

eastern side, but was known to descend on the western by a succession of upland meadows towards the valley of the Hariab.

9. The position, as thus described, was crossed by only two regular roads, viz., the Peiwar and Spin Gawai Kotals or *Cols.* At two or three other points the range was crossed by paths, but these were too narrow and precipitous for the passage of troops.

10. An important military feature in the position was that the successive ridges or peaks, into which it was broken, dominated each other from the left to the right; that is, a force placed on the height to the south of the Spin Gawai *col* would have a command over each succeeding eminence as it advanced along the ridge towards the Peiwar Kotal.

11. The Peiwar Kotal is a narrow depression in the ridge commanded on each side by high pine-clad mountains. The approach to it from the Kurum Valley, or east, is up a steep narrow zig-zag path, entirely commanded throughout its length from the adjacent heights, and difficult to ascend by reason of the extreme roughness of the road, which was covered with large fragments of rock and boulders. Every point of the ascent was exposed to fire from both guns and rifles, securely placed behind breastworks constructed of pine logs and stones. At the top of the pass was a narrow plateau, which was again commanded from the thickly wooded heights, which rose to an elevation of 500 feet on each side of the valley. On the western side the road passed by a gentle descent through a narrow valley with pine-clad sides for about one and a half miles, when it reached the open valley of the Hariab near the hamlet of Zabardast Kila.

12. The Spin Gawai Kotal, which formed the extreme left of the enemy's line, is a position far less capable of defence, and of an altogether different character from that of the Peiwar. The approach of it is through a comparatively open valley; the ascent is not steep except when close to the summit; and the valley is of sufficient width to admit of the movement of troops. The position does not, in short, possess the natural military advantages which are so remarkable at the Peiwar Kotal.

13. On the 29th November the approaches to the Peiwar Kotal from both the north and south sides were thoroughly reconnoitred, and plans were drawn up for a direct assault on the enemy's position. A reconnaissance was also pushed through the hills to obtain a view of the Spin Gawai Kotal, and of the upper part of the road leading thereto.

14. The result of these reconnaissances convinced me that a front attack, though it might be successful, would certainly entail great loss, and I formed a design for a secret night march on the Spin Gawai, by which I hoped the enemy's position in our front might be turned.

15. On the 30th I ordered the 3 guns of G-3rd, Royal Artillery, and 2 guns of F-A, Royal Horse Artillery, to move up to my camp from the Kurum fort. The 12th Bengal Cavalry were also ordered up from Habib-kila. On this day reconnoitring parties were again employed at the Peiwar Kotal, and every means adopted to induce the enemy to believe that we intended to attack him in front, and to withdraw his attention from his left. A secret reconnaissance, unaccompanied by troops, was also made from the village of Peiwar up the regular road to the Spin Gawai, and the two officers making it (Major Collett, Assistant Quartermaster-General, and Captain Carr, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General) succeeded in reaching a point about one and a-half miles

distant from the Kotal, and getting a fairly good view of the approaches thereto. On the evening of the 30th I made up my mind to abandon any attempt at attacking the Peiwar Kotal in front, and to undertake the flank turning movement by the Spin Gawai.

16. To render the success of this enterprise possible, it was necessary to maintain the utmost secrecy, and to adopt every means to divert the enemy's attention from my intended attack on his left.

17. On the 1st December ostentatious reconnoitring parties were sent to both flanks of the Peiwar Kotal, and batteries were marked out on the small plain near the hamlet of Turri. These proceedings seemed to have the desired effect; the enemy shelled the working party employed at the battery; placed fresh guns in position on the south side of the pass; and paraded their troops and showed every sign of expecting an attack. In the evening of this day, the half battery G-3rd, Royal Artillery, and the 12th Bengal Cavalry arrived from the rear. I had them marched up in full view of the enemy, and made as great a parade as possible of their arrival. At this time every officer and soldier in camp, and certainly all the natives, were fully persuaded that I intended to attack the Peiwar Kotal the next morning.

18. The general plan of the intended operations, which was explained to commanding officers at 4 p.m. on Sunday, the 1st instant, was briefly as follows:—

The following troops were detailed to form the turning force under my immediate command, and were instructed to march at 10 p.m. that night, without noise or bugle sound, in the order mentioned below. No orders of any sort for the march to be given before 9 p.m.:—

29th Punjab Native Infantry, 5th Goorkhas, No. 1 Mountain Battery, under Colonel J. J. H. Gordon, 29th Punjab Native Infantry; 72nd Highlanders, 2nd Punjab Infantry, 23rd Pioneers, under Brigadier-General Thelwall; C.B.. Four guns F-A, Royal Horse Artillery, on elephants, with two companies of Pioneers as escort.

Each of the above corps was directed to leave their camp standing, with a party of 30 men as a camp guard.

The following troops, under the command of Brigadier General Cobbe were directed to remain in camp:—

2-8th Foot, 5th Punjab Infantry, 12th Bengal Cavalry, two guns F-A, Royal Horse Artillery, three guns G-3rd Royal Artillery, the Turi and other levies, under command of Major Palmer, 9th Bengal Cavalry.

Brigadier-General Cobbe received general instructions to open fire upon the enemy about 6 a.m.; to get his troops into position in front of Peiwar Kotal by half-past eight, and to storm the place when the flank attack should have become sufficiently developed to shake the enemy's defence.

19. The troops marched at 10 p.m. on Sunday night to the village of Peiwar, where they entered the bed of the nullah which forms the road to the Spin Gawai. This was extremely difficult marching for infantry, as the nullah was nothing but a mass of stones, heaped into ridges and furrowed into deep hollows by the action of the water. The night was fine, but bitterly cold; and we did not get the advantage of the moon after midnight. While on the march I found it expedient to change the order of the leading brigade, which became as follows:—

5th Goorkhas; 1 Company, 72nd Highlanders; 23th Punjab Native Infantry.