

in Kandahar on the 2nd September at the latest.

The following day, at Shahjui, Captain Straton was able to open heliographic communication with Khelat-i-Ghilzai. By this means I heard of the sortie which had been made from Kandahar on the 16th August; and at the same time I received reassuring news as to the staying power of the garrison,—that they were in no straits for supplies for troops and followers, that they were all in good health and spirits, and that they had forage sufficient to hold out for a longer period than it would take the force under my command to reach Kandahar.

I decided, therefore, to push on to Khelat-i-Ghilzai, and there give the troops a well-earned rest of one day.

We arrived at Khelat-i-Ghilzai on the 23rd August, having marched from Ghazni, a distance of 134 miles, in eight days. This gives an average daily rate of 16½ miles.

Colonel Tanner had everything in good order at Khelat-i-Ghilzai, and had been enabled to collect a fair amount of supplies.

Being of opinion that it would be inconvenient to keep open communication with Khelat-i-Ghilzai for some time to come, and seeing no immediate advantage in continuing its occupation, I determined to withdraw the garrison and take it with me to Kandahar.

All the necessary arrangements for this purpose were made during the day the force halted, the 24th August; and the charge of the fort was handed over to Mahomed Sadik Khan, a Toki Ghilzai, who had possession of it when the British troops under Lieutenant-General Sir Donald Stewart reached Khelat-i-Ghilzai in January, 1879.

On the 26th August, at Tirandaz, I received news from Lieutenant-General Primrose, C.S.I., commanding at Kandahar, that on the 23rd Sirdar Ayúb Khan had abandoned the villages to the east and west of Kandahar; and that on the 24th he had struck his camp and had taken up a position in the Argandab Valley between Baba Wali and Mazra, due north of the city,—thus practically giving up the investment of Kandahar.

Being anxious to open up heliographic communication with General Primrose, and if possible with General Phayre, I ordered two regiments of cavalry under Brigadier-General Hugh Gough to march the following morning (27th August) to Robot, a distance of 34 miles, the remainder of the force moving about half way.

Shortly after arrival at Robot, Brigadier-General Gough was met by Lieutenant-Colonel St. John, the Resident, and Major Adam, Assistant Quartermaster-General at Kandahar. From the information brought by these officers, and from what I heard from other sources, I was led to believe that Ayúb Khan intended to make a stand, and was strengthening his position, which was said to extend from Gandizan to Kotal-i-Múrcha.

Upon receipt of this news I determined to halt for one day at Robot, and to divide the remaining distance to Kandahar, nineteen miles, into two short marches.

Soldiers, followers and transport animals were much fagged by the long and continuous marching, and somewhat exhausted by the now daily increasing heat. I was, moreover, desirous of bringing the troops into Kandahar in as fresh a state as possible, and fit for any work that might be required of them.

During the halt at Robot, on the 29th, I received a letter from Major-General Phayre, C.B., dated Kila Abdulla the 24th August, stating that

he hoped his division would be assembled there on the 28th, and be able to march for Kandahar on the 30th.

I felt at once that this precluded the possibility of General Phayre's arrival at Kandahar in time to co-operate with me. I much regretted this, as I was well aware of the strenuous exertions he had made to relieve the beleaguered garrison, and the privations and hardships which he and his troops had undergone to effect this object.

On the 31st August the force reached Kandahar, having marched from Khelat-i-Ghilzai (88 miles) in seven days, including the halt at Robot.

The position I determined to take up was to the west of the city, with my right on the cantonments, and my left touching Old Kandahar.

Such a position covered the city, gave me command of a good and ample supply of water, and placed me within striking distance of Ayúb Khan's camp.

Not knowing what opposition might be expected once we advanced beyond the city, arrangements were made, in communication with Lieutenant-General Primrose, for giving the troops their breakfast outside the Shikarpore Gate, and for watering and feeding the transport animals.

At 10 A.M. the 1st and 3rd Brigades moved off from under the city walls, and took up the position as shown in the plan attached, viz., Picquet Hill, Karez Hill, and the north-eastern spur of the hill over Old Kandahar.

This movement was accomplished without opposition,

The Cavalry and the 2nd Brigade of Infantry were at this time on baggage and rear guards.

From such a cursory examination of the ground as I was able to make on arrival in the morning, I was quite satisfied that any attempt to carry the Baba Wali Kotal by a direct attack would be attended with very severe loss. I determined, therefore, if possible, to turn it.

To enable me to decide how best this operation could be carried out, it was necessary to ascertain the strength and precise extent of the position occupied by the enemy. I was anxious to obtain this information without delay, and I therefore ordered a small column* under the command of Brigadier-General Hugh Gough to start at once and make as complete a reconnaissance as possible.

Lieutenant-Colonel Chapman, Deputy Adjutant and Quartermaster-General, was directed to accompany the party and to assist Brigadier-General Gough with his great local knowledge and experience.

The reconnaissance started at 1 P.M. from our left near Old Kandahar, and proceeded towards the high ground immediately above the village of Gandizan. Here the infantry and guns halted, while the cavalry advanced some two or two and a half miles, avoiding the numerous orchards and enclosures, and coming out in front of Pir Paimal village, where it was found the enemy were strongly entrenched.

As soon as the enemy's fire along this line had been drawn, the 3rd Bengal Cavalry fell back, admirably handled by their Commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel A. R. D. Mackenzie.

In the meantime the guns were brought into action, partly to test the range, and also to check the enemy, who were now observed to be passing rapidly into the gardens near Gandizan.

A retirement of the infantry and artillery of the reconnaissance to within our picquets was then ordered.

* 3rd Bengal Cavalry; 15th Sikhs; Two guns of 11-9th Royal Artillery.