

the Commander-in-Chief to submit for the information of Government, the accompanying Despatch, No. 1125, of the 20th of October, 1879 (and the enclosures noted in the margin*), received from Major-General Sir F. S. Roberts, K.C.B., V.C., commanding the Kabul Field Force, describing the operations of the force under his command from the 2nd October, 1879, up to the date of the occupation of Kabul.

2. These operations have been most skilfully and successfully conducted, and are very creditable to Major-General Sir F. Roberts, K.C.B., V.C., the General and other officers, and the men under his command.

3. His Excellency has much satisfaction in bringing prominently to the notice of Government the gallant conduct of the troops in the engagements referred in this Despatch; and he desires to draw attention to Sir F. Roberts' remarks in reference to their discipline and excellent bearing under severe privations and hardships.

I have, &c.,

G. R. GREAVES, Major-General,
Adjutant-General in India.

No. 1125.

Field Operations.—Kabul Expedition.
From Major-General Sir F. S. Roberts, K.C.B., V.C., commanding Kabul Field Force, to the Chief of the Staff, Army Head Quarters, Simla.

*Dated Head Quarters, Kabul Field Force,
Bala Hissar, Kabul,*

SIR, *October 20, 1879.*

MY despatch, No. 1122, dated Bala Hissar, Kabul, 16th October, 1879, acquainting His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief and the Government of India with the proceedings of the force under my command from the date of my arrival at Ali Kheyl, on the 12th of September, to the 2nd instant, when the column was assembled at Zurgunshahr.

2. I purposely delayed leaving Ali Kheyl until all necessary supplies had been conveyed to Kushi, and until everything was ready for as rapid an advance on Kabul as my limited transport would admit.

3. So long as I remained at Ali Kheyl, the people of Afghanistan were kept in doubt as to the actual intentions of the British Government. Their idea was that the season was too far advanced for troops to attempt a march on Kabul, and that beyond occupying the Shuturguridan and making a demonstration as far as Kushi, nothing would be done until the spring of next year.

The fact of my crossing the Shuturguridan would, I was aware, make our plans clear to the Afghans and neighbouring tribes, and would be the signal for the assemblage of all those who had determined to oppose our advance.

4. My object was to let as short a time as possible intervene between leaving Kushi and reaching Kabul. I knew that want of carriage would prevent my moving the force as a body, and that a halt would have to be made every second day to allow of the transport animals being sent back to bring up the rear brigade. This made it more than ever necessary that I should not reach Kushi until all was ready for a start.

5. As stated in my Despatch of the 16th instant, I arrived at Kushi on the 28th of September, and on the following day ordered the Cavalry Brigade to move to Zurgunshahr and commence collecting

supplies. On the 1st of October the last of the troops reached Kushi from Ali Kheyl, and on the 2nd idem I marched for Zurgunshahr with the two Infantry Brigades.

On the afternoon of the 5th of October the village of Charasiab, eleven miles from Kabul, was reached by the whole of the column, except two guns, No. 2 Mountain Battery, a wing of the 67th Foot, the 28th Punjab Native Infantry, and a squadron of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, which had to be left at Zahidabad to protect reserve ammunition and commissariat stores. These troops were under the command of Brigadier-General Macpherson, C.B., V.C.

6. The passage of the Logar River at Zahidabad caused some trouble. The bridge proved to be unfit for field artillery, and at first even for laden animals, while the water was deeper than I had been led to expect, caused I believed by a large cut having been turned back into the river a short distance above the ford, on purpose to delay our advance.

The company of Sappers and Miners, aided by strong working parties, soon remedied matters, but the inhabitants of the near villages showed such unmistakable signs of hostility by firing on our rear-guard, both on the evening of the 3rd and 4th of October, that I deemed it necessary to inflict summary punishment on those who had been most forward. This I did before leaving Zahidabad on the morning of the 5th idem.

7. The only casualty on our side up to this time was a slight wound received by Captain R. G. Kennedy, Deputy - Assistant Quartermaster-General, who was superintending the passage of the Logar River; though at one time the enemy approached so close that it became necessary for the covering companies of the 72nd Highlanders and the 5th Punjab Infantry to drive them back at the point of the bayonet.

The rear-guard at this time was under the command of Major C. M. Stockwell, of the 72nd Highlanders, who exercised his command with coolness and dexterity.

8. It was evident to me, from the feeling and manner of the people generally, from the fact that the Shuturguridan had been attacked immediately on the bulk of our force leaving it, and from the action of the villages near Zahidabad, that our advance on Kabul would be opposed; but I was quite unable to obtain any information as to the intentions of the enemy, although the Amir and all his principal ministers were in camp with me.

Immediately, therefore, on arriving at Charasiab, reconnoitring parties of cavalry were pushed forward along the three roads leading towards the city of Kabul. A few shots were fired at these parties from villages and walled enclosures, but no traces were visible of any large body of the enemy.

9. That night strong pickets were thrown out all round camp, and cavalry patrols were ordered to proceed at daybreak to feel for the enemy. At the same time I determined to seize as soon as possible after dawn the crest of the pass known as the "Sang-i-Nawishta," on the road towards "Ben-i-Shahr," the one by which I had decided to continue my march towards Kabul, and which was between five and six miles in advance of our camp at Charasiab.

10. A wing of the 92nd Highlanders and the 23rd Pioneers left camp soon after daybreak on the 6th, accompanied by two guns, No. 2 Mountain Battery, for the purpose of working on the road in the pass, where the cavalry patrol the previous evening had reported guns would experience difficulties. I was about to follow with a strong

* Return of Casualties, W. O. Form 718; Numerical Return of Killed, Wounded, and Missing; Return of Ordnance captured; Copy of Proclamation.