DYER REGINALD HARRY

RAIDERS OF THE SARHAD

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Raiders of the Sarhad / Being an Account of the Campaign of Arms and Bluff Against the Brigands of the Persian-Baluchi Border during the Great War:

Содержание

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PREFACE

With the greatest diffidence I have at last made up my mind to write the story of my small campaign with the Sarhad Raiders in 1916.

This campaign sinks into utter insignificance when compared with the great deeds done in other theatres of war by men who said nothing about them. But, insignificant as it was, it forms part of the mosaic of the Great War, and for this reason may be of some general interest.

I take this opportunity of paying a tribute to all the officers

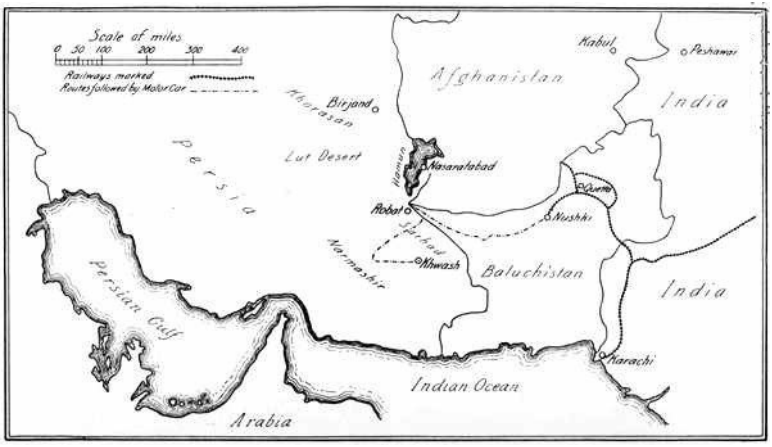
who took part in this little campaign. Their untiring devotion to duty, and their efforts to do their utmost under conditions that were often more than trying, accounts for its success.

I would like, in particular, to mention Major Landon of the 35th Scinde Horse, whose great knowledge of the people and their country was invaluable; Major Sanders of the 36th Sikhs; Colonel Claridge of the 28th Light Cavalry; Captain Brownlow and Captain Hirst, both of the 28th Light Cavalry; Major Lang; Captain Moore-Lane; Lieutenant Bream of the Hazara Pioneers, and Captain English, R.A.

In addition I would mention how much, not only I, but the old country owes to Khan Bahadur, the Sarhad-dar, and to Idu, non-commissioned officer of the Chagai Levies.

The photographs are from snapshots taken by various officers during the campaign.

R.E.H.D.



Sketch Map of the Persian-Baluchi-Afghan frontiers

CHAPTER I
ORDERS FOR THE WEST

I receive my orders – German agents and India – Their routes – A deal in chauffeurs – Concerning an appetite and sausages – Nushliki – The last of civilisation – Further information – Sand-holes and digging – Petrol in the desert

Towards the end of February, 1916, General Kirkpatrick, Chief of Staff at Delhi, sent for me and gave me orders to take charge of the military operations in South-East Persia.

Although Persia, as a country, was neutral during the War, there is a certain district in the South-East, abutting on to the frontiers of Afghanistan and of Baluchistan, and known as the Sarhad, which is occupied by a number of nomad tribes who claim absolute independence. At this time these tribes were causing considerable embarrassment and difficulty to the Indian Government.

The Germans and their agents, who were past masters in the art of propaganda, were still endeavouring, as they had done for years before the outbreak of hostilities, to work upon the

discontented portion of the Indian population in the hope of rousing them into open rebellion. They believed this to be quite possible, in spite of the magnificent way in which India had offered her resources of men and money to the British Raj, and hoped thereby to handicap us still further in our great struggle in the West.

They were pouring their agents, with their lying propaganda, into India via Persia and Afghanistan. Afghanistan, like Persia, was nominally neutral, but she was breaking her neutrality by many open acts of aggression, and was offering every facility in her power to the German agents in their passage through her territories, and thence into the Punjab.

To reach Afghanistan, however, the German agents had to pass through some part of Persia. The Persian Government placed no restrictions on the movements of either British or Germans, of which fact the latter took full advantage.

