

Names of Officers wounded.

Major G. Luck, 15th Hussars, slightly.
Jemadar Huknewaz Khan, 1st Punjab Cavalry, slightly.

MATUN, 7th January, 1879.

No. 186 F.C., dated Camp, Umballa, 17th January, 1879.

From Colonel C. C. Johnson, C.B., Officiating Quartermaster-General in India, to Colonel H. K. Burne, C. B., Secretary to the Government of India, Military Department.

I am directed by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief to forward, for the information of the Government of India, the accompanying narrative* by Major-General F. S. Roberts, C.B., V.C., commanding the Kuram Field Force, of the circumstances attending the occupation of the Khost district by the troops under his command.

Dated Camp Matun, Khost Valley, 10th January, 1879.

From Major-General F. S. Roberts, C.B., V.C., Commanding the Kuram Field Force, to the Quartermaster-General in India.

I have the honour to submit, for the information of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief and of the Government of India, the following narrative of the circumstances attending the occupation of the Khost district by the force under my command.

2. On the 2nd January I marched from Hazar Pir with the undermentioned troops, viz. :—
Squadron, 10th Royal Hussars.
Wing, 72nd Highlanders (200 men).
Three troops, 5th Punjab Cavalry.
No. 1 Mountain Battery.
No. 2
21st Punjab "Native" Infantry.
28th

Colonel F. B. Drew (with the 1st Infantry Brigade Staff) was in command of the infantry portion of the column, Colonel H. Gough, C.B., V.C., of the cavalry, and Lieutenant-Colonel A. H. Lindsay, R.A., of the artillery.

3. The first march, 10½ miles, was to Jaji Maidan. The road passed over open rolling hills, and presented no difficulties: it could easily be made practicable for wheeled guns.

Jaji Maidan consists of a cluster of about ten small villages, situated in a basin formed by low hills.

The troops had to encamp on the rice-fields, which are dry and suitable for the purpose at this season, but it would be almost impossible to place troops anywhere near the village during rainy weather. The people of Jaji Maidan were very civil, and the camp was abundantly supplied with fuel, milk, fowls, &c.

4. The next day the column marched to Nar, one of the Bakh group of villages at the northern end of the Khost district. The road lay for five miles up an open valley with low hills on each side, easily accessible by infantry, and with several small villages scattered about, until a kotal or pass was reached which commanded a view of part of the Khost plain. The ascent to the kotal is easy and open, but the descent on the Khost side is for a short distance very rough and steep. The hills close in on the road at this point, and though they are easily practicable for infantry, and are free from forest, yet the broken nature of the ground renders this part of the route defensible, and if held by an enemy, strong

detachments of infantry would be required to crown the heights on each side of the pass.

These remarks apply of course with increased force to an advance made from below, *i.e.*, the Khost side. This difficult part of the road only continues for about four miles, when the bed of a wide nullah is reached, which opens gradually out into the level plain of the Khost Valley. The total distance from Jaji Maidan to the village of Nar is about 11 miles.

5. As I had received information that the Mangals might possibly attempt to attack my baggage while marching through the pass, and as the camels could not possibly arrive in our camp until long after dark, I resolved to halt the commissariat convoy (which carried 15 days' provisions for the column, and consisted of nearly 900 camels) at the village of Dhani, situated about a mile on the Jaji Maidan side of the kotal. A 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. Muhammad 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 Muhammad 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 Muhammad 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. Muhammad 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, but smaller than the fort at Kuram.

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

11. Since our entry into the Khost Valley I

* Dated 10th January, 1879.