

No. 39.

The Deputy Adjutant-General of the Army to the Secretary to the Government of India, Military Department, with the Governor-General.

Head Quarters Camp, Poorah, April 20, 1858.

SIR, No. 257 A.

I HAVE the honor, by order of the Commander-in-Chief, to enclose copy of a despatch from Brigadier-General R. Walpole, dated the 16th instant, which I am to beg you will submit to the Right Honorable the Governor-General.

2. In this despatch the capture of the fort of Rooya is described, an operation which, to the great regret of his Excellency, has been attended with considerable loss.

3. Among the names of those who have fallen, appears that of Brigadier the Honorable A. Hope. The death of this most distinguished and gallant officer causes the deepest grief to the Commander-in-Chief. Still young in years, he had risen to high command, and by his undaunted courage, combined as it was with extreme kindness and charm of manner, had secured the confidence of his brigade to no ordinary degree.

4. This brigade he had led in several assaults, of which the last was in the attack on the Begum Kotee, at the late siege of Lucknow.

5. The service of Her Majesty could, in Sir Colin Campbell's opinion, hardly have sustained a greater loss.

I have, &c.

H. W. NORMAN, Major,
Deputy Adjutant-General of the Army.

No. 40.

Brigadier General R. Walpole, Commanding Field Force, to the Chief of the Staff.

Camp Madhogunge, April 16, 1858.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acquaint you, for the information of his Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, that yesterday morning I marched to this place (which almost joins Roodamow) from Gosegunge.

Nurput Sing, who, I stated in my despatch of yesterday, was at Rooya Fort, which is about one mile to the north of this place, did not come in or send any satisfactory reply to the message of Captain Thurburn, the magistrate who accompanies this force. I therefore thought it advisable to attack him, particularly as Captain Thurburn informed me that he understood this man had received only the day before yesterday a letter from the Begum, and that his intentions were certainly hostile to the Government; and under these circumstances it would have had the worst effect to have passed this fort without taking it.

I accordingly directed my baggage to be massed in the open plain, near Madhogunge, under a strong guard of cavalry, infantry, and two field guns, and proceeded with the remainder of the force towards Rooya, turning off from the road, about two miles from Madhogunge, for the purpose of getting round to the north side of the fort, which was stated to be the weakest part of it, where there was a gate, and where there were very few guns.

The fort on the east and north side is almost surrounded with jungle, and at these two sides, the only two gates were stated to be, which information proved correct. It is a large oblong, with numerous circular bastions all round it, pierced or guns, and loopholed for musketry, and sur-

rounded by a broad and deep ditch; there is an inner fort or citadel, surrounded in like manner by a deep ditch, and with a high wall considerably elevated above the rest of the work. On the west and part of the south side, there was a large piece of water, which was partially dried up.

On arriving before the north side, I sent forward some infantry in extended order, to enable the place to be reconnoitred, when a heavy fire of musketry was immediately opened upon them, and an occasional gun; the cavalry at the same time swept entirely round to the west side, to cut off all communication with the fort.

A tolerable view of the fort having been obtained from the road which leads into it from the north, the heavy guns were brought up; the two 18-pounders were placed on it; the two 8-inch mortars behind a wood still further to the right.

After a short time, a great many of the infantry were killed and wounded from having crept up too near the fort, from which the fire of rifles and matchlocks was very heavy. These men had gone much nearer to the fort than I wished or intended them to go, and some of the Punjab Rifles, with great courage, but without orders, jumped into the ditch and were killed in endeavouring to get up the scarp. I therefore gave directions that they should be withdrawn from their forward and exposed situation, and here it was that I regret to say the gallant and able soldier Brigadier Hope was killed by a rifle or musket ball fired by a man from a high tree within the walls of the place.

By half-past 2 o'clock the fire of our heavy guns appeared to have made little or no impression upon the place, and as no gun could be brought to bear upon the gate, the passage to which was not straight, and it could not be approached without the men being exposed to a very heavy fire from the bastion and loopholed walls that commanded it, I considered it better not to attempt an assault until more impression had been made upon the walls of the place, and as it was getting late, to withdraw from the north side and commence operations against the south-east angle, on the following morning, which had been reconnoitred by the engineers, and where they thought it would be easier to effect a breach, as it could be better seen and more direct fire could be brought to bear.

I therefore directed the camp to be pitched on the south side, about a mile from the fort, and withdrew from the north side, where it would have been dangerous to have passed the night, as it was surrounded by thick jungle.

This morning at day-light, Major Brind, Bengal Artillery, and Captain Lennox, Royal Engineers, proceeded again to reconnoitre the place thoroughly before recommencing operations, and found that the enemy had evacuated it, leaving their guns behind them, five in number, ammunition, a large quantity of attah, and some tents. As some of the carriages were found without their guns, and the track of a gun-carriage could be traced to a well, where the water is very deep, I have no doubt other guns have been thrown down it. I had information that there were more in the place, and it is certain none were carried out.

The reports as to the numbers of the enemy vary so much, that it is impossible to arrive at any certainty upon that point; but I am inclined to think the number stated in my despatch yesterday, viz., about fifteen hundred, to be nearly correct; but the strength of the garrison consisted in the nature and situation of the fort, not in their numbers.

I regret to say that this operation has cost us above one hundred officers and men killed and