

I had intended to halt the column for an hour or two during the night to rest the men; but owing to the slowness of our progress, and to the distance being greater than was anticipated, the intention had to be abandoned.

20. At a little before six o'clock on the morning of the 2nd December, the head of the column reached the foot of the Spin Gawai Kotal. Day was just breaking; and as the enemy had neglected to place a picquet down the bed of the nullah, our approach had so far been unobserved.

21. At this moment, two shots from the enemy's look-out sentries alarmed his picquet on the Kotal. The advanced party of the 5th Goorkhas immediately formed up from column of fours into a company line, and, led by Major Fitzhugh and Captain Cook, rushed straight at a barricade which now became apparent about 50 yards in their front. The remainder of the regiment extended and swarmed round the flanks of the obstacle, which was carried in very brilliant style, the enemy firing a volley into the Goorkhas as they came up, and being nearly all killed at their posts.

22. At this time the enemy's guns from the stockades or *sungas* just above us commenced firing shells into our column, but without doing much damage.

23. The Goorkhas and 72nd Highlanders continued to advance rapidly up the steep side of the Kotal, and captured three stockades in quick succession, the enemy defending them in a very obstinate manner, and being mostly killed by the bayonet as our men jumped over the barricades.

24. No. 1 Mountain Battery was of the greatest assistance during this advance, and the guns were fought in the most determined manner, well up in the advanced line. Its gallant commander, Captain Kelso, was shot through the head whilst bringing his guns into action, just beyond the first stockade.

25. I brought up the remainder of the 72nd Highlanders as soon as the firing commenced, and I cannot praise too highly the gallant conduct of this splendid regiment, and the brilliant style in which the men were led by Lieutenant-Colonel Brownlow and the other officers of the corps.

26. Of the admirable conduct of the 5th Goorkhas, I have already spoken. They were not one whit behind their bretheren of the 72nd in their eager desire to close with the enemy.

27. The 29th Punjab Native Infantry acted as a support throughout this advance, and successfully repelled an attempted attack by the enemy on our right flank.

28. By half past six o'clock the whole of the Spin Gawai barricades and stockades were in our possession, and the line of the enemy's defence was completely turned.

29. At half past seven o'clock Captain Wynne established communication with Brigadier-General Cobbe by visual signalling, when I informed him of our progress and instructed him to co-operate vigorously from below in attacking the Kotal.

30. The 23rd Pioneers and 2nd Punjab Infantry having now come up, I continued to press the enemy and hoped to have taken the Peiwar Kotal by a direct advance upon its left flank.

31. But in this I was disappointed, for we found the enemy very numerous in our front, and our progress was slow, owing to the densely wooded hills through which the line of our advance lay, and the determined resistance which we met. During this period of the engagement the fire of the four guns of F-A, Royal Horse Artillery, which had been brought

up on elephants, was found very effective. They were brought into action with great judgment by Colonel Stirling commanding the battery.

32. About noon, under the direction of Colonel Perkins, R.E., Commanding Engineer, two guns of No. 1 Mountain Battery gained a position from which they could see the enemy's camp at Peiwar Kotal. This was shelled with such success that the tents were set on fire, and a regular flight of the enemy from its neighbourhood was witnessed.

33. Having ascertained, at one o'clock, from a reconnoissance, that the Peiwar Kotal was practically inaccessible from the northern side, on which I was operating, I resolved to withdraw the troops from this line of attack altogether, and ordered the following disposition:—

2nd Punjab Infantry to hold the hill on the north of the Kotal, which formed our present most advanced position; 29th Punjab Native Infantry to hold the hill overlooking the Spin Gawai, and protect the field hospital which had been established there. A column, formed as follows, to march under my command in the Zabardast Kila direction, so as to threaten the enemy's line of retreat, viz.:—5th Goorkhas; 5th Punjab Infantry (this regiment had joined us during the day.) No. 1 Mountain Battery, 72nd Highlanders, 23rd Pioneers, 4 Guns F-A, Royal Horse Artillery, on elephants, under Brigadier-General Thelwall, C.B.

34. The effect of this movement was almost immediately apparent, for as soon as the march of the troops was perceived, the fire in front of the hill occupied by the 2nd Punjab Infantry slackened, and the enemy on the Peiwar Kotal became so disturbed that Colonel Barry Drew, of the 8th King's Regiment, who then commanded the troops on that side, determined to deliver his attack.

35. This was most gallantly executed, and at 2:30 p.m. the Peiwar Kotal was in our possession, and the enemy in full flight along the Ali Kheyl road, which for some distance was found strewn with abandoned guns, limber boxes, &c.

36. Brigadier-General Cobbe was, I extremely regret to say, wounded during the advance on the Peiwar Kotal, but the particulars of the attack will be found in the accompanying despatch from Colonel Drew of the 8th King's Regiment, who assumed the command of the troops when Brigadier-General Cobbe had to leave the field.

37. The Peiwar Kotal was garrisoned for the night by the 8th Foot.

38. The troops under my immediate command could not get up in time to fall on the retreating enemy, and bivouacked near the village of Zabardast Kila.

39. I annex a report from Major A. Palmer, 9th Bengal Cavalry, who commanded the Native levies during the day, in which his movements are detailed. The levies were detached to operate on the enemy's right flank, with the design of diverting his attention and of committing the Turis and other tribes to the British cause. Major Palmer's observations on the nature of the approaches to the Kotal from the south are very valuable, as entirely confirming the intelligence which I had gained from reconnoissance and information regarding the difficulties which would attend an attack from that direction.

40. An examination of the Peiwar Kotal defences proved it to be a place of enormous natural strength, and that the enemy's dispositions for repelling any attack on it from the front were very complete and judicious. It is also evident from the enormous stores of ammunition and supplies which have been captured, that it