

stances in not destroying the villages, though their destruction so as to make a clear space round the cantonments was, as a military precaution, desirable. Your policy in endeavouring to render the British occupation of Kabul as little irksome as possible to the inhabitants was, in His Excellency's opinion, perfectly correct, notwithstanding that, in carrying this out, you left standing villages and walled enclosures from which considerable trouble resulted during the subsequent defence of the cantonments.

From Lieutenant-General Sir F. S. Roberts, K.C.B., C.I.E., V.C., Commanding in Eastern Afghanistan, to the Adjutant-General in India, Army Head Quarters, Calcutta (No. 1027, dated Head Quarters, Kabul Field Force, Camp Kabul, the 23rd January, 1880).

I HAVE the honour to forward, for the information of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief and the Government of India, an account of the military operations which have taken place in the neighbourhood of Kabul from the 8th to the 24th December last.

2. It will be in your recollection that, towards the end of November, a small column under Brigadier-General Baker, C.B., visited Maidan, about 25 miles from Kabul, in the direction of Ghazni, to enforce the collection of grain and forage which is ordinarily due from that district as part of the revenues of the State, and that General Baker had met with acts of open hostility, for which he was compelled to inflict summary punishment.

3. From time to time both before and after the return of this force, information reached me that disaffection was gaining ground in the western districts, and that the people of Maidan, Logar, and Wardak were in communication with the Kohistanis, in view of making a combined attack on the British position at Kabul.

4. The general political situation, as it developed itself in the early part of December, and the causes which appear to have contributed to produce it, may be briefly summarised as follows.

5. After the outbreak of last September and the massacre of our envoy, the advance of the British force from Ali Khel was too rapid to give the Afghans, as a nation, time to oppose it. At Charasiah, the troops who had participated in the massacre, aided by large numbers of the disaffected townspeople, were conspicuously beaten in the open field; their organization as an armed body was at an end, and their leaders all sought personal safety in flight.

6. It appears probable that at this period the general expectation amongst the Afghans was that the British Government would exact a heavy retribution from the nation and city, which then lay at its mercy, and that after English vengeance had been satisfied, the army would be withdrawn.

Forty years ago, an English massacre had been followed by a temporary occupation of the city of Kabul, and as Pollock and Nott, on that occasion, had sacked and destroyed the great bazaar and then retired, so now the people believed that some signal punishment would be succeeded by the withdrawal of our troops.

7. It thus happened that after the action at Charasiah there followed a period of expectation and doubt. The Afghans were waiting on events, and the time had not yet arrived when any national movement was possible.

8. But this pause was marked by certain occurrences which doubtless touched the national pride to the quick, and which were also susceptible of being used by the enemies of the British

Government to excite into vivid fanaticism the religious sentiment which has ever formed a prominent trait in the Afghan character.

9. The spectacle of the prolonged occupation by foreign troops of the fortified cantonment which had been prepared by the late Amir Sher Ali for his own army; the capture of the large park of artillery, and of the vast munitions of war, which had raised the military strength of the Afghans to a standard unequalled among Asiatic nations; the measures which had been taken to dismantle the Bala Hissar, the historical fortress of the nation and the residence of its kings and principal nobles; and lastly the imprisonment and deportation to India of the ex-Amir Mahomed Yakub Khan and his leading ministers, were all circumstances which conspired to inflame to a high degree the natural antipathy felt towards a foreign invader.

10. The temper of the people being in this condition, it was clear that only mutual jealousy and distrust among the chiefs could prevent their making common cause against us, and that, if any sentiment could be found strong enough to dominate such internal dissensions, a powerful movement might be evoked, having for its object our own expulsion from the country.

11. Such an impulse was supplied by the fervent addresses to Mahomedan religious feeling made by the aged Moolla Mir Mahomed, commonly known as the Mushk-i-Alam; by the universal denunciation of the English in the mosques of every city and village; by the appeals of the ladies of Yakub Khan's family to the popular sympathies, and by the distribution of the concealed treasure which was at their command; and lastly, by the expectation of sharing in the plunder of the British camp.

12. The Moollas in short became masters of the situation, and having once succeeded in subordinating private quarrels to hatred of the common foe, the movement rapidly passed through the phase of religious enthusiasm, and culminated in nothing less than a national rising against the English invaders. The memories of the disaster of 1841-2 were appealed to; it was urged that what had happened once might happen again; and the people were assured that if they would only rise suddenly and simultaneously, the small English army in Sherpur might easily be driven from its position, and, as before, be overwhelmed in its retreat through the difficult passes which divide Afghanistan from India.

13. Such were the hopes of the chiefs and religious leaders who had now combined against the English infidels, and, according to the information which I received, their intention was to gain possession of the city and Bala Hissar, and, after occupying the numerous forts and villages in the neighbourhood of Sherpur, to surround the cantonments.

14. To attain this object, they arranged that the forces from the south, viz., from Logar, Zurmat, the Mongol and Jadran districts and intervening Ghilzai country, should seize the range of hills which extend from the city towards Charasiah, and include the Bala Hissar and the high conical peak called the Takht-i-Shah; that the forces from Kohistan should occupy the Asmai heights and hills to the north of the city; while those from Maidan, Wardak, and the Ghazni direction moved upon the city from the westward.

15. As it was evident that if these several bodies once concentrated on Kabul, they would be joined by the disaffected portion of the people of the city and adjoining villages, I endeavoured