

the Commander-in-Chief in India, the accompanying despatch of Major-General Yeatman-Biggs, C.B., on the operations on the Samana from the 9th to the 14th September.

2. These operations seem to have been well planned and carried out. The heroic defence of Saragarhi is, in my opinion, worthy of the highest praise, and I deeply lament the loss of the garrison.

3. I fully endorse the Major-General's commendation on the defence of Fort Gulistan and the behaviour of all ranks. Major Des Vœux proved himself a gallant and skilful leader, and the Major-General's remarks on this officer's conduct appear to be fully deserved.

4. I have much pleasure in recommending for the Order of Merit all the non-commissioned officers and men the Major-General has brought to notice.

From Major-General A. G. Yeatman-Biggs, C.B., Commanding the Kohat Field Force, to the Deputy-Adjutant-General, Punjab—(dated Fort Lockhart, the 21st September, 1897).

I HAVE the honour to report, for the information of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, that news was received by me from reliable sources at Hangu on the 8th instant, to the effect that the Afridis had decided to come and assist the Orakzais in attacks on Hangu and on the Samana posts on Friday, the 10th instant.

Having on the same day received reports that the necessary amount of transport and supplies for putting thirty days' supplies into the Samana posts had been collected, I gave orders to start that night with a column, strength as per margin.* The ammunition supply had, ten days previously, been sent up by me to the Samana, making up the total number of rounds to four hundred per rifle, 36th Sikhs.

Concentrating at Pat Darband at 1.30 A.M. on the 9th instant, the 1-2nd Gurkhas moved up the road as advanced guard, and occupied the plateau on which Dhar is situated, before daylight. At 4 A.M. the remainder of the column started. No enemy were reported in sight, and the road was found too bad for guns. So I sent the cavalry and artillery back to Hangu, and the convoy proceeded up the road, arriving at Fort Lockhart about mid-day.

On the 10th I sent the half-company of the Bombay Sappers and Miners to improve the defences of Gulistan.

At 7.30 P.M. Major Bewicke-Copley reported that he had seen clouds of smoke north of the Sampagha pass, and that the Afridis were coming over the pass.

The distribution of troops on the Samana on the morning of the 11th is given in Appendix "A."

Hearing that the whole of the Afridi *lashkar* had arrived at Karappa during the night, I sent a few scouts of the 1-3rd Gurkhas down the spurs towards the Khanki valley, to ascertain if the information was correct, as Karappa cannot be seen from the Samana plateau. These scouts were supported by the 1-3rd Gurkhas and two companies of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment.

About 10 A.M. large numbers of the enemy could be seen marching down the Khanki valley.

* 4 guns, 9th Field Battery, R.A.; 2 squadrons, 3rd Bengal Cavalry; 1 squadron, 3rd Punjab Cavalry; to Pat Darband only. 4 companies, Royal Irish Regiment, 300; 1-2nd Gurkhas, 500; 1-3rd Gurkhas, 500; 2nd Punjab Infantry, 500; Half company, No. 4 Company, Bombay S. and M.; Section No. 8 British Field Hospital; Section No. 42 Native Field Hospital.

I at once recalled the troops by heliograph. Just before receiving the order to retire the 1-3rd Gurkhas fired a few long range volleys into a party of the enemy, and three were seen to drop. At 1 P.M. Major Bewicke-Copley reported to me from Crag Picquet that 22 standards and about 10,000 men had passed down the valley.

It seemed probable that the tribesmen intended to carry out their threat of attacking Hangu, or perhaps Shahu Khel, a small post guarding the Khanki valley, about four miles north-west of the point where it is crossed by the Kohat-Hangu road.

This post had been reinforced by me with one company of the Royal Irish and 61 rifles of the 15th Sikhs, under command of Major Forster, Royal Irish Regiment.

I ordered the 2nd Punjab Infantry to seize Gogra Hill, supported by the 1-2nd Gurkhas.

The Commandant of the Border Militia Police, Mr. D. Donald, informed me that a large number of the enemy were making for the Darband Kotal, and the officer commanding the 1-2nd Gurkhas reported to me (7 P.M.) that seven standards and a considerable number were retracing their steps up the valley.

A convoy with two days' supplies had been ordered out from Hangu to meet me at the Pat Darband Kotal, where I found them when I advanced with the remainder of the column. The supplies had been sent up on 51 camels, as no mules were available.

The advanced guard and main column halted for the night at 9 P.M., on the hill marked in the accompanying sketch. A few shots were fired at the rear guard from Gogra Hill, and the whole of the *sarwans*, except one, bolted, and the camels, being left without drivers and without nose-strings, stampeded. The rear guard, consisting of a wing of the 1-3rd Gurkhas, under Lieutenant-Colonel Pulley, and two companies of the 1-2nd Gurkhas, under Captain Robinson, withstood several determined attacks, and did their utmost to save the convoy. At midnight I sent out two companies of the 2nd Punjab Infantry, under Lieutenant Elsmie, accompanied by Captain Scudamore, Deputy Assistant Quarter-Master-General, to assist in bringing the camels in. All but two were found to have thrown their loads, so it was useless, and by 2 A.M. the rear guard had taken up the position assigned to them in the bivouac. The enemy consisted of Sheikhs, Mishtis, Mallakhels and Alikhels, and they admit to their losses being over 100 killed and wounded. A leading *malik* of the Sheikhs was wounded, and five leading Mallakhels killed.

When morning broke (12th), I sent out Colonel Lawrence, Royal Irish Regiment, with two companies of his battalion and five companies of each of the remaining corps, to endeavour to recover the camels and stores, but only thirteen camels were recovered, and of these only two had loads. The Royal Irish fired long range volleys to keep the tribesmen at a respectful distance. On the return of Colonel Lawrence's reconnaissance, I set the column once more in motion towards Lakka, as being the best position from which both Hangu and Shahu Khel could be protected. I arrived there at 1 P.M., but finding no water, and having lost our food, I issued orders to commence the march to Hangu at 3 P.M. At 3.30 P.M. I received a message by helio. from Fort Lockhart that Saragarhi was hard pressed, and at 4.30 P.M. it was helioed that Saragarhi had fallen, and that Gulistan was hard pressed.

Four riflemen of the 1-2nd Gurkhas who had been reported missing the previous evening,