A glance at the map will show that apparently the easiest route for them to take across Persia was in the North, in the Russian sphere of influence, and to approach Afghanistan through Korasan; or, failing this, by a route rather farther South, across the Lut Desert, in the direction of Birjand. As a matter of fact they had tried both these routes, but without much success, owing to the inhospitable nature of the country through which they had to pass and also to the opposition they met with from the Hazara tribes round Herat, who, belonging as they do to the Shiah section of the Mahommedan religion, are at daggers drawn

with the Afghans, who belong to the Sunni section.

Therefore the Germans had to try yet another road, and succeeded farther South where they had failed in the North. By taking the longer route through Kerman and Narmashir in the South and South-East of Persia, they found easy ingress into Afghanistan.

To effect this, however, they had to make friends with the nomad and war-like tribes of the Sarhad. These tribes were traditionally friendly to the British, but the Germans had bribed them heavily and had moreover assured them that Germany had turned Islam and that the Kaiser William himself was a convert to their religion. As the Sarhad tribes were always out for a good thing for themselves, and as they believed the lie about the German conversion, they had allowed themselves to be tricked into helping the Germans. This they were doing not only by permitting them to pass through their territory, but also by harassing the lines of communication between the inadequately small British frontier posts.

The story of Germany having turned Mahommedan, farcical as it was, was nevertheless a potential source of grave danger for us in India. It must be remembered that Germany's ally, Turkey, was Mahommedan, and that in helping us against Germany, the Mahommedans of India were already being called upon, indirectly, to fight against their own co-religionists. When, in addition, India was assured that powerful Germany was winning, so her agents avowed, in every theatre of war, it was inevitable

that in time her loyalty to us must suffer.

It was vital to stop this lying but insidious propaganda, and the first step was to prevent German agents from entering India at all. To do this the nomad tribes of the Sarhad must be brought back into line with their old policy of friendship with Britain. Hence my orders from General Kirkpatrick.

He instructed me to proceed without a moment's unnecessary delay to Quetta, where I was to receive more detailed instructions.

On leaving him I hurried, with car and native chauffeur, to the railway station, and asked for a truck on which to place the car for entrainment to Nushki. The station-master assured me I was asking for an impossibility. A great Maharajah, then travelling, had commandeered every available truck for his suite, luggage and cars. I told him that the Government business on which I had been sent was all important, and, by a little persuasion, soon had myself on the way to Pindi and the car on the way to Nushki.

Arrived at Pindi I found I had exactly one hour left in which to catch the train for Quetta. There was no time to pack, sort out kit, or decide what should, or should not, be taken on a campaign which might last only a few weeks or many months, and which might assume a political aspect sooner than expected. My servant, Allah-dad, was therefore directed to take everything for sorting out when time could be spared, and I rushed off to try and "do a deal" with General Sir Gerald Kitson, before starting.

I realised that a motor-car might play an important part in

this prospective campaign, as it would be necessary to travel for long distances in a land of no railways and no regular roads, the best road to be hoped for probably being a sandy track used by camel caravans. I had already had some experience of difficult motoring with an inefficient chauffeur, so naturally wanted to secure the best man that could be got.

I must here explain that I possessed an English chauffeur, Allan by name, and that General Kitson employed his brother in the same capacity. Now, without any disparagement of *my* Allan, I knew his brother to be a more practical and experienced man. General Kitson generously gave his consent to an exchange of chauffeurs.

I may as well say, at once, that it was a lucky day for me that saw Allan of the 9th Middlesex Regiment enter my service, for, during the months to come, he was as cheery and full of resource as he was ready for any event, however untoward. His appetite stood forth as the only thing that ever caused me uneasiness, and I must admit that I have never met a man with one of such colossal proportion. As an instance – on one occasion, when camped out in the desert, between Nushki and Robat, and supplies were none too plentiful, we cooked twelve sausages for breakfast.

I had one, and then was persuaded by Allan to attempt a second. I only succeeded in disposing of half of it. I then got up and left Allan to have his own breakfast. Allah-dad, being a Mahommedan, of course refused to touch sausage.

