



The London Gazette

EXTRAORDINARY.

Published by Authority.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1855.

Foreign-Office, November 10, 1855.

THE Earl of Clarendon has received a Despatch from Major-General Williams, Her Majesty's Commissioner with the Turkish Army in Asia, of which the following is a copy:—

Kars, October 3, 1855.

MY LORD,

I HAD the honour to announce to your Lordship, on the evening of the 29th ultimo, the glorious victory gained on the morning of that day by the Sultan's troops on the heights above Kars, over the Russian army commanded by General Muravieff, and I now beg to furnish your Lordship with the principal incidents of that sanguinary battle.

Your Lordship will perhaps recollect, that in my despatch No. 123, of the 28th of June, I stated that the Russian General, after his second demonstration against the southern face of our entrenchments, which is flanked by Hafiz Pasha Tabia and Kanli Tabia, marched south, and established his camp at Bugah Tikmé, a village situated about four miles from Kars. Knowing that General Muravieff served in the army which took Kars in 1828, I conceived his last manœuvre to be preparatory either to a reconnaissance, or an attack upon the heights of Tahmasb, from whence the Russians successfully pushed their approaches in the year above cited.

Whilst, therefore, the enemy's columns were in march towards Bugah Tikmé, I visited those heights with Lieutenant-Colonel Lake, and after studying the ground decided upon the nature of the works to be thrown up; these were planned and executed by Lieutenant-Colonel Lake with great skill and energy. I enclose for your Lordship's information a plan made by that officer of the town and its neighbouring heights, which are situated on the opposite side of the river of Kars Chai, over which

three temporary bridges had been thrown to keep up our communications. As all verbal descriptions, or bird's-eye views, of ground convey but an imperfect idea of any locality, I beg to enclose a sketch made by Mr. Churchill, which will, I trust, tend to elucidate my description.

Your Lordship will observe that whilst our camp and magazines in the town were rendered as safe as circumstances would allow, the hills above Kars commanded all, and were, therefore, the keys of our position.

The intrenchments of Tahmasb, being those nearest the enemy's camp, demanded the greatest vigilance from all entrusted in their defence; General Kmety, a gallant Hungarian officer, commanded the division which occupied this eminence, he was assisted by Major-General Hussein Pacha and my aide-de-camp, Major Teesdale, who has acted as his Chief of the Staff.

Throughout the investment, which has now lasted four months, the troops in all the redoubts and intrenchments have kept a vigilant lookout during the night, and, at their appointed stations, stood to their arms long before day dawn. In my despatch, No. 155, of the 29th ultimo, I informed your Lordship of the arrival of the news of the fall of Sebastopol, and of the landing of Omar Pacha at Batoom. I also acquainted your Lordship with the fact that the Russian General was engaged in sending off immense trains of heavy baggage into Georgia, and showing every indication of a speedy retreat; this in no wise threw us off our guard, and Lieutenant-Colonel Lake was directed to strengthen many points in our extensive and undermanned lines, and amongst other works the tabia bearing my name was constructed.

At four o'clock on the eventful morning of the 29th the enemy's columns were reported to be advancing on the Tahmasb front. They were three in number, supported by 24 guns; the first or right column being directed on Tahmasb Tabia,

the second on Yuksek Tabia, and the third on the breastwork called Rennison Lines. As soon as the first gun announced the approach of the enemy the reserves were put under arms in a central position, from which succours could be despatched either to Tahmasb or the English lines:

The mist and imperfect light of the dawning day induced the enemy to believe that he was about to surprise us, he advanced with his usual steadiness and intrepidity; but on getting within range he was saluted with a crushing fire of artillery from all points of the line. This unexpected reception, however, only drew forth loud hurrahs from the Russian infantry as it rushed up the hill on the redoubts and breastworks. These works poured forth a fire of musketry and rifles, which told with fearful effects on the close columns of attack, more especially on the left one, which, being opposed by a battalion of 450 Chasseurs, armed with Minié rifles, was, after long and desperate fighting, completely broken, and sent headlong down the hill, leaving 850 dead on the field, besides those carried off by their comrades.

The central column precipitated itself on the redoubts of Tahmasb and Yuksek Tabias, where desperate fighting occurred and lasted for several hours, the enemy being repulsed in all his attempts to enter the closed redoubts, which mutually flanked each other with their artillery and musketry, and made terrible havoc in the ranks of the assailants; and it was here that Generals Kmety and Hussein Pacha, together with Major Teesdale, so conspicuously displayed their courage and conduct. Lieutenant-General Kereen Pasha also repaired to the scene of desperate strife to encourage the troops, and was wounded in the shoulder, and had two horses killed under him.

