

2. Owing to water and transport difficulties on the Lines of Communication between Obbia and Galkayu, the Main Column, under Lieutenant-Colonel Fasken, 2nd Sikhs, was delayed on arrival at Dibit for five days, and did not reach Galkayu until the morning of the 24th March.

3. I had in the meanwhile, ordered 300 of the 2nd Battalion King's African Rifles, two guns of the Camel Battery, and 50 men of the Somali Mounted Infantry, to cross from Damot to Galkayu. This force arrived on the evening of the 24th March, having marched 105 miles in four days, a fine performance. I have already telegraphed my reasons for this move. The Lines of Communication from Obbia to this place now cover 230 miles, and it is necessary to hold the water on this route, and to store it carefully for consumption by convoys passing through.

4. I regret to report that great mortality has occurred amongst the camel transport.

The camels brought round to Obbia from Berbera suffered considerably, owing to the impossibility of landing them immediately on their arrival, since a heavy sea was running for some days subsequent to the arrival of the transport. The camels, though given 10 days' rest and grazing, have never entirely recovered, and the mortality among them has been very great. Grazing at this time of the year is almost non-existent, the whole country being dried up.

This loss of camels has hampered the transport of rations, &c., on the Lines of Communication, and has compelled me to keep back about 100 Mounted Infantry, 50 Bikanir Camel Corps, and the Mountain Battery Section, on the Lines of Communication between Dibit and Obbia.

I have received 800 camels from the Berbera—Bokotle Force, and I have asked for a further 1,000. The receipt of these camels should improve matters.

The Somali camel is alone fitted for transport work in this country. Indian or Egyptian camels require water every third day, and this is usually impossible to obtain.

5. I have sent 80 Bikanir Camel Corps to Damot, since their rations are a heavy strain on the Supply Department.

The force crossing from Damot brought its own supplies with it.

6. On the arrival of the Main Column I marched to Bera on the 26th March. (This place had been occupied as an advanced post on the 19th March.)

The force with which I advanced was composed as under:—

	Rank and File.
Mounted Infantry	284
Sappers and Miners	20
2nd Sikhs	278
1st Battalion King's African Rifles	149
2nd Battalion King's African Rifles	300
5th Battalion King's African Rifles	50
Total	1,081 rifles.

I was compelled to halt a day at Bera in order to allow the camels, which had arrived from Damot, to rest and graze.

7. On the evening of the 27th a force of 240 Mounted Infantry, under the command of Major Kenna, started from Bera, with orders to push through to Dudub; but, if unable to advance without being seriously engaged, Major Kenna was directed to fall back on the Infantry Column, which was to leave on the morning of the 28th.

I had expected to encounter severe opposition in the thick belt of bush between Bera and Dudub,

and although the Mounted Infantry would probably be able to push through by night, I considered it likely that our large camel convoy would be attacked.

8. I picked up at Bera the detachment of 2nd Sikhs, which had been holding that place since the 19th March, and, after leaving a garrison there of 50 of the 5th Battalion King's African Rifles, and 50 of the 2nd Battalion King's African Rifles, I marched out on the morning of the 28th with a force composed as under:—

	Rank and File.
Sappers and Miners	20
2nd Sikhs	448
1st Battalion King's African Rifles	149
2nd Battalion King's African Rifles	250
Total	867 rifles.

9. The country, for the first 18 miles out of Bera, consists of extremely thick bush growing on a stony and loose sandy soil, and the marching was in consequence very difficult.

The open country beyond the bush was reached on the evening of the 28th March, and the column halted on an open grass plain 19 miles from Bera.

10. I had directed Major Kenna to send me back information as to the distance to Dudub, and the extent of the water supply. This information I had hoped would reach me on the night of the 28th March, but owing to the distance to Dudub being 44 miles, or considerably farther than was expected, Major Kenna was unable to communicate with me until noon on the 29th.

In view, therefore, of the uncertainty of the water supply ahead, I decided, on the early morning of the 29th March, to reduce the force with which I proposed to advance to Galadi, by sending back 338 of the 2nd Sikhs to Bera and Galkayu.

This decision reduced my Infantry to 529 men, a number which I considered to be sufficient to enable me to reach Dudub; the road onwards being reported to be through open country.

11. I had left Bera, carrying 6 days' water for the whole force. This reduction in my strength gave me, therefore, another day's water, besides allowing a large margin for loss of water from various causes, the chief of which are leakage and evaporation.

With this increase to my water supply, I had no anxiety as to water difficulties, even if Dudub and Galadi proved to be watering places incapable of providing for the wants of my reduced force.

12. The number of 2nd Sikhs mentioned above returned to Bera, for Galkayu, on the morning of the 29th, and I continued my march towards Dudub, accomplishing 17 miles on that day.

At noon I received a letter from Major Kenna, stating that he had occupied Dudub without opposition on the evening of the 28th, and had captured a few prisoners and camels.

On the evening of the same day I received a letter from Major Kenna, to the effect that information obtained from prisoners led him to believe that a small force of the Mullah was holding Galadi wells, and that he proposed pushing through to Galadi on the night of the 29th, and securing the water supply of that place.

13. On the morning of the 30th March I reached Dudub, distance eight miles, the total distance from Bera being 44 miles.