

being faced with *abattis*, for which purpose the wood cut down in clearing the nearest gardens and enclosures supplied the materials.

75. These defences were constructed under the superintendence of Lieutenant-Colonel *Æ.* Perkins, C.B., Commanding Royal Engineer, to whom and the other officers of his distinguished regiment I am much indebted for the intelligence and energy with which the work was rapidly carried out under considerable difficulties.

Lieutenant-Colonel Perkins reports that his Adjutant, Lieutenant Thomas P. Cather, has been very useful to him.

76. In order to supplement our field guns and leave them free to move out as opportunity offered, several of the captured Afghan guns were utilised and mounted on the defences, whence they subsequently played with good effect. A number of marksmen were provided with Enfield rifles and cartridges found in the Bala Hissar, by which means our own ammunition was economised.

77. From Lieutenant-Colonel B. L. Gordon, commanding the Artillery, I have received every assistance, and I take this opportunity of recording the service rendered by Major C. A. Gorham, R.A. (Deputy Judge Advocate-General of the force) whose technical knowledge was of the greatest service in utilising the Afghan guns and ammunition.

Besides the officers of Royal Artillery named in other parts of this despatch, Captain H. Pipon, F.A., Royal Horse Artillery, has also done excellent service; and Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon informs me that he has found his Adjutant, Lieutenant F. E. Allsopp, R.A., active and useful.

78. Early on the morning of the 15th December the telegraph wire was cut, but not before I had communicated our situation to His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief and the Government of India, urging the advisability of sending reinforcements as speedily as possible. At the same time I sent orders to Major-General Bright, C.B., at Jellalabad, to move Brigadier-General Charles Gough's brigade from Gandamak to Kabul without loss of time, and to send Brigadier-General Arbuthnot's brigade towards Kabul as soon as fresh troops should reach Jellalabad from India.

79. I had decided upon recalling to Sherpur the garrison of Butkak, which was in an exposed and isolated position, and not sufficiently strong to defend itself against serious attack, and I had considered the expediency of withdrawing the force at Lataband, which consisted of two mountain guns, the 28th Punjab Native Infantry, and a wing of the 23rd Pioneers, the whole commanded by Colonel J. Hudson of the former regiment; but as the position was a strong one, ammunition plentiful, and sufficient supplies in hand to last over the probable date of Brigadier-General Charles Gough's arrival, and moreover, as it was in direct heliographic communication with Kabul, I decided to maintain the post. I had every confidence in Colonel Hudson, and I felt satisfied that, so long as Lataband was held, no serious opposition could be offered to General Gough's advance; it was in fact the most important link in our chain of communications, and though its occupation materially diminished my force at Sherpur, its retention was worth the sacrifice. The result justified this decision, for but slight resistance was offered to General Gough at Jagdalak, and none whatever after that point was passed.

80. On the 16th a body of about one thousand men threatened the camp at Lataband, Colonel Hudson, however, attacked and dispersed them,

inflicting considerable loss in both killed and wounded. Owing to the excellent manner in which the attack was covered both by artillery and infantry fire, there were no casualties on our side. Colonel Hudson reports that the following officers did good service on this occasion—

Captain W. G. Nicholson, R.E.

Lieutenant E. A. Smith, R.A., No. 2 Mountain Battery.

Lieutenant A. A. Lane, 28th Punjab Native Infantry, and Subadar Melitab Singh, 23rd Pioneers.

Colonel Hudson brings to special notice the gallantry of Havildar Golab Singh, of the 23rd Pioneers, who, well in advance of his men, entered the enemy's breast-work and captured a standard there.

81. As I was very desirous of keeping open my communications with India, and as I felt it most important that Brigadier-General Charles Gough should know, from day to day, the exact position at Kabul; and further, as it was very possible that cavalry might be of great service in the advance from Lataband, I despatched the 12th Bengal Cavalry at 3 A.M. on the morning of the 22nd, to join hands with him. I instructed Major J. H. Green, who commands the regiment, that if Butkak, through which place he had to pass, was unoccupied by the enemy and proved friendly, he was to halt there, leaving a detachment to watch the Logar bridge, whilst Colonel Hudson was to push on to Butkak with the Lataband garrison as soon as the head of General Gough's column arrived at Lataband. Should it be found, however, that Butkak was hostile, Major Green was to press on to Lataband and unite with the troops there. The latter event proving to be the case, the cavalry went on as arranged, losing three men killed and three wounded in the operation, which was one of difficulty, and most ably carried out by Major Green, whom I desire to bring to notice for his excellent services.

82. There were no movements of sufficient importance to need special record between the 14th and 21st December.

During that interval the enemy daily took up positions in the neighbouring forts and gardens, and firing from behind cover caused a few casualties in the camp. Each day cavalry reconnaissances were made, and some portion of the force moved out to dislodge the Afghans from any place where they could cause special annoyance; some of the forts and other cover in the immediate neighbourhood of Sherpur were also destroyed, but I confined myself to minor operations of this description, and did not undertake any sorties in force with the object of gaining possession of portions of the enemy's position. My force was not large enough to admit of my holding them, and I considered that had I replied in this way to the enemy's efforts, I should have been playing their game, and I therefore determined to wait until I could act decisively.

83. Every night information reached me that an attack was contemplated, but it was not until the 21st December that the enemy showed signs of special activity. On that day and the following large numbers of them moved from the city, and, passing round to the eastward of our position, occupied the numerous forts in that direction in very great force. It became apparent that this movement was preparatory to an attack from that quarter. At the same time I was informed that the enemy were preparing a number of ladders, with the intention of attacking the southern and western walls by escalade.