

No. 33.

Lieutenant Cunliffe to Captain Larkins, Commanding at Phillibheet.

SIR,

Phillibheet, August 31, 1858.

IN consequence of the incapability of Captain Browne to report the occurrences of yesterday himself, I have the honour to report, that agreeably to your orders, the force as per margin,\* under his command, started for Nooreah at 1 P.M., to assist Lieutenant Craigie, and arrived there about 4 P.M. Captain Browne, on his arrival, finding that the enemy had retired before Lieutenant Craigie (whose report of the proceedings in the earlier part of the day I enclose,) to their standing camp at Seerpoorah, determined to postpone any attack that might be made until the following morning.

The position of the enemy, the whole of whose force was reported to consist of 500 infantry and 300 cavalry, with two or three guns, was a strong one. They occupied a rising ground, the site of a ruined village called Seerpoorah, about three miles from Nooreah, in rear of a wide and deep jheel, approachable from the front only by a straight and narrow road, entirely destitute of cover of any kind, and knee deep in water and mud. Advance from this side being out of the question, and a reliable native having been found by Mr Low, C. S., Joint Magistrate of Phillibheet, (who accompanied the force), who said he could point out a circuitous road through the jungle, which led to the enemy's rear, it was determined that the attack should take place at daybreak on the following morning. The whole force accordingly, strength as per margin,† was conducted by the guide through the jungle to within sight of the enemy's camp.

The march having been conducted with the strictest silence up to this time, the enemy were apparently unaware of our approach; the ground between us and their camp, a distance of about half a mile, being open, the line of attack was immediately formed in the following order:—The 17th Punjab Native Infantry and Kumaon Levies in line, covered by the 24th Punjab Native Infantry, half in skirmishing order, and half as support, a squadron of the 2d Punjab Cavalry on either flank, and a troop in reserve in the rear. The order having been given to move on, the whole force proceeded at a steady pace to the attack, the enemy being now drawn up to receive us. On arriving at a distance of about 400 yards,

\* Cavalry.—130 sabres 2d Punjab Cavalry; Infantry.—150 rank and file, 17th Punjab Infantry; 100 rank and file, Kumaon Levies.

† Cavalry.—230 sabres, 3d Punjab Cavalry; Infantry.—150 rank and file, 17th Punjab Native Infantry; 100 rank and file, 24th Punjab Native Infantry; 100 rank and file, Kumaon Levies.

two guns commenced playing with round shot and grape upon the advancing line. The skirmishers, led by Ensign Chalmers, advanced unshaken at a steady pace, and without firing a shot up to within 30 yards of the guns, when they poured in a rapid fire, and charged up the ascent. Being then in command of the infantry, and noticing that at this time a portion of the enemy had already commenced to retire, I rapidly brought up the whole line of reserve, and swept through the enemy's position, the greatest resistance being offered by the rebel artillerymen, who fought most desperately, apparently trying to single out the European officers.

During this time, Captain Browne, who was with the skirmishers, seeing that the squadron on the right, under the command of Lieutenant Craigie, was suffering from the fire of the guns, ordered it to charge in flank, but a swamp intervening, the squadron was obliged to make a detour, which brought it to the enemy's left rear, where a gun, hitherto concealed, opened on it; this however was speedily captured, its supporters either killed or put to flight.

By this time the flight became general, the fugitives making their way towards the jungle, which stretched away to the left; they were vigorously pursued by the cavalry up to its edge, which point however few of them ever reached.

This force was under the personal command of Nizam Alee Khan, who, however, made himself scarce at a very early stage of the proceedings. A noted chief, however, named Alee Khan, was killed, and three elephants were captured in the pursuit. On returning from the pursuit, it was with sincere regret that I learnt that Captain Browne was so severely wounded that it was necessary for me to assume command, being the next senior officer. Having formed up again, I returned with the force to Nooreah, bringing in the captured guns, &c., being compelled however to halt there that day, on account of the wounded, and I marched back to the station this morning.

By all accounts the enemy must have lost fully 300 men, besides all their guns, ammunition, camp equipage, &c., and so thoroughly dispersed, that many more have since been killed by the zemindars of the surrounding villages.

At the special request of Captain Browne, I beg to bring to your notice the extremely steady way in which the whole of the infantry advanced under fire of the guns, strictly obeying their orders not to fire a shot till they reached them; the advance of the skirmishers under Ensign Chalmers was the admiration of all concerned.

I have, &amp;c.,

G. G. CUNLIFFE, Lieutenant,  
Commanding Field Detachment.