

squadron of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, No. 1 Mountain Battery, and the 21st Punjab Native Infantry, were also halted there as an escort for the convoy. The whole joined our camp at Nar the next morning, without having been molested on the road.

6. The column halted at Nar on the 4th January.

7. On the 5th January we marched six miles over a perfectly open and level plain to the village of Khubi.

8. Mahamad Akram Khan, the Afghan Deputy Governor of the Khost District, came into our camp to-day, accompanied by a small escort.

I had been in correspondence with him for several weeks, and he had agreed to maintain order in Khost until our arrival, stipulating in return that we should guarantee his personal safety, and allow him subsequently to proceed either to Kabul or to British territory, as he might desire. To these conditions I had agreed, in the hope that by this means our occupation of the Khost Valley might be accomplished without bloodshed, and with the least possible disturbance to the settled Government of the country. It also seemed desirable that we should obtain possession of the fort at Matun uninjured, and of the office records which Mahamad Akram Khan was reported to possess, and which it was believed would afford full details regarding the revenues which the Amir derived from both the Khost and Kuram Valleys.

Before marching from Hazar Pir I sent a letter to Mahamad Akram Khan, informing him of our intended advance, and requesting him to meet me at the village of Khubi. This he did, and on his arrival in camp I received him in Durbar. He then returned to Matun.

9. On the 6th January the column marched to Matun, and encamped outside the Afghan fort. The road, after passing for three miles across an open plain, led over a kotal, and then for about two miles through some low hills till the plain was reached, in which are situated Matun and numerous other villages.

The whole district is richly cultivated, and produces large quantities of rice, wheat, &c.

The people also possess considerable herds of cattle and sheep. The total distance from Khubi to the Afghan Fort is about eight miles.

10. Mahamad Akram Khan met me on the march half-way, and conducted me to the fort, which was found to be in indifferent order, and of the same general plan, as, but smaller than, the fort at Kuram.

The garrison consisted of 200 matchlock-men (Jezailchis), who received me at the entrance.

11. Since our entry into the Khost Valley I had remarked that, though no disturbance had occurred, an uneasy feeling was apparent among the inhabitants.

Some of the most influential Maliks had not come to pay their respects until sent for, and others who met us on the road had asked for permission to return to their homes before they had even accompanied me to our camp. It was very evident in short that the arrival of a British force was not a welcome event to the inhabitants of the country, but I hoped that after a time the people would become reassured, and that, as had happened with the Turis and Jajis, our presence would be accepted as inevitable, and even ultimately as a change for the better.

12. The cause of this state of feeling soon became apparent. After my arrival at Matun Fort, Mahamad Akram Khan took an early opportunity of informing me that the Mullahs, of

which this province possesses a large number, famous for their learning and fanaticism, had been actively engaged in raising religious prejudices against us, and in calling on the people to collect, attack our camp, and endeavour to expel us from the country.

13. There can be no doubt that such exhortations were powerfully aided by the apparent weakness of our force, the small numbers of which seemed in the popular judgment quite inadequate for the occupation of an extensive country such as Khost. The Mullahs, moreover, securely counted on the assistance of the neighbouring hill tribes; and in this they were not disappointed.

14. Mahamad Akram Khan stated that he had received information of large numbers of Mangals assembling; that they were being joined by some of the inhabitants of the Khost valley; and that it was very probable our camp would be attacked that night.

15. I therefore strengthened the usual picquets, and took every military precaution that the circumstances seemed to require.

16. I also sent for the Maliks of the neighbouring villages, and requested Colonel Waterfield to address purwanas to them to the effect that if our camp was attacked, summary and severe retribution would be exacted from all who had given admittance to Mangals or other persons having hostile intentions towards us. This measure had the desired effect, for before midnight nearly all the Matun Maliks came into camp, and informed me that the Mangals had departed for their homes, and that they themselves would remain in our camp as hostages for the good behaviour of the villagers. The night passed quietly.

17. On the following morning I sent some of the Maliks to ascertain whether the Mangals had really dispersed. They returned with the information that the men had started for their homes as they had promised, but being met by large numbers of their tribesmen on their way to Matun, the men had returned; that considerable numbers of Mangals and other hill-men were now present in the valley; that before long several thousands would be collected; and that our camp would certainly be attacked at night.

18. On receiving this intelligence I sent out a troop of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, under Major J. C. Stewart, accompanied by Captain Carr, Deputy-Assistant Quartermaster-General, to endeavour to ascertain the real position of affairs. The troop had not ridden two miles from our camp when it was fired upon, and soon after the first shots were heard, it became clear that the enemy, numbering certainly several thousands, had collected round three sides of our camp.

19. It was evident to me that the time had arrived when prompt and vigorous action was required to ensure our safety. The strength of the column which amounted to about 2,000 men, all told, was insignificant in comparison with the number we might find arrayed against us; we were separated by many miles of difficult country from our nearest support; and I judged it to be a matter of urgent necessity that the tribes who had dared to organize an attack on our camp should receive speedy and severe punishment.

20. In the first instance I reinforced Major Stewart's troop with all the cavalry at my disposal, under Colonel Hugh Gough, C.B., V.C., retaining in camp only 25 sabres of the 5th Punjab Cavalry. I also sent six companies of the 28th Punjab Native Infantry and No. 2 Mountain Battery in support of the cavalry.

These troops operated to the north-west of the