

## Inclosures.

1. Sir Herbert Stewart's Despatch dated Abu Klea, 18th January, 1885.
2. List of Casualties.
3. Marching-out State from bivouac on moving, 17th January, 1885.
4. Memorandum by Sir Charles Wilson respecting the tribes engaged against us in the action of 17th January, 1885.

## Inclosure No. 1.

From Brigadier-General Sir H. Stewart to the Chief of the Staff.

SIR, *Abu Klea Wells, January 18, 1885.*

IN continuation of my Report of the 14th instant, I have the honour to inform you that the force under my command has made the following movements in carrying out your orders.

On the 14th instant the force left Gakdul at 2 P.M., and marching until dark bivouacked for the night some 10 miles on the road to Matammeh.

On the 15th instant a distance of 24 miles was accomplished, and a bivouac formed among the hills marked Gebel Es Sergain on the map.

On the 16th instant the force left camp at 5 A.M., and halted for breakfast at 11.30 A.M. at the spot marked in the map by the 840th kilometre.

Whilst halted a report was received from Lieut.-Colonel Barrow, 19th Hussars, who had been sent forward with his squadron to reconnoitre the neighbourhood of the Abu Klea Wells, informing me that he had seen about 50 of the enemy standing in groups on the hills about four miles north-east of Abu Klea.

Shortly afterwards the whole force was advanced—the Guards Camel Regiment, Heavy Camel Regiment, and Mounted Infantry Camel Regiment, moving on a broad front in line of columns at half-distance, the ground being favourable.

It soon became manifest that the enemy was in force, and looking to the hour (2 P.M.) it did not seem desirable to attempt to attack until the following morning. Another bivouac was therefore selected, protected from the enemy's fire so far as the ground would permit, and various small works were constructed.

During the night a continuous light fire at long ranges was kept up by the enemy, doing little damage.

Upon the 17th instant it was plain that the enemy was in force. During the night they had constructed works on our right flank, from which a distant but well aimed fire was maintained. In our front the manœuvring of their troops in line and in column was apparent, and everything pointed to the probability of an attack upon our position being made. Under these circumstances no particular hurry to advance was made in the hope that our apparent dilatoriness might induce the enemy to push home. The camp having been suitably strengthened to admit of its being held by a comparatively small garrison—viz., 40 Mounted Infantry, 125 Sussex and details; and the enemy still hesitating to attack, an advance was made to seize the Abu Klea Well.

The force moved on foot in a square, which was formed as follows:—Left front face, two companies Mounted Infantry; right front face, two companies Guards, with the three guns Royal Artillery in the centre. Left face, two companies Mounted Infantry, one company Heavy Camel Regiment. Right face, two companies Guards, detachment Royal Sussex. Rear face, four companies Heavy Camel Regiment, with

Naval Brigade and one Gardner gun in the centre.

The advance at once attracted a fairly aimed fire from the enemy in front and on both flanks, which, in order to enable the square to continue moving, it was absolutely necessary to hold in check by the fire of skirmishers.

The enemy's main position was soon apparent, and by passing that position well clear of its left flank, it was manifest that he must attack or be enfiladed. As the square was nearly abreast of the position the enemy delivered his attack in the shape of a singularly well organised charge commencing with a wheel to the left.

A withering fire was at once brought to bear upon the enemy, especially from the more advanced portion of the left front face of the square. The rear portion of this face taking a moment or two to close up, was not in such a favourable position to receive the enemy's attack, and I regret to say that the square was penetrated at this point by the sheer weight of the enemy's numbers.

The steadiness of the troops enabled the hand to hand conflict to be maintained, whilst severe punishment was still being meted out to those of the enemy continuing to advance, with the result that a general retreat of the enemy under a heavy artillery and rifle fire soon took place.

After reforming the square, the 19th Hussars, who had been acting in difficult ground supporting our left flank, were pushed on to seize the Abu Klea Wells, and at 5 P.M. those wells were completely in our possession.

Detachments of the corps then returned to the bivouac of the 16th instant to bring up the camel and impedimenta left there, thus completing the force here this morning at 8 A.M.

The strength of the enemy is variously estimated from 8,000 to 14,000 men. My opinion is that not less than 2,000 of the enemy operated on our right flank, 3,000 in the main attack, and 5,000 in various other positions; but it is difficult to estimate their numbers with any exactness.

Their losses have been very heavy, not less than 800 lay dead on the open ground flanking our square, and their wounded during the entire day's fighting are reported by themselves as quite exceptional. Many are submitting.

I deeply regret that the necessity of obtaining water delays my immediate advance on Matammeh, but I trust this may be overcome in a few hours.

I cannot too deeply lament the loss of the many gallant officers and men that the force has suffered; but looking to the numbers of the enemy, their bravery, their discipline and the accuracy of fire of those possessing rifles, I trust that this loss, sad as it is, may be considered as in some measure inevitable.

In conclusion, I would add that it has been my duty to command a force from which exceptional work, exceptional hardships, and it may be added, exceptional fighting has been asked. It would be impossible for me adequately to describe the admirable support that has been given to me by every officer and man of the force.

A return of casualties is attached. Every possible care is being taken of the wounded. Tents have been pitched, and a strong post established over the Wells, garrisoned by a detachment of the Sussex Regiment.

I have, &c.,  
HERBERT STEWART,  
Brigadier-General.