

MILITARY DEPARTMENT.

GENERAL ORDER.

Simla, the 31st May, 1895.

FIELD OPERATIONS.—CHITRAL.

No. 558.—THE Right Honourable the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in Council directs the publication for general information of the subjoined communication from the Adjutant-General in India, submitting, under the orders of the Commander-in-Chief in India, a despatch from Lieutenant-General Sir R. C. Low, K.C.B., Commanding the Chitral Relief Force, on the operations of the troops under his command from the 2nd to the 29th April, 1895 :—

No. 758-G, "Field Operations," dated Simla, the 21st May, 1895. From Major-General G. de C. Morton, C.B., Adjutant-General in India, to the Secretary to the Government of India, Military Department.

I HAVE the honour, by direction of the Commander-in-Chief, to submit, for the information of the Government of India, and for publication as a despatch, the accompanying letter from Lieutenant-General Sir R. C. Low, giving a *résumé* of the operations of the Chitral Relief Force from the date the troops crossed the frontier to the 29th April, 1895.

2. Although some of the engagements mentioned in this letter have already been described in former despatches submitted with my marginally noted communications,* new light is now thrown upon them, and the publication of the letter will, in Sir George White's opinion, give, when read with those already published, a connected account of the operations of Sir Robert Low's force up to the end of April.

3. The Commander-in-Chief, in inviting the attention of Government to paragraph 18, considers that the critical condition in which the garrison of Chitral was reported to be on the 20th April, justified Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Low in assuming the responsibility of ordering Brigadier-General Gatacre to push on with a small column of 500 men over the Lowarai Pass to Chitral. As events turned out, the necessity for this course no longer existed; but he thinks credit is due to Brigadier-General Gatacre and to Major Deane, who apparently suggested it, and to Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Low, who sanctioned it.

4. I am to express His Excellency's concurrence with Sir Robert Low's remarks in paragraph 21, on the admirable spirit displayed by Officers and men in this expedition. The rapidity with which the troops had to move in order to accomplish the primary object of the force, and the difficult nature of the country to be traversed, compelled the adoption of a lighter scale of equipment than has been usual in previous expeditions of this strength and at this particular period of the year.

5. The Commander-in-Chief cannot send forward Sir Robert Low's despatch without recording separately his admiration of the way in which the retirement of the Guides Infantry was carried out on the 13th April.

6. From Sir Robert Low's despatch it is evident that the Guides kept perfect formation throughout the movement; that they were attacked by 4,000 tribesmen emboldened by their retirement; that the Guides, supported towards the end of the operation by the fire from the left bank of the

Panjhora, inflicted a loss of 500 on the enemy probably one for every sepoy of the Guides engaged, while of their own number only three were killed and nine wounded.

7. His Excellency considers this a very remarkable instance of result that may be obtained under very trying circumstances by absolute steadiness combined with high training and perfect fire control, and believes that the Guides must have felt themselves conquerors though retiring before eight times their number of brave but undisciplined tribesmen. The impression left on the enemy may be gauged by the fact that they never afterwards made the faintest effort to stand against our troops.

8. Sir George White has not dwelt specially on the irreparable loss of Lieutenant-Colonel Batty, as this brave Officer fell after he had withdrawn his battalion with great skill and determination within the zone of comparative safety covered by the fire from the left bank.

No. 296-A, dated Camp Dir, the 1st May, 1895. From Lieutenant-General Sir R. C. Low, K.C.B., Commanding the Chitral Relief Force, to the Adjutant-General in India.

I HAVE the honour to make the following report on the operations of the troops under my command since crossing the frontier on the 2nd April.

2. During this period of a month I have from time to time given brief accounts of each action as it took place, and of each further advance of this force; and now that the troops have arrived in Chitral territory, and the fort there is relieved, the British prisoners who were in Umra Khan's hands have been restored to freedom, and Umra Khan himself is a fugitive; now too that Sher Afzal, the Chitral usurper, is a prisoner in my hands, the time has arrived that I should make a more comprehensive report on the work done.

3. In my despatch dated the 5th April I gave a brief account of the assault and capture of the Malakand Pass. It must be remembered that this was written only two days after the action, and, being based on my own observation, was necessarily incomplete. Thus I have to make an important correction in this report regarding one battalion, namely, the 4th Sikh Infantry, who did not remain stationary guarding the left flank of the advance, as I wrote, but joined throughout in the advance up to the highest peaks of the enemy's position, parallel with the Guides Infantry, having an equally arduous climb with them, and meeting with and carrying many sangars full of the enemy. During this advance Officers and men alike distinguished themselves. In my original report also the enemy at the Malakand Pass were estimated at 12,000 men, of whom 3,000 were said to be armed with fire-arms, but we afterwards ascertained that the number armed with fire-arms was much larger.

4. The following day, 4th April, the 1st Brigade was ordered to descend the Malakand Pass into the Swat Valley, its place on the pass being taken by the 2nd Brigade, while the 3rd Brigade remained on the south side of the Pass, pending the passage of the baggage and supplies of the rest of the force.

5. I may here allude to one of the most extraordinary coincidences within my experience. The height of the pass is about 1,000 feet from the valley below, and the track used by the hill people is most precipitous and goes straight up the hill by short zig-zags, over boulders, and often under protruding crags; and when I saw it on the 3rd April it appeared to be impossible ever

* No. 249-G, dated 9th April, 1895, No. 359-G, dated 13th April, 1895, No. 492-G, dated 24th April, 1895, No. 494-G, dated 24th April, 1895, No. 609-G, dated 1st May, 1895.