

Brigadier-General Steel to C. Allen, Esq.

(Extract.)

Camp, near Sitang, February 3, 1853.

I HAVE the honour to report, for the information of the Governor-General of India in Council, that the force under my command arrived this morning, and encamped near this place. I should have marched in yesterday, the 2d instant, but the river, at the end of a march of ten miles on the 1st, was too deep to be forded by the commissariat carts, which had therefore to be unloaded, and stores brought over by elephants, obliging me to halt one day.

Moun-goon, the Chief of Sitang, had come into my camp yesterday, under the Proclamation. He accompanied our march to this place, and seems disposed in every way to give all the assistance the country can furnish. The people in the villages on the route, since leaving Beling, have remained in their houses with the utmost confidence, showing in various ways their kindly feeling towards the troops. As an instance, jars of cooled water were placed for their use along the road, passing through each village. At this place there was a large band of their music playing as we entered, and many other signs of rejoicing were observed. There are no defences whatever to the place. The outline of the strong stockade of the former war can with difficulty be traced on the small hill which commands the whole position.

The force will continue its advance the day after to-morrow; and I expect to reach Shwaygyeen by the 14th.

His Excellency Commodore G. R. Lambert, R. N., Naval Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Ships and Vessels in the Indian Seas, to C. Allen, Esquire, Secretary to the Governor of India.

SIR, *Rangoon, February 7, 1853.*

IN reference to my letter of the 25th ultimo, I have the honour to acquaint you, for the information of the Governor-General of India in Council, in consequence of a requisition from Captain Sparks, the Deputy-Commissioner in Pegu, for the necessity of occupying Donabew, and dispersing the Burmese force collected in that neighbourhood, under Nya-myat-toon, Brigadier Dickinson, the Commandant of this garrison, determined to send a detachment consisting of 300 men belonging to the 67th Regiment Bengal Native Infantry, for that purpose; and I directed Captain Loch, C. B., of Her Majesty's ship Winchester, with the force named, No. 1 in the enclosure, to accompany and act with the military.

The combined force arrived at Donabew on the 2d of February, and landed without any opposition, where they procured guides and collected information.

On the morning of the 3d they advanced in the direction they believed would be the nearest route to the enemy, Captain Loch taking with him, in addition, two 3-pounder field-guns belonging to the Phlegethon. For the first two miles they proceeded through paddy-fields, and then entered a pathway in a dense jungle, with high trees and thick brushwood. After a march of 15 miles they halted for the night, using every precaution by placing pickets, but were disturbed occasionally by the enemy firing musketry and sounding horns.

Early on the following morning they again advanced about five miles, when the path terminated by the bank of a deep and broad nullah or creek, the opposite of which was high and strongly entrenched.

The enemy at once opened a heavy and continuous fire of musketry on the advanced guard of seamen and marines, from breastworks in which they lay concealed, while our men were completely exposed.

In such a narrow pathway, with an impervious jungle on each side, it was impossible to bring up the whole force at once to surround and storm the post; and nearly every man that approached the edge of the creek was shot down.

Repeated but unsuccessful attempts were made by Captain Loch to lead his gallant followers over the creek, and grapple with the enemy, till at last, in one of these daring acts, he received a mortal wound, and was carried to the rear.

The command of the naval force now devolved on Commander Rowley Lambert, who also, with his brave companions, made two or three determined, yet vain attempts to get across to the enemy, in which many valuable lives were lost. The First Lieutenant of his ship was killed; most of his officers were severely wounded. The military force had also suffered considerably both in officers and men. Therefore, reluctantly, though prudently, he deemed it advisable to withdraw his men. The fire of the enemy still continued unabated. To find another passage was utterly impracticable; their position was surrounded by an impenetrable barrier of trees and brushwood; and the only road open to their retreat was by the one they had advanced.

9. The force was collected, and measures were adopted for retiring. The wounded were numerous, and were conveyed to the boats by the seamen; for many of the dooley bearers had decamped. To bring away the two field-pieces was impossible, for every spare man was required to carry the wounded. They were consequently spiked, and their carriages destroyed. The enemy kept up a distant fire for several hours after the retreat was commenced, but never dared to approach the rear, which was ably and well supported by the grenadier company of the 67th Regiment.

After twelve hours' fatiguing march the forces reached Donabew. The seamen and marines embarked in their boats, and a steamer was placed at the disposal of the officer in command of the troops, of which he availed himself for the conveyance of his men back to Rangoon.

I herewith inclose a list of the killed and wounded. (No. 2.)

Commander Lambert speaks in the highest terms of all who served with him, and received valuable assistance from Lieutenant Horatio Nelson. He particularly mentions Lieutenants Glover and Bushnell; also Messrs Hinde and Wilson, mates. These officers, although severely and painfully wounded, endured the fatigue of a long march, encouraging their men, who were nearly exhausted from the heavy burden they had to bear in carrying the wounded.

Captain Loch expired on board the Phlegethon about forty hours after he had received his wound.

This officer's character is so well known that it scarce requires a comment from me; but from his having served on two stations under my immediate orders, I may add that it would be impossible to find a more gallant, intelligent officer, devoted to his profession, which, by his untimely death, has lost one of its highest ornaments.

I have, &c.

G. R. LAMBERT, Commodore, 1st Class,
Commander-in-Chief.