enemy's country; instructions based as much on enlightened concern for the safety and well-being of his Army, as on a generous recognition of the rights of a vanquished people.

The higher code of military ethics which the East had given to the West in the person of Wellington, the West gave back to the East in his example and influence. A certain William Nott, who, as an unknown officer, had made "a perfect study of the Wellington

<sup>1</sup> Kaye's *Life of Sir John Malcolm, G.C.B.*, vol. i. p. 23.

Despatches,"<sup>1</sup> came, in due course, to hold first a subordinate, and later an independent command in the first Afghan war, and, in both positions, never deviated from "the humane principles of conduct which had invariably animated the mighty Duke."<sup>2</sup> Standing by them steadily, undeterred by misrepresentation and censure, for four long years, he reaped at last his just reward in the tardily bestowed confidence of the Indian Government, in the grateful affection of the people of Kandahar, and in the consciousness that he returned to India with a reputation alike free from the stain of cruelty and the shadow of failure.<sup>3</sup>

Following closely in Nott's steps, John Jacob, whose life presented the world with the rare spectacle of a man of great military genius entirely free from the lust of personal distinction, insisted on applying the rules of civilized warfare to the savage and troublesome tribes of Sind, and their no less savage and troublesome neighbours. Punishment, with Jacob, never degenerated into revenge, and he scorned the cowardly method of striking at the guilty through the innocent. Even when pursuing a marauding band across the frontier, he suffered no looting of villages, no destruction of houses, or trees, or crops; every unarmed or unresisting man was certain of his protection, and he, too, reaped his reward in the rapid pacification of a Province, and the devoted attachment of its inhabitants.

Trained under Wellington in the Peninsula, Charles Napier, as Commander-in-Chief in India, held no less staunchly than Nott to the wise and humane principles of his great Chief. The burning of some villages, during a punitive Expedition in the winter of 1849-50,

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Sir William Nott, G.C.B.*, by J. H. Stocqueler, vol. i. p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 267.

<sup>3</sup> "I put down rebellion, and quelled all resistance to the British power; in spite of the fears and weakness of my superiors. By mild persuasive measures I induced the whole population to return to the cultivation of their lands, and to live in peace. I left them as friends and on friendly terms. On my leaving Kandahar . . . my soldiers and the citizens were seen embracing." (Letter of Sir W. Nott to the Adjutant-General, dated April 4th, 1843.)

drew from him the following official Memorandum, addressed to Sir Colin Campbell :—

“ It is with surprise and regret I have seen in Lieutenant-Colonel Bradshaw’s report of his march into the Eusofzie country that villages have been destroyed by the troops.

“ I desire to know why a proceeding at variance with humanity and contrary to the usages of civilized warfare, came to be adopted. I disapprove of such cruelties, so unmilitary and so injurious to the discipline and honour of the Army. Should the troops be again called upon to act, you will be pleased to issue orders that war is to be made on men ; not upon defenceless *women and children*, by destroying their habitations and leaving them to perish without shelter from the inclemency of the winter. I have heard of no outrages committed by the wild mountaineers that could call for conduct so unmilitary and so impolitic.”<sup>1</sup>

The officer to whom Napier forwarded this Memorandum, was to remain faithful to its teachings under the strongest possible temptation to repudiate them. The outrages committed by the mutineers of 1857, on British women and children, might easily have been made the excuse for terrible acts of retaliation ; but Lord Clyde never allowed indignation to betray him into injustice, or to blind him to the truth that only by giving the people no cause for siding with the revolted soldiery, could he hope for a peace which should leave British authority still supreme in India. Knowing human nature too well to believe that fear is the strongest lever by which it can be moved, making generous allowance for the instinct of race, the promptings of family affection and the pressure of circumstance, he avoided the mistake of trying to shorten the life-and-death struggle in which he was engaged, by striking terror into

<sup>1</sup> *Defects Civil and Military of the Indian Government*, by General Sir William Napier, K.C.B., pp. 114-5. Initials in the Memorandum. It transpired that these villages were destroyed by the Political Officer.—H.B.H.

the souls of the villagers who, willingly or unwillingly, were daily harbouring and befriending the mutineers. No defenceless towns or villages were burned or plundered by his orders, no fields laid waste, no cattle slaughtered, no bullock-carts confiscated, no women and children driven from their homes ; and, as a consequence of this resolute limiting of the evils of the war to its original authors and their active abettors, when hostilities ceased, the whole country resumed its normal aspect ; and bitterness against their alien rulers, on the score of the severity with which they had put down a military revolt, soon died out of the hearts of the Indian peasantry. The foregoing examples might be multiplied indefinitely, but enough have been adduced to prove that in the rules and practice of the Anglo-Indian Army, prior to 1879, Christian ethics, as applied to war, had touched their high-water mark, and in lowering the standard of humanity upheld by a long line of illustrious soldiers, General Roberts put back the clock of progress for the whole world.

## CHAPTER XX

### The Retirement from Khost

#### RESCUE OF MATUN GARRISON

RECONNOITRING parties that were out very early the day after the attack on the British camp, scouring the valley for seven or eight miles around Matun, discovered no traces of the enemy; yet, rumours of so disquieting a nature were afloat, that General Roberts felt it necessary to order the construction of shelter trenches in advance of his position, to give time for the troops to fall in in the event of a night-attack. None was made, but there were several scares, one of which ended in a strange tragedy.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after dark a false alarm turned out the troops, who began firing on all sides. In an instant the captive Waziris were on their feet, struggling to free themselves from the ropes that bound them together, and to wrest their rifles from the sentries. The Native Officer in command of the guard, fearing that his men would be overpowered, shouted to the prisoners, in Pushtu, to keep quiet, or he would shoot them down. The warning was unheeded, and the order to fire or to use the bayonet had to be given. Nine men were killed and thirteen wounded, four of them mortally, and in the darkness it was difficult

<sup>1</sup> "We had no end of scares about night-attacks, which is a favourite mode of fighting with these people. For myself I have a horror of night-attacks, all confusion and bother, and often firing into friends as well as foes. They are very trying even to the best and most disciplined troops. On one occasion, in the middle of dinner, a sudden alarm took place. The troops turned out in a moment, and there were volleys as if 30,000 Mangals were on us. There was really no attack and the firing soon ceased." ("Old Memories," by Sir Hugh Gough, *Pall Mall Magazine*, June 1898, pages 208, 209.)

to separate the uninjured from the injured, the living from the dead. As soon as possible, however, the wounded were placed in a roughly-improvised shelter, where Surgeon W. E. Griffiths, of the 21st Punjab Infantry, and Surgeon H. Cotton, of the 72nd Highlanders, did all in their power to save life and mitigate suffering. In the confusion attendant on this unfortunate occurrence, a friendly Chief, returning home with his followers after paying a visit to the General, was fired upon and wounded. It is probable that the shots which had alarmed the camp and led to both these regrettable incidents, had been fired for the purpose of creating a state of panic favourable to the escape of the prisoners, but the good discipline of the troops frustrated the plan, and the only men to suffer by it were those whom it was intended to help, for a Court of Inquiry held to investigate the unfortunate affair, exonerated the Native Officer from blame: he had warned the Waziris before firing on them, and he only did his duty in using force to prevent their escape.<sup>1</sup>

On the 9th, foraging parties brought in large quantities of grain and firewood from the ruined and deserted villages round Matun. On the same day, a Non-commissioned Officer and eight men of the 5th Punjab Cavalry rejoined the main body, after a very chequered experience. They had been left, with a view to protecting the road to Hazir Pir, at a village named Yakubi, whose headmen had undertaken to protect them. So long as there was no temptation to break it, this promise was kept; but during the attack on the British position, the little party was overpowered and disarmed, plundered and stripped. A few hours later, when the light of the blazing villages proclaimed the victory of the British, the villagers repented of their hasty act, released the captives, and restored to them their arms and personal possessions. The Non-commissioned Officer in command immediately seized two Maliks, who had been forward in inciting their people to violence, and, on withdrawing from the village, carried them off to camp, where

<sup>1</sup> Roberts's despatch, 10th January, 1879.

they were tried by a Military Court, and sentenced to seven years' transportation, whilst a third Malik, who had done his best to protect the outpost, was rewarded.

During the evening of the 7th, Roberts had caused the Maliks, who the previous night had placed themselves in his hands, to be brought before him, and, in full view of their burning villages, had reproached them with having brought their misfortunes on themselves, and expressed the hope that they would now see the futility of attempting to withstand disciplined troops, however small their numbers. His account of the transaction, put forward in an Official Despatch written three days later, followed the same lines. The villages had been destroyed "as a punishment to the inhabitants for having given shelter to his assailants." It had been "severe, but the lesson was certainly needed," and he expected that "its results" would be "satisfactory." "There was evidence that the combination against him (me) was widespread, and if a severe example had not been made of those who fought against him (me) on the 7th of January, the ill-feeling would have extended. Now, the headmen of the neighbouring villages had come in, and the remainder were reported to be anxious to submit." So satisfied was the British General that the punishment inflicted was a certain guarantee of future good order and peace in the valley, that he could end his Despatch with the assurance that it would now be safe to leave "an adequate Force"—defined as half a Mountain Battery, two troops of Native Cavalry, and a regiment of Native Infantry—in Khost, provided that the troops in the Kuram were maintained in sufficient strength to keep open its long line of communications.<sup>1</sup>

In accordance with the views expressed in this Despatch, the Native levies were now disbanded, the Ex-Governor and his attendants placed in tents, and, when the fort had been thoroughly cleansed and stocked with food and ammunition, all the sick and such of the Waziri prison-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.



ers as had not been ransomed, were moved thither, Major Collis appointed Commandant, with Mr. Archibald Christie, C.S., as Political Officer, and the 21st Punjab Infantry and a troop of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, for a garrison. These arrangements completed, Roberts struck his camp at 8 a.m., on the 13th of January, and entered on the subsidiary work of the Expedition—the exploring and surveying of the Khost Valley. In three days' time, he visited the whole of the western side of the valley, without encountering any opposition, though, in consequence of rumours that the Mangals intended making a night-attack, measures of precaution had to be taken on the evening of the 14th. On the return of the Force to Matun, the camp was established on a fresh site, nearer the fort, and on the southern, instead of on the northern, side of the watercourse on which its water supply depended.

As soon as it had become evident that the whole of the Expeditionary Force would be detained in Khost for a longer period than had been planned for, orders for a second fifteen days' supply had been sent to Hazir Pir; and, on the 18th of January, the expected convoy, escorted by the 23rd Pioneers, a party of the 5th Gurkhas, and a draft of recruits from the 72nd Highlanders, arrived in camp. The Gurkhas returned the following morning, taking with them all the camels still with the Force; but the greater number of those whose loads had been consumed, had already left on the 16th, in charge of a party of armed Turis, sent from the Kuram to bring them back. The same day, Captain Woodthorpe, accompanied by Captain Wynne, the Superintendent of Army Signalling, and escorted by the 28th Punjab Infantry, began a survey of the southern side of the valley. In order to connect his operations with the great Trigonometrical Survey of India, Woodthorpe obtained leave from a Waziri Chief, Kiput by name, to ascend the Lazam Peak, six thousand four hundred feet high—from the summit of which Wynne, having succeeded in opening heliographic communication with Bunu, received from Colonel Godby, commanding the Punjab Frontier Force, who chanced to be there, the news of the

Mahsud Waziris' raid into British territory and the burning of Tank. The bearing of this raid upon his own position was not lost upon General Roberts. With one subdivision of the Waziris he had already come into collision, and he knew that in Dawar, the valley lying south of Khost, where the bulk of the population was of Waziri stock, a certain Mulla Adkar was busy preaching a *Jehad*. Other news of an alarming nature had been in his possession for some time. The Mangals and Jajis had taken advantage of the weakening of the Forces in the Kuram to threaten the Peiwar Kotal, an extensive position inadequately held by three guns and about a thousand men; and though the courage and coolness of Captain Rennick,<sup>1</sup> the officer in command of the isolated, advanced post of Ali Khel, had averted the danger by giving Brigadier-General Thelwall time to bring up reinforcements, there could be no certainty that it might not recur, and with more serious results, for, with the hundred and fifty men of the 72nd Highlanders and the two hundred Gurkhas already called up, Thelwall had exhausted the troops on whom he could draw in an emergency; and the strength of every post, from Thal to the Peiwar Kotal, was steadily diminishing under the wasting inroads of disease.

The same process of attrition was going on in the Khost Force, where, to the fever and dysentery bred by the water-logged ground, the setting in of severe weather had now added pneumonia of a very acute type,<sup>2</sup> while the causes that were predisposing the men to sick-

<sup>1</sup> Rennick, threatened by a very large force, first persuaded the villagers of Ali Khel to side with him, and then sent out their headmen to warn the enemy that he should certainly oppose their advance. This resolute attitude on the part of a single Englishman, backed by only a handful of Native troops, so amazed and disconcerted the Mangals that they allowed two days to slip by unused, and when, avoiding Ali Khel, they swarmed into the Harriab Valley and advanced in dense masses towards the Kotal, they found the garrison so fully prepared to receive them, that they dared not venture an attack, and dispersed as rapidly as they had assembled.—H.B.H.

<sup>2</sup> (a) Extracts from Surgeon R. Gillam-Thomsett's Journals, 15th January (p. 206):—"The men now began to suffer a good deal from fever, neuralgia,

ness of all sorts were telling in still greater degree on the transport-animals in both valleys. All these untoward circumstances were weighing on General Roberts's mind whilst engaged in carrying out the subsidiary objects of the Expedition; yet, he continued to cling to his scheme for the permanent occupation of Khost till the 23rd of January, when reports reached him of a second great gathering of Tribesmen in the mountains bordering on that valley. The immediate danger was promptly met. A messenger was despatched to recall the 23rd Pioneers, who had been sent on in advance of the troops to improve the eastern road into the Kuram, by which they were to return to Hazir Pir; <sup>1</sup> the camp was entrenched, so far as defective tools would permit, and further protected by a rampart of camel-saddles, piled one upon another and picketed down to the ground by ropes, whilst, during the night, star-shells were fired off at intervals; but the safety thus secured was so evidently of a temporary nature, that there could be no further question of leaving a fourth part of the troops to continue a work which was taxing to the utmost the strength of the whole Force. A reconnoissance, made by Hugh Gough, revealed no large body of the enemy within six miles of the British position; but the attitude of the people on the lower hillslopes was unfriendly, and nowhere was there any sign of that willing-

and chest complaints." 21st January (p. 210):—"A great many of the men were knocked down with lung complaints, which proved fatal in many cases, especially among Natives." January 27th (p. 212):—"In common with many others, the malarious influence of the Khost Valley had now begun to tell on me. . . . I really thought I was quite breaking up." January 30th (p. 215):—"One soldier of the 10th Hussars died during the journey from lung complaint. Indeed, pneumonia was dreadfully prevalent just at that time, and I believe the 21st Punjab Infantry and the 5th Punjab Cavalry suffered very much from it, the former regiment losing ten, the latter six men during the last three or four days we were in Khost."

(b) "I believe more men died in Khost during our short period of occupation than General Roberts had lost since we crossed the Kuram." (Special Correspondent of *Standard*, January 31.)

<sup>1</sup> The Pioneers had reached Hazir Pir before the messenger could overtake them.

ness to submit to British authority which the General and the Political Officer had expected to follow upon the punishment meted out to the villages lying around Matun.

Unwilling, however, to admit the failure of his costly enterprise, Roberts fell back upon a plan by which he hoped to be able to retain Khost for the British Empire, whilst putting an end to its occupation by British troops. A certain Sultan Jan, an Indian Civil Servant and, at the same time, a scion of the Saduzai Royal House, a man of distinguished manners and appearance, had arrived in camp on the 22nd, summoned thither with a view to the eventuality which had now arisen. If any man could hold Khost without the aid of British troops, resting his authority simply on his personal influence, supported by a small body of Native levies—all Turis, for the people of the valley declined to enlist in it—which Captain Conolly had been organizing, that man was Sultan Jan, and him, therefore, Roberts now appointed Governor of the valley, to hold it until it could be brought more directly under British rule. The appointment once made, no time was lost in giving effect to the change of military policy which it denoted, and, on the 25th, all the headmen of Khost appeared, by order, at Matun to be instructed in the new arrangements which recent occurrences had rendered necessary. Roberts's speech on this occasion was an echo of that which, two months earlier, he had addressed to the people of Kuram. It contained the same explanation of the causes of the war; the same assurance that the British Government's quarrel was with the Amir, and not with his subjects;<sup>1</sup> the same promises of religious toleration and non-interference in local customs

<sup>1</sup> "Maliks of Khost, you all know the reason of our coming here. It had nothing to do with the people of Afghanistan; with them the British Government has been, and *still is, at peace*. Our quarrel is with the Amir, Shere Ali alone and, with him, only because he was ill-advised enough to break off friendly relations which, for many years, had subsisted between him and the British and to throw himself into the hands of the Russians." (Letter of Special Correspondent of *Standard*, dated January 31st, 1879.)

and affairs ;<sup>1</sup> the same picture of the blessings of peace and good government ; the same praise of British honesty and humanity ;<sup>2</sup> and if it differed from the earlier oration in that it announced the approaching evacuation of the valley, instead of its continued occupation by British troops, the difference was concealed under the threat of returning, at short notice, should the authority of the new ruler of Khost, Shazada Sultan Jan, be disputed, or attacked.

The encomium passed by the General on British honesty and humanity must have sounded strange in the ears of men who had seen their own or their neighbours' houses looted and destroyed, and had suffered the loss of all their cattle and winter stores of grain ;<sup>3</sup> but the time and place were not favourable to the expression of dissent, and the submissive attitude of the audience confirmed Roberts's confidence in the stability of the Government he had so hastily set up. On leaving the durbar tent, to which only natives of Khost had been admitted, he addressed a few words to a group of hillmen gathered outside, who had come in, by invitation, to pay a visit to their late antagonists. The interview closed with the gift of a few rupees and of twenty sheep, on which the guests were feasted to the accompaniment of the band of the 21st Punjab Infantry.

The next morning, the order for the return of the Expeditionary Force to Kuram was issued, and the necessary preparations were pushed forward with cheerful alacrity, for, the excitement of novelty having worn off, the troops were eager to get back to somewhat

<sup>1</sup> " You have been assured that the British Government have no wish to molest you or interfere in any way with your liberties, either social or religious." (Ibid.)

<sup>2</sup> " Discipline has been well maintained among my troops, not a complaint having been made, and all supplies have been regularly paid for. In short, you have been treated with the greatest forbearance and kindness." (Ibid.)

<sup>3</sup> " I think the whole Valley of Khost and the surrounding tribes will remember our visit for some time to come, and the rough handling they have received will go far to ensure our safe return to Hazir Pir." (*The Times Correspondent*, 14th February, 1879.)

healthier and less trying conditions.<sup>1</sup> A very different spirit, however, animated the Turi levies. With ever increasing anxiety and depression, they watched the activity prevailing in camp, and when the Fort, with its stores of ammunition and grain, had been formally handed over to Sultan Jan, and there could no longer be any doubt that all the British troops were about to withdraw from the valley, they flatly refused to be left behind, and only by much persuasion, and the promise of increased pay were they at last induced to remain.

On the morning of the 28th of January, the Force began its return march to Hazir Pir by the new route prepared for them by the Pioneers, and after crossing a rugged range of mountains, on the further side of which the country proved to be much cut up by ravines and water-courses, encamped at Sabbri, a village twelve miles from Matun. Here, the next day was spent for the double object of reconnoitring the district and resting the camels, some of which, whilst grazing, were driven off by hillmen and only recovered after a sharp chase. That halt saved the lives of Sultan Jan and his Turi levies. The Mangals had lost no time in showing the kind of attention that the British nominee might expect to receive from them. They had gathered at once round Fort Matun in such numbers as left its little garrison no hope of defending it successfully,<sup>2</sup> and had the retiring troops been two marches off, instead of only one, the messenger despatched to ask for assistance, would have arrived too late for a relieving force to regain the Fort before the threatened attack on it had been delivered. As it was, starting very early next

<sup>1</sup> "Nobody in the Khost Expedition regretted in the least that he was leaving the Khost Valley, and would never, in all probability, see it again." (Special Correspondent of *Standard*, January 31st, 1879.)

<sup>2</sup> "The Shahzada's message spoke of 10,000 Mangals, or Jadrans, as assembled round Matun, and a few hours later, Captain Wynne, who had established a signalling-post on a peak from which he could see the whole valley, signalled to Barry Drew that it was black with Mangals." (Special Correspondent of *Standard*, January 31st, and *Times* Correspondent, March 7th, 1879.)

day, Roberts, with No. 2 Mountain Battery, one Squadron 10th Hussars, one Squadron 5th Punjab Cavalry, a small detachment 72nd Highlanders, and the 28th Punjab Infantry, penetrated once again into the Khost Valley, which by this time was swarming with tribesmen, and reached Matun by 9.30 a.m. to the intense joy of the terrified Turis. Whilst the Cavalry watched the enemy, six thousand of whom occupied a strong position only two miles away, the Infantry loaded their camels with as much grain as they could carry, flung the remainder into a neighbouring pond, destroyed the ammunition and set fire to the Fort. The retirement was carried out with great skill and coolness. Behind a screen of Cavalry skirmishers, thrown forward as if to attack the enemy, the mountain-guns and the Infantry gained so great a start that the Mangals' chance of falling upon them with any prospect of success, was lost, and they made no attempt to meddle with the Cavalry when the time had come for these also to withdraw. At 5 p.m. relievers and relieved arrived safely at Sabbri, where Barry Drew and his men, whilst on the alert to respond to a call for assistance, should any such call reach them from Roberts's column, had been busy all day, first, striking half the tents so as to bring the camp into smaller compass, and then, surrounding it with a rampart, three feet six inches high, built up of men's kits, Officers' baggage, camel-saddles, flour-bags, tents, etc.

The next day, escorted by the 5th Punjab Cavalry, General Roberts and his Staff rode into Hazir Pir, followed, on the 31st, by the main body under Barry Drew. Its starting-point regained, the Expeditionary Force was broken up and the troops composing it distributed along the line of communications, which the Viceroy, on the recommendation of the Commander-in-Chief, had strengthened during their absence by the addition of the 14th Bengal Cavalry, the 92nd Highlanders, the 11th Native Infantry, and the troops contributed by the Rajahs of Fared Kot, Nabha, Pattiala, and Nahun, under the command of Brigadier-General John Watson, V.C., C.B.

## OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. There are notable discrepancies between the despatch of the 10th of January, 1879, and the Memorandum of the 1st of April, of the same year. In the former, General Roberts gave a straightforward and fairly full account of the circumstances connected with the attack on his camp; in the latter, he omitted all reference to the efforts made by the Maliks of the Matun villages to induce the Mangals to retire from the valley, and suppressed the fact that, in proof of their good faith, these same men had voluntarily constituted themselves his prisoners. On the other hand, the murder of "unarmed camp-followers in villages within half a mile" of the British camp, mentioned in the justificatory documents, finds no place in the purely historical narrative, and Major Colquhoun's detailed diary of the operations in Khost, makes no mention of any camp-follower who lost his life before the Matun villages were destroyed, except the driver killed by the Mangals when they captured and carried off some camels, an offence which Roberts also sought to saddle upon the people of Khost.<sup>1</sup> One point, however, on which both accounts agree is the putting forward of the threat to exact summary and severe retribution from all who should give admittance to "persons having hostile intentions towards us," made on the 6th of January, as an excuse for the destruction wrought on the 7th. But that threat was, in itself, a violation of justice and policy; firstly, because there were no means of ascertaining whether admittance to the Matun villages would be given, or forced; secondly, because only an effective occupation can, morally and legally, deprive a people of the right to defend its territory against invasion, and the arrival of a British Force at Matun did not constitute an effective occupation of Khost; thirdly, because a punishment inflicted on the inhabitants of the valley could have no deterrent effect on the inhabitants of the hills, whose homes were in no danger of

<sup>1</sup> Parliamentary Paper of 17th June, 1879, "Proceedings in Khost."



suffering a like fate ; fourthly, because the fear of being called to account for the acts of the Mangals, was certain to drive the villagers into co-operation with the former ; fifthly, because the execution of the threat could not fail to alienate completely the people of the valley, whom it was Roberts's interest to reconcile. Memories of burned houses are not to be blotted out, either by moral lectures, or promises of future benefits ; and in Khost, as later on in Kabul, Roberts did his country the disservice of associating the British name with acts of "implacable vengeance,"<sup>1</sup> which, but for his own reckless generalship, he would never have been tempted to commit.

OBSERVATION II. Responsibility for the costly and unsuccessful Expedition into Khost must be borne entirely by General Roberts. His instructions did, indeed, order him to take possession of that valley, but, as regarded the time and manner of the occupation, they left him the latitude without which no discreet and independent-minded Officer would care to accept a command in the field ; yet, he rushed into it at the earliest possible moment, taking with him an inadequate Force and leaving behind him a dangerously weakened and sickly garrison to keep open his communications, and its own. His preparations made no provision for the state of things that any intelligent Frontier Officer could have told him would confront him at Matun ; and, as the whole business was planned and conducted on a scale commensurate to a punitive Expedition, into a punitive Expedition it soon degenerated, with the ordinary ending of all such expeditions—a rapid retreat from an untenable position. That it ended merely in failure, and not in disaster, was due to two causes, on neither of which was it possible to count beforehand, viz., the dryness of the season, and the lack, on the enemy's side, of any leader endowed with average

<sup>1</sup> "In the eyes of the Afghans, General Roberts is the personification of the implacable vengeance of a conqueror"—words used by an Afghan Khan in a letter to a Persian Minister. (See, Letter to Sir Henry Rawlinson, in a volume entitled *Tracts : Central Asia*.)

military ability. Had the winter rains set in after the arrival of the troops at Matun, flooding the rice-fields in which they were encamped, and filling the wide river-beds in their rear, they would have been unable to move in any direction, the supply-convoy could not have come up from Hazir Pir, and man and beast would have had reason to be thankful if nothing worse happened to them than the being put, temporarily, on half rations; <sup>1</sup> and had the Mangals understood their business as well as the Afridis in the Tirah Campaign of 1897-98 understood theirs; had they kept to the ordinary tactics of hill-peoples, and contented themselves with nightly firing into camp, and with daily cutting the Force's communications with Hazir Pir, the troops would have had no chance of lightening the pressure of peril for as much as a day; and the retreat that had in the end to be accepted, would have come earlier, and been carried out under worse conditions.

<sup>1</sup> "Rain hung about for the first few days, and had it come down we would have been in an awful hat, for we had only seventeen days' provisions with us. . . . We were therefore praying that no rain might fall to complicate matters." (*Kohat, Kuram and Khost*, p. 172, by Surgeon R. Gillham-Thomsett.)

## CHAPTER XXI

### The Occupation of Kandahar

#### ACTION AT THE GHLO KOTAL PASS

ON the 1st of January, 1879, the day after the 1st Division of the Kandahar Field Force had concentrated at Gulistan Karez, on the hither side of the Khwaja Amran Mountains, and the 2nd Division at Chaman, on the further side of the same range, the advance guards of both forces started for the Takht-i-Pul Valley, where the converging tracks to be followed by the left and the right columns, respectively, merge into one; the Brigades composing the main body of each, following at intervals of a day's march.

The advanced guard of Stewart's column, under Brigadier-General Palliser, was composed of the—

15th Hussars, one squadron;  
1st Punjab Cavalry, two squadrons;  
A.B. Royal Horse Artillery, two guns;  
25th Punjab Infantry;  
32nd Pioneers;  
Wing of 2nd Beluchi Regiment;  
4th and 9th Companies of Sappers and Miners;  
Strength about 1,800 men.

Biddulph's advanced guard, commanded by Colonel T. G. Kennedy, consisted of the—

15th Hussars, one troop;  
2nd Punjab Cavalry, two squadrons;  
3rd Sind Horse, one troop;  
A.B. Royal Horse Artillery, two guns;  
Strength about 350 men.

Nominally, Palliser was in command of both bodies, for Stewart, knowing that the distance between them—only twenty-five miles at the outset—would steadily diminish, supposed that they would all along be able to co-operate, their cavalry joining hands to screen the march of the entire force ; but the intricate nature of the ground separating them, rendered joint action impossible ; each had to act independently of the other, and all correspondence between the Divisional Commanders was carried on by relays of horsemen, posted at convenient distances, in rear of their respective forces. The distance by either route was much the same—about fifty miles, divided into three marches ; the country to be traversed a rough, stony plain, broken by rocky hillocks and cut up by nullahs ; but Stewart's line of advance had no exposed flank, his left being covered by the drifting sands of the Registan Desert ; whilst Biddulph's right had to be carefully patrolled, and great care taken to maintain touch between the advanced guard and the two Brigades—Nuttall's and Lacy's—echeloned in its rear, in order to guard against surprise from the extensive Kadani valley, which it was impossible to reconnoitre satisfactorily.

