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India Office, February 4, 1879.

THE following Despatch has been received at the India Office:—

Fort William, the 31st December, 1878.

SPECIAL.

No. 1226.—The Right Honourable the Governor-General in Council has much pleasure in directing the publication of the following despatch received from Major-General Roberts, C.B., V.C., Commanding the Kurum Valley Field Force, announcing the capture of the Peiwar Kotal heights on the 2nd December, 1878, and the complete defeat of the Ameer's troops defending the position.

The Right Honourable the Governor-General in Council heartily congratulates the force on the signal success which has attended their efforts, and offers his best thanks to the officers and men of all ranks, British and Native, not only for their conduct in action, but also for the excellent spirit displayed by them under exposure to extreme cold and fatigue.

From Major-General F. S. Roberts, C.B., V.C., R.A., Commanding the Kurum Column, to the Quartermaster-General in India.—(Dated Camp Zabardast Kila, the 5th December, 1878).

In continuation of my telegram of the 3rd instant, I have now the honour to submit, for the information of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief and of the Government of India, a detailed account of the military operations which have led to the capture of the Peiwar Pass by the troops under my command.

2. The force detailed in the margin,* marching by separate roads in two brigades, arrived at Habib-kila about 10 a.m. on the 28th instant. Here I received information that the enemy was flying in confusion up the eastern side of the Peiwar Kotal, and that, owing to the difficulties of the road, they had already abandoned twelve guns.

* **RIGHT COLUMN.**—Brigadier-General Thelwall, C.B.; Squadron 12th Bengal Cavalry; 2 Guns No. 1 Mountain Battery; 5th Goorkhas; 72nd Highlanders (Wing); 2nd Punjab Infantry; 2 Guns F-A, Royal Horse Artillery, on elephants.

LEFT COLUMN.—Brigadier-General Cobbe; Squadron 12th Bengal Cavalry; 2 Guns No. 1 Mountain Battery; 2-8th Foot; 5th Punjab Infantry; 23rd Pioneers; 29th Punjab Native Infantry; 2 Guns F-A, Royal Horse Artillery on elephants.

3. I therefore passed a reconnaissance* in force up the south-eastern flanks of the Peiwar, which elicited the fact that, so far from the enemy having abandoned any guns, they had taken up an extremely strong position on the Pass, and that they were well provided with artillery judiciously placed. I had ordered the camp to be marked out on some dry rice fields, about 2,500 yards from the enemy's position, but as they pitched some shells into the middle of this ground it was abandoned, and the camp removed to a more secure site.

4. This reconnaissance was not accomplished without loss; and I have to regret the occurrence of the following casualties:—

29th Punjab Native Infantry—One officer (Lieutenant Reid) severely wounded. Four sepoy wounded (one severely).

5th Punjab Infantry—Subadar-Major Aziz Khan severely wounded; 3 sepoy slightly wounded.

No. 1 Mountain Battery—1 driver killed; 1 mule wounded.

5th Goorkhas—1 sepoy dangerously wounded.

5. By the evening of this day I had seen sufficient of the enemy's position to convince me that it could not be carried by an attack in front without incurring very heavy loss.

6. I resolved therefore to halt for a few days: first, with the view of recruiting the men's strength, which had been severely taxed by several days' continuous marching over extremely difficult roads, and secondly, to gain time to ascertain by reconnoitring whether the position could not be turned, or failing that, in what manner it could be most easily attacked in front.

7. It will be convenient for me here to give a short and necessarily imperfect description of the Peiwar Kotal position. I have issued instructions for detailed topographical reports to be prepared; but as these will necessarily take some time to complete, a written description will be better than none.

8. The enemy's position extended from the Spin Gawai Kotal, on their left, to some commanding heights about a mile south of the Peiwar Kotal. It thus had a front of about four miles facing due east, the Peiwar Kotal being about the enemy's right centre. From right to left the position ran along a lofty and rugged range of mountains, mostly covered with dense pine forests. The range was precipitous towards the

* No. 1 Mountain Battery, 2-8th Foot, 29th Punjab Native Infantry, 5th Punjab Infantry, 23rd Pioneers, subsequently reinforced by 5th Goorkhas.