The right column of the Russian infantry, supported by a battery, eventually turned the left flank of the intrenched wing of the Tahmasb defences, and whilst the Russian battery opened in the rear of the closed redoubt at its salient angle, their infantry penetrated considerably behind our position.

Observing the commencement of this movement, and anticipating its consequences, Lieutenant-Colonel Lake, who had taken the direction of affairs in the English Tabias, was instructed to send a battalion from Fort Lake to the assistance of the defenders of Tahmasb, and at the same time two battalions of the reserves were moved across the flying bridge and upon the rocky height of Laz Jeppé Tabia. These three reinforcing columns met each other at that point, and being hidden from the enemy by the rocky nature of the ground, confronted him at a most opportune moment; they deployed, opened their fire, which stopped and soon drove back the enemy's reserves, which were then vigorously charged with the bayonet, at the same moment when General Kmety and Major Teesdale issued from the redoubts at Tahmasb and charged the assailants. The whole of that portion of the enemy's infantry and artillery now broke and fled down the heights under a murderous fire of musketry; this occurred at half past eleven, after a combat of seven hours.

In this part of the field the enemy had, including his reserves, 22 battalions of infantry, a large force of dragoons and cossacks, together with 32 guns.

Whilst this struggle, which I have attempted to describe, was occurring at Tahmasb, a most severe

combat was going on at the eastern position of the line, called the English Tabias.

About half-past five o'clock, A.M., a Russian column, consisting of 8 battalions of infantry, 3 regiments of cavalry, and 16 guns, advanced from the valley of Tehakmak, and assaulted those small redoubts, which after as stout a resistance as their unavoidably feeble garrisons could oppose, fell into their hands, together with the connecting breastworks, defended by townsmen and mountaineers from Lazistan, whose clannish flags, according to their custom, were planted before them on the epaulments, and, consequently, fell into the enemy's hands; but ere the firing had begun in this portion of the field, Captain Thompson had received orders to send a battalion of infantry from each of the heights of Karadagh and Arap Tabia to reinforce the English lines. This reinforcement descended the deep gully through which flows the Kars River, passed a bridge, recently thrown across it, and ascended the opposite precipitous bank by a zigzag path which led into the line of works, named by the Turks, Ingliz Tabias (the English Batteries). Their arrival was as opportune as that of the reserves directed towards Tahmasb, which I have had the honour to describe in the former part of this despatch; these battalions, joined to those directed by Lieutenant-Colonel Lake, gallantly attacked and drove the Russians out of the redoubts at the point of the bayonet, after the artillery of the enemy had been driven from those lines by the cross fire directed from Fort Lake and from Arab Tabia and Karadagh, by Captain Thompson. This officer deserves my best thanks for having seized a favourable moment to remove a heavy gun from the eastern to the western extremity of Karadagh, and with it inflicted severe loss on the enemy.

After the Russian infantry was driven from the English redoubts, the whole of their attacking force of cavalry, artillery, and infantry retreated with precipitation, plied with round shot from all the batteries bearing on their columns. During their temporary success, however, the enemy captured two of our light guns, which the mortality amongst our horses from famine prevented our withdrawing from their advanced positions. He also carried off his wounded, and many of his dead; yet he left 363 of the latter within and in front of these intrenchments; and his retreat occurred at least an hour before the assailants of Tahmasb were put to flight.

During this combat, which lasted nearly seven hours, the Turkish infantry, as well as artillery, fought with the most determined courage; and when it is recollected that they had worked on their entrenchments, and guarded them by night throughout a period extending to nearly four months, I think your Lordship will admit that they have proved themselves worthy of the admiration of Europe, and established an undoubted claim to be placed amongst the most distinguished of its troops.

With regard to the enemy, as long as there was a chance of success he persevered with undaunted courage, and the Russian officers displayed the greatest gallantry. Their loss was immense; they left on the field more than 5,000 dead, which it took the Turkish infantry four days to bury. Their wounded and prisoners in our possession amount to 160, whilst those who were carried off are said to be upwards of 7,000.

As the garrison was afflicted with cholera, and I was apprehensive of a great increase of the

malady, should this melancholy duty of the burial of the dead be not pushed forward with every possible vigour by our fatigued and jaded soldiers, I daily visited the scene of strife to encourage them in their almost endless task; and I can assure your Lordship that the whole battle-field presented a scene which is more easy to conceive than to describe, being literally covered with the enemy's dead and dying.

The Turkish dead and wounded were removed on the night of the battle. The dead numbered

362, the wounded 631. The town's people, who also fought with spirit, lost 101 men.

His Excellency the Mushir has reported to his Government those officers who particularly distinguished themselves; a difficult task in an army which has shown such desperate valour throughout the unusual period of seven hours of uninterrupted combat.

I have, &c.

(Signed) W. F. WILLIAMS.

The Earl Clarendon, &c.