It would be hard to exaggerate the barrenness and loneliness of the region into which the troops had now descended, for two days the only sign of life was a group of Kabitkas,<sup>1</sup> the temporary dwellings of a party of nomads, which Palliser's men caught sight of ; and though, on the third morning, after the Mel Manda Valley had been entered, a few scattered habitations were discerned and strips of cultivation here and there, these were confined to the banks of artificial watercourses, and far away the greater part of the land was clothed with thick brushwood, smelling of sage. The foliage of this

<sup>1</sup> These Kabitkas are formed of branches bent in a curve and stuck in the ground, and then the framework is covered with a thick, coarse camel-hair cloth, most neatly pinned together with large thorns, and fixed to the ground by short ropes and pegs. In these domed tents, men, women, children and animals all live together, and they suit the climate, being warm to a degree." *Kandahar in 1879*, by Major A. Le Messurier.

shrub—though not actually poisonous—proved fatal to many a starving camel, whose weakened stomach was unable to digest the unaccustomed food which hunger compelled it to devour; for the difficulty of feeding the transport animals still weighed heavily on the Kandahar Field Force, as did also the allied difficulty of keeping up their numbers to a point compatible with the efficiency of the Army. Even as late as the 1st of January, the Commissariat Officer attached to Lacy's Brigade, had reported that very necessary stores would have to be left behind for lack of carriage; and when, the next day, an Afghan brought in three hundred donkeys, they had to be hired at the exorbitant rate which their owner's knowledge of the Army's needs emboldened him to ask. Fortunately, they were particularly fine animals, almost as big as mules.<sup>1</sup>

About the middle of the morning of the 4th of January, when the two advanced guards were within three or four miles of each other, parties of the enemy's horse were discovered, pushed well forward in front of a low rugged chain of hills to protect the passes which lead from the Mel Manda, into the Tukht-i-Pul Valley. Major G. Luck who, with a squadron of the 15th Hussars, was scouting well ahead of Palliser's force, pressed back the Afghans opposed to him into the Karkoma Pass, and, driving them before him, descended at their heels into the last named valley. Here the fugitives came upon their supports, and, turning back, rushed upon their pursuers, shouting and waving their swords. Though greatly outnumbered, Luck boldly galloped forward to meet the charge, and when the opponents were only a few hundred paces apart, the Afghans hesitated, paused, broke, and, scattering right and left, sought shelter in ground too rough and rocky to make it safe for a mere handful of men to follow them up.

<sup>1</sup> Some people may ask why they were not pressed into the service, and fair wages allotted to their owner. The answer to this is that the Afghan would have taken the first opportunity to desert with his beasts, and no further transport animals would have been brought into camp.—H. B. H.

Hardly had the squadron come to a halt, before a detachment of the 1st Punjab Cavalry, led by Major C. S. Maclean, rode up, bringing the order to fall back upon the guns which, by this time, were in the Pass, and if possible to lure the enemy under their fire. This withdrawal was part of a general scheme suggested by Kennedy, who, finding himself confronted by a considerable body of Afghan Cavalry and learning from his scouts that the Ghlo Kotal Pass was strongly held, had determined, before advancing, to dislodge the former and clear the latter, and had sent off a note to Palliser asking for his co-operation in reconnoitring the Tukht-i-Pul Valley. Palliser took the necessary steps for carrying out the proposed joint movement, by recalling and, at the same time, strengthening Luck, by directing the 32nd Pioneers to hold the Karkoma Pass, and the 25th Punjab Infantry to move rapidly in support of the Artillery, which was to stick to the Kafila track. Meantime, Kennedy had reinforced his scouts, and whilst they were gradually enveloping the enemy's flanks, he himself, with the remainder of his cavalry, threatened them with a frontal attack. Skilfully hidden by this screen of horsemen, the guns were brought to the front, and, coming into action, compelled the Afghans to fall back. At the first sound of Artillery fire, Palliser, with his Brigade-Major, Captain H. R. Abadie, hurried forward to meet Luck's party, placed himself at its head, turned sharply to the right, and, as quickly as the rugged nature of the ground would allow, pushed on towards the northern mouth of the Ghlo Kotal Pass. Just then, a dust storm sprang up, so thickening the air that Palliser was for an instant deceived into believing that a body of Afghan horsemen who were just then issuing, in good order, from the pass, were Kennedy's men; whilst the Afghans, unaware that the British had already penetrated into the valley, mistook Palliser's troops for a party of their own cavalry. The deception was a short one on either side. Maclean and Luck, at the head of Palliser's column, saw more clearly than their chief, and, quickly deploying, dashed into the enemy's

exposed flank. Though taken by surprise and their ranks broken by the impetus of the British charge, the Afghans gathered in groups and fought on bravely, till Kennedy's Cavalry, pressing them in rear, obliged them to seek safety in flight, and they galloped away, unpursued, in the direction of Kandahar.<sup>1</sup> Whilst this fighting was in progress on the eastern side of the valley, the guns which Palliser had left on the western Kafila road, and, as he thought, under the protection of his Infantry, had, by some mistake, been pushed forward four or five miles, escorted only by a small party of Cavalry. Near the village of Saif-u-Din they came suddenly in sight of the main body of the enemy, twelve hundred strong, posted on a hill about a mile away. At the same moment, they were themselves discerned, and the Afghans, seeing them so weakly guarded, poured down towards the stream on the banks of which they had halted. Marshall, the officer commanding, at once began to retire slowly on his distant supports, and sent back an urgent message asking for assistance, which Colonel H. Moore who, had assumed command in Palliser's absence, was not slow in rendering. Hurrying forward cavalry and infantry, he covered the retirement of the guns with mounted skirmishers, whom he directed to fall back slowly as soon as they had come into touch with the enemy; and, in this way, he not only brought the Artillery into safety, but, by its fire, inflicted some loss upon its would-be captors.

<sup>1</sup> "The curious mistakes during the day are worth noting, for they were made by one and all. In the first place, the Afghans themselves, on issuing from the Ghlo Kotal, saw the 15th Hussars and Punjab Cavalry, and at first set them down for their own cavalry coming in from Kandahar; then the 15th Hussars took Kennedy's men for the enemy, and instances could be given in which individuals nearly suffered, for their want of knowledge of the men in whose vicinity they remained. One man of the 15th Hussars was out as a scout, and actually, for a time, did left flanker to a party of the enemy; and in the evening, General Palliser, Sankey and myself at first thought we had run on the main body of the enemy when we were close to our own men."—*Kandahar in 1879*, by Major Le Messurier, pp. 57, 58.

The brief danger was over before Palliser rejoined his men, but with evening closing in, the British forces in the valley widely scattered, and the main body of the enemy still unshaken and near at hand, it would have been imprudent to carry the reconnaissance any further; so the troops bivouacked as they stood, with strong outposts thrown out on every side. The night proved a wild one. At first it rained heavily, then a sharp wind arose, and, in its wake, a second dust storm, making the darkness doubly dark; and when morning broke, Palliser and Kennedy found themselves in undisputed possession of the valley, for, under cover of that darkness, the Afghans had retreated on Kandahar.

In his report on this very creditable little affair—the only engagement on the whole long march from the Indus to Kandahar—General Palliser brought to special notice Colonel Kennedy whose admirable dispositions had contributed so much to its success, Majors Maclean and Luck, Captain Abadie, and his own Aide-de-camp, Lieutenant the Hon. R. Rupert. Three men of the 1st Punjab Cavalry enjoyed a similar distinction: Sowar Mahomed Takhi, who in the face of the enemy had picked up a dismounted comrade, and Ram Rukha and Akhmat Khan, who, together, had boldly charged into the ranks of a considerable body of Afghans to rescue J. Lower, a private of the 15th Hussars. All these men were subsequently decorated with the Order of Merit; had they been British soldiers, or negroes belonging to a West Indian regiment, they would have got the Victoria Cross.

The British casualties in the action were small:—in the 15th Hussars, one officer, Major Luck, contusion of shoulder;<sup>1</sup> one non-commissioned officer and five troopers wounded, two severely; in the 1st Punjab Cavalry a native officer, Jemadar Huknewary Khan

<sup>1</sup> Luck would have lost his arm but for the fortunate coincidence that the night before the action he received a pair of steel epaulettes from his wife in India, which his bearer at once sewed on his uniform.



and three sowars wounded, one severely ; whilst the enemy's losses amounted to about a hundred men killed and wounded.

On the 6th of January, at Abdur Rahman, in the Tukht-i-Pul Valley, the two divisions of the Kandahar Field Force concentrated for the first time, and all the regiments and corps that had been temporarily transferred from the one to the other, returned to their respective commands. On the 7th, the combined forces marched to Kushab, a village about eight miles short of Kandahar. The two Cavalry Brigades, under General Palliser, carefully covered the movement, and at night encamped well in advance of the main body of the army, for news received at Abdur Rahman had pointed to a stout resistance on the part of the enemy, and to the need of regular siege operations for the reduction of Kandahar. On the line of march, however, a deputation from that city waited upon the British Commander-in-Chief to inform him that the Governor, Sirdar Mir Afzul, had fled, with two hundred horsemen, to Herat, that the troops retiring from Tukht-i-Pul had been refused admittance within its walls, that the rest of the Afghan garrison had dispersed to their homes, and that the citizens were prepared to submit to British authority.

Stewart immediately decided to make, on the morrow, a ceremonial entry into Kandahar. The whole army, except the two Batteries, Heavy Artillery, C-4, and 1-1 Royal Artillery,<sup>1</sup> escorted

<sup>1</sup> By this time it had become a difficult matter to move the Artillery at all. On the 1st January, General Stewart wrote, as follows, to the Adjutant General: "The Artillery have simply collapsed, owing to complete failure of the bullocks. They have died in large numbers, and from sore feet and from other causes are hardly able to drag themselves, much less loaded waggons, along even an easy road. . . . At present most of the troops in this force are simply working parties for the Artillery, and if I had not arranged for this, not one of them would have reached Quetta. This is a very serious matter, especially as we cannot get bullocks in this country." Again, on January the 4th, he wrote: "If I had known they were in such a plight I should have left, the waggons at Quetta, for as matters stand I am always in dread of being obliged to abandon them."—*Life of Sir Donald Stewart*, pp. 235, 236.

by 59th Foot<sup>1</sup> and the troops needed to guard the baggage, was to share in the triumphal march, passing in one long stream from the Shikarpur Gate on the southern, to the Kabul Gate on the eastern side of the town.<sup>2</sup> The start next day was made early, but, owing to the cutting of numerous watercourses,<sup>3</sup> the road for miles was little better than a swamp,<sup>4</sup> and the difficulties of getting the infantry, guns and baggage along so great that it was four p.m. before the head of the British column, after threading its way through the narrow lanes of an extra-mural suburb, passed through the Shikarpur Gate into the broad street which runs northward in a straight line

<sup>1</sup> 59th Foot came up the next day with C-4 and I-1 Royal Artillery, and the two Heavy Batteries, 5-11 and 6-11.—*T. C. Hamilton's Diary*.

<sup>2</sup> ORDER OF MARCH THROUGH THE CITY OF KANDAHAR:—

15th Hussars.  
 A-B Royal Horse Artillery.  
 1st Punjab Cavalry.  
 2nd Punjab Cavalry.  
 E-4 Royal Artillery.  
 D-2 Royal Artillery.  
 Peshawar Mountain Battery.  
 Jacobabad Mountain Battery.  
 2-60th Rifles.  
 70th Foot.  
 25th Punjab Infantry.  
 32nd Pioneers.  
 29th Baluchies.  
 No. 9 Company Sappers and Miners.  
 8th Bengal Cavalry } Detachments.  
 19th Bengal Cavalry }

Generals Stewart, Biddulph, Fane, Palliser, Nuttall, and Barter took part in the Procession.—*Diary of the March of the 15th King's Hussars to Kandahar*, by T. C. Hamilton.

<sup>3</sup> These watercourses had probably been cut to impede the advance of the Force before the intention of defending the city had been given up.—H. B. H.

<sup>4</sup> "An officer galloping from rear, assured the General that his Infantry were miles behind toiling through the slough, his Guns were entangled, his Baggage in a desperate case. The sappers told off had doubtless done their best, but the water was too much for them. . . . After weary hours the Infantry appeared, crowning the slope, and with them A.B. Battery of Horse Artillery."—*Life of Sir Donald Stewart*, p. 237.

to the citadel, and which, in the centre of the city, is crossed, at right angles, by a similar thoroughfare connecting the Eastern, or Kabul Gate, with the Western, or Herat Gate. At the point of intersection, both streets are arched over by the Charsu, a circular dome, fifty feet in diameter; and under this vast roof and along the half mile of road between it and the Shikarpur Gate, are the principal bazaars. These, as a rule, swarm with men of many nationalities, all wearing Afghan dress, but in endless variety of hue and shade, and through this bright crowd carts filled with country produce, and camels laden with merchandise, come and go, whilst here and there a woman, clothed from head to foot in the "burkha," a formless robe, or domino, glides silently by. For the traveller, weary and hungry after weeks of toilsome journeyings, no pleasanter sight, even in winter, can be imagined than the food shops of Kandahar, with their piles of juicy pomegranates and almonds and raisins, of dried figs and apricots, to say nothing of cooked vegetables and fish and cresses, fresh from the watercourses which give life and fertility to the valley in which the southern capital is situated. But on that January evening, all these tempting delicacies were hidden from the eyes of the British soldier and his Native comrade. Every shop was closed; buyers and sellers stood, sullen and scowling, in dense ranks on either side the road; and every roof was crowded with women gazing down, half in wonder, half in fear, on the white-faced infidels, rumours of whose approach had so long agitated the city, and who were now actually in its midst.

Arrived at the Charsu, the column ought to have turned to the right, but its guide went steadily forward into the Topkana, or Place d'Armes; a square closed, on the further side, by the citadel's southern wall. At sight of this unexpected obstacle, the leading troops came to a standstill; and, whilst Sir Donald Stewart and his staff rode forward to ascertain the cause of the halt, the regiments behind continued to advance, and soon there was a dangerous block

just outside the square, where the roadway narrowed down to half its original width, and in the still narrower stretch of street just outside the Charsu. The growing darkness added to the difficulty of the situation; but coolness and discipline soon set matters straight. The Commander-in-Chief and his staff forced their way back through the press; the men faced about where they stood; the Artillery, with a good deal of trouble, turned their horses' heads in the right direction, and then the column once more got into motion, and after retracing its steps to the covered crossways, swung round to the left and, a few minutes later, began issuing from the Kabul Gate and marching north-eastward towards the old graveyard of the city, in the vicinity of which tents and baggage were expected to be awaiting its arrival.<sup>1</sup> This expectation was fulfilled for half the Force only. The original order with regard to the impedimenta of the Army, had been that they should all follow the road which, much cut up by watercourses, run through the villages on the south and eastern side of the city; but an officer on Biddulph's Staff who, after careful inquiry, had convinced himself that the Mand-i-Hissar road, which branches off from the southern road three miles from the Shikarpur Gate, though rough and winding, yet, as lying outside the region of irrigation, was safer and easier than the route selected, went to General Stewart, and, with some difficulty, obtained his permission to use it for the stores and baggage of the 2nd Division. This officer's information proved correct, and Biddulph's tents were being pitched and food got ready for issuing when his troops reached their camping ground; but Stewart's transport, entangled in narrow streets, and perpetually

<sup>1</sup> "Retracing our steps we again reached the *Charsu*, and turned down the road leading to the Kabul Gate, from whence we emerged at about five o'clock in the evening. The troops, however, continued to pass through the streets until long after dark. The guns had some difficulty in getting through the narrow turnings of the Shikarpur Gate, there was consequently delay, and it was nearly nine o'clock before the bayonets of the last regiment filed through the streets."—Correspondent of the *Bombay Gazette*.

stopped by canals, many of them with broken bridges, moved so slowly that it was hours late in arriving, and in the First Division of the Kandahar Field Force, man and beast celebrated the end of their long march by going supperless to bed.<sup>1</sup>

## OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. In their advance from the Khwaja Amran range to Kandahar, both Stewart's and Biddulph's advanced guards were too weak in Artillery; a complete battery should have been attached to each, and Kennedy should also have been given a regiment of Infantry and a company of Sappers and Miners, because (1) opposition was expected and its strength uncertain; (2) the country, especially as regarded the eastern column, offered the Afghans many opportunities for concealment and attack; (3) the advanced guards were not marching in light order, but had their baggage to protect; (4) the supports of each were a day's march in the rear.

OBSERVATION II. It is a matter of regret that Sir Donald Stewart should have allowed himself to run so great a risk as was involved in his triumphant entry into Kandahar, for the sake of a mere spectacular effect; for no practical end was served by rushing into the town in ignorance of the temper of its notoriously treacherous population, and with no certain information as to the whereabouts

<sup>1</sup> In a letter, dated 4th March, 1879, General Stewart writes:—

“That account of our march to Candahar is quite true. We were seven or eight hours doing eight miles, and a weary time we had of it. I don't admit, however, than any part of the delay was due to avoidable causes, because the stoppage was caused by watercourses, which had to be bridged over for the guns. The mistake was bringing the guns at all. But, before I ordered them to go, I had ascertained from our news-writer, a man who had only left Candahar a week before, that the road was a splendid one, fit for guns of any size, etc., etc. A native's idea of a good road is a place along which a pony or mule can scramble, and the country round the city was so intersected by watercourses that we had to *work* our way in. It was very aggravating, but having once got into the labyrinth of lanes and watercourses, there was no way of getting out of a fix except by going on.”—*Life of Sir Donald Stewart*, p. 253.

of the large body of troops which had so recently been within its walls. And not only was the march through Kandahar a grave error in itself, it was marked by faults of still greater gravity. No precautions were taken to diminish its dangers; not a gate was seized, nor any strong force of Artillery and Infantry told off to hold the Charsu and the Citadel; nor, yet, were patrols sent out to make sure that every part of the town was clear of the Afghan soldiery. Had there been a capable leader within its walls that winter afternoon, its inhabitants, all of whom were armed, might have annihilated their invaders when closely jammed together in the cul-de-sac, into which ignorance of its topography had betrayed them. That the Kandahar Field Force escaped unscathed, is no excuse for the temerity which exposed them to the chance of destruction; and the success of the demonstration was one of many incidents in the war which tended to confirm British officers in their inveterate habit of neglecting precautions and courting unnecessary danger.

## CHAPTER XXII

### Expedition to Khelat-i-Ghilzai

EARLY on the morning of the 9th January, the gateways of Kandahar were occupied by strong European detachments, and the wing of a Native regiment was encamped in the square outside the citadel—measures excellent in themselves, but quite inadequate to the protection of the soldiers and camp followers who, later in the day, poured into the city; for bazaars and streets were swarming with disbanded soldiers, armed with the jezail or the terrible Afghan knife; and amongst those seething crowds were many Ghazis (religious fanatics), men ever ready to give their lives for the chance of slaying an unbeliever. That first afternoon, Major St. John, riding in the principal bazaar, had his bridle seized and a gun fired point-blank into his face, by a man who sprang suddenly out of the throng. The startled horse swerved aside, the bullet whistled harmlessly by, and, with the assistance of his companion, Nawab Gholam Hussain Khan, late British Resident at the Court of Shere Ali, St. John succeeded in securing his assailant, who was subsequently tried by a military commission, found guilty, and hanged on the scene of his attempted crime. In a different part of the town, Lieutenant Willis, a young Artillery officer, was stabbed to the heart; and the assassin cut down three soldiers and wounded Captain H. De la M. Hervey, 1st Punjab Cavalry, who bravely tried to seize him, before he was killed by a non-commissioned officer of the same regiment.<sup>1</sup> Strong detachments of troops were hurried into the city,

<sup>1</sup> Referring to these outrages in a letter dated 12th January, 1879, General Stewart writes: "There are a lot of Ghazis about the place, but I have told the troops they must look out for themselves, as I am not going to let them bully us or frighten us into *not* going about the town, or wherever we like."—*Sir Donald Stewart's Life*, p. 242.

where the merchants were hastily closing their shops, to collect and bring out their comrades scattered about its streets; and, when this had been accomplished, the gate guards strengthened and the bazaars diligently patrolled—the dangerous wave of excitement sweeping over the population died away; but from that time forward no officer or soldier was permitted to enter Kandahar singly and unarmed; and its citizens were warned, by proclamation, that every man among them was liable to be searched, and that whoever should be found with weapons concealed on his person, would be handed over to the Provost Marshal for condign punishment.

With an almost immediate further advance in prospect, Stewart's most pressing business was to provide for the safety of the city and its garrison during his absence. To render an alien rule as little irksome as possible to its inhabitants, he appointed Nawab Gholam Hussain Khan, a man of the same religion if not of the same race, to the Civil Governorship, with Major St. John, his own Principal Political officer, as his adviser.<sup>1</sup> The command of the garrison, consisting of—

## ARTILLERY

Colonel C. Collingwood Commanding—  
 E-4 Royal Artillery,  
 5-11 } Heavy Batteries,  
 6-11 }

## CAVALRY

Major C. S. Maclean Commanding—  
 5 troops 1st Punjab Cavalry,

## INFANTRY

Wing 59th Foot  
 6 Companies 26th Bengal Infantry,  
 4 „ 12th „ „

Strength—14 guns, 1,735 effective European and Native Troops.

<sup>1</sup> In a letter dated 9th January, 1879, Stewart writes: "I am in a difficulty to know what to do with the country now we have got it. I have to arrange, for the government of the city and the collection of taxes. This is no easy matter, as most of the officials have disappeared."—Ibid. p. 240.



he conferred on Nuttall, one of Biddulph's Brigadiers; and he directed that the sick, of whom there were four hundred and sixty-six, in charge of the Senior Medical Officer, Surgeon J. B. C. Reade, should be accommodated in the Citadel—one hundred and fifty beds for the Europeans in certain of its buildings, two to three hundred for Native soldiers and camp-followers, in tents pitched in its central square, which the Garrison Engineer, Captain W. S. S. Bissett, was directed to put, as quickly as possible, into a defensible and sanitary condition.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the subordinate General Officers and their respective Staffs were employed in arranging for the occupation of further points of the Amir's territory. The immediate goal of the First Division was Khelat-i-Ghilzai, and that of the Second, Girishk, a fort of considerable size, situated on the right bank of the River Helmand; but it was rumoured in camp that if the weather continued favourable—so far it had been unprecedentedly fine—the former might go on to Ghazni; and every one regarded Girishk as only a halting place on the way to Herat. Stewart certainly arrived in Kandahar with both these distant objects in view, but a very few days in the “vile barren country”<sup>2</sup> lying around that city, sufficed to limit his ambition to the attainment of either the one or the other. Any hopes that he may have cherished of replenishing his supplies and renewing his transport at the end of the first stage of his great undertaking, had been quickly dissipated: Kandahar might offer a few luxuries to those who were able to pay for them, but it could not entirely support its own small garrison, still less furnish the stores of food that would be needed by two large forces on a journey of several hundred miles; and if, to use his own words, “having to draw all European supplies for three hundred miles

<sup>1</sup> Deputy-Surgeon-General A. Smith, Principal Medical Officer.

<sup>2</sup> The expression appears in a letter of Stewart's dated 8th January, 1879.—*Sir Donald Stewart's Life*, p. 240.

and more, through a country which produces little or nothing is a serious undertaking, and anything that throws it out of gear plays the mischief with us ”<sup>1</sup>—to what straits would not his men have been reduced by a doubling, in two directions, of the distance which separated them from their depôts? Already the margin that lay between them and starvation, was of the narrowest; only seven days’ supplies remained in camp on the 13th January, and, four days earlier, Stewart had written to the Adjutant-General that if he was not to go on to Herat, he should like, on account of the scarcity, to send some of the Force back to India.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Donald Stewart’s Life*, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 241. In his admirable little book, *Kandahar in 1879*, Major Le Messurier gives an interesting calculation to show the daily consumption of food by a force of 14,000 men—the total strength of the Forces at Kandahar and on the line of communications being 14,025.

#### FOR EUROPEANS

5,300 Loaves	or	25 Camel loads of flour.
265 Sheep	„	25 „ „ of meat.
Rice	4	„ „
Sugar	3	„ „
Tea	1	„ „
Salt	1	„ „
Vegetables	16	„ „
100 gallons Ruin	3	„ „
Wood	50	„ „
	—	
	128	„ „

#### NATIVE TROOPS AND FOLLOWERS

Flour	183 Camel loads.
Dhal	22 „ „
Ghee	11 „ „
Salt	4 „ „
Wood	275 „ „
	—
	495 „ „

The First Division of the Kandahar Field Force,<sup>1</sup> consisting of the following troops:—

ARTILLERY

- A-B Royal Horse Artillery.
- D-2 „ Artillery.
- G-4 „ „
- 11-11 „ „ (4 guns).

CAVALRY

- 15th Hussars.
- 8th Bengal Cavalry.
- 19th Bengal Lancers.

INFANTRY

*1st Brigade*

- 2nd 60th Rifles.
- 15th Sikhs.
- 25th Bengal Infantry.

*2nd Brigade*

- 59th Foot.
- 3rd Gurkhas.
- 12th Bengal Infantry (4 Companies).

Strength—4,182 officers and men, 5,119 camp followers, 22 guns, 1,564 horses, 78 gun bullocks, 4,439 transport animals, of which 3,930 were camels.

set out on the 15th January for Khelat-i-Ghilzai, in the following order—

---

Each horse 8 lbs. grain, 8 lbs. bhoosa; other animals, ponies, mules, and bullocks, half that rate; each elephant 1 camel load.

For horses, ponies, mules, and bullocks	}	{	500 maunds grain	165	Camel loads.
			500 „ bhoosa	200	„ „
Camels		{	650 „ bhoosa	450	„ „
			650 „ grain		
Elephants				15	„ „
Total				830	„ „

Grand Total for one day's consumption, 1,453 Camel loads.

<sup>1</sup> No change was made in the Divisional and Brigade Staff, but in Major St. John's stead Lieutenant-Colonel Browne, R.E., accompanied the Force as Political Officer.

## ADVANCED GUARD

Cavalry Brigade and Battery Royal Artillery, under Brigadier-General W. Fane, one day's march in advance of Main Body.

## MAIN BODY

General Stewart's Head Quarters, 2nd Brigade, under Brigadier-General Hughes, and three Batteries Royal Artillery under Brigadier-General Arbuthnot.

## REAR GUARD

1st Brigade under Brigadier-General Barter, one day's march in rear of Main Body.

The distance to be traversed was 84 miles, divided into eight stages—

1	Mohmand . . . . .	12 miles
2	Robat . . . . .	8 "
3	Khel-i-Akhum . . . . .	12 "
4	Shahr-i-Safa . . . . .	12 "
5	Tirandaz . . . . .	10 "
6	Jaldak . . . . .	14 "
7	Pul-i-Sang . . . . .	9 "
8	Khelat-i-Ghilzai . . . . .	7 "

and the road, which, after the third day's march, ran for the most part in the valley of the Turnak,<sup>1</sup> presented only one difficulty—numerous irrigation channels—which was met, on the suggestion of Captain A. Gaselee of the Quarter-Master-General's Staff, by sending ahead camels carrying gang boards, and laying them down for the use of the Transport and Artillery over each watercourse in turn. But all the way the ground rose steadily ; with each march the cold at night grew greater, the east wind, which, day after day, swept down the valley from dawn till noon, more and more cutting ; and though no opposition was encountered, the possibility of it had to be so constantly guarded against that, short as were most of the stages, the men were

<sup>1</sup> This tributary of the Argandab, at the time of Stewart's advance only 16 feet wide and 2 deep, during the rains is a considerable stream. "Its water is good, and the country in its vicinity is extensively cultivated, yielding for Afghanistan fair crops of wheat, the young shoots of which were just beginning to show themselves above ground."—*Surgeon-Major H. S. Muir's Diary.*

kept under arms from before daylight until after dark.<sup>1</sup> Cold and fatigue would have been easily borne if those who endured them had been well clad and well fed ; but nearly all the camp-followers and many of the Native soldiers were still without warm clothing ; and, by the substitution of meat for part of the usual allowance of flour and ghee, soldier and camp-follower alike were put practically on half rations for the whole period of their absence from Kandahar.<sup>2</sup> This confession of the paucity of the supplies accompanying the Force, was made at the end of the first day's march<sup>3</sup> ; by the end of the second, scarcity of forage, coupled with cold, had begun to tell on the camels ; by the end of the sixth, the losses among them had been so heavy that the Commissariat Department could no longer supply the necessary carriage,<sup>4</sup> and General Stewart saw himself compelled to decide that the Rear-Brigade and the Divisional Hospital should go no further than Jaldak—a decision which dislocated the new medical organization, left the greater part of the European troops ill-furnished with medical necessaries and comforts,<sup>5</sup> and, as the number of sick

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> This statement of Major Le Messurier's is confirmed by Deputy-Surgeon General A. Smith. "The reduction of rations," wrote the latter, "fell most heavily on the Native soldiers and followers, whose diet is mostly of a farinaceous description. . . . It was not until their return to Kandahar that the whole of the Native troops were again able to have their full rations issued to them."

