

In the afternoon I sent the Somali Mounted Infantry, under Lieutenant Chichester, to the front, with orders to go about 10 miles before dark, and marched myself by moonlight until I reached them. Lieutenant Chichester reported that about 7 of the enemy's horsemen had been seen, but that, seeing our men, they had galloped off; the scouts whom I had sent to Gumburu also reported that they had fired on the enemy's scouts.

I halted here and sent on eight Somali Mounted Infantry with about 12 foot scouts, to go through the night and examine the road; the scouts were ordered to wait and report to me at daylight, while the Mounted Infantry scouted further to the front.

I started at 4 A.M. on the 13th and marched 10 miles, being met at various points by my scouts, who reported that the road was clear, and that the tracks of the enemy's horsemen led away to the west. As the guide appeared to be doubtful whether we were on the right road to Wardair or not, I recalled my scouts from the road leading west, and sent five mounted men out to the north-west to look for another road further north. They returned and reported that, after passing through thick bush, they had found a path which seemed to be much less used than the one on which I was marching, I therefore decided to keep on the same road.

The British and Burgher Mounted Infantry,* under Captain Snakerley, joined me at the mid-day halt, and, before marching, I sent back 70 camels with empty water tins under an escort. I reported that I was extremely doubtful of the road, and that I was about 49 miles west of Galadi, but that I should go on till mid-day on the next day, and then, if I had found out nothing definite about the road to Wardair and the wells, I should have to return, as I could not afford to go further with the water which I had.

On the afternoon of the 13th, I sent on all the Mounted Infantry in front, with orders to go about eight miles along the road, which would enable me to march by moonlight. I started at 5 P.M., with the Infantry, but shortly after starting, not seeing the tracks of the Mounted Infantry on the road, I suspected that they had been guided by the Somali Mounted Infantry on to the northern road, which the Somalis had previously reconnoitred. I sent two camel sowars to follow their tracks and recall them, who returned without finding their tracks.

As I was now in thick bush, and had no scouts ahead, I halted before dark, after 4 miles, and made a zariba. Three scouts were sent back to the afternoon camp, to follow on the tracks of the Mounted Infantry, with a letter recalling them to me. These did not reach the Mounted Infantry till 7 A.M.

At 4 A.M., on the 14th instant, I sent my remaining scouts a short distance ahead, but did not march myself until daylight, at 6 A.M. I advanced shortly, and as the bush grew thicker and the paths dispersed, I decided that I could do no more by mid-day, and so ordered the column to retire.

After retiring for about a mile and a half, the new advanced guard was fired into by the enemy's horsemen. I was able to collect most of the transport into the zariba, but some stampeded, and the two companies in front dispersed the horsemen, who, however, continued to hang about till the Mounted Infantry, hearing our guns, came up and chased them away.

* British Mounted Infantry—2 Officers, 21 non-commissioned officers and men. Burgher Mounted Infantry—1 Officer, 22 non-commissioned officers and men.

I continued the retirement to a place north of Gumburu hill, about 42 miles from Galadi, and sent back a letter saying that I proposed to leave a post there, and to return myself to Galadi. This letter I sent by two Somali Mounted Infantry, who returned saying they had met seven of the enemy. I then sent it by 10 British Mounted Infantry. During the night I sent out my scouts to watch the bush for the enemy's scouts; in the morning they fired at, and dispersed, some of the enemy's horsemen, who had galloped up to them unawares. I decided, on the morning of the 15th, to rest the men, who had had a trying time. During the morning it rained hard for 1 hour, and, sending men out, I found some pools, where I filled up empty tanks and watered the horses, and I decided not to march. I received a letter informing me that a convoy was on its way to Gumburu.

On the morning of the 16th, I sent out half a company to the west, under Captain Morris, and half a company, under Captain Luard, to the W.S.W., to reconnoitre for the enemy, and to look for water; also a mounted patrol to the north to look for the northern road and water, and scouts to S.S.E., who returned and reported water.

I sent out a strong escort, with camels and empty tins, and obtained some water. The patrols came back from the north later, and reported that they had gone out seven miles, but had seen no water or signs of the enemy.

In the morning firing was heard from the direction of Captain Luard's party, and Captain Morris reported the enemy in front, but that they retired and advanced in accordance with his movements. I sent out the Mounted Infantry to him, and when they reached him they saw no enemy, and Captain Morris showed them the direction Captain Luard had taken, whence firing had been heard. They went in that direction, but saw no enemy, and came on some of Captain Luard's men sent back by him with a note, in which he said that he had been fired on by the enemy's mounted patrols, but had chased them and killed three ponies, captured a rifle, wounded some of them, and was following them, but would be back by 10 A.M. Captain Morris returned and reported that he had seen the enemy's scouts again since the Mounted Infantry had left him, so I sent half a company to follow Captain Luard's tracks and reinforce him should it be necessary. I also sent the Mounted Infantry out to occupy the enemy on the west.

I sent in a report of what I was doing, also expressing an opinion that the enemy were collected in the thick bush about 10 to 12 miles distant, where I had been attacked by the horsemen on the 14th, and were sending out scouts towards us; also stating that I wished to hold my post with all my force until the arrival of the main column if my water would last. I also sent a letter to Officer commanding convoy to march straight in.

As this letter was leaving I heard firing from the Mounted Infantry, and a messenger came in asking for reinforcements, which I sent out. Very shortly afterwards I received another letter from Captain Snakerley saying that Captain Luard, hearing the firing, had come up on the flank of the enemy, who had galloped off.

Convoy, under Captain Vesey,* came in, bringing back my letter, and I added to it another letter, giving the casualties in the Mounted Infantry, *i.e.*, Lieutenant Chichester, killed;

* 2nd Sikhs.—1 British Officer, 48 N.F.R.