At lunch-time Allah-dad asked what I would have to eat,

and got the answer, "Oh, some of the cold sausages left from breakfast."

Allah-dad replied, "But there are no sausages, Sahib. Allan has eaten them all."

I expostulated, maintaining that it was impossible. No normal man could have eaten ten and a half large sausages. But Allah-dad was not to be shaken. It may be well imagined that the feeding of my chauffeur during the months to come loomed up as one of my minor anxieties.

From Pindi I went to Quetta by train, my car, with the native chauffeur having gone direct to the then rail-head at Nushki, in the North of Indo-Baluchistan.

At Quetta I laid in a store of petrol, spare tyres, a few personal necessities, reported to General Grover for orders and information, and then proceeded to Nushki; which place was reached, and the car picked up, on, if I remember rightly, the 25th of February.

This day in Nushki was to prove the last in a civilised town for many months to come. The look of the country lying before us so intimidated my native chauffeur that he came to me, a short time before we were due to start, with a countenance torn with grief and, with lamentations and protestations of sorrow, told me that both his father and mother were ill, and that it was vital for him to return and succour them. As I had been in two minds as to the advisability of taking the rascal with me, this sign of the white feather at the very outset at once decided the point, and I

gave him to understand that he could go and bury as many of his relations as he pleased. With a countenance swiftly transformed to cheerfulness he left me.

Just before starting a wire was handed in from a high political official at Quetta informing me that the Baluch Raiders had already cut our lines of communication, were right across my path, and he advised, if not ordered, me not to proceed.

However, as explicit military instructions were to endeavour to reach Robat (near the Koh-i-Maliksia), a hill at which the Baluch, Afghan and Persian frontiers meet, as well as that of the district known as the Sarhad, with the least possible delay, and as I knew the Raiders were across my path even before I left Quetta, I saw no reason for altering previously made plans or for delaying my departure.

Accordingly I started on the journey to Robat early on the morning of the 27th. I reckoned it would take at least five days to reach that town, as the route it would be necessary to follow would be fully three hundred and seventy-five miles. I already knew that it would be essential to make many long détours round freshly formed sand dunes and other obstacles, for it must be remembered that there was no proper road but only a rough camel-track continually blown over and obliterated by sand, along which supplies were taken from India to Robat, and the small garrison posts which we had established at various points Northward.

The mention of small garrison posts may lead the reader to

suppose that this area of wild activity was fairly well policed, but, as a fact, one battalion of Indian infantry, a regiment of Indian cavalry and, I believe, four mountain guns, constituted the entire force of regulars holding a front of close upon three hundred miles. It was small wonder, then, that the Sarhad tribes, commonly known as Raiders, from their raiding proclivities, who knew every inch of the country, could climb like cats, and could do long marches on short rations, had succeeded in cutting our lines of communication, and in carrying off our supplies.

I could, therefore, look for no further help for the time in the matter of supplies and so took with me all that I thought would be necessary for our three hundred and seventy-five mile trek across the sandy wastes lying between Nushki and Robat.

Petrol was, at the moment, the most important of our needs; we had, therefore, to carry with us all we should require, making allowance at the same time for mishaps. Moreover, we had to take enough food and water to last Allan, Allah-dad and myself for five or six days.

As regards personal luggage we travelled absolutely light, leaving all kit to follow at a slower pace on camels, together with my horse, Galahad. I had some compunction in leaving the latter behind, but my orders were concise and urgent – to reach Robat, endeavour to get into touch with all our scattered posts, and effect a combination against the Raiders at the earliest possible moment.

A start was made very early in the morning, but the first day's

journey proved disappointing. Instead of doing the ninety miles planned, we only accomplished thirty. The track was even worse than I had expected, for we constantly ran into sand-hills, and had to dig the car out. I have never done so much digging in my life as I did on that journey to Robat. Sand-hills were, however, only a portion of our afflictions, for, in addition, there were many water pools and small shallow lakes – due to recent rain – which had to be taken at a rush, or somehow circumvented.