<sup>3</sup> "Articles of provision are not to be trifled with or left to chance, and there is nothing more clear than that the subsistence of the troops must be certain upon the proposed service, or the service must be relinquished."—Duke of Wellington's Despatch, dated February 18th, 1801.

<sup>4</sup> January 19th. "We are getting into cold regions again, and our camels are dying in large numbers every day."—*Sir Donald Stewart's Life*, p. 245.

<sup>5</sup> "As there was no other arrangement to meet this unlooked-for contingency, the European portion of the advanced Brigade had to go forward trusting to the medical aid which could be afforded to the sick through the means at the disposal of Batteries and Corps as provided under the arrangements prescribed in Appendix A of the Précis."—Deputy-Surgeon-General A. Smith.

It is probable that the regimental hospital system, though less economical, is the one best suited for campaigning in a country like Afghanistan, where troops are constantly on the move, and forces are so often split up into small divisions.

outran the accommodation that could be provided for them in Khelat-i-Ghilzai, subjected the worst cases among them to the suffering attendant on removal.

On the 22nd, General Stewart, with the Divisional troops and the 2nd Brigade, arrived at Khelat-i-Ghilzai, which had been occupied by the advanced guard two days before. Native reports asserted that the garrison of six to seven hundred men, had originally intended to defend the place, but that, disheartened by the splitting of their largest gun, they relinquished their purpose and withdrew in the direction of Ghazni, carrying off with them as much food and forage as they required for their own use, and distributing the balance of their stores amongst the inhabitants of the surrounding districts. Had they stood firm, however, it is probable that the place would have been taken, without great difficulty, by a *coup de main*,<sup>1</sup> for, though strongly situated on the summit of an isolated eminence, well supplied with water by two copious springs,<sup>2</sup> and possessed of strongly defensible works—ramparts scarped out of the face of the hill, a substantial encircling parapet, and on its western front a natural cavalier<sup>3</sup> in the shape of a rough pyramid of conglomerate, shooting up to a height of nearly a hundred feet—its northern gateway had no flanking defences, and large masses of conglomerate scattered in its vicinity would have given good shelter to a covering party.<sup>4</sup>

The First Division remained eleven days in Khelat-i-Ghilzai, and

<sup>1</sup> This was the conclusion come to by Colonel Sankey and Major Le Messurier after a careful inspection of the fort and its surroundings.

<sup>2</sup> There are two copious springs of water, giving an abundant supply, rising in the fort below the northern face of the cavalier; its quality is said, however, not to be good, but the existence of these springs in an isolated hill formed of conglomerate and sandstone is curious, to say the least.”—*Kandahar in 1879*, by Major Le Messurier.

<sup>3</sup> A work situated behind another, over which it has a command of fire. From this point there is an extensive view of the bare, treeless plain, and also of distant hills, with some small villages, half hidden in orchards lying at their foot.—H. B. H.

<sup>4</sup> Major H. B. S. Lumsden.

during the whole of that time, apart from some valuable surveying work, its entire energies were devoted to keeping itself alive. To make its supplies go further, the men's rations were reduced in respect of several small articles of diet; but the resultant economies were effected at the expense of the health of the troops, more especially the Native troops, amongst whom there were already many cases of dysentery and pulmonary complaints. Dried fruits, eggs and fowls found their way into the fort; but the men, being in arrears of pay, had little spare cash, and the high prices offered by the Commissariat authorities failed to induce the people to bring in the grain and bousa, deprived of which they and their live stock, with one bad harvest behind them and another in prospect, would be in danger of starvation.<sup>1</sup> What could not be obtained by consent, had to be taken by force; and a duel of wits between the two interested parties ensued, the villagers growing more and more cunning in hiding their stores, and the British foraging parties more and more skilful in scenting them out and rifling their caches.<sup>2</sup> On the whole, the despoilers had the better of the despoiled; but in the daily search for forage and food, camels and men were worn out, and the only gain resulting from their sufferings and exertions was a slight prolongation of the term during which Khelat-i-Ghilzai remained in British hands.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "There is forage in the country, but it is only natural that the villagers should wish to keep it until their spring harvest is gathered."—*Kandahar in 1879*, p. 102, by Major Le Messurier.

<sup>2</sup> "Hereabout the people have no love for the Amir, and decline to do anything for him. But they don't care about us, and would prefer our room to our company; my plan is to keep on good terms with them, but I insist on getting what the troops want. They always say they have nothing, and yesterday, when a foraging party went into a house to search for grain, they were shown into a room where a woman was found moaning and groaning, and the people said she had been delivered of a baby that morning. On asking to look at the child, a thumping thing of five or six months old was shown, and the woman was requested to get up. Under her bedding was found the entrance to a granary, in which 150 maunds of wheat were hidden."—*Sir Donald Stewart's Life*, p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> On the arrival of the Cavalry Brigade at Khelat-i-Ghilzai, its Commander,

Not all the Force shared in this prolongation. Partly in order to lessen the Commissariat difficulty, partly with a view to examining into the resources of new districts, Stewart, very soon after his arrival at Khelat, sent two small columns back to Kandahar—the one *viâ* the Argandab, the other *viâ* the Arghesan Valley ; the former, commanded by Colonel B. W. Ryall, consisting of 2 guns of 11–11 Brigade Royal Artillery, 1 squadron 19th Bengal Lancers, 25th Punjab Infantry ; the latter, under Lieutenant-Colonel J. W. Hoggan, 2 guns of 11–11 Brigade Royal Artillery, 1 squadron of the 15th Hussars and one of the 8th Bengal Cavalry. To these last-named troops a wing of the 3rd Gurkhas, sent up from Mundi Hissar, was added *en route*,<sup>1</sup> when Colonel A. Paterson, as senior officer, assumed command.

With the exception of an attack on this second column, delivered with great courage and determination by a small party of horse and footmen, who were driven back with loss into the hills, neither Force was molested on its march, but both were delayed for some days by snowstorms ; and the result of the investigation into the resources of the two valleys was disappointing—there was fish in the rivers, and plenty of mallard, teal and other wild ducks along their course ; also, in sheltered places, an abundance of fruit trees, already white with blossom ; but the quantity of grain and forage in the possession of the people barely sufficed for their own wants, and the attempt to extort from them so much as a few days' supplies deepened their natural dislike to the invaders of their country.<sup>2</sup>

Brigadier-General W. Fane, deeply impressed by its miserable condition—Stewart himself states that the Cavalry and Artillery horses were half starved—recommended that it should be sent back to Kandahar before things grew worse. Had his suggestion been acted upon, the Infantry and Artillery must have starved, since it was only the ceaseless activity of the Cavalry which secured to them their daily bread.

<sup>1</sup> The march of the Gurkhas was much impeded by a heavy snowstorm.

<sup>2</sup> “ The people here say they can't fight us, but they don't hesitate to give out that they will worry us in every way they can.”—General Stewart, 26th January, 1879, p. 247



General Stewart had held on to Khelat-i-Ghilzai in the hope of obtaining the Indian Government's sanction to an advance on Ghuzni, and when that hope had been disappointed, he was not sorry to receive an order to return with his Division to Kandahar. So great, however, had been the deterioration in his transport service, that by no possibility could sufficient camels be mustered to admit of his whole Force getting under weigh together, and he had to arrange to leave Brigadier-General Hughes with the Head Quarters and wing 19th Bengal Lancers, Head Quarters and wing 12th Bengal Infantry, 9th Company Sappers and Miners, and the Engineer Field Park, at Khelat-i-Ghilzai until such time as more could be procured, when the fort was to be handed over to a Ghilzai chief, who had undertaken to hold it for the British Government against the Amir.

In the teeth of a bitter wind laden with sharp dust, Head Quarters and the bulk of the Division marched on the 2nd of February to Jaldak, where the Divisional Hospital was waiting to join them. The next day proved calm and mild, but the transport animals were so exhausted, that the day's march had to stop short of Firandaz, the next halting place ; and hardly had the Force encamped when the long delayed rain, alternating with violent snowstorms, descended in torrents, turning the ground into a half frozen quagmire, sunk in which the starving camels died as they lay.<sup>1</sup> The state of the horses was hardly less wretched. Fuel ran short ; the men shivered in their wet clothes ; and had the storm continued for a week, the whole Force might have perished of cold and hunger, or been destroyed by the Ghilzais, who would have been as willing to complete the work of destruction begun

<sup>1</sup> "Unluckily, last night we were caught in a storm of rain and snow ; the former has, however, prevailed ; the camp is simply a sea of mud, and the poor camels can't move to feed themselves. The horses, too, are in a miserable plight, and it is difficult to see how they are to be fed if this weather continues. . . . If we had had this weather at the proper season, the troops would have been unable to do anything."—*Sir Donald Stewart's Life*, p. 250.

by the elements, as their fathers had shown themselves thirty-seven years before in the Khurd Kabul Pass.<sup>1</sup> Luckily, it only lasted two days, and on the 6th, the march could be resumed ; but the loss of camels had been so enormous that only a portion of the troops could move at one time, and those who got off first had to halt two miles south of Tirandaz, that their transport might be sent back to bring up the baggage left behind. The same state of things repeated itself day by day, progress growing slower as more and more camels gave out ; and it was not till the last day of February that the 1st Division was once again concentrated at Kandahar. Its Commander had arrived there on the 11th, to find that during his absence his orders with regard to providing accommodation for the sick<sup>2</sup> had been effectually carried out ; also that only one serious incident had occurred, and that, outside the city, not within its walls. One morning, late in January, a band of Pathans, eluding the sentries, rushed into the camp of the Royal Artillery and 59th Foot, cutting and slashing right and left. Some of the soldiers lost their heads, and, instead of using their bayonets, seized their rifles and began firing with such recklessness that more of their comrades were injured by their bullets than by the knives of the Ghazis. Of these latter, five or six were killed on the spot, but not a single man taken alive ; and, as in the confusion, no one saw in what direction the survivors made good their escape, the affair could never be thoroughly investigated ; but from the fact that none of the dead were identified as belonging to the town, it was surmised that the

<sup>1</sup> "The Commissariat are out of wood, camels are dying off, and move we must before long, if we want to get out of our trip with any chance of success."—*Kandahar in 1879* (February 4), p. 103, by Major Le Messurier.

<sup>2</sup> Native string beds had been provided, with thick felt mats in lieu of mattresses, and each patient was provided with a rough table. The whole citadel had been put into excellent sanitary condition ; the dry earth system introduced ; all refuse removed daily and buried in trenches outside the city walls. In the opinion of the Principal Medical Officer, Dy. Surgeon-General A. Smith, the whole arrangements, considering the means at his disposal, reflected the highest credit on Brigade-Surgeon J. B. C. Reade's zeal and energy.

whole party had entered it, in twos and threes, the evening before delivering their desperate attack.<sup>1 2</sup>

## OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. Where a captured or occupied city is without any civil authority, or machinery for the control of its turbulent elements, the more drastic the measures adopted to prevent disturbance and crime, the better both for the victors and the vanquished. General Stewart's first act on entering Kandahar, should have been to issue two proclamations : the one, to its inhabitants, commanding them to bring in and give up their weapons of every description ; the other, to the people of the surrounding country, forbidding them to come armed within the British outposts ; and until time had been allowed for these proclamations to have their full effect, no camp-follower or soldier, not on duty, should have been permitted to pass through the city gates, at each of which a search party should have been stationed, with orders to arrest every man found in possession of arms, whether worn openly or concealed about his person. A fair interval should have been granted to the townspeople and the villagers in which to learn and obey the order affecting them ; but, after a specified date,

<sup>1</sup> In this affray one Artilleryman lost his life, and three were wounded, of whom one mortally ; one man of the 59th and one of the 70th Foot wounded ; also a Native officer of the 1st Punjab Cavalry and three followers. After this occurrence the troops were strictly enjoined to make use of their side arms, not of their rifles. " Our only excitement is trying to avoid these rascally Ghazis. A gang of them ran amuck in camp a few days ago, and the soldiers, losing their presence of mind, began to fire recklessly, and killed more men with their bullets than the Ghazis did with their knives. It is very disgusting having to guard against these brutes, and I am surrounded by sentries as if I were the Emperor of Germany. The mischief of the whole matter is that all the sentries in the world won't save one from a man who has no regard for his own life."—*Sir Donald Stewart's Life*, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup> The following extracts from a Diary of the march of the 15th Hussars in 1878-9, kept by " A Soldier in the Ranks " (T. C. Hamilton), give a vivid picture of the hardships undergone by the men and the suffering endured by the animals who took part in the Khelat-i-Ghilzai Expedition :—January 15. " Halt at

any violation of either proclamation should have rendered the offender liable to capital punishment. In a country like Afghanistan, however, where every man habitually carries arms for his own defence, the area within which such a proclamation should apply, ought always to be small, and so distinctly marked out that there can be no question as to its limits; and in no case should the death penalty attached to its violation be inflicted, except on a sentence pronounced by a regularly constituted military court, confirmed by the General Commanding, for its object is not the terrorizing of a people, but the prevention of crime, and the detection and punishment of the criminal. Had the measures recommended above been adopted, Lieutenant Willis would not have lost his life; there would have been no rushing of the camp of the Royal Artillery and 59th Foot, and many outrages of later date would never have occurred.

Robat. Forage runs short; horses on half rations." January 16. "Numerous fatigues, these last two days getting in forage." January 18. . . . "Fatigues for foraging. Commissariat is getting scanty. Got one pound of bread." January 19. "Got extra feeds for our horses to-day." January 20. "Very cold to-day; out foraging till 6 p.m. Not much grain to be got, and not enough wood to cook all our rations. The element fire is, indeed, scarce up here. Roti (bread) getting short; want of grain one of the reasons we left Kandahar." January 22. "Fearfully cold last night and this morning. No wood. Am weaker to-night." January 23. "General Stewart inspects our horses, which are mostly in very poor condition . . . supplies are very short now." 24th. "Awfully cold last night; the thermometer down to 5° or 6°. Stock of vegetables run out. Foraging parties out every day." 25th. "Out foraging till 6 p.m. . . . Our tea and sugar is further cut." 26th. "Troops go off reconnoitring to the Arghasan Valley, probably on account of scarcity of supplies. Got extra half-pound of mutton yesterday in lieu of groceries cut. Rain at night. 27th. "Out foraging. . . . Patrolling still kept up every night." 28th. "Very cold. Great scarcity of wood." 29th. "Find extra sentries and picket . . . duty is heavy." February 1. "Out foraging . . . Send a great many sentries and pickets now; am getting only two or three nights in bed." February 5th. "Convoy comes in with highlows, socks, gloves, guernseys and waterproof sheets." 6th. "Very great difficulty in getting the camels to move in the mornings, as they are often frozen to the ground and unable to rise." 8th. "Baggage often late, as the camels succumb in numbers to cold and hunger."

OBSERVATION II. Although the occupation of Khelat-i-Ghilzai formed part of the Indian Government's programme of operations in Southern Afghanistan, the time of that operation was left as much to the discretion of General Stewart as the time of the annexation of Khost to the discretion of General Roberts ; and the responsibility for a risky and futile expedition rests even more exclusively with the man who planned and conducted it in the former case than in the latter, since the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief were aware of Roberts's intention to invade Khost at the beginning of the year 1879, and forbore to interfere ; but they had no knowledge of Stewart's intention to march on Khelat-i-Ghilzai within a week of arriving at Kandahar, till too late for their attempt to stop him to prove successful. That Stewart knew the expedition to Khelat-i-Ghilzai to be risky and futile can be shown from his own correspondence.

On the 15th January, he wrote to his wife : " It has been rather a risky trip, this, as we have only two or three days' supplies in hand, and are living from hand to mouth on what we can pick up." And again, three days later, " A fall of snow would cut us off entirely from our base and source of supply." He might, with equal truth, have added, " And from the opportunities of picking up enough to keep us going from day to day," on which he had come to depend. The day after his entry into Kandahar he had written : " I am ordered to take Khelat-i-Ghilzai and Girishk, which I can easily do in eight or ten days, but what is to be done after that is a puzzle to me. I cannot get to Ghazni till spring, and by that time the Government of Afghanistan will have tumbled to pieces " ; and in the letter of the 18th already quoted from, he admitted that he did not know what he was to do after he got to Khelat-i-Ghilzai, unless it were to return to Kandahar. Of the two reasons assigned by General Stewart for doing what, on his own showing, he had better have left undone, the one—that " it is better to keep moving about and occupying the country than squatting in a place like Kandahar, where the troops will suffer

from sickness and ennui"—though sometimes valid, had no application to the circumstances of the case; and the other—that he wanted “to show the Russians that we can go where we like, even in winter time”<sup>1</sup>—savours more of the spirit of the English schoolboy than of the judgment of a British Commander. Who can doubt that what Stewart’s troops needed, after a long and terribly arduous march, was rest, and that they were far more likely to suffer from ennui in the wilderness into which he flung them, than in a large town, with bazaars full of objects of interest, and streets teeming with strange and vivid life; and what could his advance to Khelat-i-Ghilzai teach the Russians save the old, old lesson, that, in a country like Afghanistan, the armies of a civilized state may, indeed, go where they like; but how long they can remain at the points reached, and in what condition withdraw from them, depend, not on the will of their Commander or on their own courage and discipline, but upon their ability to procure food, and upon the greater or less severity of the season. How many of Stewart’s camp-followers and men succumbed on the march to and from Khelat-i-Ghilzai, how many of the sick sent back to India shortly after the return of the Expedition to Kandahar, had belonged to it—cannot be ascertained; but the corpses of nineteen hundred and twenty-four camels<sup>2</sup> strewn along its route, reveal something of the price paid by General Stewart to vindicate his liberty of movement in the eyes of men who, noting his losses with cynical satisfaction, were in no danger of being deceived into mistaking failure for success. The extraordinary errors into which British Commanders allowed themselves to fall, both in the First and Second Afghan Wars, were largely due to ignorance of, or incapacity for assimilating the teachings of military

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Donald Stewart*, pp. 243, 244.

<sup>2</sup> “Out of curiosity I asked Brigadier Hughes to count the skeletons of camels lying on the road from Khelat-i-Gilzai to Kandahar, and the list was 1,924. This was what we lost out of a division transport of about 3,500. Many more disappeared, but there is no doubt about these, as the carcasses were counted by officers.” (*Ibid.* p. 255.)

history. If General Stewart had had present to his mind the example set him by the Duke of Wellington, when, arriving victorious on the northern frontier of Spain, he disappointed the expectations of those who believed he would at once invade France; had he reflected on the reasons assigned by that great soldier for his determination to consider the question of such an invasion only in reference to the convenience of his (my) "own operations,"—he would have spared his troops the trouble of marching to Khelat-i-Ghilzai, only to march back again. "An army which has made such marches and fought such battles as that under my command has," so wrote the Duke to Earl Bathurst from Lusaca on the 8th August, 1813, "is necessarily much deteriorated. Independently of the loss of numbers by death, wounds and sickness, many men and officers are out of the ranks for various causes. The equipment of the army, their ammunition, the soldiers' shoes require renewal. The magazines for the new operations require to be collected and formed, and many arrangements to be made without which the Army could not exist a day, but which are not generally understood by those who have not had the direction of such concerns in their hands." Leaving out the allusions to battles fought and to the numbers of killed and wounded, this passage describes exactly the state of things in Stewart's army when it entered Kandahar. Men and transport were exhausted with long marches, the ranks of both thinned by death, sickness and various other causes; equipment of all kinds required renewal, magazines re-stocking, and there were endless arrangements calling for attention—when the man who had "the direction of such concerns in his hands," for no object that he could himself define, decided to press on into a country resembling France in that "everybody was a soldier and the whole population armed,"<sup>1</sup> but differing from it, in being poor and barren instead of rich and fertile.

<sup>1</sup> "Then observe that this new operation is the invasion of France, in which country everybody is a soldier, where the whole population is armed."—Despatch dated 8th August, 1813.

To General Stewart's honour, however, it must be recorded that, though he did not profit by other men's experience, he learned wisdom from his own. Kandahar once regained, he embarked on no more adventures, but set himself steadily to the work of reorganizing and re-equipping his Force ; and when the day came for him to be consulted with regard to the terms of peace,<sup>1</sup> he opposed the retention of a province which, as he had come to recognize, could never maintain either a British or a Russian army of occupation of even twenty thousand men.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Memorandum on the Strategical and Political value of Kandahar as a Position, given on pp. 263-5 of *Field-Marshal Sir Donald Stewart's Life*.

<sup>2</sup> "I am quite sure that, with all India at our back, we could not keep up a force of 20,000 men in one place, and I don't think Russia could do much better than ourselves in that respect." (Ibid. p. 248.)



## CHAPTER XXIII

### Expedition to the Helmand

THE constitution of the 2nd Division of the Kandahar Field Force, after contributing its quota to the garrison of the city, was as follows :—

#### ARTILLERY

- 1 Battery, 1st Brigade Royal Artillery, 6 guns.
- 11th Battery, 11th Brigade „ 2 mountain guns.
- Peshawar Mountain Battery, 4 guns.

#### CAVALRY

- 2nd Punjab Cavalry.
- 3rd Sind Horse.

#### INFANTRY

- 70th Foot.
- Wing 19th Punjab Infantry.
- 29th Bombay Infantry (Baluchis).
- 32nd Pioneers.
- 5th and 10th Companies Sappers and Miners.
- Engineer Field Park.
- 2 Pontoon Boats.

#### STRENGTH OF FORCE

- 3,035 Troops of all ranks.
- 2,087 Camp-followers.
- 991 Horses.
- 278 Bullocks.
- 364 Ponies and Mules.
- 2,251 Camels.

The Division had lost Brigadier-General Nuttall, Captain Bissett, R.E., and Lieutenant Colonel Lane, placed in charge of the important depôt of Kandahar ; but Brigadier-General Palliser and his Brigade-Major, Captain Abadie, had been re-transferred to it, and Captain W. Luckhardt had succeeded Lane as Principal Commissariat Officer,

Lieutenant J. E. Dickie, R.E., being attached as signalling officer, and Captain R. Beavon in charge of Survey party.

Girishk, the objective of the expedition, lies on the right bank of the Helmand, and the distance from Kandahar to Abbazai, the village facing it on the left bank, is seventy-six and a half miles by the southern, and seventy-four and a half, by the northern road, divided, in each case, into eight stages, four of which coincide.

(1)	8	miles	Kokeran . . . . .	8	miles	(1)
(2)	4	..	Sinjiri . . . . .	4	..	(2)
(3)	12 $\frac{3}{4}$	..	Haus-i-Madat Khan . . . . .	12 $\frac{3}{4}$	..	(3)
(4)	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	..	Ata Karez . . . . .	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	..	(4)
(5)	10	..	Killa Sayad. . . . .	9	..	(5)
(6)	11	..	Band-i-Tomur. . . . .	18	..	(6)
(7)	12	..	Bala Khana. . . . .	7	..	(7)
(8)	10	..	Abbazai . . . . .	7	..	(8)

Immediately after his arrival at Kandahar, General Biddulph had personally reconnoitred the first of these stages, and had subsequently sent out working parties to widen the road where it runs through the suburbs of the city, and to strengthen the bridges over the numerous water-courses by which it is intersected. On the 14th of January, Palliser, with the cavalry, proceeded to Kokeran, on the left bank of the Argendab, to collect supplies, and, that duty accomplished, gave place on the 16th, to Headquarters and the main body, and, crossing the river, occupied Sinjiri, where, on the 17th, he was reinforced by the 32nd Pioneers, who had pushed on to join him after helping the Sappers and Miners to ramp the banks of the Argendab<sup>1</sup> for the passage of the guns. On the 18th, the main body encamped at Sinjiri, and the advanced guard, a march ahead, at Haus-i-Madat Khan. There was nothing in the nature of the country—a hard, flat, stony plain—to have prevented a rapid advance; but Biddulph, solicitous for the well-being of his sickly

<sup>1</sup> The Argendab is not a difficult river to cross, its fords, except during floods, being only two feet deep, with good gravelly bottoms, and its current not exceeding four miles an hour.

transport, aware that the immediate object of his expedition was to relieve the pressure on the scanty food stores of Kandahar—he had started out with supplies for only one and a half days—and anxious, alike from motives of policy and humanity, to avoid driving the people along his route to despair by cruelly enforced exactions, moved slowly, drawing grain and forage from as wide an area as possible, and enforcing his requisitions according to a scheme thought out by his political officer, Colonel Moore, through the Maliks of the principal villages within reach.<sup>1</sup>

Advancing thus in leisurely fashion, he arrived at Ata Karez on the 23rd, where, to protect his right flank, and to reconnoitre the northern route to Abbazai, he detached a small column, under Colonel Tanner, to Kushk-i-Nakhud, with orders to regulate its subsequent movements by those of the main body, which was to follow the southern road, because, running for two more marches at no great distance from the Argendab, it seemed to hold out a better prospect of supplies. The reality proved so disappointing, that at Killa Sayad, the very next halting place, Biddulph ordered General Lacy, with the undermentioned troops—

I-1 Royal Artillery, 4 guns.  
 11-11 Royal Artillery, 2 guns.  
 70th Foot.  
 Wing 19th Punjab Infantry.  
 Wing 29th Baluchis—

to retrace his steps to Ata Karez, whilst he transferred his own Headquarters, the Peshawar Battery, the 10th Company of Sappers and the Pontoon Train, to Palliser's column at Bala Khana. Lacy executed a delicate duty with energy and discretion; but his troops soon swept the district lying round Ata Karez bare of food and fodder, and, notwithstanding the exertions of his Purchasing Agents, Major C. Sartorius and Captain J. E. Waller, who visited many dis-

<sup>1</sup> See General Biddulph's Lecture, vol. 24, No. cvii. of the *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*.

tant villages in search of supplies, he had to fall back on Haus-i-Madat Khan, where he put himself into communication with Kandahar, by establishing a heliographic station on an isolated hill near his camp.

Even after the sacrifice of so large a part of its strength, it looked as if the second Division would fail to reach the Helmand; and only by extending the operations of Colonel Moore's Purchasing Agents to the right bank of the Argendab, could Biddulph obtain sufficient food to carry his men through the last stage of their arduous journey. On the 29th, he reconnoitred the Helmand, and determined the ultimate disposition of his troops; and the next day his Force, preceded by an advanced guard under Colonel Kennedy, consisting of—

2nd Punjab Cavalry.

32nd Pioneers.

5th and 10th Company of Sappers and Miners—

moved slowly forward through an apparently illimitable desert, stretching away westward to where, on the far horizon, a range of hills, bare and stony as the plain from which they spring, could be descried. Suddenly, at the men's very feet, lay a deep valley, two to three miles broad, its fertile surface diversified with hamlets and orchards; Girishk, half hidden in jungle, on the further side; and, flowing under the cliffs on which they stood, the swift, clear stream of the Helmand, winding among yellow sands, and giving the finishing touch to the beauty which, in countless centuries of ceaseless change it had itself called into being, and then hidden from sight—for to step back only a few paces, was to lose all hint of it and its surroundings.

That night, the troops, including Tanner's flanking party, slept on the left bank of the river; but by ten o'clock the next morning, the Sappers, under the direction of Lieutenant L. F. Browne, R.E., had established a flying ferry across its channel. Mir Afzul, in his flight from Kandahar, had destroyed all the boats on the river except one, which the people of Abbazai saved by sinking it out of sight.

This and the pontoon raft,<sup>1</sup> brought up by the 5th Company of Sappers, sufficed for the conveyance of the Infantry, camp-followers and baggage belonging to the Force with which Palliser was to occupy positions on the further shore, the Cavalry and unladen camels crossing by the ford, in small groups, each accompanied by two or three guides, thanks to whose intimate knowledge of the stream, not a life was lost, though the water in places was four feet in depth, the current rapid, and the diagonal passage narrow and difficult to keep.<sup>2</sup>

When all the dispositions previously determined on by the General had been carried out, only the Divisional Headquarters, the Peshawar Mountain Battery, the Field Park and two hundred Baluchis remained on the southern side of the Helmand, encamped on the summit of the cliffs above Abbazai—the valley itself reeked with malaria. Two companies of Sappers were employed in ferry operations on the right, and two companies of Pioneers on the left bank of the channel, whilst the bulk of Palliser's troops occupied a position on high ground above Girishk, which fort was garrisoned by small detachments of Pioneers and Baluchis, under Colonel Tanner, and gave shelter to the Commissariat dépôt and, in the first instance, to

<sup>1</sup> A raft consists of two pontoon boats.

