

From Lieutenant-General J. M. Primrose, C.S.I., Commanding the 1st Division, Southern Afghanistan Field Force, to the Adjutant-General in India,—(dated Khandahar, the 28th September, 1880).

With reference to your telegram to the address of Sir Frederick Roberts, K.C.B., received this day, intimating that copies of any instructions issued to Brigadier-General Brooke on his proceeding to meet the troops returning from Maiwand on the 28th July should be forwarded, I have the honor to inform you that my instructions were given verbally to that officer, to the effect that he should proceed along the Kokeran road, with a small force of all arms, in the direction of Singiri, with a view of helping in the men and followers of Brigadier-General Burrows' column, and protecting them from the villagers, who were then firing on them. He was to use his own discretion in carrying out these instructions.

2. I beg herewith to forward a copy of Brigadier-General Brooke's report of his proceedings.

3. With regard to paragraph 8 of Brigadier-General Brooke's report, the information he received was probably conveyed to him in a note from Lieutenant-Colonel St. John, who was also returning to Kandahar, in the following terms:—

“The hills about Abásábad and neighbouring villages are full of men, and passage to cantonment impossible. Skirmishers going out, but guns wanted.”

From Brigadier-General H. F. Brooke, Commanding the 2nd Infantry Brigade 1st Division, Kandahar Field Force, to the Assistant Adjutant-General, Kandahar Field Force,—(No. 300, —“Field Operations”—dated Kandahar, the 8th August, 1880).

I have the honour to report that, in compliance with the orders received from the Lieutenant-General, I left cantonments at 5.30 a.m. on the 28th July, with the force as per margin,\* to proceed to Kokeran to cover the retirement of the force under Brigadier-General Burrows, whose movement on Kandahar was, as reported by an officer who had arrived half an hour previously, being endangered by the opposition of the country people, who had collected in large numbers for that purpose.

2. On leaving cantonments, the only practical road to Kokeran passes for about one mile (as the Lieutenant-General is aware) through walled gardens, and along the main street of the village of Abásábad, which is narrow and tortuous. The gardens were full of armed men, who, however, fell back without much resistance before my skirmishers, and thus allowed the guns and the remainder of the column to pass unopposed through the village of Abásábad into the more open country beyond.

3. From the time of leaving Kandahar, parties of the retiring force were met, who reported that they had been attacked by the country people all along the route, but especially at the villages of Singiri and Kokeran.

4. I therefore pushed on as quickly as the weakness of my force and the necessity of clearing my flanks of the large number of armed men who crowded the high hills on my left, and the walled enclosures and strongly-placed villages on my right, would allow. Although the resist-

ance offered was not important, considerable time was necessarily occupied in clearing the numerous positions taken up by the enemy, and it was nearly 9 o'clock a.m. before I reached Kokeran.

5. Here I took up a position which enabled me to command the Herat road, the village, and the fortified residence of the Sártip; and at once sent on some cavalry to communicate with the force under Brigadier-General Burrows, which had at that time completed the crossing of the Argandab river, and was halted about a mile from Kokeran.

6. On the appearance of the force under my command, the village and fortified post of Kokeran were hurriedly evacuated by a very considerable body of armed men, who up to this time had been harassing and killing all small parties of the retiring force who had passed within their range. This body of men then established themselves in a village on the bank of the Argandab, about 800 yards from my right flank, from which position, however, they were quickly dislodged, and all further firing from the enemy prevented until the rear guard of General Burrows' force had passed me on their way to Kandahar. I caused the Sártip's house to be entered by a party of the Royal Fusiliers, under Lieutenant Rodick, but no one was found in it.

7. When the last man of the retiring force had passed me, I recalled that portion of my cavalry which, under Captain Anderson, had been watching the ford of the Argandab; and as soon as they had rejoined my column, I commenced to return to Kandahar, picking up all stragglers who had been unable to keep up with General Burrows' force. In returning from the ford, Captain Anderson's small party of cavalry were attacked by very superior numbers, but they quickly overcame the resistance and inflicted considerable loss on the enemy.

8. Our return march was unmolested for about three miles and a half, when I received information from the front that the hills immediately over the village of Abásábad and the walled enclosures round it were strongly occupied by the enemy. I at once sent forward the two guns of C-2nd Royal Artillery, under Captain Law, with a cavalry escort, following myself with the remainder of the cavalry and infantry, and, passing through General Burrows' force, which was then halted, pushed rapidly to the front, throwing out skirmishers to clear the gardens and village. Some excellently directed shells from the guns caused the enemy to evacuate their fortified posts on the hills, while the skirmishers cleared the walled enclosures of all opposition, enabling both my force and that of Brigadier-General Burrows to pass through the extremely difficult village of Abásábad with trifling loss.

9. On reaching the open ground on the Kandahar side of Abásábad, I again halted and formed up my force, and so remained until the main portion of the force of Brigadier-General Burrows had passed me, sending back a company of the Royal Fusiliers,\* under Captain E. W. Adderley, to keep the outskirts of the village of Abásábad clear of the enemy and bring in all stragglers. I then followed General Burrows' force into cantonments, where I arrived about 1.30 p.m.

10. The loss of the enemy in the operations above described must have been considerable, not only from our artillery and rifle fire, but also consequently on two well executed charges which were made by the Poona Horse, admirably led by Captain J. W. Anderson, whom I desire to commend to the favourable consideration of the Lieutenant-General.

\* Poona Horse,—40 sabres, under Captain J. W. Anderson.

C-2nd Royal Artillery,—2 guns, under Captain W. Law.  
7th Royal Fusiliers,—3 officers and 70 rank and file, under Lieutenant E. B. P. Rodick.

28th Native Infantry,—100 rank and file, under Major F. C. Singleton.

\* Obtained from the regiment.