

No. 8.

Brigadier-General Napier, C.B., Commanding
Gwalior Division, to the Chief of the Staff,
Head-Quarters, Allahabad.

Camp, Powrie, 30th August 1858.

SIR, No. 153 of 1858.

My telegrams of the 21st and 22d, and my demi-official letter of the 20th, will have put you in possession of the principal occurrences here, which I will now report more fully.

Brigadier Smith, Commanding the Brigade at Sepree, received intimation that the Fort of Powrie, twenty miles north-west of Sepree, had been seized on the 4th instant by Maun Sing, the ex-Raja of Nurwar, who corrupted the garrison, most of whom joined him after letting him into the place. His force was reported to be 4,000 men, of whom 700 were rebel sepoy, well armed with flint and percussion muskets.

Very urgent applications for protection were made by the local authorities to Brigadier Smith, as Maun Sing was on the point of seizing other valuable towns, and alarming the well-disposed inhabitants of the district. The Brigadier therefore moved at once to Powrie on the 6th, but found it too strong to be attempted with field guns, and, encamping at a distance of three miles, applied to me for two 18-pounders, two 8-inch mortars, and reinforcements. The requisition reached me at Gwalior on the 9th.

On the 11th the Siege Train left Gwalior, and arrived at Powrie on the 20th, where I encamped with Brigadier Smith's force, total strength as per margin,* just out of range of the enemy's guns.

A party of 100 Infantry, with 200 Infantry and two guns in support, under command of Major Vials, immediately seized a temple 400 yards from the main gate, the enemy's picket retiring into the place, from which a smart fire of round shot and musketry was opened, and replied to by our rifles. I then proceeded with Brigadier Smith; Captain Turnbull, Chief Engineer; Colonel Blake, commanding Artillery; and my Staff, to reconnoitre the north-east side, whilst Colonel Robertson, 25th Bombay Native Infantry, accompanied by Major Chetwode, with a strong escort of cavalry and guns, reconnoitred the west side.

Having determined on the necessary arrangements, four 8-inch mortars were sent down to the temple at sunset, and continued to play without intermission during the night.

A breaching battery for two 18-pounders was commenced at 300 yards from the bastion on the east side, and nearly completed by morning.

A battery for the howitzer to give an oblique fire on the defences of the east side, and cross-fire on the breach, was also commenced at 400 yards, but, being interrupted by a party of the enemy in the thick jungle, the Bildars ran away, and could not be re-assembled. The mortars continued to play all day of the 21st, and had a sensible effect on the enemy's fire, which had been maintained with much briskness on the temple, and on all approaches. During the night of the 21st both batteries were completed, armed, and on the point of opening, when I received a message from the fort to say that Maun Sing, with his followers, had escaped in the night, and praying that the mortars might cease.

I regret that it was out of my power, with my force, to invest the place properly. It is a mile and a half in circuit. One side rests on an im-

* European Artillery, 149; Native ditto, 11; European Cavalry, 166; Native ditto, 280; Engineers, 29; European Infantry, 552; Native ditto, 733.

practicable precipice, flanked by large ravines and jungle, and backed by a deep torrent, and a forest extending for many miles. In front of the other side is open ground, tanks, and marshes. The main gateway is very strong, having three gates, and numerous lofty bastions to flank them.

The Dhang, or jungle gateway, has two gates, and opens on ravines and jungle; a wicket leads down by the one side of the precipice, and there is also a path sufficient for escape of men in single file down the other.

The walls, though ancient, and in some places dilapidated, are generally 10 feet thick of massive stone, and from 25 to 50 feet high, and are well protected by the precipice above mentioned, by deep tanks, and a wet ditch, except at two or three points.

I found on the walls 17 guns, all of which have been burst, except 4 of the smallest, which have been disabled.

No one at Gwalior, with intelligence enough to describe Powrie, could give me a correct idea of its size and strength, but a native plan, procured through the Political Agent at Gwalior, gave me correct information in some details which were valuable.

I received every assistance from Brigadier Smith, Commanding Rajpootana Brigade, and his Brigade Major, Lieutenant Goldsworthy; from Colonel Blake, Commanding Artillery; from Captain Todd, 14th Dragoons, Assistant Adjutant-General; and Captain Field, Royal Artillery, in charge of the Siege Train.

Major Vials, of Her Majesty's 95th, at his own request retained command of the advanced party at the temple.

Captain Turnbull, Chief Engineer; Lieutenant Festing, Royal Engineers; and Lieutenant Mac-lachlan, Bombay Horse Artillery, Deputy Judge-Advocate-General, worked without intermission at the batteries, aided by Lieutenants Budger, Pearson, and Anderson, 95th Regiment, Assistant Field Engineers.

Captain Turnbull and Lieutenant Mac-lachlan, supported by a party of 12 volunteers from the 95th and 10th Regiments, under Lieutenant Crealock, 95th, examined the ground up to the foot of the proposed breach, both to see that there were no obstacles to the assault, and to find the best way.

This was a service of some danger, as the enemy were on the alert, and outside the walls. It is entirely owing to the exertions of these officers, and the efficient practice of the mortars under Captain Field, and Lieutenants Harris and Strutt, commanding detachments, and their officers, that we recovered a place of such strength as Powrie, in forty-eight hours. The escape of Maun Sing is to be regretted, but it could not have been prevented without a larger force, and it would have been equally inexpedient to draw away troops from any other quarter, or to let the enemy remain in possession of a place in front of our force a day longer than could be avoided.

The troops have borne exposure and fatigue with the utmost cheerfulness, and very little sickness.

On the 23d Brigadier Smith came on the track of Maun Sing's party, near the Koonoo River, and recovered two guns which they had carried away from Powrie; and Colonel Robertson, with a Light Column, is now following them closely.

A Return of Casualties is annexed, in which I have to regret Lieutenant Fisher severely wounded. The enemy lost ten killed and thirty wounded.

I have, &c.,

R. NAPIER, Brigadier-General,
Commanding Gwalior Division.