

to briefly review the operations from the date the Force took the field.

3. Orders for its mobilisation were issued on the 14th March, 1895, and on the 1st April it had crossed the frontier with two of its brigades at Jalala and one at Lundkhwar.

4. The actions of the Malakand Pass, Khar, Chakdara, Sado (or Panjkora) and Mamugai followed in rapid succession, and the details of each action, together with those of the passage of the Swat and Panjkora rivers, have already been published in the previous Despatches submitted to Government.

5. On the 20th April, a report, received through Brigadier-General Gatacre, of the great straits to which the garrison of Chitral was reduced, led to Sir Robert Low approving of a flying column of 500 men being pushed on in advance to effect the relief of the garrison at all hazards. The support to the Khan of Dir afforded by this small column, added to the prestige gained by the successes of the British arms, emboldened the Khan of Dir to advance with his tribesmen into the Chitral Valley, and his arrival there had a material effect on the raising of the siege and the flight of Sher Afzal—a service of great importance, which is alluded to by Sir Robert Low in paragraph 4 of his present Despatch.

6. In their advance from the Indian frontier, the troops under Sir Robert Low had to cross five mountain passes, three of which—the Malakand (2,900 feet), the Janbatai (7,400 feet) and the Lowarai (10,200 feet)—presented exceptional difficulties to the movement of troops, their baggage and supplies: they had to bridge two rivers which in rain became impassable torrents, and to fight five actions with the enemy, and, when not engaged in fighting or marching, they had to labour incessantly in road-making in order to make the mountain tracks passable for the force. The admirable conduct of, and the spirit displayed by, the troops have already been favourably commented on by Sir George White, and it remains now for His Excellency to bring to the notice of Government the skilful dispositions of their gallant leader, Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Low, K.C.B., and the admirable manner in which the intentions and orders of Government have been carried out by this distinguished officer.

7. His Excellency also concurs in the favourable terms in which Sir Robert Low has spoken of Major-General E. Stedman, C.B., Brigadier-Generals W. F. Gatacre, D.S.O., H. G. Waterfield, A. G. Hammond, C.B., V.C., D.S.O., and Brigadier-General Blood, C.B., and the other officers mentioned by him in his Despatch.

8. Sir George White has in a previous letter alluded to the loss sustained by the service in the premature death of the gallant Lieutenant-Colonel F. D. Battye, Corps of Guides, and I am to add that the names of this officer and of the late Captain A. L. Peebles, Devonshire Regiment, would have been prominently brought forward for the favourable consideration of Government had they survived.

9. Although Major-General Stedman joined the Force after the conclusion of active hostilities, the success that has attended his efforts, and the skill he has displayed in the organization of the large transport train required for the provisioning and supply of the troops on so extended a line of communication, entitle him, in His Excellency's opinion, to special recognition by Government. In his important duties he has received material aid from his Staff, Colonel I. S. M. Hamilton, D.S.O., Assistant Adjutant- and Quartermaster-General, and Captain G. V. Kember, Deputy

Assistant Adjutant- and Quartermaster-General.

10. The physical difficulties of the country traversed have afforded special opportunities of distinction to the officers of Royal Engineers who were selected for appointments in that branch of the service with the Force; that these opportunities were taken the fullest advantage of is apparent on reference to paragraph 10 of Sir Robert Low's Despatch, and the magnitude of the work accomplished can also be judged by the following descriptions of the six bridges thrown over the Swat and the Panjkora rivers and of a few smaller ones over minor streams:

#### A.—At Chakdara on the Swat River.

(1.) A trestle bridge thrown over the Swat River by Major Barton, nearly 1,200 feet in total length, erected in the early part of April, which lasted till the end of June, when the suspension bridge was completed.

(2.) A pontoon bridge\*, with twelve pontoons which were brought over the Malakand Pass by Captain Heath, and with trestle landing stages, and a trestle bridge over the smaller arm of the Swat River, erected in May and still in use.

(3.) A suspension bridge†, total length 948 feet, with two suspension spans of 250 and 110 feet over two main streams, erected by Captain Williams, and though only commenced in May was completed on 26th June. Total suspended lengths including back stays, are 500 feet and 220 feet.

#### B.—At Sado on the Panjkora River.

(4.) A bridge on rafts was first made by Major Aylmer on the 12th April; but was carried away by logs coming down the torrent of the swollen river.

(5.) A suspension bridge, telegraph wire being used for the cables, was then erected by Major Aylmer; main span 95 feet; finished on 16th April; only commenced on 13th April.

(6.) A third bridge‡ was afterwards erected by Captain Serjeant and the 1st Company Bengal Sappers and Miners; a suspension bridge with main span of 200 feet at a higher level than the one erected by Major Aylmer.

#### C.—At Chutiatan on the Panjkora.

(7.) A suspension bridge§ was afterwards erected six miles south of Dir, when it was decided to open out the road on the left bank of the Panjkora. This also was built by the 1st Company Sappers and Miners, under Captain Serjeant. Total span about 78 feet.

#### D.—Minor Bridges.

Several smaller bridges, chiefly trestle or cantilever bridges, were erected, of which the most important are—

(8.) A trestle bridge erected by Captain Skay and the 6th Company, Bengal Sappers, at Darora, over the Ushiri River.

(9.) A wooden girder bridge at Sakot, between Jalala and the Malakand; two spans of 50 feet; built by Captain Nanton, Royal Engineers.

The Commander-in-Chief considers that the record of work done by Colonels Leach and Shore, Majors Ellis, Barton, Aylmer, V.C., and Abbott, Captains Tanner, Williams, and Serjeant, and other officers of the Royal Engineers, reflects the highest credit on those officers, and on the corps to which they belong. In the same terms His Excellency would comment on the survey work done by that

\* As shown in Nos. I and II of attached photographs of bridging operations.

† Photographs III and IV.

‡ Photograph V.

§ Photograph VI.