

No. 45.

General Hope-Grant to the Adjutant-General of the Army.

Head-Quarters, Camp, Sultanpore Cantonments,
30th August 1858.

SIR,

No. 212.

I HAVE the honour to report, for the information of his Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, that, under instructions received from the Chief of the Staff, I despatched from Fyzabad the force as per margin,* under the command of Brigadier Horsford, C.B., on the 9th instant, towards Sultanpore, to follow up the rebel forces which had been besieging Maun Sing at Shahgung.

2. Heavy rain had fallen for some days before this force left Fyzabad, which rendered the track (there is no road) to Sultanpore very heavy and deep in places for the guns and the hackeries carrying the Commissariat supplies. There are two considerable nuddees on this route, but, by the exertions of Captain Reid, Deputy Commissioner, they were bridged.

3. Brigadier Horsford's Despatch, detailing his operations on the 13th instant, when he drove the enemy to the right bank and occupied Sultanpore, I have already had the honour to forward.

4. It was intended that Brigadier Horsford should cross the Goomtee,† and occupy the cantonments on the right bank; but the enemy having taken away or destroyed every boat, no bridge could be thrown across the river, and Brigadier Horsford's instructions were not to cross without one. The right bank being in the possession of the enemy for about fifteen miles up and down the river, it was found impracticable to bring boats from a distance.

5. In consequence of the large increase of the rebel force, amounting to about 20,000 men, with 15 guns, opposing the passage of the river, I received further instructions from the Chief of the Staff to reinforce Brigadier Horsford; and for this purpose I despatched the 2d battalion of the Rifle Brigade and two 9-pounder guns from Fyzabad, on the 16th instant. By order of the Commander-in-Chief this entailed the following movements of the Oudh force, viz. :—(1st)—The 53d Regiment from Durriabad to Fyzabad, to replace the Rifles. (2d)—The 1st Bengal Fusiliers from Nawabgunge to Durriabad; and (3d)—A wing of the 88th Regiment from Lucknow to Nawabgunge, Bara Banke.

6. In consequence of the increasing numbers of the enemy, the determined opposition shown to the passage of the river, and the importance attached to our occupying the right bank, I determined, without waiting for His Excellency's instructions, to still further reinforce the Sultanpore column, and I accordingly marched from Fyzabad on the 19th instant, with the detail mentioned in the margin.‡

7. In many places along the route the track led across cultivation, and through marshes where the gun wheels sunk to the axle. The infantry, too, were obliged to wade through sloughs frequently.

8. I arrived at Sultanpore on the 22d instant. Brigadier Horsford had taken up a good position and secured an excellent point for the passage of

the river. But no boats could be procured. Three small dinghies were found, and of these Lieutenant Raynsford had constructed a very good raft; he also had platforms for a bridge in a forward state. Three dinghies, which were lying at the Biswee Nuddee, nine miles distant, I had conveyed to the ghat, and three others were found sunk in the river; of these two more rafts were constructed.

9. All the preparations necessary for crossing the force on the rafts, with the exception of the heavy guns and park, were completed on the night of the 24th instant.

10. It being evident that there was no possibility of procuring boats for a bridge until the enemy was driven from the opposite bank, I decided upon crossing without one.

11. The force of the enemy occupied several positions. The main position was at Hassenpore, about four miles from cantonments. In the cantonment there was another large body and eight guns; and two villages in front of the point at which I intended crossing were also occupied. Besides the above, there were picquets along the bank of the river, and several batteries, and a regiment watched the Dhera Ghat, where it was said there were some boats.

12. On the 22d instant I received intelligence that Bene Madho had arrived at the rebel camp, bringing a strong reinforcement, but the numbers were variously reported.

13. The heavy guns being in position to cover the operation and keep down the fire of the enemy, the force commenced passing over on the morning of the 25th.

By 4 P.M. the Madras Fusiliers, the 5th Punjab Rifles, two 9-pounder guns, and a detachment of Hodson's Horse had crossed, and I ordered this force to advance under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Galway, and take and occupy the two villages in my front. On the approach of the column the enemy fled, the villages were occupied, and I thus secured an excellent position; the river, which here forms a loop, protecting the flanks of the advanced line.

14. There was much difficulty in swimming the horses across the river, and all the force had not got over till late on the 27th.

15. On the 28th I had my arrangements made for attacking the rebels at the cantonments on the following morning at daybreak. On that afternoon the enemy came out in strong force and attacked my position. They were easily repulsed and driven back, but as it was late when this was accomplished, I did not think it advisable then to follow them up. The following morning I advanced at four o'clock, but found that the cantonment was deserted.

16. The enemy retreated towards the south-west, but it is not ascertained yet what position they intend taking up.

17. This district is now clear of rebels, and the right bank of the river being free, boats for a bridge will be up in a couple of days.

18. I beg to bring to the notice of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief the efficient co-operation and support I received from Brigadier Horsford, C.B., commanding the Infantry Brigade; Lieutenant-Colonel Sir W. Russell, Bart., who commanded the cavalry and superintended the outpost duty; and Major Yates, R.H.A., who commanded the Artillery. Officers commanding regiments, troops, and detachments :—Lieutenant-Colonel Hill, 2d Battalion Rifle Brigade; Lieutenant-Colonel Galway, 1st Madras Fusiliers; Lieutenant-Colonel Payn, Her Majesty's 53d Regiment; Major Horne, 7th Hussars; Major Vaughan, 5th Punjab Rifles; Major Daly, C.B., Irregular Cavalry. Lieutenant Strange, R.A.;

* DETAIL.—Artillery : Troop Royal Horse Field Artillery. Cavalry : A Wing 7th Hussars; Detachment 7th Hussars. Infantry : 1st Madras Fusiliers; 5th Punjab Rifles; Detachment Madras Sappers.

† The river Goomtee is upwards of 400 feet wide.

‡ DETAIL.—Artillery : Heavy Battery Royal Artillery. Cavalry : Head Quarters and Wing, Her Majesty's 7th Hussars. Infantry : Head Quarters and Wing, Her Majesty's 53d Regiment; Detachment Madras Sappers and Miners.