<sup>2</sup> During the time the Force remained on the Helmand only one man was drowned, and he lost his life in attempting, in defiance of orders, to cross the river without a guide. A dog belonging to the author frequently crossed the river at night to visit the only other canine member of the expedition, visits which were never returned. The following are the Helmand's principal fords:—

(a) Koji Bazak Ford, about three miles above Abbazai, bottom stony, passage difficult.

(b) Abbazai Ford. Very fair bottom; water about 3½ feet deep in dry weather.

(c) A Ford about 700 yards below *b* and similar in character. Above Abbazai the river divides into two branches, which reunite three-quarters of a mile lower down, thus forming a long island between 300 and 400 feet wide, covered with brushwood and small jungle. Fords *b* and *c* cross the two channels on either side this island.

(d) Ford Malger, 5 miles below Abbazai and of the same nature as *b* and *c*, minus the island.

(e and f) The two Fords at Killa-i-Bist, both very easy to cross. (H.B.H.)

the hospital ; but as every case of pneumonia—and there were many, especially among the Pioneers—treated within its walls, ended fatally, the sick were very soon removed into tents, pitched in a wide hollow, where, sheltered from the keen winds, they rapidly recovered.<sup>1</sup>

Hardly, however, had the arrangements for a prolonged sojourn on the Helmand been completed, than all illusions as to the value of its valley, as a source of supply, were roughly dispelled. Both up and down stream, the stocks of grain and bhousa, within anything like easy reach of Girishk, were quickly exhausted, and the foraging parties and Purchasing Agents had to go ever further and further afield. When one of these latter had been murdered by the Alizais of the Zemandawar, a district twenty-five miles from the British camp, and it had become impossible for the transport camels and the horses of their escort to go and return in a single day,—Palliser reported that some other system of collecting supplies would have to be devised, and Biddulph was driven to the dangerous expedient of scattering his cavalry over the country, leaving each detachment to forage for itself. How dangerous that expedient was, no one knew better than the General, whose thoughts were continually occupied with the problem of how to keep on good terms with tribes whom he saw himself compelled to strip of the very necessaries of life, and who was well aware that the discontent provoked by his exactions—pay as he might for the stores taken—was growing daily deeper and more widespread. That he adopted it, is the best proof of the straits to which he had been reduced within ten days of his arrival at Girishk.<sup>2</sup> He continued, nevertheless, to believe that his

<sup>1</sup> Girishk, as a fort, is quite useless, as, being commanded by the opposite bank, it would be untenable under the fire of modern artillery. Forty years before Biddulph occupied it, Major J. Woodburn, one of Nott's most trusted officers, had recommended that it should be blown up. (H.B.H.)

<sup>2</sup> The troops were generally short of tea, sugar and vegetables. Scurvy was showing itself, and there was no lime-juice in camp. The grain procured locally was not unfrequently poisonous. At first, treachery was suspected, but a searching inquiry showed that datura plant had been garnered with the

men were the advanced guard of a larger body that would march triumphantly on Herat, and, in that belief, began preparations for the building of a bridge over the river and for the improvement of the ferry service ; constructed a good military road between the ferry and the Helmand's northern bank—a work which called for the bridging of three wide water-courses—and sent out towards Herat, one reconnoitring party in the direction of Washir, sixty-two miles from Abbazai, and another, for three marches, towards Farrah, both of which brought back reports showing that, by either route, an invading army would have to carry all its supplies, and was likely to fare badly in the matter of water. He also took advantage of the scattering of the cavalry to extend his knowledge of the country through which he had advanced. An excellent traverse of the road between Kandahar and Abbazai had already been made by Captain Bevon ; now, the whole of the Argendab-Helmand Doab<sup>1</sup> was thoroughly surveyed ; and Biddulph himself, escorted by the Peshawar Battery and the Baluchi Infantry, visited Killa-i-Bist and the point, some miles below that ancient city, where the two rivers meet. From this interesting excursion he was recalled by news that the Alizais and other tribes were about to deliver simultaneous attacks on the British camps at Abbazai and Girishk.<sup>2</sup> A forced march of forty miles

corn, and this, though eaten with impunity by the people of the country, was hurtful to the troops, seventy of whom, from this cause, were under treatment at one time. The symptoms were extreme giddiness, followed in some cases by unconsciousness. No deaths occurred (H.B.H.)

<sup>1</sup> *Doab.* Strip of country lying between two rivers.

<sup>2</sup> "The Headquarters Camp commanded the passages (of the Helmand), nevertheless our situation was critical, divided as we were by such an obstacle as lay between the two camps. Zemindawar, the country of the Alizais, a warlike tribe, was only 25 miles distant. There were signs of excitement in that quarter and a blow was threatened on both banks at the same time. Had an attack been made, we should have been found weak in numbers, as the troops were much occupied in distant expeditions ; reconnoitring and bringing in supplies." See General Biddulph's Lecture, vol. 24, No. cvii. of the *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution.*

brought him to the latter place in time to frustrate plans which, in the dispersed state of his troops, might have proved successful; and a few days later—the 15th of February—he received the unexpected order to withdraw his Force to Kandahar, preparatory to returning to India by the Thal Chotiali route.

In view of the heat that would soon be setting in below the passes, delay was to be deprecated; but it was impossible to move without supplies, and Biddulph had to wait till the 22nd of February for a convoy from Killa-i-Bist, where he had established a Purchasing Agency, and another from Kandahar, to ensure the safe arrival of which large bodies of cavalry were sent out. On the 19th, whilst strong reconnoitring parties watched the Zemandawar frontier to give timely notice of any symptoms of hostile unrest on the part of its inhabitants, Biddulph shifted his Headquarters back to the cliffs above Abbazai, and, in the course of the three following days, withdrew all the troops, sick and baggage from the right to the left bank of the Helmand.

The retirement to Ata Karez, which began on the 23rd, *viâ* Kushk i-Nakhud, was covered by a rear-guard under Colonel H. P. Malcolmson's command, consisting of two squadrons 3rd Sind Horse and one company 29th Baluchis—strength seven officers and four hundred and six men, of whom two hundred and eighty-five were Cavalry. Malcolmson's orders were to watch the up-stream fords for a day and a night, and so to time his subsequent movements as to be always one march in rear of the main body, which, by the recall of Lacy to Kandahar, had lost the support it had hitherto enjoyed from the presence of a British column at Haus-i-Madat Khan.

Ata Karez was reached, without incident, on the 26th; but, after dark, two men of the 3rd Sind Horse galloped into camp bringing a message from Malcolmson, asking urgently for reinforcements both of Cavalry and Infantry, as he was surrounded by a large body of Tribesmen, and, though he had beaten off their attack, there was



every likelihood of its being renewed during the night. The messengers were evidently very anxious, and there could be no doubt that the rear-guard was in danger of being overwhelmed before help could reach it, though Biddulph lost not a moment in despatching Lieutenant-Colonel G. Nicholetts with a squadron of the 2nd Punjab Cavalry and a wing of the 29th Baluchis—strength, two hundred and ninety-one officers and men—to its assistance. When, after a rapid march, this little relief party arrived in the neighbourhood of Kushk-i-Nakhud, there were no lights to indicate the presence of friend or foe, and the stillness of the desert—that stillness which only they who have lived in that land of rocks and stones, can realize—was unbroken by the slightest movement of man or horse. For a moment Nicholetts thought of sounding a bugle call to give Malcolmson notice that friends were at hand; but the reflection that the signal would be equally understood by the enemy, and must destroy any chance, there might be, of taking them by surprise in the morning, made him abandon the idea. So, in drizzling rain, he and his men lay hidden till dawn, silent and watchful, their minds full of doubt and anxiety; for what disaster might not the darkness conceal from them, and what would be their own fate if those they came to succour, had already been annihilated? Daybreak dissipated their fears. An early patrol sent out by Nicholetts fell in with one of Malcolmson's; and soon the two forces were merged into one, and the former officer had heard from the latter, the story of his narrow escape from destruction.

Malcolmson had marched into Kushk-i-Nakhud at noon the previous day, without the slightest suspicion that fifteen hundred Alizais and other Tribesmen, who, on the 25th, had crossed the Helmand by a ford far up-stream and, after a rapid march of thirty miles along the foot of the hills to the north of the Kandahar road, had spent the night in a ravine not far from Kushk-i-Nakhud—were, at that very time gathering on the reverse slope of some high ground, a mile and a half to the left front of the British position. Just as the officer

in command of the Sind Horse was holding an inspection of the men's saddles, which, together with the bridles, were laid out on the ground—vedettes galloped in to report that they had seen a large body of men streaming over the adjacent ridge. The troopers coolly put their accoutrements together, saddled their horses and mounted. With equal steadiness, the Infantry fell in, and, in obedience to Malcolmson's order, Colonel Tanner brought their right shoulders forward so that their rifles might bear on the enemy's left. The Baluchis reserved their fire till the assailants were within five hundred yards of their ranks, and then poured into them such a storm of bullets that, to avoid it, they edged off to their own right, with the evident intention of occupying some huts and enclosed gardens. In doing this, they brought themselves on to ground favourable to Cavalry, and Malcolmson instantly wheeled his squadrons to the left, formed line and charged into the enemy's centre. A determined attack met with an equally determined resistance;—the Cavalry rode through the heavy masses opposed to them, sabring right and left; the Tribesmen forced their way through the Cavalry, hamstringing the horses as they pressed forward. At last the Zemandawaris' stubborn valour gave way before the desperate courage of the Indian horsemen, and, dividing into two columns, they retreated, still fighting, towards the hills. Major W. Reynolds was sent in pursuit of the enemy's right wing; Tanner, with the bulk of the Infantry, followed up the left, driving them, with heavy loss, into broken ground; whilst Malcolmson, with a troop of horse and a small detachment of Baluchis, tried to cut off a third body that was making for a village not far from camp. A deep, wide water-course intervened, and a false alarm that the right of his position was threatened, reaching him as he pulled up on its edge, he recalled his troops, and set all hands to work to strike the tents and get the camp equipage, ammunition, treasure and stores into the fort before dark. This done, he placed his men in an enclosure, protected on three sides by a wall two and a half feet high, and all

through the night sent out patrols, none of which chanced to approach the hollow where Nicholetts's party lay concealed.

In this sharp affair, the Infantry had no casualties, but the Cavalry had their second in command, Major William Reynolds, and four men killed, and Colonel Malcolmson and twenty-three men wounded, besides losing twenty-eight horses. Reynolds had been wounded early in the action, but continued to lead his men, and fell in the pursuit. In his despatch, Malcolmson, whose own wound fortunately was slight, brought the following officers' names to notice :—

Lieutenant-Colonel O. V. Tanner.

Captain J. P. Maitland.

Lieutenant H. C. Hogg.

Lieutenant F. D. N. Smith.

Lieutenant B. L. P. Reilly.

Surgeon C. E. E. Boroughs.

Praise of Boroughs' gallantry failed to save him from being reminded by the Deputy-Surgeon-General that a medical officer's place was with the wounded, not in the fighting line ; an undeserved rebuke, since, in this case, every man was needed to repulse the enemy, who, led by chiefs of distinction, displayed both military skill, and the utmost coolness and contempt of death. The total number of their killed probably exceeded two hundred—one hundred and sixty-three bodies were counted in the open, amongst them that of Abu Bukker, the Alizai chief who had murdered the Purchasing Agent's party a week or two before. One of the three men taken prisoners, stated that a hundred and twenty wounded had escaped, or been carried off by their friends ; but the explanation of the fact that only these three fell alive into Malcolmson's hands was an ugly one : whilst the troops were in pursuit, the camp-followers broke loose ; and, as they certainly mutilated the bodies of their dead foes in barbarous fashion, there is strong reason to suspect that they murdered all whom they found still living ; but as there were no outside witnesses of their brutal deeds, the crime could not be brought home to them.

General Biddulph and his Staff rode into Kushk-i-Nakhud shortly after the meeting of Malcolmson and Nicholetts, and after inspecting the field of battle and visiting the wounded, returned, with the troops, to Ata Karez. The next morning, just when all was ready for a start, camels laden, Infantry fallen in, Cavalry thrown forward to examine the ground to the front and flanks—an officer galloped up to announce that the Tribesmen were rapidly advancing in numerous columns, with banners displayed and flags flying. Apparently, the Zemandawaris defeated by Malcolmson, had been reinforced, and were about to try their fortune a second time. Camels and baggage were hastily parked, with strong guards told off to protect them; the reserve ammunition was placed at points convenient for the troops, who were drawn up in line of contiguous columns ready to deploy, and then—another messenger arrived, breathless, to explain that the dust-enveloped masses of the enemy had resolved themselves into flocks of mountain sheep, whose long tails, wagging in the air, had been changed into waving banners by the mirage, so common in Afghanistan. The news was received with shouts of laughter, mingled with some grumbling over lost time and wasted energy, and tempered by a general feeling of disappointment that, after all, the bulk of the troops were to see no fighting; then the quickly made preparations were as quickly undone, and the interrupted march resumed.

Two days later, March 1st, Biddulph's Division re-entered Kandahar in a storm of sleet and rain. It had been absent exactly six weeks; and though it had had the same Commissariat difficulties to struggle with that had troubled Stewart's Force, in coping with which the Cavalry horses were well-nigh worn out, yet, thanks to a milder climate and an abundance of fuel all along the course of the Helmand, it had suffered comparatively little in health, and there were no heavy losses among its transport animals to deplore.

## OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. Biddulph's expedition to Girishk was as barren of results as Stewart's to Khelat-i-Ghilzai; it failed even of the immediate advantage expected of it, for the troops had to be mainly supported by provision convoys sent out from Kandahar; and, though the camels improved in condition, the cavalry horses were worn out in the incessant search for food. Its chief effect was to rouse the inhabitants of the Zemandawar into active hostility, and to bring trouble on the peaceable inhabitants of the Doab,<sup>1</sup> whose villages were threatened and, in some cases, plundered by the Tribesmen in revenge for their defeat at Kushk-i-Nakhud, lack of carriage for a time rendering it impossible to afford them the protection to which they had a claim at the hands of their new rulers. All that was really gained would have been attained, without these drawbacks, by sending the spare camels to Ata Karez with a strong Cavalry and Infantry guard.

OBSERVATION II. The disposition of Biddulph's troops on the Helmand was faulty in the extreme. In an enemy's country to divide so small a force—fifteen hundred men with only four guns, its nearest supports fifty miles away—would have been unwise under any circumstances; but to place the bulk of the troops on the further side of a deep and rapid river, flowing through a valley so intersected by water-courses as to be impassable by night, and to leave Headquarters, the mountain guns, and the Engineer Park on the hither side, protected only by a few hundred men with a desert at their back—was

<sup>1</sup> “The defeat of the Alizais on the 26th ultimo has had less effect than was expected. Bands of Alizais and other vagabonds, religious and predatory, collecting to the number of two thousand in the neighbourhood of Kandahar, at a distance of thirty miles, are looting weak and threatening strong villages, in the name of the Amir and Islam. The respectable inhabitants, including the Barakzais, are inclined to assist in putting the vagabonds down, but nearly all the means of carriage have been absorbed by the returning force, and none are left for columns strong enough to restore order at any distance.”—Telegram from the Kandahar correspondent of the *Times*, dated 6th March, 1879.

to expose the latter to serious risks. Yet, to have kept the whole force together on the left bank of the stream, would have added enormously to the labour and danger incurred in the collection of supplies, as the resources from which they were drawn, lay on the right bank, and the unsupported foraging parties would have been constantly liable to attack and capture. It should never be forgotten that a commander's first duty is to his troops, and that only exceptional circumstances—circumstances in which some much higher interest than that of their safety is involved—can justify him in exposing them to the possibility of having to choose between starvation and annihilation at the hands of the enemy. In the case under consideration, there were neither political nor military reasons calling for the maintenance of a position on the Helmand. There was no enemy to keep at bay, no friendly force to rescue or support, no rich province to hold for the sake of its teeming supplies. Biddulph, therefore, when brought face to face with two equally unwise courses, should have informed the Indian Government that he had been given a task to which his troops and his material resources were alike inadequate, and have asked either to be placed in a position to perform it satisfactorily, or to be permitted to return to Kandahar.

**OBSERVATION III.** In the retirement from the Helmand, wise caution was shown in watching the fords till the troops were clear of the river, but only Cavalry, unencumbered with baggage, should have been used for that purpose, with orders to rejoin the main body the same evening; for the safety of a small force depends on keeping its units together, and on making up for its deficiency in numbers by enhanced vigilance, surprise being guarded against by night and day patrolling; by surrounding camps with strong outlying pickets, protected by *sangars*; by holding a certain proportion of the troops ever ready to fall in; and by so timing marches that baggage and rear-guard shall reach the camping ground before dark. Malcolmson's detachment was not a rear-guard in the ordinary acceptance of that term, for it had

no connection with the main body ; and, for the same reason, the detachment which marched to Abbazai by the northern road was not a flanking party. Both were dangerously weak, and the reconnoitring performed by Tanner's men could have been done equally well from the Helmand. On the important point of keeping a force together, Sir William Nott gave excellent advice to Colonel Wymer in the letter already quoted from. "The Major-General," so he wrote, "has taken every precaution in his power to fit out your detachment in the most efficient manner, and provided you keep it together and, unless absolutely necessary in your military judgment, never allow of it being divided and frittered away into parties, it must be successful."<sup>1</sup>

OBSERVATION IV. In the action of the 26th February, the troops were skilfully handled and well led ; but, before the fight, military precautions seem to have been neglected. Had Malcolmson on his arrival at Kushk-i-Nakhud despatched strong Cavalry patrols to search the ground beyond the screen of hills, and posted an observation party on its crest, he would have received timely warning of the enemy's presence. Until this step had been taken, a saddle parade was out of place, and one half the troops should have been held ready to mount at a moment's notice.

<sup>1</sup> *Major-General Sir William Nott, G.C.B.*, by J. H. Stoqueler, vol. I. p. 337.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### Visit of the Commander-in-Chief to Jellalabad

IN the midst of the Mohmand troubles, Sir S. Browne received the welcome news that the Commander-in-Chief and the Headquarters Staff had left Calcutta, and were on their way up country to visit the Peshawar Valley and the Kuram Field Forces. It was a relief to the harassed General to have the prospect of submitting his arrangements to a higher judgment, and of obtaining from the best authority some information as to the work which he might still be called upon to perform.

On the 24th of February, Sir Frederick Haines arrived at Jumrud, where he visited the hospitals, inspected the fortifications, and reviewed the troops, on whose soldierly appearance he was able to compliment General Maude.<sup>1</sup> That night he slept at Ali Masjid,

<sup>1</sup> "On this occasion the 5th Fusiliers (1st Battalion) turned out so strong that, as the ground available for parade purposes was limited in space, the Regiment formed up in half battalions. This regiment had passed the hot weather of 1878 in the hills, and was largely composed of seasoned soldiers, who maintained their efficiency and health during the campaign, while other regiments, such as those that had been stationed at Peshawar, . . . were so impregnated with fever that hard duty and variations of climate soon told on their shattered constitutions. . . . No regiment should, if possible, be kept at a notoriously unhealthy station . . . for a longer period than a year. The prospect of a change for the better . . . would have a good effect on the men's spirits, and any expense the Government would incur in carrying out these reliefs would be amply compensated for by the increased efficiency of the regiments concerned, to say nothing of the saving of life and health."—*General Maude's Diary*, 24th February, 1879.



and the next day rode through the Khyber, the hills on either side of the pass being crowned with troops to ensure him and his party against the possibility of attack. On the 28th he was at Jellalabad, where he remained till the 3rd of March. During this time he inspected the garrison, selected a site on the hills, about a mile from the town, for the cantonments which had become necessary since the Government had made up its mind to a permanent occupation of that post, issued orders for the erection of huts for the accommodation of the men during the coming hot season, and sanctioned the construction of a fortified enclosure to protect the great sheds containing supplies and military stores. But whilst busy with these immediate details, the Commander-in-Chief was on the alert to take in and weigh every feature of the general situation, a knowledge of which might enable him to advise the Government as to its future military policy, and afterwards he held a long consultation with Sir S. Browne and General Maude at Peshawar, when many important matters were discussed.

The distribution of troops between Jumrud and Jellalabad had not satisfied Sir Frederick; it seemed to him that there was too much overlapping of Browne's and Maude's commands, and that Jellalabad, at the extreme end of the line of advance, and the point from which a further forward movement would have to be made, was far too weak. To obviate these defects it was now agreed that the 2nd Division should take over charge of the whole line of communications, with its Headquarters at Lundi Kotal, where a fort and huts were to be erected; and that, strengthened by the addition of a wing of the 9th Lancers, the 10th Bengal Lancers, the 12th Foot<sup>1</sup> and the 39th Bengal Infantry, it should be distributed for the time being, at its Commander's discretion, between Jumrud, Ali Masjid,

<sup>1</sup> "The 12th Foot, a very nice Battalion, commanded by Colonel Walker, joined my Division. . . . A good many young soldiers in it."—*General Maude's Diary*, 18th April, 1879.

Lundi Kotal, Dakka, Basawal<sup>1</sup> and Barikab, with the addition, later on, of Jellalabad.<sup>2</sup> The 1st Division, reinforced by the Heavy Battery and the 51st Foot, whilst temporarily continuing to have its Headquarters at Jellalabad, was to occupy Gandamak, at which place, in view of the likelihood that it might have to serve as a secondary base of operations, a strong position was to be secured, extensive enough to contain a field hospital and a depôt for Commissariat stores, but not so extensive as to require to be defended by a large force.

When these and other matters had been settled, the Commander-in-Chief left Peshawar for the Kuram, and Sir S. Browne returned to Jellalabad charged with the responsibility of preparing a comprehensive scheme for that advance on Kabul which the political aims of the Indian Government might at any moment demand. The desire to have his name associated with the capture of the Afghan capital must have been a powerful inducement to Browne to place the undertaking in the most favourable light; but the uprightness of his character, and his exhaustive knowledge of all the conditions of the problem given him to solve, prevailed over personal ambition, and the document which was to have shown how Kabul could be reached, amounted, when complete, to a demonstration of the fact that, under then existing circumstances, it could not be reached at all.

So far as troops were concerned, Browne considered that if he took with him his whole Division and established no posts to keep open his communications,<sup>3</sup> he would be strong enough to overcome

<sup>1</sup> A Commissariat depôt was to be formed at this place, and shelter provided for troops and Commissariat establishment.

<sup>2</sup> The new arrangement gave Maude—

4 Batteries Royal Artillery,  
1 Regiment of British Cavalry,  
2 Regiments of British Infantry,  
6 Regiments of Bengal Infantry.

<sup>3</sup> Browne justified this departure from ordinary military caution on the ground that he would not be able to spare the men to hold the posts, and that

any resistance he might encounter, either in going or returning, and, marching by the Khurd Kabul route—the same that Pollock had taken in 1842—he would reach Kabul on the eighth day; but he could not assume a like adequacy with regard to transport. The weather would be warm, therefore tents could be dispensed with, and little baggage need be taken; but in the matter of food there could be no stinting and no trusting to the resources of the country. An ill-fed army, his experience taught him, was an inefficient one; and though he did not anticipate delays, he felt bound to provide against them to the extent of carrying fifteen days' supplies for his eight days' march. Calculating on this basis, he found that for eight thousand men and two thousand one hundred horses he should need—

	Camels	Elephants	Mules	Ponies	Bullocks
For Guns . . .		39	150		
Baggage Stores . and Ammunition.	1,700		1,900	700	320
15 Days' Supplies .	4,355				
Total . . .	6,055	39	2,050	700	320

and if, to save the time and stores and labour that would be consumed in converting Gandamak into an auxiliary base, the expedition started from Jellalabad—an alternative preferred by him—fourteen hundred and fifty-two additional camels would be required. But as two mules are always reckoned equal to one camel, the necessary carrying capacity expressed in camel-loads would amount to ten thousand six hundred and sixty-seven,<sup>1</sup> while the carriage actually at his disposal amounted only to three thousand five hundred and sixty loads—two thousand eight hundred camels, fifteen hundred the posts themselves would be in danger of being cut off, and unable to communicate with either the front or the rear. If the point should be decided against him, he suggested that fortified enclosures should be established at Jugdallak, Kala Sang and Tezin.

<sup>1</sup> Sir George Pollock, for 8,000 men, took with him 10,736 camel-loads.

and twenty mules. Colonel G. S. Macbean whom he had consulted, had promised to provide him with a fresh draft of eleven hundred and thirty-two camels and twelve hundred and fifty-eight mules, and to transfer two thousand camels and one thousand mules from the line of communications;<sup>1</sup> yet, even then, the total carrying capacity of the transport provided would be equivalent but to seven thousand five hundred and forty-three camel-loads, three thousand one hundred and twenty-four loads less than his minimum requirements.<sup>2</sup> Under these circumstances, all that he felt justified in recommending in the matter of an advance on Kabul, was the immediate transference of his Division to the cooler and healthier climate<sup>3</sup> of Gandamak.<sup>4</sup>

Preparations for this next step, which had long been in progress, were now pressed forward with redoubled activity. In addition to military movements, to be dealt with in a later chapter, they included fresh efforts to accumulate supplies, to increase the stock of transport animals, and to allay the suspicions and soften the hostility of the Afridis; for though the arrangements to secure the line of communications through the Khyber were by this time excellent, they were not so perfect but that a combination of the Pass

<sup>1</sup> This transference would have deprived the Second Division of mobility.

<sup>2</sup> Sir S. Browne noted that his estimate made no allowance for deaths among the transport animals, or for their drivers deserting with them, though he believed that the losses from both causes would have been heavy. He mentioned, too, that he had no hope of obtaining any further camels from the Kabul traders.

<sup>3</sup> There had been a sudden increase of sun heat, and the European troops had begun to suffer from fever, pneumonia and dysentery, in consequence of the difference in temperature between the days and the nights: Maximum, 86° minimum, 46°.

<sup>4</sup> Sir S. Browne sent in his draft-scheme early in April, and it was quickly apparent that his blunt statement of the difficulties standing in the way of an advance on Kabul had not shaken Lord Lytton's desire to bring the war to an end by the capture of that city, for, on the 13th, General Maude received, from the Adjutant-General, an official intimation that, in such an advance, he would command the First Division, Major-General R. O. Bright, the Second, and Sir S. Browne, the whole Force, with Colonel C. M. Maegregor as chief of the staff.

Tribes might jeopardize them, and, with them, the very existence of the troops in advance. And the Afridis were uneasy; they had not forgiven the invasion of Bazar, and the attempt to penetrate into Bara, and they could not see why, now Shere Ali was dead, the Indian Government should continue to keep an army in Afghanistan and to build forts and barracks in their territory. It was no easy matter to explain conduct so distinctly at variance with the promises made to them at the beginning of the war; but the Viceroy did the best he could to appease their discontent by appointing Mr. Donald Maenabb as Political Officer of Maude's Division, in succession to Cavagnari, when the latter moved on to Gandamak.

During his visit to Jellalabad, Sir Frederick Haines was shown many places of interest connected with the memorable siege of that town, by the only officer in Sir Samuel Browne's Force, who had been a member of its "illustrious garrison"—Lieutenant-Colonel J. J. Bailey, Rifle Brigade.

This officer was able to point out the bastion held by what was then his regiment, the 13th Foot, from which Dr. Brydon, the sole survivor of the British Army massacred in the Khurd Kabul and Jagdalak Passes was first deserted; the garrison graveyard, now covered by a mosque; the tracings of the fortifications which it had taken the garrison three months to construct, and an earthquake an hour or two to destroy; and, lastly, the spot, where his own gallant commanding officer, Colonel Dennie, fell in the engagement, in which Mahomed Akbar was driven across the Kabul river with the loss of all his tents and baggage.—H.B.H.

## CHAPTER XXV

### The Occupation of Gandamak

10TH HUSSARS DISASTER—ACTION AT FUTTEHABAD—  
THE KAM DAKKA AFFAIR

ON the last day of March, information reached Sir S. Browne that Azmutulla Khan, with a large following, had again descended into the Laghman Valley, where he was working to bring about a fresh combination of the Tribes against the British occupation of their country, and that the Khugianis, a powerful clan, occupying the fertile lands that lie to the south of Futtehabad, a large village seventeen miles west of Jellalabad, were assembling in great numbers in the neighbourhood of Khaja, their principal border fortress. To prevent the threatened mischief assuming larger proportions, Browne instantly organized three lightly equipped columns—no tents were taken, and the ammunition mules carried only half loads—one of which, under Major E. Wood, was to march to Chaharbagh in the Laghman Valley and capture, or drive out, Azmutulla; another, under Brigadier-General Macpherson, was to cross the Siah Koh (Black Mountain) by the Jowari Chann Pass into the valley on its further side, to cut what was expected to be that chief's line of retreat; and the third, under Brigadier-General Charles Gough, was to march on Futtehabad, and disperse the Khugianis.

