

the line of the old railway which had been completely destroyed by the Dervishes.

Levies of friendly Arabs were also raised to watch the roads and wells in the Eastern and Western Deserts, and patrols of these Arabs proceeded occasionally to the Nile in the Dar Shaigia district.

The collection of supplies of Akasha and the relaying of the railway line were actively taken in hand.

Meanwhile, Osman Digna, who had been co-operating in the siege of Kassala, proceeded by forced marches towards Suakin, and took up a position at Erkowit. Lieutenant-Colonel Lloyd, D.S.O., having formed a field column from the Suakin and Tokar garrison, was attacked while advancing in Khor Wintri by Osman Digna's force, which was driven back, and soon after retired from the district. On the conclusion of this operation the Egyptian garrison was transferred to the Nile valley, being replaced by a contingent of Indian troops under the command of Brigadier-General Egerton, C.B., D.S.O. I am of opinion that the moral effect on the Dervishes of the presence of these troops in the Suakin district was considerable.

Early in April the Dervishes moved their advanced post from Suarda to Firket, whither re-inforcements were constantly despatched from Dongola.

On 1st May three squadrons of cavalry under Major Burn Murdoch unexpectedly came into contact with a considerable force of Dervish horse, camel, and footmen within a few miles of Akasha, the enemy, who had intended a demonstration against Akasha, retired on Firket after making a show of resistance.

Early in June the railway reached Ambigol Wells. Dervish patrols were seen in the neighbourhood, and having received information that more serious interference with the working parties was intended, I deemed it necessary to attack and drive the enemy out of Firket. This operation was successfully performed on the morning of 7th June, and was described in my despatch of 9th June. The cavalry pursued to Suarda, which was occupied, and the Dervishes fell back on Dongola.

The railway was now pushed on to Kosheh, and preparations were made to pass the steamers over the cataracts as soon as the height of the Nile would allow of this being done, but the rise of the river was unusually retarded.

During this period an outbreak of cholera occurred, and I have to deplore the loss of several valuable officers and men from this epidemic which—though severe whilst it lasted—was not of long duration, and I attribute its being effectually stamped out to the energy and ability displayed by Surgeon Lieutenant-Colonel Gallwey and the officers of the Medical Staff.

On the 4th August the railway was completed as far as Kosheh, and the collection of supplies proceeded with. The sections of the new gunboat reached Kosheh on 15th August, and under the able superintendence of Commander the Honourable C. Colville, R.N., the work of construction was carried on with the least possible delay.

Owing to the lateness of the Nile, the passage of the steamers over the cataracts could only be commenced on 2nd August, and was successfully accomplished under the direction of Colonel Hunter, D.S.O., who was ably assisted by Commander Robertson, C.M.G., R.N., and other officers, who all worked indefatigably on this very arduous task. The flotilla of four armed and three unarmed stern wheelers arrived at Kosheh

on 23rd August, and the forward movement of the troops of the Suarda garrison to Absarat took place on the same day. Two Water Depots were established in the desert between Kosheh and Absarat, and on 27th August the 1st Brigade crossed.

News of the destruction of 20 miles of railway line between Sarras and Moghrat by a storm of unprecedented violence reached me on the evening of the 27th August, and it became necessary to immediately despatch all available troops to repair damages. Over 5,000 men were massed on the works, which were within two days of completion when a fresh storm destroyed eight miles of line as well as the station at Akasha. The troops were able to repair these breaks in the line by 6th September, and I cannot speak too highly of the cheerful manner and endurance displayed by them in carrying out this most laborious duty, during which long and rapid marches under exceptionally difficult conditions were necessary and work proceeded night and day.

The forward movement which had been temporarily interrupted was now continued. Dulgo was occupied by the 1st and 2nd Brigades on 5th September, the mounted corps and 3rd and 4th Brigades being pushed across the desert to Absarat. The North Staffordshire Regiment was brought by train from Sarras and embarked on steamers for the south on the 12th inst.

I regret to report that the steam trial of the new gunboat resulted in the bursting of a cylinder which temporarily prevented her from joining in the advance.

At this period it was known that the Dervishes were in considerable strength at Hafir (west bank) and Kerma (east bank) where they had constructed a fort, and where it was said they intended to oppose our advance with all the available forces in the province.

The troops marched to Fereig on 14th September, thence to Barji and by desert route to Abu Fatmeh, which was reached on the evening of the 18th inst. After passing the Hannek Cataract the gunboat "Et Teb" struck on a rock and had to be left.

On the morning of the 19th instant Kerma was occupied without opposition, the Dervish force having been crossed to Hafir the evening before. From the high ground at Kerma large bodies of the enemy were seen on the west bank where a number of boats and the Dervish steamer lay. I at once ordered the artillery to open fire, whilst the gunboats, which I had previously instructed to proceed to Dongola, attempted to pass Hafir, but were received by a very heavy fire from guns placed in cleverly screened batteries and from riflemen entrenched in deep pits at the water's edge. Our artillery under Lieutenant-Colonel Parsons, R.A., was advanced to a position on the low ground opposite the enemy's forts and after a preliminary bombardment the gunboats were able to pass successfully under a very hot fire, sinking the Dervish steamer as they advanced.

I regret to say that in the first approach of the steamers to the enemy's position Commander the Hon. C. Colville, R.N., was wounded in the wrist, but gallantly remained on board and proceeded with his gunboat to Dongola.

The artillery continued to bombard the forts up to a late hour at night when the enemy, believing that our main force was marching south to cross the river by the help of three advanced gunboats, evacuated Hafir and fell back on Dongola.

Early on the morning of 20th September I occupied Hafir with a brigade, and the crossing of the whole force of upwards of 13,000 men