So serious, at last, did our rate of progress become that, as we approached what seemed to be the hundredth of these wide, shallow pools, I lost patience and ordered Allan to drive straight through.

He attempted to carry out the order, but about half-way we sank up to the axle and stuck. No power on earth would induce the car to budge another inch, and, though we all three got out into the water, and lugged, pushed and dragged at the wretched car, no impression could be made upon her.

So we remained till, at last, about two a.m., I caught sight of a light on a small hill not very far away in the west, and, on going over to it, found a sort of recluse, or holy man, quietly cooking his food. After the usual courtesies I asked him to come and help me to pull my car out. He replied that he was an old man and could not do much by himself, but that a caravan of nomads, who had arrived the evening before, were encamped close by. So off I went again, flushed my "quarry", and, with the help of large bribes, persuaded all the able-bodied men to come back to the

car. Fortunately we carried a good strong rope as part of our kit, so soon had the car out and running again.

Allan was never again ordered to drive through water on that route.

On the second day our troubles recommenced, for we had barely done a dozen miles than we stuck in another sand-hill, and the laborious digging-out process had to be done all over again. Fortunately, the party who had got the car out of the lake the night before were close behind, and for an obvious reason. They had been given so many rupees for their timely help that, knowing the difficulties lying ahead, they had followed in the hope of further largesse. They got it.

Once safely out again I made a tour of inspection round the car, but only to find more trouble.

"Hullo, what on earth is this, Allan? She's leaking!"

Allan smiled a superior smile. "I don't think so, sir. My cars don't leak."

But a moment later his superiority turned to consternation, and he was burying his head in the bowels of the car.

After a moment's inspection he showed a face of such utter dismay that it would have been comical had not the situation been so serious.

"Great Scott, sir! I must have left the petrol tap turned on, and the tank is nearly empty."

Here, I'm afraid, my language was violent, and it was some minutes before Allan was able to ascertain exactly how much

petrol we had left. His calculations established the fact that we had lost some fourteen gallons. This meant that we should have to walk the greater part of the last two hundred miles of our journey. A pleasant prospect in that forbidding country. But orders were to go on, and go on we did.

That day we made good time, and before evening had done the ninety miles set as a day's march. But, as we had lost so much ground the previous day, I determined to go on as long as Allan could stick at the driving wheel, and we went on – to a post called Yadgar.

I should explain that in this barren, townless, roadless district there are occasional small rest-houses, very modest types of Dâk bungalows, established by the Indian Government for the benefit of travellers, or soldiers on their way to frontier duty. They are quite bare except for a camp bed or two, a tub, a table, a few chairs and a wash-hand basin, with a *chokidar*, or keeper, in charge.

Such a rest-house we found at Yadgar, and being not only very tired and dusty, but filthily dirty, as the result of our struggles with the car, we pulled up to try and get a superficial wash.

I jumped out and tried the door. It was locked, and I banged loudly without getting any answer. It would not do to lose an unnecessary minute, for the many miles we should have to walk later on loomed unpleasantly ahead, but I knew there were pretty certain to be water and washing-basin behind that door, and did not intend to leave them unused if I could help it, *chokidar* or

no *chokidar*. So, I took a butting run with my shoulder, the door gave, and I set out in search of the water tub.

An open door on my right showed me a small room, absolutely empty, except for a row of tins against the wall. Knowing that petrol was carried in such tin drums I went and examined them. The next moment Allan heard a shout that brought him hastily inside, wondering whether I had gone mad, had been bitten by a wild beast, or was being murdered.

"Look!" I cried, as he came running up to me. "Look at those tins and tell me what's inside!"

Allan seized hold of one of the drums, read what was written on it, gave it a shake, and we could both hear the blessed sound of lapping inside.

"It's petrol, sir," he whispered in an awed voice.

Petrol in the desert – petrol where one would as soon have expected to find a Bond Street jeweller!

At first we could neither of us believe it. Personally I imagined we had both got temporary jim-jams, but Allan, with his usual stolid, common sense, opened one of the drums, tested the contents, and pronounced it to be first-class petrol. There were seven drums, each containing four gallons.

