

practice was very good, the first bursting overhead, and the third on striking the wall. Then we got the range by "sound," and concentrated our fire on the guns (muzzle-loading 9 lbs. rifled guns), and in 30 minutes both guns retired; only one turned up again on the further hill, 1,500 yards from the line of walls, and made wilder practice, only running the gun up to the crest to fire and wasting no time over laying, as the Martinis reached them there. All this time the enemy kept up a hot fire, but were always driven off on reaching 600 yards. At dark they were working round to our left flank, and when nearly quite dark I closed in on our fort, the men being sent back one by one, 50 yards between each, not one doubling. The behaviour of the men, all but ten of mine eight months' recruits, and the Gurkhas also very young soldiers, was simply magnificent. I cannot express my admiration of them.

The scream and bursting report of the shells was most unpleasant to me, who knew the small loss they could inflict, but the men, who must have had a greatly exaggerated idea of their powers, paid most careful attention to their aim, and obeyed all directions as to sighting and wind when firing on the guns.

We spent the night behind our walls in the main fort, the enemy keeping up a long range fire till 2 A.M., which was not replied to. We tied white rags to our foresights, but the enemy did not close.

2nd April, 1891.—At 3 A.M. in moonlight we commenced work, strengthening position with large dhan baskets of earth, ration sack and pillow-case sand bags, and making abattis, and continued hard at work making cover for transport till evening. At 3 P.M. I went with the patrol to the line of walls. Enemy all in position. Saw a man signalling with white flag. Went to meet him with white flag. Turned out to be a Gurkha of the 44th Gurkha Light Infantry with letter from babu prisoners imploring me to retire or they would all be killed. If I retired, prisoners would be released and sent to Cachar. Answered that if all the prisoners who wished to go with me were given to me, I would retire to Tamu. Asked for letter from Maharaj. Returned saying Maharaj would send letter. Said till I got letter I would not attack.

3rd, 4th, and 5th.—Negotiated for prisoners, I demanding at least all Gurkha prisoners, saying as all babus and civilians wouldn't come to Burma, they could go to Cachar and Gurkhas must come with me, and I would never retire empty-handed. Then they said all the prisoners had started for Assam, and I must retire. Refused to retire without a Maja (or one of the four wazirs*) as hostage for prisoners. They offered me a subadar as hostage. Refused, demanding Apprai Maja (whose flag we captured at Thobal), who is in charge of country from Manipur to Tamu. Two babus of Manipur came to meet me. Said 500 pounds of ata and 50 pounds of dal and ghi† were ready for me to take. Refused to take without the hostage. Said I had lots to eat. Babus said Samoan Juba, Regent's fourth brother, had commanded Thobal when I took it, and third brother, Senapati, Commander-in-Chief, commanded attack on 1st. That 800 men had held Thobal on 31st and 2,000 attacked on 1st, and I had killed four of their gunners.

6th April, 1891.—On 6th the enemy attacked at dawn, and I closed in on my fort, which by

now was greatly strengthened. At 8 A.M. their shell fire ceased, and enemy had gained the hedges and walls from 100 to 200 yards on my front and left. Crept out with ten Gurkhas, and attacked the enemy on my left on their right flank and drove them off with loss, killing six or seven, and bolted back to fort without loss. At 11 A.M. crept out to front under my right wall and up to enemy with one havildar and six Gurkhas, and, after driving enemy from one hedge, found a party of about 60 in a corner behind a wall 20 yards off. After a very hot two minutes we got to wall, and drove them out of their corner, leaving ten or eleven dead. A double-barrelled gun with buck-shot most effective on their heads as they showed up to fire. Then we bolted in again, but the 43rd Gurkha Light Infantry havildar, Gunbir Rai, had his hand shot through; no other loss to us.

I now found we had only 50 rounds per man left and the Gurkhas only 30, and we had to submit to a purely passive defence. The men lay down behind walls, one in every six keeping a watch. I gave orders that not a man was to fire till the enemy were half way across our field of fire, but they preferred to remain behind hedges, where they kept up their fire till dark; but it was very wild, and they dare not show themselves to aim after one or two crack shots had hit their heads. At dark they retired, and we had a quiet night in the trenches.

I think it was after 12 noon on this day that the men really showed the best soldier's qualities, lying down to be fired at (and the few men on two sides were exposed to reverse fire), and one of each six taking his half hour's watch more or less exposed.

7th April, 1891.—Enemy all retired behind hill, but large parties seen going to our right rear: busy strengthening defences.

Our loss on 6th—Havildar Gunbir Rai, 43rd Gurkha Light Infantry, wounded by rifle; Private Miran-bakhsh, 12th Burma Regiment, wounded by shell (slightly); 1 driver by bullet (slightly); 1 pony killed, 2 wounded, and 2 elephants wounded (one severely and one slightly).

On 7th with patrol found in "11 A.M. counter-attack corner" 20 Martini cartridges and one 500 express cartridge and lot of blood, but no bodies.

9th April, 1891.—At 12 noon the enemy brought out a white flag, and, putting a letter on a stick on road, retired. Brought it in, and found orders to retire on Presgrave forwarded by the Maharaj. Started at 7 P.M., bringing away 20 enemy's guns and rifles, but we drowned about 1,000 rounds of their ammunition, all of Government make. An awful night, dark except for lightning, pouring with rain, but perfect for retreat. At 2 P.M. met Presgrave with 75 men and nine boxes of ammunition coming to Thobal without kits or rations. We returned to Palel, not reaching there till 6 A.M., about one mile an hour, but unmolested, and having brought off everything.

I recommend every man of the party for the Order of Merit. I think they have all well earned it, not only in attack and defence, but also by their cheerfulness in the fort for 13 days on 6 days' rations, and every man on guard every night. I never heard a complaint or doubt; they only asked to be allowed to take those guns, and they would have done it with another 100 rounds a man, all to make a "name" for regiment.

I recommend Subadar Shaik Mahtab Din in addition for the title of Sirdar Bahadur.

I recommend Havildar Chaughatta in addition for early promotion. He was first across the

* Wazir,—a minister.

† Ghi,—clarified butter.