Macpherson's Column, consisting of :—

The Hazara Mountain Battery,  
A wing 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade,  
Do. 4th Gurkhas,  
Do. 20th Punjab Infantry,  
A Company of Sappers and Miners,  
Approximate strength—1,000 men and 4 guns.

was the first to move. It left camp at 9 p.m. and, marching quickly, followed the course of the Kabul River up-stream for nine miles, and then, turning sharply northward, made its way through lands cut up by muddy irrigation channels, which so delayed it that the moon had set before it reached the Surkhab.<sup>1</sup> Here, the usual ford was found to be impassable, and another had to be sought. When this had been discovered, about half a mile lower down, at a point where the river divides into two branches—the whole force crossed in pitch darkness, and, pressing on, arrived about 4 a.m., at the foot of the Siah Koh. Here, there was a pause of fifty minutes, to allow of the troops closing up, and then the passage of that range began. The track presented many difficulties, its steep ascents and descents being strewn with huge boulders, or running over layers of sheet rock, so slippery that it seemed impossible for horse or mule to keep its footing; but at last the crest—five thousand three hundred feet above sea level—was reached, and Macpherson, hearing that Azmatulla was still in Laghman, and hoping to catch him near Bairam Khan Fort, where he would probably try to cross the Kabul River, hurried down the further side of the pass with a detachment of the Rifle Brigade, only to find that his expected prisoner had made good his escape, and that his followers had dispersed to their villages.

As pursuit was out of the question, and the troops—the same who five months previously had scaled the rocky heights of Rotas—though now inured to steep hillsides and stony ways, were exhausted by the long march, Macpherson determined to spend the night on the further side of the mountains, and the men's eyes turned anxiously to the path by which they had descended, watching for the rear-guard and the loaded mules. But nothing was seen of them that day, nor till 2 p.m. on the morrow, when they rejoined the main body on its homeward march. It turned out that they had missed their way

<sup>1</sup> A tributary of the Kabul River, and, like that stream, very dangerous at the season of the melting of the snows.

and wandered down to Futtelhabad, where they had blundered into Gough's column, and been promptly sent back, by paths so steep and narrow, that the 20th Punjab Infantry had been obliged, again and again, to unload and reload their mules.

At midnight, orders reached Macpherson to detach De Lautour's Mountain Battery, with an escort of two hundred Infantry, to reinforce Gough, and to return himself, with the rest of the troops, to Jellalabad. A few hours later, the column was again in motion, and though the Duranda Pass, by which its commander had elected to return, proved little less difficult than the Jowari Chann, by nightfall it was once more in quarters.

Major Wood's Column, consisting of a squadron of the 10th Hussars and one of the 11th Bengal Lancers, had left camp half an hour after Macpherson's.<sup>1</sup> To reach the Laghman Valley the Kabul River had to be crossed, and as, owing to its swollen state, the trestle bridge had been removed, the troops were obliged to make use of the ford just below the spot where that bridge had stood. The bed of the river at this point is about three-quarters of a mile broad ; but, in mid-stream, a stony island divides it into two channels. Between the right bank and this island, the ford—a wide strip of gravel strewn with boulders—is drawn in a straight line from shore to shore ; but between the island and the left bank, it runs first down the stream at an angle of 45°, then up-stream at the like angle, and above and below it, are rapids, broken by sandbanks and rocks. The V-shaped half of this ford is at all times dangerous, yet Jenkins and Gough seem to have been the only two senior officers who recognized the danger, and, unfortunately, a report of the former, in which he deprecated the use of it at night, was forgotten, or overlooked, by the Quartermaster-General's Department, in the hurry and stress of preparing three forces, at short notice, for the field. The moon was sinking and the dark shadows of

<sup>1</sup> The infantry supports which were to have followed the next day, were countermanded when news came that the Ghilzais had fled from Laghman.



the hills were falling across the valley when the column rode down to the river, and crossed over to the island without mishap, the single guide attached to it, leading the way, followed first by the squadron of the 11th Bengal Lancers in half sections, i.e. four abreast ; next, by two mules led by their drivers ; and, lastly, by the squadron of the 10th Hussars, also in half sections, Captain R. C. D'E. Spottiswoode at their head. By this time the darkness had deepened, so that no man could do more than dimly discern his neighbour, and the roar and rush of the river drowned every voice save its own ; yet, once again, the guide and the Bengal Lancers, composed of men accustomed from youth up to the treacherous rivers of the Punjab, reached the opposite bank in safety. Nevertheless, in the long column there had been a slight yielding to the pressure of the stream, so that at the apex of the V its tail had been dangerously near the edge of the ford ; so near, that the mules and muleteers, following close behind, stepped off into deep water and were at once swept over the rapids.<sup>1</sup> Almost at the same moment, Spottiswoode's horse—a powerful English charger—lost his footing, recovered it, lost it again, and finally, after being carried down some distance, swam to land with his rider, on the further shore. As with the leader, so with the rank and file. Too closely locked up for one section to take warning by the fate of that in front of it, the whole squadron missed the ford at the same point, and in a moment men and horses, closely packed, were fighting for life, rolling over and over in the swift, strong flood. Many of the men were drowned, or kicked to death by the struggling chargers, a few carried on to sandbanks and so saved. The last to enter the water, Sub-Lieutenant C. M. Grenfell, escaped through the wise instincts of his horse, who swung round the moment he felt himself in deep water, and regained the shore which he had just left. The Bengal Lancers on the left

<sup>1</sup> The official reports say nothing as to the fate of the mules and drivers, but, according to private sources of information, they all succeeded in getting back to land.

bank of the river knew nothing of this sudden tragedy; but two men of the 10th who had lingered on the island when their comrades entered the river, saw, as it seemed to them, the whole squadron in mid-channel suddenly face to the right, gallop down stream and vanish from sight.<sup>1</sup> The first intimation of what had occurred, was carried into camp by riderless, dripping horses, who about 11 p.m. rushed through the lines of the Horse Artillery to those of the 10th Hussars. That a great disaster had befallen that regiment was evident, and the officers in camp belonging to it, hurried down to the ford, followed by doctors and ambulances, and, as quickly as possible by Major G. E. L. S. Sandford with the elephants of the Heavy Battery, equipped with ropes, and carrying large bundles of firewood. Soon a huge bonfire was blazing on the island, and, by its light, Lieutenant the Hon. J. P. Napier and a few of his men were discovered on a sandbank below the rapids, and dragged, bruised and exhausted, to shore. Not till morning could there be any search for the dead, and then only the bodies of Lieutenant Harford and eighteen men were recovered; <sup>2</sup> all the rest had been swept away and were never seen again, though, later on, a report was current that they had been cast up by the flood, stripped by the Natives and flung back into the river.

The loss sustained by the 10th Hussars on that fatal night was one officer, three non-commissioned officers and forty-two rank and file—total casualties forty-seven; nearly two-thirds of the squadron

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of the Tenth Royal Hussars*, p. 402.

<sup>2</sup> "As daylight came and the banks lower down were searched, the bodies were found jammed amongst the boulders and under the rocky banks. The men were in full marching order, khaki, with putties and warm underclothing. They had their swords on and carried their carbines slung over their shoulders and their pouches were full. A man so accoutred simply had no chance against the swollen river."—Surgeon-Major George T. H. Evatt's *Personal Recollections*.

"Many amongst them were excellent swimmers . . . but the water was bitterly cold from the melting snows, and the poor fellows were quickly benumbed."—*Memoirs of the Tenth Royal Hussars*, p. 401.

which had left camp seventy-five strong.<sup>1</sup> Only thirteen horses were drowned ; the rest, when freed from their riders, having swum to land, on one bank or the other.

In the hurry and horror of this unexpected catastrophe, Sir S. Browne did not forget the important movement that was in progress, and quickly despatched another troop of the 11th Bengal Lancers to take the place of the lost Hussars. Furnished with guides and lighted by the fire on the island, the Lancers crossed over safely, and, thus reinforced, Wood pushed on to his destination, where he arrived too late to capture Azmutulla, who, warned of his approach, had quitted the valley, and was by that time well on his way to Kabul.

Saddened by the knowledge of the misfortune which had overtaken Wood's force, Gough's Column left camp at 1 a.m. of the 1st of April. The night was intensely dark, and difficulty was experienced in forming up the men, so hard was it to distinguish the stony track from the stony plain through which it ran ; but, once started, its progress was fairly rapid, and daybreak found it within a mile of Futtehabad. It was soon discovered that the inhabitants, who were reputed friendly, had deserted the village, and there was reason to fear that many of them had gone to swell the ranks of the Khugianis. A site for a camp

<sup>1</sup> "Several instances of gallantry, worth recording, took place during this terrible calamity, and none more so than the conduct of Lieutenant Charles Greenwood, who, although much exhausted by his efforts, had extricated himself from the quicksands and found himself on an island. Hearing cries for help, he again entered the water and found a man thirty yards out, unable to move in the deep gravel and almost drowning. Lieutenant Greenwood failed in getting the man out alone, when Lieutenant Grenfell, hearing the shouts, came to his assistance, and together they brought the man in safety to the shore. . . Lieutenant Greenwood received the Humane Society's medal for his conduct on the occasion.

"Private Crowley, who had swum with his horse a considerable distance and remained with it until it succumbed, had great difficulty himself in reaching the shore, and on doing so went to the assistance of Lieutenant the Hon. J. Napier, whom he helped to rescue."—*Memoirs of the Tenth Royal Hussars*, p. 404.

was selected, and the Cavalry found shelter under some trees whilst waiting for the rest of the Column to come up. The Infantry and guns came in at 10 a.m.; the baggage animals not till nightfall. Gough made use of the day's halt to acquire all the information he could as to the strength and whereabouts of the enemy, sending out numerous patrols and interviewing a good many local chiefs, amongst whom the Khans of Gandamak and Khuja were conspicuous by their absence. Early next day, he despatched Major H. F. Blair, R.E., and Major the Hon. A. Stewart, commanding the Horse Artillery, with an escort of thirty men of the 10th Hussars, to reconnoitre the road as far as Nimla Bagh, at the foot of the ascent to Gandamak, and report on its condition; whilst Captain J. Davidson, Quartermaster-General's Staff, and Lieutenant R. Purdy, R.H.A., with thirty men of the Guide Cavalry, were sent south towards Khuja, the principal village of the Khugianis, to try to ascertain the temper of that tribe. Its unfriendliness was shown by their firing on the reconnoitring party; and Davidson reported on his return that they were in large numbers, with outposts thrown forward to within five miles of the British Camp, evidently prepared to give battle. Finding that he was in presence of an enemy, Gough at once seized a hill from which the Khugianis' movements could be observed, the picket on which reported, about 1 p.m., that masses of men were advancing from the direction of Khuja, and forming up on the edge of a plateau, four miles south of the Gandamak road. As Blair and his escort had not returned, Gough ordered Major Wigram Battye, with three troops Guide Cavalry, to go in search of them, as far as the point where that road crossed the slopes leading up to the plateau on its northern side, and here he was quickly joined by the missing party.

Leaving Lieutenant-Colonel C. M'Pherson, with three hundred Infantry and a squadron of Cavalry to guard the camp, Gough, with

4 guns I.C. R.H.A. : Major the Hon. A. Stewart,

3 troops 10th Hussars : Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Ralph Kerr,

240 men 17th Foot : Major F. S. S. Brind,  
 220 „ 27th Punjab Infantry : Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. Hughes,  
 240 „ 45th Sikhs : Major C. L. Woodruffe—

followed Battyé, and on reaching him found that the Khugianis, numbering about five thousand men, held a very strong position that stretched for a mile along the edge of the plateau, its flanks protected by steep bluffs, its front, by strong stone breastworks and by the lie of the ground, which fell, at first abruptly and then more gently, to the Gandamak road. A frontal attack on such a position was out of the question, and Gough was too good an officer to dream of weakening his little force by detaching troops to turn it; the only course open to him, therefore, was to draw the Khugianis from their stronghold, and this he did with singular skill and success. Having carefully explained his plan to his principal officers, he ordered the Cavalry and Artillery to advance together to within a mile of the enemy. Here the former were to halt, while the latter, with a strong escort, were to gallop forward several hundred yards, fire a few rounds, limber up and retire. Gough felt confident that, when they saw the guns begin to fall back, the brave but undisciplined Tribesmen would rush out from their defences to seize them, and that, by repeating the manœuvre, he would, in time, draw them so far down the hill that it would be impossible for them, when attacked, to return to the position they had left. For the attack he made ample provision by sending the Infantry up a nullah, through which, if his calculations proved correct, they would get unsuspected on the enemy's right flank.

Everything worked out exactly as the General had hoped. When the guns fell back for the first time, the Khugianis began streaming from their breastworks; and when, after again firing a few rounds, they fell back the second time, accompanied by the Cavalry, the whole of the enemy's force abandoned their defences and rushed down into the plain, collecting on their own left to attack what they

supposed to be the only troops opposed to them. At that moment the Infantry emerged from the nullah on their right; the 17th Foot and the 27th Punjab Infantry deploying into line, whilst the 45th Sikhs were held in reserve.

Making over the command of the Cavalry and Artillery to Lord Ralph Kerr, with strict injunctions to guard against the Khugianis cutting in on his right, and orders to charge them when a favourable opportunity should present itself—Gough now hurried away to a point from which he could direct the movements of the Infantry. The latter were already at close quarters with the enemy, whose courage had not been shaken by their unlooked-for appearance on the scene of action. One group of Khugianis, led by a man carrying a large flag which had been very conspicuous throughout the fight, rushed boldly forward, and was met with like boldness by a handful of the 17th, led by Lieutenant Wiseman. A fierce hand-to-hand fight ensued, in which the gallant young officer and the equally gallant standard-bearer fell. The courage of the tribesmen, however, could not prevail over the admirable tactics of the British Commander, and, completely out-flanked on that side of the field, they had to give way. Seeing that the decisive moment had arrived, Gough despatched his A.D.C., Lieutenant the Hon. G. L. Bellew, to bid the Cavalry charge. But the order had been anticipated. Lord Ralph Kerr had recognized the opportunity for which he had been directed to watch, and forming up his men—barely two hundred, all told—the 10th Hussars on the right, the Guides on the left—had dashed straight into the crowd of Khugianis hovering on his right flank, and shattered it into fragments.

Many groups of men still clung obstinately to their rocky slopes, and, for a time, fought on bravely; but they could not reunite sufficiently to offer any effectual resistance to cavalry, and when they fled back to their original position, the mounted men were at their heels, and they were driven headlong over and beyond the breastworks, behind which, an hour before, they had enjoyed perfect security.

On the ridge, Lord Ralph Kerr halted to rally his scattered men, and here Gough—riding ahead of the Infantry, who were pushing up the slope towards the other end of the plateau—joined him, and together they looked down over a plain, seamed with ravines and sowed with rock, over which the Khugianis were flying for their lives, towards the forts that could be seen dotting the fertile country on either side of this region of stone. The order to pursue was quickly given, and whilst the galloping Cavalry cut down scores of fugitives, the guns which had been placed in position on the ridge, opened fire, and mowed down every little body of men that still retained its formation, and was within their range. It was a terrible slaughter, but the Khugianis were brave men and they did not die tamely. Flying, they fought on, till, under the walls of Khuja, they reached safety, and the victorious British Cavalry drew rein, and, turning, rode back over the blood-stained waste to the ridge where the Infantry awaited them.

In this, the most successful engagement of the war, the Afghans cannot have lost less than three hundred killed, and three times that number wounded. The British loss, as the table on the following page shows, was also heavy in comparison with the number of troops engaged.

In Major Wigram Battye, the Indian Army lost one of the best and bravest of its officers.<sup>1</sup> When he fell, the command of the Guides Cavalry was taken by Lieutenant W. R. P. Hamilton, whose gallant conduct on this occasion won for him the Victoria Cross.

The action was over by 5 p.m., and the same evening Gough's Column returned to camp by a valley lying to the east of the plateau on which it had been fought. Only a low range of hills separated the two, yet how great the contrast! On one side the blood-stained battlefield, where dead and dying lay strewn among the rocks; on the other, the homes of these very men—pretty villages, surrounded

<sup>1</sup> "In Major Wigram Battye the Government have lost an officer of whom any army would have been proud—a noble, chivalrous character and beloved by all who knew him."—Covering despatch by Sir S. Browne.

by gardens, half hidden in fruit trees just bursting into bloom; beyond the gardens, long fields of corn waving green in the evening

RETURN OF THE KILLED, WOUNDED AND MISSING IN THE ACTION  
OF FUTTEHABAD, 2ND APRIL, 1879

Corps	Killed.						Wounded.						Total, Officers and Men
	British Officers	Native Officers	Sergeants, Duffadars	Drummers	Rank and File	Horses	British Officers	Native Officers	Sergeants, Duffadars, etc.	Drummers	Rank and File	Horses <sup>c</sup>	
I.C.R.H. Artillery ..	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1 <sup>a</sup>	—	—	1
10th Hussars .. ..	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	6	—	—	7
Cavalry of Corps of Guides .. ..	1	1	1	—	1	5	—	4	5	19 <sup>b</sup>	20	—	32
1st Battalion 17th Foot	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	3	—	—	6
27th Bengal Native Infantry .. ..	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
45th Sikhs .. ..	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL .. ..	2	1	1	—	2	6	—	4	7	29	20	—	—
GRAND TOTAL ..	6						—	40				—	46

*a.* Mortally wounded.

*b.* One Sowar since died of his wounds.

*c.* Horses missing, 31.

NAMES OF OFFICERS KILLED AND WOUNDED.

*Killed.*

Major Wigram Battye, Bengal Staff Corps, Officiating Commandant Cavalry of Corps of Guides.  
Lieutenant Nicholas C. Wiseman, 1st Battalion 17th Foot.  
Resaldar Mahmood Khan, Cavalry of Corps of Guides.

*Wounded.*

Resaldar Dhuni Chand, Resaldar Kala Sing, Jemadar Jewand Sing, Jemadar Bishen Das, Cavalry of the Corps of Guides—all slightly.



sunshine, and, on every hand, the ripple and glitter of the streams from which this favoured valley borrows its beauty and its wealth.

Unwilling to inflict any further suffering on a brave people, Sir S. Browne waited for a day before resuming operations against the Khugianis, and sent two chiefs who had previously come in, to tell their head-man, Hyder Khan, of Gandamak, that their forts would be spared if they would undertake to give no further trouble. This message remaining unanswered, Gough, reinforced by the remainder of Tytler's Brigade<sup>1</sup> and by the troops detached by Macpherson, started out again on the 4th of April to destroy the fortifications of Khuja. The Cavalry and Horse Artillery ascended the slopes; the Infantry and Mountain Guns moved by the lateral valley, and the two bodies, meeting on the plateau, continued their united march to Sarna, the site of a post held by the British troops in 1840-2. Hearing

<sup>1</sup> The supersession of Tytler by Gough was much criticized at the time, and has never been explained or justified. The *Bombay Review* of the 5th of April 1879, has the following passage: "From what we know of General Tytler as an experienced and eminently judicious Commandant of his own (Gurkha) Regiment. to say nothing of the unmistakably superior service he has rendered during the present campaign, we would emphatically endorse the following remarks by the *Indian Daily News*, which, indeed, only repeats what is being said on all sides: 'A strong sense of injustice pervades the Peshawar Field Force, and great sympathy is felt for General Tytler, V.C. The records of the time testify that General Tytler has not been wanting in anything that has been required of him, and this supersession by a junior officer is felt to be one of those acts which is not only a personal wrong, but a course that tends to discourage men who have capacity and will to serve their country.'"

There is no evidence to show whether Browne or the Military Authorities at Headquarters must bear the responsibility for what must be stigmatized as an act of injustice, for the fact that Gough acquitted himself admirably of the duty confided to him, did not make it less unjust that a man should have been passed over, who had so recently given proof of his ability to discharge it with equal success. Tytler's retreat from Mausam was masterly, and if he made a mistake in taking too small a force to attack that village, it must be remembered that he had the safety of an important part of the communications of the 1st Division to provide for, and that when he had gone out with a larger column, he had returned to find that a convoy had been plundered in his absence.—H.B.H.

at this point, that the Khugiani chiefs were holding a Council of War, Gough despatched another messenger charged to assure them that, if they would surrender, all hostile action on his part should cease. Again there was no answer; so at 2 p.m. the march was resumed and the towers of Khuja, which village was found deserted, were blown up. Then, at last, Hyder Khan sent in to say that if the British General would promise to destroy no more forts, he and his chiefs would come in. The promise was given without demur, and the troops returned to Futtehabad, where, on the 6th, the Khugiani leaders made their submission to Gough, by whom they were courteously received and kindly treated; and, from that day to the close of the campaign, the tribe not only kept the peace but, by furnishing working parties, rendered valuable assistance to the army of occupation.

The action at Futtehabad and the agreement with the Khugianis having cleared the way for the long intended advance, Sir S. Browne, accompanied by a small column, left Jellalabad for Gandamak, on the 12th of April. The two valleys are thirty-five miles apart, and the distance is divided into three marches. The first day the General established his Headquarters at Rosabad; the second, at Nimla,<sup>1</sup> on the eastern side of the Gandamak heights, where he was joined by Gough and Tytler. On the 14th, the British troops entered the high-lying, well-watered valley of Gandamak, shady with mulberry trees, and cool with the breezes that blow down from the snow-capped peaks of the Safed Koh. It afforded ample accommodation for a large force; but, as a military position, Sir S. Browne preferred the Safaid Sang, a ridge three miles nearer to Jellalabad, where there was an abundant supply of good water, and where his camp could not be overlooked. These advantages had, however, counterbalancing

<sup>1</sup> At Nimla is the beautiful garden laid out by the Emperor Barbar. The garden, which is a square, with sides over 1,000 feet in length, contains avenues of gigantic plane trees and many summer houses, and is famed for its narcissi. Here, in the year 1809, Shah Shuja was defeated and expelled from his kingdom by Futteh Khan, the elder brother of Dost Mahomed.—H.B.H.

defects; the ridge was stony and treeless, very hot by day, very cold at night, and it suffered from clouds of dust, which sudden winds swept up from below; in the end, therefore, though the original camp was maintained, a large part of the First Division was removed to Gandamak, and the whole position was known by that name.<sup>1</sup>

It will be remembered that, by Sir F. Haines's arrangements, Jellalabad was to be transferred to the Second Division; but when the time came for carrying this out, Maude's hands were too full to allow of his extending his responsibilities beyond Barikab, eight miles short of that town, and, accordingly, when Appleyard's Brigade moved on to Gandamak, a small force consisting of—

2 guns E-3 Royal Artillery,  
 One wing 11th Bengal Lancers,  
 1st Sikhs,  
 One wing Guide Infantry,  
 One Company Sappers and Miners—

was left behind as a garrison for Fort Sale,<sup>2</sup> and its connexion with Safaid Sang was assured by the establishment of two strongly fortified posts—Fort Rosabad and Fort Battye—the one, twelve; the other, twenty-one miles from Jellalabad.

Though Gough's victory at Futtehabad had killed all resistance to the west of Jellalabad, to the east of that town, a fresh movement among the Tribesmen coincided with the British advance to Gandamak. First, came rumours that the Mohmands, under a certain

<sup>1</sup> Four miles from Gandamak is the hill where the last survivors of the British army, retreating from Kabul in 1842, were massacred. Pollock's men, advancing to avenge their fate, covered their bodies with stones. These, in course of time, became displaced, and when Browne moved to Gandamak, the bones of those brave men still whitened the hill-side, and received tardy burial at the hands of the 17th Foot, a regiment which had formed part of "the illustrious garrison" of Jellalabad.—H.B.H.

<sup>2</sup> This important post was afterwards strengthened with two troops of Cavalry, a company of 51st Foot and two of Sappers and Miners; and when the wing of the Guide Infantry was called up to Safaid Sang, it was replaced by four Companies furnished by the 45th Sikhs and the 27th Punjab Infantry.—H.B.H.

Mulla Khalil, were gathering in the hills beyond Lalpura, on the left bank of the Kabul River; then, the officer commanding at Dakka, Major O. Barnes, received a message from the Khan of that district asking for help against the insurgents, who were within three miles of his village, and had already exchanged shots with his outposts. The request put Barnes in an awkward position. He felt the hardship of leaving a chief who had entered into engagements with the British invaders, to the vengeance of his countrymen; but more strongly still did he feel his responsibility for the safety of his own post, with its large hospital and Commissariat depôt, and he knew that to detach any portion of its small garrison of eight hundred men and six guns to the further side of the river, would dangerously weaken its defences. Fortunately, the insurgents themselves relieved him from his dilemma by abandoning the threatened attack on Lalpura, and crossing over, in the night, to the northern bank of the river. Hearing, the next morning, that the enemy was at no great distance from Dakka, Barnes sallied out with two guns, C-3 Royal Artillery, a squadron 10th Bengal Lancers and three Companies of the Mhairwarra Battalion, to ascertain their character and number, and pushed forward, unopposed save for a few shots fired from the opposite bank of the stream, as far as the Kam Dakka Pass. Here he halted his guns and Cavalry, and himself advanced cautiously with his Infantry, and a few mounted scouts to the village of the same name, whose inhabitants he found much alarmed by the news of the Mohmand gathering, and urgent in their entreaties that he and his troops would remain and defend them. Their prayer was refused at the time; but on his return to Dakka, Barnes, after consulting the Political Officer, sent back a detachment of the Mhairwarra Battalion, consisting of a hundred and thirty men of all ranks, under Captain O'Moore Creagh, well provided with entrenching tools, ammunition and rations, to give the protection asked for. It was no easy matter getting the laden mules over the hills in the dark, and it was eleven at night before Creagh, who had

left Dakka Fort at five in the afternoon, arrived at the village, and prepared to occupy and entrench it. To his surprise, the inhabitants refused to admit him ; they were, so they declared, quite able to defend themselves, and the presence of a British detachment, without guns, could add nothing to their safety, and would certainly compromise them with the Mohmands. To force an entry was out of the question ; so the troops bivouacked outside the walls, with strong pickets thrown out to guard against surprise.

At 4 o'clock next morning, Creagh again summoned the elders of the village and ordered them to open their gates. But the men stood firm ; neither a Mohmand nor a Sepoy would they suffer within their walls. At this time, very few of the enemy were in sight, and Creagh felt so little fear of an attack that the messenger whom he sent to Dakka to inform Barnes of the strange position in which he found himself, was instructed to add that all was well. An hour later, he despatched a second messenger with very different tidings : the Mohmands had crossed the river in large numbers ; the inhabitants of Kam Dakka were showing themselves less and less friendly, and, his right flank being endangered, he had withdrawn to a fresh position covering the Pass, where he was momentarily expecting to be attacked. At half-past five, his right was again in danger, and once more he began slowly falling back. At 8 o'clock, he was joined by thirty-six men and a Native officer, who, leaving Dakka late the previous evening, had been benighted among the hills. Small as was this detachment, it was very welcome to Creagh, especially as it brought with it a fresh supply of ammunition ; but it was discouraging to hear that the Native officer doubted whether the second messenger would get through to Dakka, and was of opinion that no reinforcements could be counted on that day. Retreat, in the face of so numerous and determined an enemy, was impossible ; so Creagh looked about for a position in which his small force might defend itself until help should arrive, and found it in a graveyard lying in the plain between Kam

Dakka and the Pass, midway between the river and the Dakka road. No wall surrounded it, but there were plenty of stones, and out of these, whilst some of the troops held the enemy in check and others watered the baggage animals and laid in a store of water for the use of the men, the remainder built up a good, solid breastwork. Just as they finished their task, the Mohmands, descending from the hills, drove in the skirmishers, and taking advantage of the high corn and other cover, closed round the graveyard to within a distance of from sixty to a hundred yards, cutting off the garrison alike from road and river. Again and again, did the enemy assault the entrenchments, and, again and again, were they driven back at the point of the bayonet. About 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the attack on the front facing the Pass relaxed a little, but the other three sides were assailed with even greater fury than before; and though the troops fought with unabated spirit, ammunition was running short, and every man knew that help must come soon, or it would come too late. Luckily, Creagh's second messenger did succeed in reaching Dakka, and Barnes instantly telegraphed the bad news he brought, to Headquarters at Lundi Kotal. General Maude, who up to that moment had been unaware of the despatch of Creagh's Force to Kam Dakka, now took prompt steps to provide for its safety. In a very brief space of time, two Forces—the one starting from Dakka Fort, under Captain D. M. Strong, the other from Haftchar, a fort lying half way between Dakka and Lundi Kotal, under Major J. R. Dyce—were hurrying over the hills to the rescue of their beleaguered comrades, whilst Colonel F. B. Norman, who with a small column of Artillery and Infantry was reconnoitring between Lundi Kotal and the Kabul River, warned by a heliographic message of the emergency which had arisen at Kam Dakka, was hastening across country to Creagh's assistance, and two companies 2nd Gurkhas from Basawal, and three companies 12th Foot, and two mountain guns 11-9 Royal Artillery from Lundi Kotal, under Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. C. Sillery, were on the march to strengthen the weakened garrison of Dakka.

