

advance of the Force, as it bears considerably on the main object of the expedition,—namely, the relief of Chitral Fort.

Mahomed Sharif Khan, the Khan of Dir, some years ago was dispossessed of the whole of his territory by Umra Khan, and at the time of the mobilisation of the Chitral Relief Force he was a refugee in Upper Swat. On hearing that the Government of India intended to send a force against Umra Khan, he joined me at the front, avowedly with the object of regaining his lost territory and position, but offering his services at the same time,—services which, as will be seen, were afterwards of great importance.

After the action of the 4th April, on the descent from the Malakand Pass to the Swat Valley, the Khan of Dir was sent on in advance across the Laram Pass into Dir territory, with orders to raise his tribes and recapture, if possible, all the forts in Dir territory then held by detachments of Umra Khan's men, and then to push men across the Lowarai Pass to the assistance of the besieged garrison of Chitral.

The delay to the advance of the Force caused by the floods in the Panjkora River, the washing away of the first bridge, and the necessity of building a suspension bridge, have been duly reported in my Despatch of which this is a continuation. At that time it was believed that the garrison of Chitral had food only till the 20th April, and, after the defeat of Umra Khan on the 17th, and his flight, it was clear that, using the utmost exertions, the leading troops could hardly reach Chitral before the 25th, and that the action of the Khan of Dir might have an important effect on the fate of the besieged garrison.

The Khan carried out his instructions most loyally, not only in capturing the different forts in Dir territory, in doing which, it may be said, he acted as much for himself as for us, but also in pushing forward men into the Chitral Valley, which is outside his territory, and which was done entirely in our interests.

He captured the Fort of Dir from Umra Khan's troops on the 12th April, with the loss of sixty of his own men, and he pushed forward men under his brother, who took and occupied the fort of Kila Drosh, the most important fort in the Chitral Valley, on the 18th April. Kila Drosh is two marches south of Chitral Fort, and on the same date Colonel Kelly's troops were two marches north of Chitral Fort, while Brigadier-General Gatacre's brigade had reached Barwa, five marches south of Kila Drosh. The siege of Chitral was raised that night, the garrison finding themselves free on the morning of the 19th April.

It is due to the Khan of Dir that the active part he took should be recognised, since, if he did nothing more, he heralded our arrival in the Chitral Valley.

5. Leaving Dir on the 9th of May, I marched to Chitral and reached it on the 16th. The troops were drawn up to receive me, and in front of them I met the British Agent, Surgeon-Major G. S. Robertson, C.S.I., and the provisional Mehtar, the boy Shujah-ul-Mulk.

The parade was made as impressive as possible, for the Chitralis had never seen British soldiers, and as a matter of fact did not believe that we had any. A portion of the garrison that had defended the fort during the siege, viz., one company of the 14th Sikhs, was in the centre, supported on the right by the Gilgit Field Force, consisting of the 32nd Pioneers and two guns of the Kashmir Mountain Battery, the whole under Lieutenant-Colonel J. G. Kelly, 32nd Pioneers; on the left were the troops of the 3rd Brigade,

viz., the 1st Battalion of "The Buffs," No. 2 (Derajat) Mountain Battery, No. 4 Company, Bengal Sappers and Miners, a detachment of the 2nd Battalion, 4th Gurkha Rifles, and my escort of one company of the Seaforth Highlanders; the whole parade being under the command of Brigadier-General Gatacre, D.S.O. After inspecting the troops, I formed them into three sides of a square and, addressing them, pointed out that the parade was a very remarkable one, in that every man present had received the congratulations of Her Majesty the Queen-Empress; that the gallantry of the besieged garrison of Chitral was the pride and admiration of all their comrades in the army; as was also the determined march of Lieutenant-Colonel Kelly and his troops, who were the first to reach Chitral.

6. Prior to my departure from Chitral, the British Agent heard rumours of disturbances in Kohistan, and asked that the troops of this Force should hold the valley and relieve Lieutenant-Colonel Kelly's troops. This was sanctioned by Government, and Chitral was occupied by the 2nd Battalion, 4th Gurkha Rifles, and the whole line from Chitral to our frontier in India has since been held by the troops of this Force.

7. During the operations of the month of April the troops of the Force under my command advanced from our Indian frontier into Chitral territory, crossing five mountain passes, three of which—the Malakand (2,900 ft.), the Janbatai (7,400 ft.), and the Lowarai (10,200 ft.)—were of the most difficult character; and having also to throw bridges over two large rivers, the Swat and the Panjkora, besides innumerable smaller streams. The tracks across the mountains were so narrow and difficult that it is no exaggeration to say that the troops had to make them passable for baggage animals every yard of the way.

8. During the first advance of the Force the object was speed, and the labour of the troops was spent in making the mountain tracks passable. Since the 1st May the troops have been employed in improving these tracks into roads, over which the transport can work without exhaustion.

From the first the Gwalior and Jeypore transport rendered services which may honestly be described as invaluable at a time of great pressure, when sufficient transport had not yet been collected. They lifted a very large amount of commissariat stores from Nowshera to Dargai. After this, at the request of the General of Communications, they parked their carriages at Nowshera and brought their ponies up to Dir, where they undertook the daily convoy duties, working as pack transport. When no longer required at Dir they returned to the Nowshera-Dargai stage; and, finally, when the Chakdara suspension bridge was completed, they brought their carts over the Malakand Pass and worked between Khar and Sarai. Probably they are the first wheeled transport ever employed on this route. Thus wherever their services were most required they have always been to the front and eager to meet all requirements. The greatest credit is due to Captain Tate, of the Jeypore transport, and to Captain Edwards, of the Gwalior transport; for their thorough efficiency, and the native officers, non-commissioned officers and men deserve all that can be said in their praise, for their willingness and cheery good conduct.

9. The heat in the valleys has been intense during May and June, but posts have been found on or close to the line of communications for the British soldiers of the Force, namely, on the Laram, the Janbatai and Lowarai Passes, where they have had a comparatively cool climate.