"This means we'll motor, not walk into Robat after all, sir," said Allan, with a grin and sigh of relief. The thought of those miles of desert – nearly two hundred of them – which confronted us after the mishap had been haunting us both like a nightmare.

At this moment the *chokidar* returned, in great trepidation,

fearing a dressing-down for being absent from duty. But I was far too elated at the turn of events to want to swear at anyone.

I asked him where the petrol had come from, and whose it was. He shook his head, and said he had no idea. It had always been there. It belonged to no one, and no one had put it there, so far as he knew. He had never seen a car there before; in fact, he had never seen a car anywhere before, and could not understand how it was that men could travel on a thing which was not alive, which was not like any horse or camel he had ever seen.

This was all very good hearing, so I proceeded to tell him that the petrol belonged to me, and, as he quite cheerfully acquiesced, I gave him a receipt which he could show to any Government official in case of needed absolution in the future. As we now had means to finish our journey by car, I decided to spend the night at the rest-house.

After a simple camp meal Allan, worn out with the strenuous work of the past two days and night, was quickly snoring in the deep sleep of exhaustion, so I went for a stroll.

As I paced up and down I tried to draw up some preliminary plan for the coming campaign. But such occupation was somewhat futile, as, until I could reach Robat, I had no knowledge at all as to the strength and composition of the force that would be at my disposal. But upon one thing I made up my mind – even at that early stage – I would do my utmost to show these Raiders, who were doing us so much harm, that they could not do this with impunity. The lesson once driven home,

an endeavour should be made to become friendly with them, to win them back to our side, and, so to speak, appoint them as doorkeepers of the Baluchistan frontier; but doorkeepers with their rifles pointed at our enemies instead of at ourselves.

In the midst of these meditations I found myself stumbling with fatigue, so, with a last look at the beauty of the night, I turned indoors, and in a few minutes was sound asleep, and making up for the "whiteness" of the night before.

CHAPTER II
THE ROAD TO ROBAT

Mushki-chah – The native contractor – An evening rencontre – Idu of the Chagai Levies – The native idea of an airship – Idu the invaluable – Robat

On the third day we made good progress, fate being kind in helping us to avoid the sandy pitfalls which had hitherto been our undoing, and, by nightfall, we found ourselves approaching the post of Mushki-chah.

Here we found the road blocked with a number of camel caravans carrying Government food supplies for our scattered posts along the frontier. These posts were already in difficulties owing to the Raiders' interference with their commissariat.

As can be imagined there was a great deal of noise, the native drivers gesticulating and talking in a way which proved that something was afoot. I got out of the car and asked who was in charge of the caravan. A huge native contractor was pointed out to me, and, summoning him to my side I asked him what all the hubbub was about.

He was in a state of great agitation and told me that he had received information from several reliable sources that the whole

of the countryside ahead of them was in the hands of the Raiders, and that, therefore, it was useless to go a step further.

I expostulated with the man, pointing out that, by the terms of his contract, he must go on, and that if he did not the soldiers for whom he was bringing supplies would die of starvation.

But he was dogged. He knew too well the methods of the Raiders with the men they captured.

"It's no use, Sahib," he said, respectfully but firmly. "My men will not go on as they are unarmed, and a single armed Raider is enough to hold up the whole caravan."

I knew the man was right, but persisted in my efforts to persuade him to chance it, pointing out that he might be lucky enough to elude the Raiders and to win through.

"If the Government will give me a military escort I will go, but not without," was his final word.

I had no authority to compel him to go on, so gave up the struggle. But I realised more than ever how imperative it was to endeavour to reach Robat without a moment's unnecessary delay, and start conclusions with the Raiders, whose menace was growing more dangerous every day.

We were, therefore, on the road very early next morning, for I hoped to make Saindak that night. I had intended to go by Borgar, but now that I knew – for I had verified the contractor's statements, and believed them to be correct – that that place was in the hands of the Raiders, I elected to go by an alternative route, known as the *Webb-Ware* route, which is practically out of use

nowadays, hoping, thereby, to avoid the enemy.