Strong's party, consisting of a troop of the

10th Bengal Lancers,  
One Company 5th Fusiliers,  
One of the Mhairwarra Battalions;

and accompanied by Captain Trotter, the Political Officer, was the first to arrive on the scene of action. Soon after 3 p.m., descending the Kam Dakka Pass, it reached a point from which all the details of the unequal contest in the valley below, could distinctly be discerned. On its left lay the Kabul River, winding through yellowing cornfields; the mountain slopes and the plain at its feet crowded with blue-togared Mohmands, and gay with red and white banners. But the point that drew all eyes was the graveyard, with its improvised defences, behind which glimpses could be caught of the gallant Mhairwarras, some with bandaged limbs and heads, firing slowly into the surging throng which threatened every moment to overwhelm them. Recognizing the imminence of their peril, Strong, with the Fusiliers, scattered the nearest Mohmands, posted his Company of the Mhairwarras on a ridge to maintain communication with his rear and to protect his flanks; and then, despatching Lieutenant C. E. Pollock to bring up at once the troop of the 10th Bengal Lancers, he and Tucker, at much risk, succeeded in getting into Creagh's enclosure. When the Cavalry came up, Strong dashed out again, and succeeded in joining it unhurt. Putting himself at the head of the Lancers, he charged through the fields, driving the astonished Mohmands headlong down the steep bank into the river, which was soon full of struggling men and floating flags and turbans. Simultaneously, the garrison of the graveyard, its ammunition at last exhausted, rushed from its entrenchments, and attacking with the bayonet, completed the enemy's discomfiture. Bewildered and terror-stricken, the Tribesmen fled to high ground, and the combined British Force at once withdrew, with all its killed and wounded, to the shelter of the Pass. This retirement was the signal for the return of the Mohmands; but hardly

had they swarmed down into the valley, and occupied the abandoned entrenchments, than the relief Force from Haftchar came hurrying up, and with its mountain guns soon drove them out, and forced them, for the second time, to seek safety among the hills.

Strong had been instructed to hold the Pass till morning, but the Mohmands were still in great strength, and not only Creagh's men, but the corps which had come to his aid, were much exhausted; there were wounded requiring treatment, and neither rations for the men, nor forage nor water for the horses and mules; so Major Dyce, the senior officer of the united Force, very judiciously decided on an immediate withdrawal, and, thanks to his careful dispositions, Dakka was reached, with few casualties, at 8 p.m., though the column, hampered by baggage and doolies, moved slowly, and the Mohmands followed it up and harassed it by continuous and heavy firing. When, the following morning, Colonel Sillery, with a strong column, re-crossed the Pass, he met with no resistance, nor did Norman who joined him at Kam Dakka after a long march through the Shilman Valley. The Mohmands had melted away as quickly as they had come together; and thenceforward, till the end of the campaign, they gave no further trouble as a tribe, though individuals still continued to steal, rob and murder whenever they had the chance. Their losses on the 22nd of April had been heavy—about two hundred killed and wounded—whilst the British casualties were only six killed and eighteen wounded, an inconsiderable number when it is remembered that the slightest hesitation or error of judgment on the part of Creagh or Strong must have entailed the destruction of the whole detachment. General Maude showed his appreciation of the former officer's skill, coolness and determination, by obtaining for him the Victoria Cross; and he commended Captain Strong's name to the favourable consideration and notice of the Commander-in-Chief, an honour shared by Hospital-Assistant Syud Nur Khan and Bheestic Nadari, both belonging to Creagh's Company of the Mhairwarras.



It was suspected that some of the Kam Dakka people took part in the attack on the graveyard; but the offence could not be proved against them, and as, after the dispersal of the Mohmand gathering, they made haste to return to their original friendly attitude, it was deemed unwise to punish them for a change of front which was, to some extent, justified by the weakness of the column sent to their assistance. A body of armed tribesmen belonging to Lalpura, who had accompanied Captain Trotter, were also believed to have gone over to the enemy. Certainly they took no part in the action on the British side, and their unfriendliness, even if it went no further than abstention from aid, was a fresh proof of the folly of expecting Mohmands to fight against Mohmands, Afridis against Afridis, at the bidding of a foreign authority, and in any interest but their own.

#### OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION I. The operations against Azmutulla emphasize what has already been written about night marches, and wide turning movements, in a mountainous country. In Wood's Column, the lives of forty-seven British soldiers were thrown away in the attempt to surprise an enemy, whose spies swarmed in Jellalabad, and watched every yard of the Kabul River; and Macpherson's Column ran immense risks, and underwent exhausting fatigues, in striving to cut off the retreat of a fugitive who was practically certain to get away before the point at which, alone, there was a chance of intercepting him, could be reached. Gough's enterprise succeeded, not because he started out in the middle of the night—for the fact that he found Futtehabad deserted proved that the enemy had been warned of his approach—but because, after duly informing himself as to the strength and dispositions of the Khugianis, he adopted the only tactics by which the superiority due to position could be transferred from them to him. No such military success was possible in the Laghman Valley, but a single strong force, leaving Jellalabad by daylight, could

have accomplished all that Wood's and Macpherson's combined movements were able to effect—namely, the evacuation of that valley by the Ghilzais—without the loss of a single life. In the whole of the first phase of the war, only one night march, Roberts's on the 1st of December, can claim to have attained its object; and that, though it succeeded, so far as the surprise of the Spingawai Kotal was concerned, failed as a turning movement, in co-operation with General Cobbe's frontal attack.

OBSERVATION II. The proceedings of the Court of Inquiry held to take evidence as to the cause of the accident to the 10th Hussars, have never been made public, but Sir S. Browne attributed the disaster to a sudden rise in the Kabul River, similar to that which, in 1839, swept away the leading troop of the 16th Lancers, when effecting the passage of the Jhelam, on their return to India. The surmise was probably correct; but that spates are of frequent occurrence in Afghan rivers, is an additional reason for the exercise of foresight and care in crossing them, and, on the occasion under review, the most ordinary precautions were neglected, the best known rules violated. The river was known to be in flood, yet (1) the eccentric course of the ford had not been staked out; (2) only one guide was attached to the column; (3) baggage animals were allowed to interpose between the two Cavalry corps; (4) the troops were ordered to cross in half-sections; (5) no Staff Officer was present to superintend the operation; (6) the officer commanding the column, instead of remaining on the island till all his men had landed on the further bank, crossed with the first half of his Force, and left to subordinates the duty of watching over the safety of the second half; (7) the passage, risky by day, was made at night.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the occasion of the accident to the 16th Lancers, the regiment entered the ford six abreast, and missed it in trying to pass some camels. After the accident, Sir J. Keane ordered the rest of the Cavalry to cross the Jhelam singly, with a horse's length between each animal, and every troop led by a guide.

OBSERVATION III. Though the incident at Kam Dakka reflects nothing but credit on all concerned, it nevertheless brought out strongly the need for well organized moveable columns, unconnected with the defence of the communications, and free, therefore, to march to the assistance of any threatened post. Had Barnes, on the 22nd of April, been in command of such a column, anxiety for the safety of Dakka would not have obliged him to refuse the prayer of the people of Kam Dakka, and the adequate protection which he would have been able to afford them, would have commanded their fidelity and kept the Mohmands to their own side of the Kabul River.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### Visit of the Commander-in-Chief to the Kuram

#### ADVANCE TO ALIKHEL

FOR some weeks after the close of the Khost Expedition, the Kuram Field Force, except for road-making, in which it was greatly helped by local labour, enjoyed a period of rest ; the severity of the weather which protected its outposts from attack, condemning it to not unwelcome inactivity. There was, however, no respite from toil and anxiety for the troops on the line of communication within British territory, where there was no snow to act as a check on the hostility of the tribes. Around Thal, cattle were still frequently carried off from their grazing grounds, and no man dared venture beyond the walls of that fort without a strong escort, which a garrison, so weak that it was not always able to relieve its outposts, could ill afford to furnish. Between Thal and Kohat, the Zymukhts, tempted by the stream of supplies flowing within sight of their hills, were continually raiding, and, early in March, a section of the Orakzais made a night attack on an unfinished resting place for convoys, a walled, but gateless, enclosure, killed four Commissariat servants and a police constable, wounded several drivers and carried off twenty-nine mules, without losing a single man, the small guard, in a better protected enclosure hard by, not daring to oppose or pursue them.

The strain on the Commissariat and Transport Departments also knew no relaxation, for not only had the troops, from Kohat to the Peiwar, to be fed, but supplies had to be accumulated as far forward as possible with a view to a fresh advance in the spring, a season of the

year when local food stores are at their lowest. The toil which this necessity imposed upon the transport animals, steadily thinned their ranks, and as each of the two thousand carts plying between Kohat and Thal, had to carry fodder and grain for its bullocks, the labour expended was out of all proportion to the result obtained.<sup>1</sup> On this section of the road, some relief was given by contracts with the local Tribesmen for the conveyance of goods; but beyond Thal, no such arrangements were entered into; and though the civil authorities scoured the Bunu district to replace losses among the camels, the animals obtained were of inferior quality and died off so quickly that when the order to prepare to march on Kabul was received, General Roberts found that he had only four thousand fit for service instead of the six thousand that would be needed, if his Force was to take the field in an efficient condition.

Early in March, three guns, F.A. Royal Artillery, passed over the new road from Thal to Kuram, accompanied from Chapri, their first halting place, by the 23rd Pioneers.<sup>2</sup> A week later, the 5th Punjab Infantry and a squadron of the 9th Lancers marched by the same road, which came thenceforward into general use. For its better protection, General Watson, who was now in command of Roberts's line of communications from Kohat to Thal, was requested to send the Nabha Contingent to Badish Khel, and orders were issued to prepare sites near Chapri, Shinnak and Badish Khel for the camp of the Commander-in-Chief, who was expected in the valley at the close of his visit to the Khyber.

<sup>1</sup> These bullocks had been purchased in Bengal on the suggestion made by General Roberts in December.

<sup>2</sup> STAGES ON THAL-KURAM ROAD.

	<i>Miles.</i>
1. Thal to Chapri . . . . .	7
2. Chapri to Alizai . . . . .	12
3. Alizai to Shinnak . . . . .	6
4. Shinnak to Badish Khel . . . . .	9
5. Badish Khel to Wali Mahomed's Fort . . . . .	7
6. Wali Mahomed's Fort to Kuram . . . . .	<u>10</u>
	51 miles.

On the 22nd, Sir Frederick Haines, accompanied by General Roberts, arrived at Kuram, where he reviewed the troops assembled to meet him, and inspected the forts and hospitals. On the 23rd, he rode up to Peiwar, and after a day's delay, due to heavy rain, to the Kotal. Everywhere he was able to compliment the men on the excellence of their conduct, as attested by the fact that not a single complaint had been preferred against them; and on the Kotal, he had words of special praise for the 8th "King's," whose gallant deeds he could fully appreciate, now that he had seen with his own eyes what manner of ground it was over which they had climbed, in the teeth of the Afghan guns.<sup>1</sup> Sir Frederick Haines began his return journey on the 27th, leaving with Roberts who took leave of him at Shinnak—the second stage from the Kuram forts on the new road—the order to hold the undernamed troops in readiness to co-operate with Browne's Division in an advance on Kabul, as soon as the Shutargardan should be free from snow:—

ROYAL ARTILLERY.

F-A. Royal Horse Artillery.

G-3 Royal Artillery.

No. 2 Mountain Battery.

CAVALRY BRIGADE.

Squadron of 9th Lancers.

12th Bengal Cavalry.

14th Bengal Lancers.

1ST INFANTRY BRIGADE.

72nd Highlanders.

5th Gurkhas.

28th Punjab Infantry.

23rd Pioneers.

7th Company Sappers and Miners.

<sup>1</sup> "Men of the 'King's' Regiment, now that I have seen the ground that you have come over and taken, I think that you have done wonders, and that you have performed deeds that any man should be proud of." Words of the Commander-in-Chief as conveyed to the "King's" Regiment in Regimental Orders, 25th March, by Colonel Barry Drew.

2ND INFANTRY BRIGADE.

92nd Highlanders.

5th Punjab Infantry.

21st Punjab Infantry.

ARTILLERY.

380 men of all ranks and 18 guns.

CAVALRY.

820 Sabres.

INFANTRY.

3,500 of all ranks.

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Total 4,700

Cobbe, who had recovered from the wound received in the attack on the Peiwar Kotal, was again in command of the 1st Brigade, but Brigadier-General Thelwall having been invalided back to India, the command of the 2nd Brigade was vacant, and remained so till the middle of April, when it was given to the Commandant of the Bhopal Battalion, Brigadier-General Forbes.<sup>1</sup> The only change in the Staff was the substitution of Captain E. Straton, 22nd Regiment, as Superintendent of Army Signalling, for Captain Wynne, whose health had broken down in the Khost campaign. The Regiments and Corps selected to take part in the advance on Kabul were to assemble at Alikhel, and a Reserve, consisting of:—

ARTILLERY

Half Battery C-4 Royal Artillery,

No. 1 Mountain Battery,

CAVALRY

5th Punjab Cavalry,

INFANTRY

2nd Battalion 8th "King's,"

67th Foot,

<sup>1</sup> This appointment, except as regarded seniority, did injustice to Colonel Barry Drew. The man who had led the 1st Brigade when, weakened in numbers, it performed the deeds eulogized by Sir F. Haines, and who had commanded it in the Khost Campaign, had the best claim to the command of the 2nd. —H.B.H.

11th Bengal Infantry,  
29th Punjab Infantry,

was to be formed in the Kuram and afterwards transferred to the Harriab Valley. The command of this Reserve was conferred on Colonel Osborne Wilkinson only three days before the conclusion of peace. General John Watson's functions as Inspector-General of Communications were extended to the Kuram; and in the course of April, Colonel Mark Heathcote was appointed to his Staff as Assistant Quarter-Master-General, and Major G. Wolseley, then on his way back from Kandahar, as Assistant Adjutant-General.

The 28th Punjab Infantry, the 23rd Pioneers, and the 72nd Highlanders were the first regiments to be ordered to Alikhel, and each, as it marched up, improved the road for the troops that were to follow after. The advance above was supported by a corresponding advance below; the 92nd Highlanders, the Headquarter wing of the 14th Bengal Lancers and the 11th Punjab Infantry—regiments that had been placed on Roberts's line of communications during his absence in Khost—moved up to Kuram, also two companies of the 8th "King's" from Kohat, and the 67th Regiment from Multan, accompanied by half C-4 Royal Artillery, bringing with it thirty-seven elephants to carry the 9-pounder guns over the mountains. The Nabha Contingent already held posts on the new road; now, half the Pattiala Contingent accompanied General Watson to the Forts, and went to work to improve their dilapidated defences, whilst the Artillery of the Force was further strengthened by raising the number of guns in each of the Mountain Batteries from four to six, and calling upon the 2nd Punjab Infantry, as it passed through Kuram on its way back to India, to furnish additional drivers.<sup>1</sup> Two Gatling guns

<sup>1</sup> "The 2nd Punjab Infantry, who had suffered much from exposure in the beginning of the campaign, were now ordered to be withdrawn from the Kuram Force, and their place was to be taken by the 11th Native Infantry."—*With the Kuram Field Force*, p. 288, by Major Colquhoun.



that were brought up by elephants on the 9th of April, turned out to be defective; and, though, after much tinkering, they were passed as fit for service and allowed to proceed to Alikhel, the practice made with them was never satisfactory.

All through the month of April, there was no pause in the upward and onward movement of troops; but the successive steps in advance were necessarily slow where regiments had to march by detachments, because the greater part of their transport was required to bring up supplies, where ordnance stores and ammunition had to be transferred from one kind of transport to another, at a great cost of time and labour—loads calculated for camels being quite unsuited to mules or men—and where weather varied from day to day, snowfalls following hard on sandstorms, and torrential rains on both.

As it was clear that similar causes of delay would have to be reckoned with in an advance from Alikhel to Kabul, when speed might be of vital importance, General Roberts made up his mind to increase the mobility of his Force by diminishing its impedimenta. In accordance with this resolve, he ordered the daily ration of the Native troops and camp-followers to be reduced from two pounds of flour or rice to one and a half, and, in his plan for the coming campaign, cut down the Commissariat reserve of food stuffs to fifteen days, curtailed camp equipage both for officers and men, abolished it altogether for camp-followers, and reduced the supply of ammunition, per man, to a hundred rounds for Infantry and fifty for Cavalry.

If General Roberts imposed sacrifices on his troops and demanded of them unflagging industry and zeal, he certainly did not spare himself. But though perpetually on the move, now at Kuram, now at Alikhel, again at Peiwar, Thal, and even at Kohat, seeing, with his own eyes, what was being done from one end of his long line of communication to the other, noting defects, ordering improvements, fertile in expedients to meet the difficulties which were constantly cropping up—he could not succeed in concentrating his troops and

guns till the 28th of April, eleven days after the date on which he had telegraphed to Colonel Macgregor his readiness to begin the combined movement on Kabul at a day's notice. Even then, the greater number of his horses, mules and camels were still in the Kuram, recruiting their strength after the fatigue and semi-starvation of the winter, as well as six elephants, which had been sent back to Peiwar for medical treatment, in consequence of an outbreak of foot and mouth disease.<sup>1</sup> He himself arrived at Alikhel on the 29th, and established his Headquarters near the First Brigade. The Second, and all the Artillery guns occupied a plateau six hundred yards away, a deep nullah separating the two camps. Breastworks of loose stones surrounded each, picket towers protected them at night against snipers, and a redoubt and other fortifications commanded their approaches. Strongly protected against attack, they had one internal weakness—water had, at first, to be procured from the Hazardarakht, a stream flowing in a deep ravine half a mile off; and when, by the construction of a channel two miles long, water was brought in from a spring, there was always a chance that the supply thus obtained might be cut off. Beyond the camps, a road fit for wheeled carriage had been constructed, and a telegraph line laid to within eight miles of the Shutargardan.

Whilst the military authorities, on both sides the Safed Koh, were occupying positions from which to attack Kabul, events were in progress which were to obviate the necessity for a further British advance. Sirdar Wali Mahomed Khan, the candidate for the throne of Afghanistan whose pretensions Lord Lytton was inclined to favour, had arrived in the Kuram late in January, and Roberts, on his return from Khost, had despatched him to Jellalabad, with Captain Conolly, Assistant Political Officer, as his companion, and a squadron of the 10th Hussars as his escort. But the Viceroy's wish to impose a

<sup>1</sup> This outbreak was attributed to feeding the elephants on rice straw. One died of the seven attacked.

sovereign with British proclivities on the people of Afghanistan, had already given place to the more sober desire of coming to an agreement with the prince in possession, and it was with Yakub Khan that, after many delays, negotiations were at last opened. During their progress, no movements directly hostile to the Government at Kabul could be undertaken; so the troops collected at Alikhel, filled up the weeks of waiting with extensive survey operations. On the 1st of May, Generals Roberts and Watson rode up the Hazardarakht defile as far as Drekulla. On the 6th, Colonel J. Gordon, Major Parry, Captains Rennick and Carr, Lieutenant Spratt and Dr. Duke, set out from Alikhel to explore some of the side gulleys leading to the Shutargardan plateau, on reaching which they split into two parties, one returning by the Thabai Pass, the other by the Gogizal road. The former, which runs into the Hazardarakht defile at Jaji Thamma, was found to be impracticable for laden camels and mules, and the latter, which debouches at Drekulla, was, in part, only thirty to forty yards wide and flanked by lofty precipices. On the 10th and 12th, the hills lying to the south of the Harriab valley were surveyed by Captain Clarke. On the 17th, Captain Woodthorpe succeeded in tracing the Hazardarakht stream to its junction with the Kuram river.

The wild inhabitants of these solitary regions saw, with intense dislike and suspicion, strangers scaling their mountains and penetrating into their most secluded ravines. Their acts of hostility might be few—a little firing into the camps at night, an attempt, nearly successful, to cut off Captain G. W. Martin's survey party, the murder of one or two camp-followers—but, at bottom, every man among them was the enemy of the invaders, and from the Shutargardan to the Peiwar Kotal, as from the Peiwar Kotal to Thal, and from Thal to Kohat, the price of safety, for reconnoitring parties and convoys alike, was perpetual vigilance.<sup>1</sup> Still, there was no objection to

<sup>1</sup> The reconnoissance to the Shutargardan plateau nearly provoked a fresh

profit by the needs of the Force ; poultry and vegetables, the latter specially welcome, were freely brought into camp, and the Jajis of the Harriab Valley showed themselves as ready as their kinsfolk in the Kuram, to make money by working on the roads ; though, at one moment, the reduction of their wages, from four annas a day to three, nearly provoked a strike among the Alikhel labourers.<sup>1</sup> The Hassan and Ahmed Khels, more distant sections of the tribe, held aloof throughout April ; but the former attended a Durbar held by the General on the 3rd of May for the purpose of announcing to all concerned that the Kuram and the Harriab Valley were now definitely severed from Afghanistan and united to the British Empire ;<sup>2</sup> and the latter, alarmed by Roberts's threat that, if they did not come to visit him, he would go to visit them, came in on the 21st, in time for their leaders to accompany the General when, reconnoitring to the south-west of Alikhel, he reached a point from which he could look down upon their villages.

As the belief gained ground that the negotiations in progress at Gandamak would be brought to a satisfactory conclusion, life in the camps became a little easier—sports and parades occasionally taking the place of work on roads and fortifications. The news that

Ghilzai rising, and drew from the chief of the tribe, Padshah Khan, who hurried back to his own territory from Yakub Khan's camp at Bhut Khak on hearing of it, a strongly worded protest.—H.B.H.

<sup>1</sup> Thelwall had paid his labourers four annas a day ; Roberts reduced their wages to three, and threatened to make them work for nothing, if they would not work for what he declared to be the recognized rate of wages.—H.B.H.

<sup>2</sup> General Roberts must have been conscious of a certain unreality in the threats and promises which he addressed to his audience at this Durbar. The conviction of the worthlessness to India of this barren and nearly inaccessible region, later expressed by him, may already have been growing in his mind ; and he knew that Colonel Colley, who had visited the Kuram in April and ridden with him to the mouth of the Hazardarakht defile, had come for the purpose of fitting himself to advise the Viceroy on the vexed question of which route to Kabul—that by the Shutargardan or that by the Khyber—should be retained in British hands, at the close of the war.—H.B.H.

Yakub Khan had accepted the British terms was telegraphed to General Roberts at Alikhel on the 20th, and after a grand review held on the 24th, in honour of the Queen's birthday,<sup>1</sup> the orders for the return of the troops to the Kuram Valley were published. The following day the backward movement began with the march of the 12th and 14th Bengal Cavalry from Byan Khel to Ibrahimzai; and, on the 26th, Headquarters moved to Shaluzan, a village in the upper part of the Kuram Valley, which had been selected as the site for a permanent British cantonment. Here a feast had been prepared by the Punjab Chiefs to celebrate the first occasion on which their troops had been employed in the service of the Empire; <sup>2</sup> and here, in the midst of festivities, the news of the signature of the treaty of peace was received by the Commander of the Kuram Field Force, and communicated by him to his hosts and fellow-guests.

#### OBSERVATION

A single general action, half a dozen skirmishes, would have exhausted the hundred rounds per man for Infantry, the fifty rounds for Cavalry to which General Roberts was prepared to limit his troops, and, apparently, the bayonet and the sabre were to be relied on in all subsequent engagements.

To diminish the camp equipage of the British and Native soldier may have been a disagreeable necessity, but to expect the camp-follower to cross the Shutargardan without any, was to condemn him to intense suffering and, in many cases, to death. Half-clothed camel-drivers

<sup>1</sup> At this Parade, Captain John Cook was decorated with the Victoria Cross for saving Major Galbraith's life in the attack on the Spin Gawai Kotal, and the Third Class Order of Merit was conferred on a Native officer and several men of the 3rd Gurkhas.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout the advance great hospitality had been exercised by the officers of the Native Contingents. The Chief of the Nablia Contingent, whose troops occupied Badish Khel, had a mess tent pitched in the shade of a great chumar tree "which many a weary, hungry, and thirsty traveller" had cause to remember with gratitude.—See Major W. C. Anderson's Report.

and doolie-bearers feel cold more than men in uniform, and, apart from all humane considerations, a prudent commander, recognizing that the efficiency of his Force depends largely on their capacity for work, would be equally solicitous for their well-being.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The tendency to reduce baggage for officers and men to a point at which health cannot be maintained, commented on by Sir Donald Stewart (see his *Life*, p. 229) is, at all times, greatly exaggerated in the case of camp-followers. I have known an officer's servant die of cold outside his master's tent, and numbers of servants perished on the march to Kandahar for lack of shelter and proper clothing; whilst warm coats and blankets and a tiny tent, just big enough to creep under, weighing less than fifteen pounds, kept others in perfect health; but to give them these necessaries, their master had to cut down his own allowance of baggage.—H.B.H.

#### NOTE TO WHOLE CHAPTER.

This chapter is based upon one authority only, viz., Major Colquhoun's *With the Kuram Field Force*, a most valuable and painstaking work, enriched with many extracts from Divisional Orders. Since the war, no other writer has given his impressions of this particular period, and no contemporary information of any importance bearing upon it, is to be found in English or Indian newspapers, an omission explained by the fact that, on the 7th of February General Roberts had summarily ordered Mr. McPherson, of the London *Standard*, the only independent Special Correspondent with the Kuram Field Force, back to India, on the ground that in his letters he had made "statements which kept the English public in a state of constant apprehension regarding the safety of the Kuram Force, which in the General's opinion had never been in peril," and "had been guilty of adding to a telegram after it had been approved of, and countersigned."

As regards the first of these accusations, no one who has read the accounts of the Peiwar episode given in chapters vii., ix. and x., can believe that, in "making statements which kept the English public in a state of apprehension regarding the safety of the Kuram Field Force," Mr. McPherson sinned against truth; and, as regards the second—the offence had been committed and condoned, on a promise being given that it should not be repeated, before the Khost Expedition, in which the offender was allowed to take part.

In *Forty-One Years in India* Lord Roberts charges McPherson with having broken that promise, telegrams having appeared in the *Standard* which he, the General, had not seen before despatch, and which were most misleading to the British public; but the letter of the Assistant Quarter-Master-General, ordering the Correspondent to leave the Kuram, alludes only to the one telegram, and it

was impossible that others should have been sent off without Roberts's knowledge, since they would not have been passed by the Telegraph Master unless signed by himself or by one of his Staff Officers.

It would seem, therefore, that McPherson's expulsion was solely due, as he himself asserted, to the severity with which he had criticized General Roberts's strategy in his letters, the newspapers containing which had reached the Kuram, just before the Khost Expeditionary Force got back to Hazir Pir.—H.B.H.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### The Retirement of Biddulph's Division

#### ACTION AT BAGHAO

THOUGH nearly a third of Stewart's Forces were employed in keeping open his communications, the poverty and physical difficulties of the country rendered it impossible to maintain more than four posts between Kandahar and Quetta. The first of these, at Mundi Hissar, eleven miles from Kandahar, was held by the wing of the 1st Gurkhas which subsequently joined the troops returning from Khelat-i-Ghilza by the Arghassan Valley ; the second, at Deh-i-Haji, the point where, twenty-one miles from Kandahar, the road *viâ* Kushab joins that *viâ* Mundi-Hissar, by 6-11 Royal Artillery and a company of the 59th Foot ; the third, at Chaman, seventy-two miles from Kandahar by—

Peshawar Mountain Battery, 2 guns,  
Bombay            "            "            "  
8th Bengal Cavalry,  
1st Punjab Infantry,  
26th Punjab Infantry ;

and the fourth, at Haikalzai, a hundred and six miles from Kandahar by a detachment of the 29th Bombay Infantry, whilst Quetta itself originally garrisoned by—

Bombay Mountain Battery, 2 guns,  
2nd Sikh Infantry,  
Wing 19th Punjab Infantry,  
Wing 30th Bombay Infantry,



was strengthened, towards the end of January, by the arrival of the 1st Gurkhas from India. In the wide gaps between Deh-i-Haji and Chaman, Chaman and Haikalzai, the Achakzais roamed at will; and hardly had Biddulph's Division quitted Chaman than, abandoning their friendly attitude, they waylaid and murdered two native soldiers and a camp-follower, and attacked a convoy which had halted for the night at Killa Abdulla. Fortunately, Subadar Faiz Tullah, in charge of the escort of forty men of the 1st Punjab Infantry, was warned of their approach in time to throw up an entrenchment, from behind which, with the advantage of superior weapons, he beat off his assailants, though they outnumbered his Force ten times over, and advanced with such boldness that the Sepoys had, in the end, to have recourse to their bayonets. News of this affair was carried to Chaman, and Major F. J. Keen started at once for Arambi Karez, to which village some of the persons implicated in it, were believed to belong; but the culprits, as was usual in such cases, had made good their escape, and Keen wisely abstained from punishing the villagers, as a whole, for the misdeeds of some of their number. Later, the Kadani plain—the great desert tract lying between Takt-i-Pul and the Khwaja Amran mountains, where the Achakzais make their winter home—became the scene of their predatory activity; and to the very end of the war, the crossing of this particular district was never free from danger, though Lukhan Khan, a chief who had long been the terror of the Kafilas trading between Kandahar and India, pursued by a force under Major A. Tullock, was brought to bay by Lieutenant Wells and Surgeon O. T. Duke, at the head of a small body of Cavalry, and shot, with nine of his men, on refusing to surrender.

