

to cross the great ravine and turn the enemy's position, and that the moment the fort fell, the Body-Guard Regiment of the Imperial Service Troops, who were in reserve, should follow the flying enemy and carry any defences on the opposite bank of the *nala*. The precipitous sides of the ravine, the paths in which had been destroyed by the enemy, prevented Captain Mackenzie from carrying out my intention; while Captain Bradshaw, who succeeded to the command when I was wounded, came to the conclusion that any forward move was that day impossible.

7. The force was, therefore, halted for the night at Nilt. In front of it was the great ravine running from the river-bed to the glaciers some thousands of feet above. The far bank was lined with *sangars*, which commanded every possible track up it. Its height varies from six hundred feet, where it joins the river bank, to twelve hundred feet, and it is absolutely precipitous. To the left of the force ran the Hunza river, on the opposite bank of which was the strongly fortified place of Mayun, standing on the high cliff of the river, and full of men. Half a mile up the river, on the left bank, was a strongly fortified *ziarat*, from which to the junction of the great ravine ran one continuous line of *sangars*. During the night all the *sangars* were strongly reinforced, and those exposed to shell fire were provided with such heavy roofs as to defy the seven-pounders.

On our side the edge of the ravine was held by a line of picquets up to the snow-line, the Punial Levy holding the upper positions.

8. On the morning of the 3rd December an advance was attempted, but after a loss of one man killed and seven wounded, including Lieutenant Gorton, Royal Artillery, was abandoned. Every *sangar* on the opposite hill was held in great force; the path leading down from the fort was precipitous, impassable for mules, and swept from end to end by a searching fire; while the path by which the enemy had fled the day before, and which ran up a cliff on to the cultivated land above the river, had been broken away and encumbered with *abattis*. It was, moreover, barred by a large *sangar*, holding about a hundred men, which during the night had been so strengthened as to be bomb-proof.

9. The position was one of great difficulty. The force was very small, and before it was an enemy many times more numerous than itself, holding a position of enormous natural strength and heavily entrenched. To attack the lower *sangar* with any chance of success seemed impossible, while an advance up the river-bed against the strongly fortified *ziarat* position under a raking cross fire from both banks of the river, though feasible with a large force, must have led to very heavy loss; and a very heavy loss, which would necessarily have involved many casualties amongst the British officers, already none too many, was not to be faced, except as the last resource.

10. For seventeen days the little force therefore remained stationary. It was evident that only two courses remained:—the first to transfer the force to the right bank of the river and storm Mayun; the second to storm the opposite bank of the ravine. A force was crossed on the night of the 12th December to capture Mayun, but the attempt offered such difficulties in the darkness that it was given up. Night after night a few men of the Body-Guard Regiment, who volunteered for the dangerous service,

explored the precipice for a road. The task was one of great danger, for at the least noise a heavy fire was opened, and, what was far more dangerous, avalanches of rock, started by the holders of the *sangars* above, thundered down the cliff into the ravine below.

11. During this enforced inactivity the conduct of the troops was all that could be desired; and, despite the depressing effect which a check in the face of the enemy must exercise, they showed the most soldierly spirit, the Gurkhas, Ragu Pertab and Body-Guard all claiming to share the dangers of exploring the cliff face.

12. After many nights of patient searching, a Dogra sepoy of the Body-Guard Regiment named Nagdu, whose bravery and perseverance deserve special mention, discovered a practicable path, and an assault was resolved on. The command had devolved on Captain Colin J. Mackenzie, Seaforth Highlanders, in the temporary absence of Captain Bradshaw, who had come to Gilgit to see me on the question of supply.

13. During the night of the 19th December a hundred men of the Body-Guard were moved silently into the ravine, accompanied by Lieutenants J. Manners Smith and Taylor, the former of whom was to lead the assault. Captain Mackenzie's report on the operations of the 20th and subsequent days is attached, and gives an excellent description of the operation. On the morning of the 20th four parties of picked shots were moved on to our bank of the ravine, and with the guns opened such a well-aimed fire on the four *sangars* guarding the path by which the storming party was to ascend, that not a man could show himself. Shortly after the fire was opened, Lieutenant Smith led off his party of 50 men, followed by Lieutenant Taylor with the rest. At first a wrong direction was taken, and after an arduous climb Lieutenant Smith found his way barred by a sheer precipice absolutely impassable for his men; descending several hundred feet, he again led his men up, and after another hour of hard climbing neared the top. The fire had been so well directed that the holders of the *sangars* were unaware of the danger which threatened them until the small party was observed from Mayun, and word was passed across the river and up the mountain side. Showers of stones were then thrown from the inside of the *sangars*, and crashed down over the storming party; but it had by this time passed the most dangerous points on the cliff, and was in safety. Lieutenant Smith, collecting a handful of his men, dashed forward, carried the nearest *sangar*, and in so doing assured the success of the expedition; for, as more men arrived at the top of the cliff, *sangar* after *sangar* was carried, and the roof set fire to. The rising smoke was the signal for a general *saue qui peut*; the defenders of Mayun streamed away in hundreds. Wazir Dadu and Raja Uzr Khan, the leaders of the Hunza and Nagar forces, fled from the *ziarat*, and did not halt till they had put the passes of the Hindu Kush between them and our troops; and the defenders of the positions on the Nagar bank broke up and fled for their homes. Our loss in this brilliant attack, led up a precipice, at this point 1,200 feet in height, with consummate skill and daring by Lieutenant Smith, amounted to only two men wounded. The enemy's loss was heavy, and amounted to over 100 men killed and wounded, with 118 prisoners. A separate representation was forwarded by Captain Mackenzie while in command with reference to Lieutenant Smith's gallantry.

14. An immediate advance was made by the