It was still dark when we set off on the most strenuous part of our journey; climbing, making détours, digging the car out again and again till we were all three worn out in body and temper. We hardly halted that day, for the necessity for speed was as fully realised by Allan as by myself.

When night fell we had not yet sighted Saindak, but I knew we could not be very far off, and cursed the coming of the night which made it impossible to see where we were. I knew we had got off the camel track somehow, for the ground was even more bumpy than it had been, and was frequently intersected by nullahs or rocky ravines, which made the going positively dangerous. If the car were knocked right out of action our difficulties would reach the last stage of disaster.

At last, in despair, Allan stopped, saying it was useless going on any further. We might overturn the car at any moment and smash it as well as ourselves. He submitted that the only sane thing would be to camp just where we were and wait for daylight, when we might regain the camel track.

I knew he was right, but said I would make one final effort on foot to find the track, and directed him to give me the hurricane lamp we carried on the car.

Stumbling and slipping over the broken ground in the pitch darkness, the lamp barely lighting up my immediate path, I had wandered some distance from the car when I heard voices. Instantly I thought of the Raiders who were over-running the

district. It would be too galling, too humiliating to be captured by them before the campaign, on which I was building such high hopes, had even begun.

Noiselessly I put out the lamp and listened in the dense darkness. There was absolute silence for some minutes, and I stood stock still. Then voices sounded again, and I conjectured that there were not more than two, or at the most three, speakers.

I thought rapidly, and finally decided that there would not be many men in front of me. Had there been anything approaching an encampment of the Raiders in the neighbourhood, there would have been lights, camp fires and considerable noise. The voices I had heard probably belonged to men who had seen the lights of the car, and had come to find out what it was.

I turned swiftly and made my way back to the car, where I had foolishly left my revolver. Recovering my weapon I warned Allan in a whisper of the voices I had heard, and told him to be ready to stand by. Then I made my way back in the darkness, and when I had regained the spot, called out loudly, in Hindustani, "Who's there?"

Instantly a voice answered, "I am Idu of the Chagai Levies, friendly to the British Government."

I then called out who I was, and, immediately, three fully armed men came forward in the darkness.

I asked them what they were doing there, and the voice that had answered me before replied that they were all three members of the Chagai Levies, and that they, and about fifty others, had

come out to fight me.

"To fight me?" I exclaimed. "Whatever for?"

"Well, Sahib," returned the man who had said his name was Idu, "we thought you were a German airship." And he went on to explain that for a long time he and his companions had been watching powerful lights floating about in the sky, and as they knew that Germans were the only people in the world who had *hawaiijihaz* or airships, they were convinced the lights they had seen belonged to one of these. And when it had alighted on the hill in front of them, the majority of his companions had been so terrified that they had run away, and only himself and his two comrades had had the bravery to stay where they were and face the unknown danger.

Then it dawned on me what he was driving at. The flashing electric lights of the car, lighting up the distant, rising slopes of the desert, had appeared to these men to come from the sky, and my harmless motor-car the dreaded German airship. Cars, of course, along this route were as great a novelty as airships, and doubtless not one of the men in front of me had ever seen one before.

I reassured them as completely as I could, adding that I was delighted to meet such redoubtable warriors, and hoped that now they would come with me and help me, as my business was to fight Germans, airships and all. This was strictly true, for, but for German influence, there would have been no need to wage war on the Raiders who had only been induced to become our

enemies by lying German propaganda.

Idu said they would be only too glad to go with the Sahib and to help him fight the enemies of the British Raj. He also told me that he had already saved my life once that evening.

"How was that?" I asked, my spirits rising as I gazed through the darkness at my first three recruits.

"Well, Sahib," returned Idu, "when the airship, which you say is no airship, stopped, in a little while we saw the figure of a man, carrying a lantern moving towards us, and Halil here," laying his hand on the shoulder of one of his pals, "lifted his rifle and was about to shoot. But I said, 'Nay. See, it is but one man. Let us wait and see who he is.' And then the lantern went out and there was no longer a target."