To the east of Quetta, where the responsibility for Stewart's communications lay with General Phayre and the Bombay troops, the nature of the road placed them in constant jeopardy. In the narrow Bolan, convoys, full and empty, were perpetually jostling

and impeding each other; and, day by day, the task of accumulating enough supplies above the pass to ensure the troops in Southern Afghanistan against starvation, whilst they waited for the harvest to renew the sources of local supply, became harder and, at the same time, more pressing, for the time was not far off when all intercourse with India must cease. To relieve the congested traffic, Sir Richard Temple opened up a second route to the Pishin valley, *viâ* the Mula Pass, to guard which a wing of the 30th Bombay Infantry was placed at Khelat; but this circuitous road was never sufficiently used to serve as an antidote to a continually increasing evil the magnitude of which—impressed upon him from all quarters—at last, extorted from Lord Lytton a reluctant consent to that reduction of the troops in Southern Afghanistan which their commander had early seen to be imperative. Yet, the Viceroy seems not to have grasped the meaning and consequences of the step he sanctioned, for, whilst directing Stewart to bring down the forces under his command to seventeen thousand five hundred men—a number barely sufficient to hold the Kandahar Line—he allowed the Siege Train, of which the first section was still at Dadar, the second at Jacobabad, and the third at Sukkur,<sup>1</sup> to go on to Quetta, though that reduction destroyed all chance of its ever being used against Herat, and its presence in the Bolan added enormously to the difficulties of the convoys, struggling to push through to relieve the straits to which the army of occupation had been reduced.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Each Section consisted of a Battery—

Section I. 13-8 Royal Artillery.

„ II. 8-11 „ „

„ III. 16-8 „ „

Section II. never reached Quetta.

<sup>2</sup> “ Ever since we left Pishin we have been living on the country; two small convoys have reached us, and that is all I have heard of.”—Letter of Sir D. Stewart, dated 26th January, 1879. See p. 249 of his *Life*.

“ Depending on the Commissariat for a daily ration is a farce; one day

The Viceroy's orders, as embodied by the Commander-in-Chief in a telegram despatched early in February, 1879, directed General Stewart to retain for disposal at Kandahar and on his line of communications, the following troops belonging to the Bengal Presidency: Three Field Batteries, two Mountain Batteries, two Heavy Batteries, one of which was to be broken up to complete the carriage of the other, and its guns placed in position on the walls of Kandahar, two British Infantry Regiments, three Native Cavalry Regiments, seven Native Infantry Regiments, and two companies of Sappers and Miners. The Corps selected, in obedience to this order, together with the troops belonging to the Bombay Presidency, were distributed as follows:—

KOKERAN.

- 11-11 Royal Artillery (Mountain Guns).
- 2nd Punjab Cavalry.
- 29th Bombay Infantry.

KANDAHAR.

- A-B Royal Horse Artillery.
- D-2 Royal Artillery.
- G-4     "     "
- 5-11    "     "
- 6-11    "     "
- 19th Bengal Lancers.
- 1st Punjab Cavalry.
- 59th Foot.
- 2-60th Rifles.
- 15th Sikhs.
- 3rd Gurkhas.
- 25th Punjab Infantry.
- 10th Company of Sappers and Miners.

you can get a little wood ; another day you can get rice instead of flour ; other days you can get nothing, and if barley is issued for the horses, ten to one whether the bhoosa or dried lucerne is not withheld. The prices one has to pay are startling, and the forage of dried lucerne for one horse costs as much as Rs. 2 per day"—equivalent in 1879 to 3s. 4d.—Major Le Messurier's *Kandahar in 1879*, p. 72.

## PISHIN.

Wing 3rd Sind Horse.

2nd Sikhs.

1 Company 19th Punjab Infantry.

## QUETTA

13-8, Royal Artillery } Siege Train.  
16-8, „ „ }

19th Punjab Infantry (7 Companies).

Wing 30th Bombay Infantry.

## KHELAT.

Wing 30th Bombay Infantry.

## BETWEEN QUETTA AND SUKKUR.

1st Sind Horse.

1st Bombay Infantry.

19th „ „

Nos. 2 and 5 Companies Bombay Sappers.

Approximate strength, 17,500 of all ranks, and 40 guns.

All other Regiments and Corps were to return to India—

E-4 Royal Artillery,<sup>1</sup>I-1 „ „<sup>1</sup>

12th Khelat-i-Ghilzais,

26th Punjab Infantry,

326 Sick,

*via* the Bolan Pass ; and the

Peshawar Mountain Battery,

Jacobabad „ „

15th Hussars,

8th Bengal Cavalry.

70th Foot,

32nd Pioneers,

1st Gurkhas,

1st Punjab Infantry,

9th Company Sappers and Miners,

by the Thal-Chotiali route ; these latter joining hands in the Leghari Barkhan Valley with a force consisting of—

<sup>1</sup> These Batteries were to park their guns, ammunition and equipment at Quetta.

15th Bengal Cavalry,  
 Detachment 21st Madras Infantry,<sup>1</sup>  
 „ 30th „ „<sup>1</sup>  
 „ Bhawalpur Contingent,

which, under Colonel Prendergast, was to advance to meet them from Multan.

As the object of the march through the Kakar country was to ascertain its fitness to serve as an alternative route from India to Pishin, to pave the way for the construction of a military road and railway, and to select a site for a future British Cantonment—Captain W. J. Heaviside, R.E., and Captain T. H. Holdich, R.E., were attached to the retiring Force; the former, to connect the territory now to be explored, with the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India; the latter, to fill in the topographical details. The command fell naturally to Biddulph, but all the arrangements for the march were made by Stewart, in consultation with Sandeman, before that General's return from the Helmand. There were to be three columns, all of which were to *rendezvous* at Khushdil Khan-ka-Killa, at the upper end of the Pishin Valley; but the first of them, accompanied by Sandeman, was to start so long before the other two as to be entirely independent of them.

FIRST COLUMN OF FORCE RETIRING BY THAL-CHOTIALI ROUTE.

Commanding, Major F. J. Keen.  
 Staff, Major G. V. Prior.

ARTILLERY.

2 guns Jacobabad Mountain Battery.  
 2 „ Peshawar „ „

CAVALRY.

1 Squadron 8th Bengal Cavalry.  
 1 „ 2nd Sind Horse.

INFANTRY.

1st Punjab Infantry.  
 Strength, 775 men of all ranks, and 2 guns.

During a whole month, the troops under orders to return to

<sup>1</sup> These two regiments had been ordered up from the Madras Presidency to strengthen Multan, which had been entirely denuded of its ordinary garrison.

India, were slowly making their way to the appointed *rendezvous*; how slowly and with what difficulty can best be shown by taking a single case, that of the 15th Hussars. So sudden and violent were the floods which poured down from the Khwaja Amran Mountains and filled to overflowing the streams and watercourses on their western side, that this regiment was nine days in marching from Mand-i-Hissar to Chaman. Here it was detained by the state of the Khojak Pass, which, blocked by snow when its foot was reached, was swept on the third day by a heavy flood, following on a rapid thaw. On the 4th of March, the Hussars crossed the Pass, the men carrying their kilts and blankets on their horses, and halted at Abdul Khan-ka-Killa to rest the baggage animals. On the 7th, a fearful duststorm occurred, followed, in the evening, by heavy rain. In heavy rain, the march was continued for three consecutive days, the bad weather culminating, on the night of the 10th, in a terrific thunderstorm, which left the camp knee deep in mud; and it was not till the 14th of March that the regiment arrived at Khushdil Khan-ka-Killa, having taken twenty-two days to accomplish nine marches.<sup>1</sup>

The troops that started later, fared no better. Biddulph and his Staff, who left Kandahar on the 7th of March and reached Khushdil Khan-ka-Killa on the 20th, were as much hampered as the 15th Hussars by the swollen state of the rivers and drainage lines, in trying to ford one of which Captain Macgregor Stewart narrowly escaped drowning; and the heaviest flood of the season occurred about the middle of March, sweeping, in a single hour, from the top of the Khojak to the bottom.<sup>2</sup> But the worst feature of the journey for all concerned, especially for those who came last, was the terribly insanitary state of the camping grounds, and the stench from the dead camels that strewed the entire road, and blocked a portion of the Khojak.<sup>3</sup> So

<sup>1</sup> Mr. T. C. Hamilton's *Diary of the March of the 15th Hussars*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Indian Borderland*, by Sir T. H. Holdich, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> With the increasing heat the insanitary condition of the road grew worse.

many of these had belonged to the retiring force—the 15th Hussars lost a hundred and eighty-seven in one march—that but for the strenuous exertions of Mr. Bruce, the Assistant to the Governor-General's Agent in Baluchistan, it would hardly have got further than Pishin.

The first column of Biddulph's Force marched for India a week before its nominal Commander arrived at Khushdil Khan-ka-Killa. Its advance was slow, for the country was difficult, and one of the duties assigned to it was the collecting of supplies, and the establishing of depôts for the use of the succeeding columns. On the 23rd, a series of low hills, barring the way, were found to be strongly occupied by the Damars of Smalan. A warning to disperse sent to them by Sandeman, was disregarded, and Keen, with two guns and a detachment of Infantry, was just on the point of dislodging them, when a prisoner, captured the previous day under curious circumstances,<sup>1</sup> shook himself free of the men in charge of him, and, rushing up a hill, dashed among his clansmen, shouting : " I have surrendered ; who are you to dare to oppose the British

Major Le Messurier, who rode over it on the 6th of April, writes : " The road is all fair to Mand-i-Hissar, but the stench from the dead camels along the line was only just bearable. There are thirty sabres at Mand-i-Hissar, but all round the camp are some forty dead camels, unburied and stinking enough to poison the post. . . . At Deh Haji there were the usual number of dead camels. . . . All stages seem to have a fair stock of dead camels, and the men tell me that, although the beasts manage to get in with their loads, it is even betting that a large percentage cannot get on their legs in the morning, and are left to die. Poor beasts, what a tale they could tell of our want of care and forethought ; and will the broad hint of their dead carcasses have any effect on our future campaigns ? " (pp. 149, 150).

<sup>1</sup> " Just before we arrived at the crest of the Charri Momand plateau, I received notice that it was held by one man, who, sword in hand, refused the troops a passage. He had erected a small barricade, and there he stood alone, apparently determined to oppose us—a veritable Roderick Dhu. . . . On nearing him, the friendly headmen of the night before advanced rapidly on his position and throwing their long *chuddars*, or shawls, over him succeeded in bringing our opponent to the ground. . . . When once captive the man soon became quite quiet and docile."—See Thornton's *Life of Sandeman*, p. 130.

after I have submitted." The tribesmen's answer to this question was to disperse; but, about 3 o'clock the next afternoon, the headmen of Baghao, a village near which Keen had just pitched his camp, came to tell him that a large body of tribesmen from the Zhob and Bori valleys, under a certain Shah Jehan, a faithful adherent of the Amir of Kabul, was about to fall upon him. Scouts having confirmed these tidings, Keen left Major G. U. Prior, with the two guns of the Peshawar Mountain Battery, one squadron Sind Horse, and two hundred and fifty men of the 1st Punjab Infantry, to fortify and defend the camp against any attack from the Smalan direction, and sallied forth with the two guns of the Jacobabad Mountain Battery, one Squadron 8th Bengal Cavalry and the remaining two hundred and fifty men of the 1st Punjab Infantry, to reconnoitre the enemy whom he almost immediately discovered, moving forward in a line some seven hundred yards long. Perceiving that his opponents were only armed with swords and matchlocks, he determined to read them such a lesson as would take from them all desire to interfere with him again; so, sending Major Chapman with his squadron to see to the safety of his left flank, which they had begun to overlap, he threw forward a party of Infantry in skirmishing order, under Major Vallings, covered by the guns. After a few rounds of the latter, the enemy began working round to some hills commanding the British right, a movement which Keen met by sending Major Higginson, with another detachment of the 1st Punjab Infantry, to seize the position. The near side of the hills was very difficult, the further side almost perpendicular; so, when once Higginson and his men had reached the summit, the tribesmen, unable to escape, were shot down or captured in large numbers. Vallings, meantime, had driven the tribesmen with whom he had been engaged towards the same hills, and but for an intervening precipice would have come into touch with Higginson's party. The rout of the enemy was, however, complete, and Keen ordered the pursuit to stop, judging it unwise to adventure



his men further in an intricate country, leaving the troops in camp unsupported.

In this action, the British had two men killed and one non-commissioned officer and four privates wounded, whilst the tribesmen's loss in killed and wounded was very heavy. Higginson, reconnoitring the scene of the engagement the next day to ascertain if any armed men were still lurking in the neighbourhood, counted a hundred and three bodies, and learned that parties of the enemy had returned during the night, and carried off some of the dead and all the wounded left on the ground. The gathering, according to the statements of some of its leaders, who came in to tender their submission, had numbered three thousand men; but fourfold numbers and equal courage could avail nothing against superior weapons.<sup>1</sup>

The following officers were mentioned in Major Keen's despatch :—

Major H. Chapman.  
 „ T. Higginson.  
 „ A. Vallings.  
 „ G. U. Prior.  
 Captain L. R. H. D. Campbell.  
 „ C. A. de N. Lucas.  
 „ H. F. Showers.  
 „ R. Wace.  
 Lieutenant R. W. P. Robinson.  
 „ R. A. C. King.  
 „ H. L. Wells.  
 „ T. C. Ross.  
 „ T. C. Pears.

No further opposition was met with, and towards the middle of April, the first column of the retiring force emerged from Afghanistan at Fort Monro, and crossing the desert at its narrowest point, reached

<sup>1</sup> “ The people who have never before seen Europeans object to our marching through their country and try to stop us. . . . Poor wretches ! They fancy we are no better armed than we were forty years ago, and it is not till they feel the power of our rifles that they see the hopelessness of interfering with us.”—*Life of Sir D. Stewart*, pp. 265-6.

Dera Ghazi Khan, where its units were dismissed to their respective stations.

On the day of his arrival at Khushdil Khan-ka-Killa, Biddulph organized the troops awaiting him there, and those that had already gone on to Balozai, 15½ miles ahead—the 15th Hussars and the 1st Gurkhas—into two columns.

#### 2ND COLUMN.

Major-General M. A. Biddulph, Commanding Division.

##### HEADQUARTERS STAFF.

Lieutenant S. F. Biddulph, Aide-de-Camp.

Major G. B. Wolseley.

Captain R. M. Stewart.

„ W. G. Nicholson.

„ W. Luckhardt.

Dr. Surgeon-General J. Hendley.

Colonel J. Browne, Political Officer.

Colonel R. S. Hill, Commanding Column.

##### STAFF.

Major H. H. F. Gifford.

Lieutenant W. G. Smith.

„ J. J. Money-Simons.

##### ARTILLERY.

2 guns Peshawar Mountain Battery.

2 „ Jacobabad „ „

##### CAVALRY.

15th Hussars.

##### INFANTRY.

32nd Pioneers.

1st Gurkhas.

Approximate strength, 1,350 men and 4 guns.

#### 3RD COLUMN.

Major-General T. Nuttall, Commanding.

##### STAFF.

Major H. B. Hanna.

Captain W. W. Haywood.

##### ARTILLERY.

2 guns Jacobabad Mountain Battery.

##### CAVALRY.

2 Squadrons 8th Bengal Cavalry.

## INFANTRY.

6 Companies 70th Foot.

9th Company Sappers and Miners.

Approximate strength, 870 men and 2 guns.

Both columns having filled up with supplies—thirty days for European, seven days for Native troops—the Second moved to Balozai on the 21st of March, where it halted two nights in order that the watershed separating the drainage lines which flow into Pishin, on the one hand, and into the Gumal River, on the other, might be surveyed, in performing which task a glimpse was caught of the open Zhob Valley.<sup>1</sup> In consequence of this delay, the Third Column entered Balozai the evening before the Second left it; but, from that point onwards, the former was a day's march behind the latter, till, on the 27th, at Chinjan, a village 57 miles from Khushdil Khan-ka-Killa, their respective positions were reversed. The depôt of supplies established by Sandeman at this point, was found to have been plundered by the tribesmen dispersed by Keen, and as the people of the village, though friendly, could not meet the requirements of two columns, Biddulph ordered Nuttall to make a double march to Dargai, whilst he himself halted at Chinjan for the purpose of visiting the singular, detached, oval-shaped, table mountain of Siazghai, which, rising abruptly from the floor of a wide valley, dominates the Damar country for many miles round.

This interesting piece of survey work accomplished, the Second Column pursued its way, nearly due eastward, down the Bori Valley to Chimalang. Here it turned south, to reach Nahar-ki-Kot in

<sup>1</sup> "Amongst the Generals who, throughout the course of that much chequered war of two years' duration, showed the keenest and most determined interest in clearing away geographical mists, in leaving no stone unturned that might add something to our knowledge of that strange combination of high-land, plain and rugged mountain . . . General Biddulph ranked first. . . It was consequently a happy omen for the success of the Chotiali Field Force, which was to find its way to India through an untraversed wilderness, that General Biddulph was placed in command of it."—*Indian Borderland*, p. 11, by Sir T. H. Holdich.

the Leghari Barkhan Valley, where it was to unite with the force under Prendergast, whilst the Third Column, following in the steps of the First, marched to the same *rendezvous* through Smalan and Baghao, Thal and Chotiali.

During the thirteen days, from the 30th of March to the 11th of April, that the two columns were moving independently of each other, neither encountered any resistance, except that a small body of Ghazis rushed one of Nuttall's camping grounds, and wounded a man of the 70th Foot; but two incidents betrayed the existence, in both forces, of that under-current of nervous tension which has always to be guarded against among troops on active service. One morning, as the Second Column, half its day's march accomplished, was halting for breakfast, some one spread the report that there was no water at the next camping ground. Instantly a scare set in, and though no one, so far, had been suffering from thirst, the soldiers now drank up all the water left in their tins, and the camp-followers scattered in every direction, seeking vainly for some spring. "Had we," writes Holdich, "been caught at that juncture by anything like an organized attacking force, we should have fared very badly indeed."<sup>1</sup>

On the other occasion referred to, the troops of the Third Column had turned in after an unusually long march, and both soldiers and followers were wrapped in profound sleep, when a dreamer uttered a piercing shriek. Some camel drivers instantly took alarm, and with loud cries, crowded with their camels into the spaces between the tents, stumbling over the ropes in their haste. Instantly, the whole camp was afoot; the men seized their arms and fell in, the outlying pickets opened fire, and it was not till the General and his Staff were in their saddles that the cause of the disturbance was discovered, and order restored.

At Nahar-Ki-Kot, Biddulph, assembled a committee of civil and military officers to select a site for a permanent cantonment, which

<sup>1</sup> *The Indian Borderland*, p. 23.

should command all the passes leading through the Kakar country into Peshin, and be within easy reach of the Indian frontier. The choice of the committee fell upon a place named Vitakri, at the southern end of the Barkhan Valley, and there Prendergast's men established themselves for the hot weather. Their experience soon showed that the site was very unhealthy, and the cantonment was subsequently abandoned.

In the Leghari Barkhan Valley the retiring Force again divided, the bulk of both columns retracing their steps northward to Hun Kua, whence they marched, *viâ* Fort Monro, to Dera Ghazi Khan, and crossed the Chenab and the Indus in steamers without hitch or accident, whilst the 15th Hussars, 1st Gurkhas and 32nd Pioneers, under their respective commanders, made for Mithankot by the Chachar Pass and entrained at Khanpur, on the eastern side of the Indus.

With the arrival of General Buddulph and his Staff at Multan, on the 1st of May, 1879, the Thal Chotiali Force ceased to exist. All its units, except the 15th Hussars and the 1st Gurkhas, had belonged originally to the 2nd Division of the Kandahar Field Force, and their General, in parting from them, could assert with pride that they had marched twelve hundred miles, in intense heat and bitter cold, through a rude and inhospitable country, without slackening in the performance of their duties, without losing any of their cheerfulness in the face of privations and hardships, and without being guilty of any act of cruelty or oppression—a record of discipline never excelled, and seldom equalled.

Of fighting, Biddulph's troops had had little, and their roll of killed and wounded was very small; but on the march to Kandahar, in the expedition to the Helmand, and on the way to Khushdil Khan-ka-Killa, fever, pneumonia, and dysentery had ravaged their ranks. At Kushdid Khan-ka-Killa all sick had been weeded out,<sup>1</sup> and it was

<sup>1</sup> 66 men of the 70th Foot were reported unfit to proceed by the Thal Chotiali route.

a thoroughly efficient Force which started from thence to find its way back to India; and though the road was always rough, though provisions were not too plentiful, and water sometimes scarce and often bad, the pleasant weather and the knowledge that every step was bringing them nearer home, kept the men in good spirits and good health. Yet in this last stage of its long journey, the Force lost one of its best officers—Colonel H. Fellowes, the Commander of the 32nd Pioneers. On the march, always in front, smoothing the road for those behind; at the camping grounds, struggling with the terrible water supply difficulty—his work, arduous and incessant, had worn him out, and he died before reaching Chinjan, just after crossing a most difficult and exhausting pass.

Difficult passes, alternating with terrible defiles, were frequent all along the route, and, so far as exertion and the need for constant vigilance were concerned, there was little to choose between the road through the Bori and that through the Thal Chotiali Valley, though, as regards supplies, the first named had the advantage. Except between Spira Raha and Obushkai, where the hills were clothed with forests of juniper,<sup>1</sup> that most weird and fantastic of trees, there was little shade; but the pure, high air tempered the sun's rays, though only to intensify the suffering of the troops when, at the end of their long march, they dropped suddenly from an elevation of several thousand

<sup>1</sup> "A juniper forest is picturesque with a weird form of attractiveness. No ordinary forest tree could imitate the attitudes, or follow the fantasies, of the juniper. White skeleton arms, twisted and gnarled, riven and bent, with but a ragged covering of black foliage, lift themselves to the glowing sky and cast intense shadows over the stunted yellow grass-growth below them. Each tree separates itself from the crowd, so that it is a dispersed and scattered forest, owning no friendly connection with trees of other sorts, but preserving a grim sort of isolation. Nevertheless, with a backing of snow peaks and the light of spring sunshine upon it, the strange beauty of that juniper forest became crystallized in the memory, ranking as a Baluch speciality with the olive groves of the more eastern uplands, and the solitary group of magnificent myrtles which stand near Sinjas."—*The Indian Borderland*, p. 18, by Sir T. H. Holdich.

feet, into the desert below.<sup>1</sup> The 15th Hussars, on their way to Meerut, lost many men from cholera, as the result of travelling in carriages recently used by pilgrims returning from Hurdwar, and the 32nd Pioneers were detained at Multan, owing to the prevalence of the same disease at Jhelam; but once across the Indus, all other corps and regiments proceeded without let or hindrance, to their appointed stations.

Whilst General Biddulph's columns were making their way slowly back to India, General Stewart was engaged in providing for the health and comfort of the troops that, under any circumstances, would now have to spend the summer in Kandahar. In consultation with his Principal Medical Officer, his Quarter-Master-General, and his Engineer Staff, he resolved to house his English regiments in the old cantonment buildings erected by the Army of Occupation, in 1839, and the necessary repairs and improvements were entrusted to Lieutenant C. F. Call, R.E. The first step was to put the whole place in a sanitary condition by thoroughly cleansing and draining the ground; and when this had been accomplished, the defects in the existing buildings were made good, and a new barrack erected for the accommodation of A.B. Battery, Royal Artillery. The old buildings, consisting of a series of blocks forming a great, hollow square, had been constructed of sundried bricks, with domed roofs and massive walls, and were very lofty in proportion to their other dimensions. To avoid over-crowding, platforms were now erected in the barrack squares, on which tents were pitched for a number of the men. Within the cantonment, a detached block was allotted to the 25th Punjab Infantry, and, outside it, three villages were made over to the 19th Bengal Lancers, the 1st Punjab Cavalry, and the 3rd Gurkhas, the dispossessed inhabitants receiving compensation for the temporary loss of their homes. The European sick were placed in a special square of considerable size.

<sup>1</sup> At Zorodan, at the foot of the pass in which Fort Monro stands, 6,158 feet above sea-level, the thermometer registered 105° Fahrenheit in the shade.—H.B.H.

and the 5-11 Royal Artillery, two Companies of the 59th Foot and the 15th Sikhs garrisoned the Citadel, where a large number of Departmental Officers also resided, and General Stewart found comfortable quarters for himself and his Staff in a country house, surrounded by a walled garden, prettily laid out with fruit trees and beds of flowers. His European guard occupied an enclosure on one side of this garden, and his Native guard, some old buildings on the opposite side. Another walled garden accommodated the Engineer officers, the Field Park and the Company of Sappers and Miners. The city, which was in a filthy condition, received its share of attention. Under the superintendence of Major M. Protheroe, assisted by the Subadar Major of the 26th Punjab Infantry, himself a Pathan, drains were renovated, streets opened out, and the whole place cleaned and disinfected; changes little to the taste of the inhabitants, but greatly to the advantage of their health, which was further benefited by the establishment of a dispensary, under Dr. Brereton, whose knowledge of Persian put him in touch with the people.

All these arrangements and improvements took time to effect, and building operations and repairs were delayed by heavy rains, which, on more than one occasion, destroyed the sun-burned bricks when just ready for use; in consequence, the hot season was well advanced before the troops were properly housed; but, though under canvas they suffered severely from heat and flies, except for a few cases of typhus,<sup>1</sup> the health of the Kandahar Field Force was, for a time, satisfactory, a result to which the amusements provided contributed their share. A racecourse was laid out, a polo ground selected, and both officers and men were permitted to go out shooting small game—duck, black partridge and sand-grouse; but always armed, and in parties large enough for defence, since, even within a mile of the cantonment, the only security against attack was the ability to meet it.

Between the departure of Biddulph's Division and the end of the

<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant Lendrum died of typhus on the 30th of March.



war, nothing of importance occurred in and around Kandahar, though late in March there were rumours that a considerable Afghan force, composed both of regular and irregular troops, was about to leave Ghazni to re-occupy Khelat-i-Ghilzai, and it was persistently reported that the Amir's younger brother, Ayub Khan, was busy at Herat preparing for a resumption of hostilities.

There was, however, always a certain amount of trouble on the line of communications, and on one occasion a large body of Afghans attacked a detachment of thirty sabres, 1st Punjab Cavalry and a hundred and seventy-six men of Jacob's rifles, commanded by Major F. J. Humphrey and accompanied by the Political Officer, Dr. O. T. Duke, who were collecting supplies and camels in an outlying district of the Pishin Valley.<sup>1</sup> A spirited action ensued, resulting in the defeat and dispersion of the tribesmen, who left sixty dead, including two leaders, and twenty-five wounded on the field, whilst, on the British side, only four men of the 1st Punjab Cavalry were wounded.

