



The London Gazette.

Published by Authority.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1898.

War Office, December 9, 1898.

A DESPATCH, of which the following is a copy, has been received by the Secretary of State for War from Major-General Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, G.C.B., K.C.M.G., Sirdar of the Egyptian Army :—

SIR,

December 6, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to report on the operations in the Soudan subsequent to the defeat of the Khalifa at Omdurman.

Information having been received that Ahmed Fedil with a force of 3,000 rifles had marched out of Gedarif, leaving only a weak garrison there, and that he was moving down the Blue Nile to support the Khalifa at Omdurman, Lieutenant-Colonel Parsons was directed to advance with the Kassala Garrison and occupy Gedarif.

In pursuance of these orders, on the 7th September, Lieutenant-Colonel Parsons left Kassala with a force consisting of—

The 16th Egyptian Battalion,
The Arab Battalion,
The Camel Corps,
The Arab Levies,

in all about 1,400 men.

The passage of the troops over the Atbara River in flood, considering the means at Lieutenant-Colonel Parsons' disposal, was carried out under Major Lawson, Royal Engineers, with great skill and ability.

On the 17th September this force left El Fashr, and marching up the left bank of the Atbara, met the Dervish garrison, consisting of 1,500 riflemen and about 1,700 spearmen, at 9 A.M. on September 22nd, two miles north of the town of Gedarif.

In the action that ensued the Dervishes made two determined attacks on the Egyptian Forces. The first was delivered against the left front of the column, consisting of the Arab Battalion, the 16th Egyptian Battalion, and the Arab Irregulars. These troops were at once deployed to the left, and repulsed the Dervish assault with heavy loss. The second attack was directed against the baggage column in rear, by a considerable body of Dervishes, who had moved under cover of a hill round the left flank of the Egyptian Force. The escort to the baggage column, consisting of the Arab Levies and a detachment of the Camel Corps, under Captain C. C. Fleming, Royal Army Medical Corps, found themselves heavily engaged by greatly superior numbers, and it was chiefly owing to the valour of the detachment of the Camel Corps, under Captain the Honourable

A. G. A. Hore-Ruthven, 3rd Battalion Highland Light Infantry, and the prompt assistance rendered by the 16th Egyptian Battalion, under Captain A. de S. McKerrell, Cameron Highlanders, that this attack was defeated.

Lieutenant-Colonel Parsons advanced and occupied Gedarif at mid-day, the Emir Mir Angara and 150 Dervishes with 2 guns, surrendering to the troops.

Our losses in action during the day were 53 killed and 61 wounded.

Lieutenant-Colonel Parsons and his force deserve great credit for the excellent manner in which the difficult march of 107 miles from Kassala to Gedarif was accomplished, and for the gallant way in which they defeated a considerably superior force of the enemy in the field.

Lieutenant-Colonel Parsons speaks highly of the way in which Major Lawson, Royal Engineers, commanded the irregulars, Captain McKerrell, the 16th Battalion, and Captain Wilkinson, the Arab Battalion, and also of the services of Captain Fleming, Royal Army Medical Corps, in charge of the medical arrangements and baggage guard.

Meanwhile the gunboats patrolling the Blue Nile after the battle of Khartoum, had met Ahmed Fedil's army advancing on the right bank, and had shelled them, the result being that Fedil's force retired again to Gedarif.

On September 19 Major-General A. Hunter proceeded up the Blue Nile in command of a force consisting of 2 Maxims and 20 men of the Royal Irish Fusiliers under Captain (now Brevet Major) D. Churcher, and 600 men of the 10th Soudanese Battalion. He established posts at Sennar, Karkoj, and Rosaires, and confirmed the report that Ahmed Fedil refused all offers of peaceful surrender, and was returning to Gedarif.

On receipt of this information I directed a force under Major-General Rundle to proceed up the Blue Nile, to attack Ahmed Fedil in rear, and to reinforce Lieutenant-Colonel Parsons at Gedarif.

Prior, however, to the arrival of this force at Abu Haraz, on the Blue Nile, Ahmed Fedil had attacked Gedarif on September 28, and was driven off by the Egyptian Garrison with considerable loss. The Dervishes, however, took up a position 8 miles south-west of Gedarif, from which they were able to harass the garrison, and being in greatly superior numbers it was not thought advisable to attack them.

Major-General Rundle, on arriving at Abu Haraz, therefore, was directed to detach a force under Lieutenant-Colonel J. Collinson to proceed