

He arrived about noon with all his transport intact, his retirement from Gumburu having been unmolested.

13. I at once proceeded to return to my camp of the 18th, sending on all transport animals ahead, and covering them with a strong rearguard of Mounted Infantry and Infantry.

I arrived at the camp of the 18th instant at sundown on the 19th instant, and Galadi at sundown on the 20th instant.

14. The camels of Lieutenant-Colonel Cobbe's reconnaissance were very weak, having had little or no grazing for 10 days, and no water for that time, but nevertheless reached Galadi. Had this force been in possession of Indian camels every camel would have died, and the retirement would have been impossible without the loss of all the baggage.

15. From the narrative of survivors of the action, it is evident that the enemy was in overwhelming numbers, and that he fought with a fanatical bravery that he has never displayed before.

It is also evident that the Somalis alone were not engaged in this action, but that Adones from the Webi Shebelle were for the most part employed.

This information has since been confirmed by a telegram I have received from Colonel Rochfort, who states that the Mullah had with him 1,900 Adones.

I had heard from prisoners that the Mullah had with him a number of men who were described to me as "men who would come right up to the troops and take their rifles from their hands."

16. From the report of Lieutenant-Colonel Cobbe it is evident that disobedience of orders on the part of Lieutenant-Colonel Plunkett, in pushing on to get into contact with the enemy, resulted in an action occurring, in which a small force has been annihilated. Had Lieutenant-Colonel Plunkett contented himself with bringing in Captain Olivey's company, I should have been able to reach Lieutenant-Colonel Cobbe on the 19th with reinforcements, when the enemy would either have retired or would have engaged me with probably different results.

17. Lieutenant-Colonel Plunkett has paid the penalty of his life for his disobedience of orders, and he, together with all those who were killed at Gumburu, fought with the greatest gallantry in endeavouring to retrieve the day, but were overwhelmed by numbers.

18. The service ammunition, with the present rifle, has little stopping power, and, in a fanatical rush of savages, a heavier bullet, or one with greater stopping power, is very requisite.

19. I deeply regret the loss of life which had occurred. I consider that Lieutenant-Colonel Cobbe acted in the best manner that he could in the circumstances.

Lieutenant Colonel Plunkett had marched so far from the zariba in order to come up with the enemy, that to have sent out more men to him in time to assist him would have been impossible, and moreover would have so weakened the garrison of the zariba as to render it liable to be taken by the enemy; and such a reinforcement would have been, in all probability, attacked and overwhelmed on its way.

20. After the withdrawal to Galadi, a further immediate advance on Wardair or Walwal was now impracticable. The delay caused by the events at Gumburu had in any case too far reduced my available rations and transport, while the knowledge gained of the country to be traversed and of the military spirit of the enemy, would

have necessitated a larger force than I had available at Galadi.

I therefore decided to drop back the bulk of my force to Galkayu and Bera, and to employ every available camel on the rolling up of the Obbia base.

In order that this movement should be completed without hostile interference, and for the following reasons, I decided to hold Galadi and Dudub with sufficiently strong garrisons.

By so doing I should cover the rolling up of the base, and the Bohotle—Galkayu route, and, in addition, should the Abyssinians come up with and inflict a defeat on the Mullah, I should be able to prevent the latter from falling back on Galadi.

21. I consequently left a garrison of 370 men, under Lieutenant-Colonel Cobbe, in Galadi, and 800 men, under Captain Phillips, in Dudub, with a month's rations, and withdrew the rest of my force to Bera and Galkayu, the troops arriving there between the 25th and 27th instant.

I do not think that the enemy will attempt to attack either of the advanced posts, since I believe that the severe punishment which he received in the action of the 17th will prevent his taking the offensive for some time.

In any case the posts are sufficiently strong to prevent any anxiety being felt as to their safety.

22. I have in my telegram, No. 121 of 27th instant, reported very fully on the situation, and have little to add thereto. For reasons which I have therein given, I am of opinion that the force must be withdrawn across the Haud to Bohotle during the next two months, and I have given my views, for your decision, as to the retention of a garrison in the Mudug.

23. The possibility of further operations at a later date depends entirely on the capacity of the Protectorate to raise a sufficient number of camels, and on the position of the Mullah at that time.

I am telegraphing to Colonel Swann and Cordeaux, as to the possibility or advisability of making extensive forced requisitions of camels on payment, and as to the measure of success which is likely to be obtained.

24. In any case I fear that some time will elapse before the necessary transport could be collected, but if by that time the Mullah is still in his position, the reoccupation of the places which we now hold will not be a difficult matter, with the knowledge which we possess of the country and the water supply.

25. In the meanwhile I am hoping that, before it becomes necessary to withdraw the garrisons of Dudub and Galadi, the Abyssinians will have been able to drive the Mullah from his present positions.

In such a case I expect to see an immediate débacle of the Ali Gheri and Dulbhanta, who will be driven by stress of water on to Bohotle or Galkayu.

I should then be able to deal with those tribes, and to obtain a large number of transport animals. In such a case the whole situation as regards this force would be changed.

26. There is, however, another situation to be considered, viz., that the Mullah may signally defeat the Abyssinians. As far as we ourselves are concerned, I do not consider that the situation will be very different to what it is at present. We may expect that the Bohotle—Galkayu route may be visited by a certain number of horsemen, and escorts must therefore be strong, but so long as Galadi and Dudub are held, no considerable body of the enemy will penetrate so far east.