#### OBSERVATION.

The vicious system of breaking up a small force into insignificant detachments denounced by Kaye "as one of the great errors which marked our military occupation of Afghanistan," in the first war, has no more striking exemplification, in the second, than the march of General Biddulph's Division from Khushdil Khan-ka-Killa to Dera Ghazi Khan. From the outset, one of its three columns was so completely separated from the other two, that it could not, under any circumstances, however critical, have fallen back upon them for support, or have entrenched itself to await their coming, with any reasonable hope of their arriving in time to rescue it from its difficulties. What those difficulties might prove to be, there was no means of knowing, but it was safe to assume that the inhabitants of this *terra incognita* would not look favourably on its invaders, that the route to be

<sup>1</sup> March 29th, 1879.

followed would present endless points at which an enemy, lying in wait, might attack with advantage, and that it would be impossible to protect the column's long baggage train by flanking the heights along the road in the daytime, or to protect its camp at night, by adequately picketing the hills surrounding it. This error, the responsibility for which must be borne by General Stewart, was without excuse, there being no valid reason, military or political, for starting off the first column seven days before the other two; but the separation of the second and third columns at Chignan was forced upon Biddulph by the same scarcity of food and fodder which had obliged him to divide his troops on the Helmand; and he and his subordinate officers showed their appreciation of the risks they were running by the unusual precaution, enforced throughout the whole period during which the two columns were moving independently of each other, of making all the officers and half the men, in each, sleep fully accoutred and with their arms beside them. An expedition, however, in which such risks had to be accepted, ought not to have been undertaken so long as a safer line of retirement—that by the Bolan—was open to the troops, and the only military object in view was the transference of a certain proportion of Stewart's army from Afghanistan to India. That no harm befell any one of the three columns is beside the question. A military movement is not justified by its success; and the point of view of the military critic should always be that of the responsible Commander *before*, not that of the man in the street *after*, the event. Judged by his inability to constitute and equip a strong and self-sufficing force, General Stewart's action in sanctioning the return of Biddulph's Division through the Kakar country, must be condemned as an unjustifiable yielding to the counsels of Major Sandeman; for the Government of India would hardly have maintained the order to adopt that route, had the General on the spot opposed the plan, even if he had based his opposition on purely military grounds, and had abstained from pointing out the contra-

diction between the aims of the proposed movement and the Proclamation of the 20th of November, 1878<sup>1</sup>—a point which Generals like the Duke of Wellington and Sir John Malcolm, men who believed that a reputation for good faith was England's most valuable political asset, would not have failed to raise.<sup>2 3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "With the sirdars and people of Afghanistan this Government has still no quarrel, and desires none. They are absolved from all responsibility for the recent acts of the Amir, and as they have given no offence, so the British Government, wishing to respect their independence, will not willingly injure or interfere with them."—See *Lord Lytton's Proclamation*, vol. i. Appendix ii.

<sup>2</sup> "I would sacrifice Gwalior, or every portion of India, ten times over, in order to preserve our credit for scrupulous good faith. . . . What brought me through many difficulties in the (Mahratta) war, and the negotiations for peace?—The British good faith, and nothing else."—*The Duke of Wellington's Despatches* Despatch, dated March 17th, 1804.

<sup>3</sup> "An invariable rule ought to be observed by all Europeans who have connection with the Natives of India . . . from the greatest occasion to the most trifling, to keep sacred their word. This is not only their best but their wisest policy."—Kayo's *Life of General Sir John Malcolm, G.C.B.*, vol. i. p. 23.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### Negotiations

#### CONCLUSION OF PEACE

THOUGH Yakub Khan had received Cavagnari's original overtures with coldness, he could not be indifferent to the anarchy into which his country was falling in consequence of the British invasion; and, when it became clear that he would soon be called upon to rule in his own name and in his own right, he determined to ascertain the temper and intentions of the British Government by offering himself as a mediator between it and his father.<sup>1</sup> The letter containing the proposal was written on the 20th of February, 1879; on the 21st, Shere Ali died; on the 26th, his death was known in Kabul; and on the 28th, the Political Officer at Jellalabad received the tidings direct from the new Amir, and telegraphed to the Viceroy, suggesting a friendly letter of condolence, as a first step towards the opening of negotiations with the dead man's heir.<sup>2</sup> Lord Lytton fell in with the suggestion, and followed up the telegram sanctioning it, by a second, in which he laid down the four conditions on which he was prepared to treat for peace,<sup>3</sup> viz. :—

1. The renunciation by the Amir of all authority over the Khyber and Michni Passes, and over the independent tribes inhabiting the territory directly connected with them.

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan*, No. 7 (1879), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 12, 13.

2. The continuance of British protection and control in the district of Kuram, from Thal to the crest of the Shutargardan, and in the districts of Pishin and Sibi.

3. The conducting of the foreign relations of the Kabul Government in accordance with the advice and wishes of the British Government.

4. The permission to European British officers, accredited to the Kabul Government, to reside, with suitable personal guards, at such places in Afghanistan as might be determined on later.

There was nothing new in the third of these conditions. Shere Ali had agreed to a similar restriction on his liberty of action in the foreign relations of his kingdom, and Yakub Khan had no hesitation in accepting it as "a good and proper proposal." It may seem strange that he should have offered no objection to the fourth—the "essential preliminary," against which his father had fought so stoutly; but something had to be yielded to the demands of men who were in possession of his chief highways, and of one of his three principal cities; and by showing himself compliant with regard to a British envoy in Kabul—he did stipulate that only one European British Officer should reside in Afghanistan—he hoped to secure the withdrawal of demands which would limit his authority, and diminish his dominions; or, at least, to place himself in a better position for combating them; for, as he argued in writing to Cavagnari, on the 12th of March, by agreeing to conduct his foreign relations in accordance with the advice and the wishes of the British Government, and to allow a British officer to watch over the manner in which he discharged his obligation, he was giving all necessary guarantees for the safety of India, and might fairly look for the extension, rather than for the curtailment, of his kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Lord Lytton had no intention of yielding either in the matter of the control of the Pass tribes, or of the transfer of Kuram, Sibi and Pishin from the Afghan to the British Government;

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.

yet, he felt so strongly that an entirely one-sided bargain would be difficult to strike, and still more difficult to enforce, that he telegraphed to Lord Cranbrook, on the 4th of April, asking that Cavagnari who, with the consent of the Amir, was about to proceed to Kabul, should be allowed to offer to the son, the concessions which Sir Neville Chamberlain had been empowered to grant to the father.<sup>1</sup> Lord Beaconsfield and his colleagues were inclined, in the first instance, to look at the question from a purely British point of view. They had gone to war to secure India, once and for ever, against Russian ambition and Afghan treachery; they had been assured by the Viceroy that the presence of British officers in Afghanistan, and the acquisition of a certain frontier, now in their possession, would effect this end, and they saw no reason for promises which might involve them in the quarrels of two states, whose governments they had ceased to fear. To a subsidy and a qualified recognition of Yakub Khan's heir, they were willing to agree, but not to a guarantee of Afghan territory. Eventually, however, the urgent representations of the Viceroy wrung from Ministers the desired concession, couched in the following terms:—"If Yakub faithfully conducts his foreign policy under our direction, we shall be prepared to support him against any foreign aggression which may result from such conduct, with money, arms and troops, to be employed at our discretion, when and where we may think fit."<sup>2</sup>

Lord Lytton had good reasons for desiring to sweeten the pill which he was bent on administering to the Amir, for, whilst public opinion in England was showing itself, more and more, impatient of the protraction of the war, the prospect of bringing it to a conclusion, by force of arms, was growing daily more remote. There was trouble all along Browne's long line of communications, the very Jezzailchies in the Khyber, hitherto faithful, lending themselves to outrages which they existed to suppress. The whole of the North-West Frontier of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17

India, from Jumrud to the mouth of the Gomal Pass, had been thrown into a state of ferment by Roberts's invasion of Khost. In Afghanistan proper, the inhabitants were ripe for a holy war; the Amir's counsellors scouted the idea of surrendering a foot of Afghan territory, and the common people of Kabul were violently agitated by the report that an Englishman was about to visit their city.<sup>1</sup> And, as the spirit of the defenders of the country had risen, the resources of its invaders had declined. Sir S. Browne had found it impossible to concentrate the whole of his Division at Gandamak; his Forces there were three thousand short of eight thousand men, the smallest number with which he was willing to risk an occupation of Kabul. It was intended that his deficiency in this respect, should be made good by a simultaneous advance of the Kuram force; but the chances of a successful combined movement were poor where, for lack of transport, one General was unable to say when he should be able to stir, and the other wanted to start at once, lest *his* transport should perish whilst he waited.<sup>2</sup> Cholera, too, had broken out at the great fair at Hurdwar; the dispersing multitudes had carried it to their homes; it had already reached Peshawar; any day it might fall upon the British camps and sweep away hundreds of tired and sickly men. In such disquieting circumstances, though Colonel Macgregor may have expressed the prevailing feeling among soldiers, when he wrote to Roberts:—"I sincerely hope, for our sakes, that Yakub Khan may *not* treat,"<sup>3</sup> the Indian Government had no stronger wish than to be spared the necessity of a further advance.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Lytton's *Indian Administration*, pp. 320, 321.

<sup>2</sup> General Roberts to Colonel Macgregor:—"I shall be ready to move any day after the twentieth; a move will be advantageous, but I trust there will be no great delay, or camels may disappear."—*Life and Opinions of Sir C. Macgregor*, vol. ii. p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> Macgregor suggested that the advance should be by the Lakari Pass, by which a junction of the two forces would have been made at Tezin, but Roberts preferred to march by the Shutargardan, on the double ground that the latter

For a time, it seemed as if an advance, however dangerous and futile, would have to be risked, for days and weeks went by without Yakub Khan giving effect to his promise to receive a British envoy, though Cavagnari's messenger, Bukhtiar Khan, was constantly at his elbow, urging him to do so. Then, just when it looked as though the negotiations were at an end, came the welcome intelligence that they were to be renewed at Gandamak.

Weary of finding himself the centre of an administrative chaos, too short-sighted to recognize the elements of national strength underlying a military collapse, and too weak of will to dare to place himself at the head of a movement, which was threatening to carry him with it, or to sweep him from its path—the Amir had made up his mind to rid himself of the British by yielding what he must to their demands, in the hope that, when he had only his own people to deal with, he should be able to make order follow upon peace; and as, in Kabul's angry mood, it would be unsafe for Cavagnari to come to him, there was nothing left but for him to go to Cavagnari.

The letter announcing his resolve<sup>1</sup> was brought to Gandamak by Bukhtiar Khan on the 24th of April, and, on the 25th, the same messenger took back the reply, in which Cavagnari assured Yakub Khan, in the Viceroy's name, of the most honourable treatment so long as he remained the guest of the British Government.<sup>2</sup> The arrangements for the journey, which was divided into seven stages,<sup>3</sup> were left to the Afghan officials; and the Amir, having regard to the fact that the British army was in "light marching order," undertook to provide tent equipage for himself and his four hundred followers.

route was known to be practicable for camels, and that, by entering Kabul from different sides, the area from which supplies and forage might be collected would be enlarged.—Ibid. pp. 82-4.

<sup>1</sup> *Afghanistan*, No. 7, (1879), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Begrami, Butkhak, Samu-Mulla Umr, Sibi-baba, Jugdallak, Surkhpul, Gandamak.



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Leaving the Bala Hissar on the 2nd, of May, Yakub Khan reached Surkhpul<sup>1</sup> on the 7th. On the 8th, he was met by Cavagnari, with an escort of one squadron of the 10th Hussars and one of the 11th Bengal Lancers, six miles from Gandamak ; and, four miles further on, by Sir S. Browne, who accompanied him to his camp, through two lines of troops drawn up under General Macpherson's command, on either side of the Kabul road. On the 9th, he paid a ceremonial visit to the British Commander in Cavagnari's Durbar tent. So far, all had gone smoothly ; the guest's good looks had pleased his hosts, and the hosts' courtesies had laid to rest any misgivings which the guest may have felt in placing himself so unreservedly in their hands ; but with the beginning of business came hitches and delays. The Indian Government saw in the Amir's visit, a token of his unconditional acceptance of their terms ; he, on his part, was of opinion that so conspicuous a mark of his confidence and friendship, should be rewarded by the withdrawal of the most obnoxious of the British conditions. From the 10th to the 17th, negotiations dragged on ; then Cavagnari, who had conducted them throughout with scant ceremony,<sup>2</sup> insisted on a private interview—so far, the Mustaufi and the Commander-in-Chief, Daud Shah, had been present at the conferences. What passed at that interview has never been made public ; it was currently reported, however, at the time, that Cavagnari boasted of having rated the Amir as if he had been a mere Kohat Malik ; i. e. a petty border chieftain.<sup>3</sup> But, whether browbeaten or reasoned into submission, Yakub Khan ceased to struggle ; and though Sibi,

<sup>1</sup> It was uncertain whether Surkhpul was in British or Afghan possession, but, for the pleasure of the guest and the convenience of the host, the doubt was decided in favour of the latter.

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan*, No. 7 (1879), p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Confirmed by a letter from Cavagnari to Lord Lytton, dated 23rd of May, 1879 :—"Their arguments were so feeble," he wrote, "and far from the point that I at once made up my mind to deal with the case as if it concerned an ordinary affair connected with border Pathan tribes."—Lord Lytton's *Indian Administration*, p. 322.

Peshin and Kuram were not formally alienated from his dominions, but retained by the British Government under an assignment, he really agreed to all that originally had been asked of him, except that, as a personal favour, the limits of British administration in the Kuram were fixed at Alikhel, instead of at the crest of the Shutargardan.

The treaty of peace signed at Gandamak on the 20th of May, and ratified on the 6th of June, contained articles by which the Amir further bound himself to grant an amnesty, to give trade facilities, to permit the construction of a telegraph line to Kabul, and to guarantee the safety and honourable treatment of all British agents, whether permanently resident in the capital, or temporarily deputed to the Afghan frontier; also others, by which he received from the British Government the promise of a subsidy, and a conditional guarantee against foreign aggression, but *not* an undertaking to recognize and support his heir.

In the opinion of Lord Lytton, Yakub Khan left Gandamak not merely submissive, but satisfied, trustful, and friendly.<sup>1</sup> Some men would have been disturbed to find in the Amir's farewell letter<sup>2</sup> not one word of praise for the instrument by which peace had been re-established between the British Government and his own; but the Viceroy seems not to have been troubled by the omission. His aim had been "to secure for British interests and influence in Afghanistan, a position substantially independent of the personal caprices of any Afghan ruler"; and as "the territorial conditions of the Treaty," by placing "the British Power in permanent command of the main avenues from India to Kabul," had provided "strong natural guarantees" for the "effectual maintenance of that position"<sup>3</sup> he could afford to be indifferent to the distaste which they had inspired in the

<sup>1</sup> Lord Lytton's *Indian Administration*, p. 326. The above are not Lord Lytton's own words, but the biographer's summing up of his impressions.

<sup>2</sup> *Afghanistan*, No. 7 (1879), p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36.

man, on whom he had imposed them. Nor does he appear to have had any misgivings as to the feelings of the Afghan people in respect of the practical transfer of a portion of their country to a foreign power, and of the approaching advent of British officers in their midst. He had Cavagnari's assurance that in Afghanistan "so long as we have wealth and strength on our side, we shall always be able to count on having plenty of supporters";<sup>1</sup> and what better proof of the probable acquiescence of the subjects in the arrangements accepted by their ruler, could be desired, than the fact that Yakub Khan should have returned quietly to Kabul, after repeatedly protesting that he would either take back a settlement satisfactory to his countrymen or else go to India as a pensioner.<sup>2</sup> Yet the most noticeable feature of the despatch in which Lord Lytton reaffirmed the objects of his Afghan policy, explained the military measures adopted for its attainment, and counted up its gains—is its studied moderation. No one reading it would suppose that the writer had ever dreamed of driving the Russians across the Oxus, or that the army which halted at the Helmand, had dragged across the Sind desert heavy cannon intended to batter down the walls of Herat. Something of the old boastful spirit peeps out in the remark<sup>3</sup> that "the capture and occupation of Kabul offered no military difficulty," but, for the most part, the desire to conciliate public opinion at home by showing that operations had been kept, of set purpose, within the narrowest limits, and had inflicted the least possible loss on everybody concerned—colours the whole document, and lends to it a cautious and sober tone. Its value as a measure of Lord Lytton's statesmanship, cannot be estimated till it has been studied in the light of subsequent events; but its trustworthiness as an historical document, will be understood by the readers of the foregoing chapters when they discover that it contains not a

<sup>1</sup> Lord Lytton's *Indian Administration*, p. 326.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 323.

<sup>3</sup> *Afghanistan*, No. 7, p. 28.

single admission from which the true state of the British armies in Afghanistan could be inferred, not a hint that the Indian Government's ability to keep up their strength and efficiency was exhausted, and not an allusion to the fact that, three weeks before peace was signed, a third of Stewart's force had returned to India, because, in the richest province of Afghanistan, there was not food enough, without starving the inhabitants, to feed twenty thousand alien troops.

The conclusion of the peace was hailed in England with nearly universal satisfaction. To the Government, the treaty of Gandamak brought increased confidence in its stability at home,<sup>1</sup> and the hope of greater influence abroad ;<sup>2</sup> to the great mass of the people, who had begun to tire of the war while continuing to lend it their support, it meant liberty to dismiss the subject from their minds ; to the minority who had opposed the war, and who still condemned it as begun on flimsy pretexts for foolish ends, it was welcome as an escape from the worse things threatened by an indefinite prolongation of hostilities. The only malcontents were to be found in the advanced section of the Forward Policy party, men who had always desired for India a frontier that should include Kandahar and Jellalabad, and who now refused to be convinced that to be within striking distance of strategic points, was tantamount to having them in actual possession ; and even they had the satisfaction of knowing that Kandahar must be retained till the cold weather,<sup>3</sup> since there was always the chance that Yakub

<sup>1</sup> See Lord Beaconsfield's letter of 11th August, p. 331 of Lord Lytton's *Indian Administration*.

<sup>2</sup> "The great military success has done us yeoman's service in negotiating with Russia, and I hope that the moderation of your terms will be of no smaller utility at Constantinople."—Letter of Lord Salisbury to the Viceroy, 23rd May, 1879 ; Lord Lytton's *Indian Administration*, pp. 330-1.

<sup>3</sup> Yakub Khan was much annoyed when informed by Cavagnari that Kandahar would not be evacuated till the beginning of winter. He must have known that the troops could not re-cross the desert during this hot weather, but he may have hoped that they would be withdrawn to Quetta.—H. B. H.

Khan's inability to fulfil his engagements, might release the British Government from theirs.

Yet, had the whole truth as to the situation created by the Treaty of Gandamak, or which continued to exist in its despite, been known in England, public satisfaction over its signature would have been qualified by much anxiety, for never did a state of peace bear a stronger resemblance to a state of war, than in the countries which it was supposed to have reconciled to each other. There was unrest, throughout the summer of 1879, all along India's North-West Frontier, tribes, once trustful and friendly, showing themselves suspicious and hostile; and not only in the ceded province of Kuram, but also at Kandahar, an army of occupation had to be maintained on a war-footing; even on the Khyber Line, the troops could only be slowly and partially withdrawn. But the maintenance of large forces on a war-footing, meant a continuance of the waste of India's resources. Convoys and transport trains still toiled through passes reeking with fever and cholera, and left their toll of dead camels and dead men behind them. In the Punjab, supplies of every kind were at famine prices, and agriculture and commerce languished for lack of beasts of draught and burden. The finances of the whole country were in the utmost confusion; no one knew what the war had cost, and, in this uncertainty, Civil Officers were forbidden to introduce administrative improvements, however desirable, if they involved increased expenditure; the Provincial Governments were warned that it might be necessary to decrease the sums allotted to public works, and the Central Government had already reduced its grant of capital for reproductive public works, an economy which, as the *Times* pointed out, "went far to impoverish the whole future of India."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 23rd May, 1879. All quotations from this Journal have been taken from its weekly edition.



## APPENDIX I

TRANSLATION OF LETTER FROM HIS HIGHNESS the AMIR of KABUL, to His Excellency the VICEROY, dated 19th November, 1878.

BE it known to your Excellency that I have received, and read from beginning to end, the friendly letter which your Excellency has sent in reply to the letter I despatched by Nawáb Ghulám Hassan Khan. With regard to the expressions used by your Excellency in the beginning of your letter, referring to the friendly character of the Mission and the good-will of the British Government, I leave it to your Excellency, whose wisdom and justice are universally admitted, to decide whether any reliance can be placed upon good-will, if it be evidenced by words only. But if, on the other hand, good-will really consists of deeds and actions, then, it has not been manifested by the various wishes that have been expressed, and the proposals that have been made by British Officials during the last few years to Officials of this God-granted Government—proposals which, from their nature, it was impossible for them to comply with.

One of these proposals referred to my undutiful son, the ill-starred wretch Muhammad Yákúb Khan, and was contained in a letter addressed by the Officials of the British Government to the British Agent then residing in Kabul. It was written in that letter that if the said Yákúb Khan be released and set at liberty, our friendship with the Afghán Government will be firmly cemented ; but that otherwise it will not.

There are several other grounds of complaint of a similar nature which contain no evidence of good will, but which, on the contrary, were effective in increasing the aversion and apprehension already entertained by the subjects of this God-granted Government.

With regard to my refusal to receive the British Mission, your Excellency has stated that it would appear from my conduct that I was actuated by feelings of direct hostility towards the British Government.

I assure your Excellency that, on the contrary, the Officials of this God-granted Government, in repulsing the Mission, were not influenced by any hostile or inimical feelings towards the British Government, nor did they intend that any insult or affront should be offered ; but they were afraid that the independence of this Government might be affected by the arrival of the Mission, and that the

friendship which has now existed between the two Governments for several years might be annihilated.

A paragraph in your Excellency's letter corroborates the statement which they have made to this Government. The feelings of apprehension which were aroused in the minds of the people of Afghánistán by the mere announcement of the intention of the British Government to send a Mission to Kabul, before the Mission itself had actually started or arrived at Pesháwar, have subsequently been fully justified by the statement in your Excellency's letter that I should be held responsible for any injury that might befall the tribes who acted as guides to the Mission, and that I should be called upon to pay compensation to them for any loss they might have suffered; and that, if at any time those tribes should meet with ill-treatment at my hands, the British Government would at once take steps to protect them. Had these apprehensions proved groundless, and had the object of the Mission been really friendly, and no force or threats of violence used, the Mission would, as a matter of course, have been allowed a free passage, as such Missions are customary and of frequent occurrence between allied States. I am now sincerely stating my own feelings when I say that this Government has maintained, and always will maintain, the former friendship which existed between the two Governments, and cherishes no feelings of hostility and opposition towards the British Government.

It is also incumbent upon the Officials of the British Government, that, out of respect and consideration for the greatness and eminence of their own Government, they should not consent to inflict any injury upon their well-disposed neighbours, and to impose the burden of grievous troubles upon the shoulders of their sincere friends; but, on the contrary, they should exert themselves to maintain the friendly feelings which have hitherto existed towards this God-granted Government, in order that the relations between the two Governments may remain on the same footing as before; and if, in accordance with the custom of allied States, the British Government should desire to send a purely friendly and temporary Mission to this country, with a small escort not exceeding 20 or 30 men, similar to that which attended the Russian Mission, this Servant of God will not oppose its progress.



## APPENDIX II

TREATY between the BRITISH GOVERNMENT and HIS HIGHNESS MUHAMMAD YAKUB KHAN, Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies, concluded at Gaudamak on the 26th May, 1879, by His Highness the Amir Muhammad Yakub Khan on his own part, and on the part of the British Government by Major P. L. N. Cavagnari, C.S.I., Political Officer on Special Duty, in virtue of full powers vested in him by the Right Honourable Edward Robert Lytton, Bulwer-Lytton, Baron Lytton of Knebworth, and a Baronet, Grand Master of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Grand Master of the Indian Empire, Viceroy and Governor-General of India.

The following Articles of a Treaty for the restoration of peace and amicable relations have been agreed upon between the British Government and His Highness Muhammad Yakub Khan, Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies :—

### ARTICLE 1.

From the day of the exchange of the ratifications of the present Treaty there shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the British Government on the one part and His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies, and his successors, on the other.

### ARTICLE 2.

His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies engages on the exchange of the ratifications of this Treaty, to publish a full and complete amnesty, absolving all his subjects from any responsibility for intercourse with the British Forces during the war, and to guarantee and protect all persons of whatever degree from any punishment or molestation on that account.

### ARTICLE 3.

His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies agrees to conduct his relations with Foreign States, in accordance with the advice and wishes of the British Government. His Highness the Amir will enter into no engagements with Foreign States, and will not take up arms against any Foreign State, except with the concurrence of the British Government. On these conditions the British

Government will support the Amir against any foreign aggression with money, arms, or troops, to be employed in whatsoever manner the British Government may judge best for this purpose. Should British troops at any time enter Afghanistan for the purpose of repelling foreign aggression, they will return to their stations in British territory as soon as the object for which they entered has been accomplished.

#### ARTICLE 4.

With a view to the maintenance of the direct and intimate relations now established between the British Government and His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and for the better protection of the frontiers of His Highness' dominion, it is agreed that a British Representative shall reside at Kabul, with a suitable escort in a place of residence appropriate to his rank and dignity. It is also agreed that the British Government shall have the right to depute British Agents with suitable escorts to the Afghan frontiers, whensoever this may be considered necessary by the British Government in the interests of both States, on the occurrence of any important external fact. His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan may on his part depute an Agent to reside at the Court of His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, and at such other places in British India as may be similarly agreed upon.

#### ARTICLE 5.

His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies guarantees the personal safety and honourable treatment of British Agents within his jurisdiction; and the British Government on its part undertakes that its Agents shall never in any way interfere with the internal administration of His Highness' dominions.

#### ARTICLE 6.

His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies undertakes, on behalf of himself and his successors, to offer no impediment to British subjects peacefully trading within his dominions so long as they do so with the permission of the British Government, and in accordance with such arrangements as may be mutually agreed upon from time to time between the two Governments.

#### ARTICLE 7.

In order that the passage of trade between the territories of the British Government and of His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan, may be open and uninterrupted, His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan agrees to use his best endeavours to ensure the protection of traders and to facilitate the transit of goods along the well-known customary

roads of Afghanistan. These roads shall be improved and maintained in such manner as the two Governments may decide to be most expedient for the general convenience of traffic, and under such financial arrangements as may be mutually determined upon between them. The arrangements made for the maintenance and security of the aforesaid roads, for the settlement of the duties to be levied upon merchandize carried over these roads, and for the general protection and development of trade with and through the dominions of His Highness, will be stated in a separate Commercial Treaty, to be concluded within one year, due regard being given to the state of the country.

## ARTICLE 8.

With a view to facilitate communications between the allied Governments and to aid and develop intercourse and commercial relations between the two countries, it is hereby agreed that a line of telegraph from Kurram to Kabul shall be constructed by and at the cost of the British Government, and the Amir of Afghanistan hereby undertakes to provide for the protection of this telegraph line.

## ARTICLE 9.

In consideration of the renewal of a friendly alliance between the two States which has been attested and secured by the foregoing Articles, the British Government restores to His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies the towns of Kandahar and Jellalabad, with all the territory now in possession of the British armies, excepting the districts of Kurram, Pishin, and Sibi. His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies agrees on his part that the districts of Kurram and Pishin and Sibi, according to the limits defined in the schedule annexed, shall remain under the protection and administrative control of the British Government : that is to say, the aforesaid districts shall be treated as assigned districts, and shall not be considered as permanently severed from the limits of the Afghan kingdom. The revenues of these districts, after deducting the charges of civil administration shall be paid to His Highness the Amir.

The British Government will retain in its own hands the control of the Khyber and Michni Passes, which lie between the Peshawar and Jellalabad Districts, and of all relations with the independent tribes of the territory directly connected with these Passes.

## ARTICLE 10.

For the further support of His Highness the Amir in the recovery and maintenance of his legitimate authority, and in consideration of the efficient fulfilment in their entirety of the engagements stipulated

by the foregoing Articles, the British Government agrees to pay to His Highness the Amir and to his successors an annual subsidy of six lakhs of Rupees.

Done at Gandamak, this 26th day of May 1879, corresponding with the 4th day of the month of Jamadi-us-sani 1296, A.H.

(Sd.) AMIR MUHAMMAD YAKUB KHAN.

(Sd.) N. CAVAGNARI, *Major,*  
*Politl. Officer on Special Duty.*

(Sd.) LYTTON.

This Treaty was ratified by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, at Simla, on Friday, this 30th day of May 1879.

(Sd.) A. C. LYALL,  
*Secry. to the Govt. of India, Foreign Dept.*

## PRESS OPINIONS ON THE FIRST VOLUME OF THE AFGHAN WAR.

THE TIMES.—“ Now that opinion in regard to Indian frontier policy has undergone a marked change, Colonel H. B. Hanna's careful study of the events which led up to the Second Afghan War is distinctly opportune. . . . From first to last, the book will well repay study by every one who cares to understand how wars can be made—and avoided.”

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#### INDIAN PROBLEMS.

- NO. I. CAN RUSSIA INVADE INDIA ?  
 NO. II. INDIA'S SCIENTIFIC FRONTIER.  
 NO. III. BACKWARDS OR FORWARDS ?

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