"You did well, Idu," I said solemnly. "You have most certainly saved my life, and as you seem to be as intelligent as you are brave, I shall appoint you to my personal staff. I am the officer who has been sent out to take command of the forces along the Sarhad, and in Seistan. But at the present moment my chief concern is to find the right road to Saindak. Can you show it to me?"

Idu laughed. "I could lead you there blindfold, Sahib."

I felt the difficulties of the road were now over, and, piloted by these three stalwarts, the car – a source of the utmost excitement and wonderment to them – Allan, Allah-dad and my weary self were, ere long, safe in the rest-house of the small mud fort at Saindak.

The following morning, after a good night's rest, I had a long talk with Idu, and the very favourable impression I had formed of the man the night before was greatly increased. I found him by daylight to be a highly intelligent-looking, splendidly proportioned fellow of about five feet eight, with a big black beard. I had glimpses, even then, of the keen sense of humour which was to do so much to lighten the difficulties of the ensuing campaign. Never once in all the months to come did I find his wit and humour fail.

As after-events proved he was absolutely invaluable. In fact, I often called him, and told him that I called him, my "head." Not only did he know every yard of the country, but he knew by name practically every one of the Raiders, knew their peculiarities and their weak points as well as their strength. Idu was a man in a million, and I should like to think that, some day, this public appreciation of him, and of what he did to help in this campaign, may reach him.

After breakfast and my talk with Idu, we set out on the last march of the first phase of my journey, and reached Robat by two o'clock in the afternoon.

CHAPTER III
A PLAN OF CAMPAIGN

An "intelligent" officer – Matters political – Three tribes and a fourth – Their women and inter-tribal laws – Sarhad conditions – A summons to the Chiefs – A bid for rank – Telegraph wires and Sheitan – Two first-class liars – A strategic scheme – An ungazetted General – Lost kit – Swallows and flies – Forces available – Communications freed – The Kacha levy and a shock – Mirjawa

My first visit in Robat was to the officer who had been commanding the scattered British forces up to that date. He was a very sick man, and had been holding out with the utmost difficulty until he could be relieved. Here I met Major Landon of the 35th Scinde Horse, one of the three Intelligence Officers employed by the Indian Government in Persia.

I very quickly realised that Landon was an officer of very high intelligence, as well as an Intelligence Officer, and that he had a fund of information concerning the country, and the conditions and characteristics of the inhabitants of both Persia

and Baluchistan. In fact, I judged that he would be such an asset that, then and there, I invited him to become my Brigade-Major, although I ruefully remarked that I had, at present, no brigade!

He was keen to accept, but did not know how the authorities at Simla would view his acceptance of such a post, and asked me whether I should be willing to shoulder the responsibility of annexing him for the campaign. Considering that my shoulders were broad enough, I promptly replied that my orders had been to take command of all the scattered forces I could find and co-ordinate them, and that I looked upon him as my second "find," Idu and his two companions being the first. Further, that he was here as Intelligence Officer and would acquire no intelligence sitting down in Robat, whereas, if he came with me, he would get all he wanted at first hand!

I set myself to pick up all the information I could about the conditions of British "influence" in this part of Persia, and on the borders of Afghanistan. To make it in any way clear why we had any influence here at all we must revert to the old fear of the threatened advance of Russia on India, in the days before Russia became our ally in the Great War.

Slowly and gradually Russia had been extending her influence in the Pamirs until her outposts on the Oxus River were only eight marches from Chitral. Evidently, as a wide counter, strategic move, the Indian Government had sought to increase its own influence with Persia and Afghanistan by pushing forward her outposts to Robat and Nasaratabad.

Consequently, at the time of which I am writing, Robat, Nasaratabad and Birjand were held lightly by chains of small posts composed entirely of Indian troops and some local levies commanded by British officers. Our lines of communication running from Birjand to Nushki, a distance of about six hundred miles, were held, in widely scattered posts, by only one battalion of Indian Infantry and one regiment of Indian Cavalry and four mountain guns. Thus it will be seen that it was very difficult to obtain any troops for a movable column.

A British Consulate had also been established at Nasaratabad, which is on the borders of Afghanistan and Persia. During the War the importance and influence of the Consul increased considerably, as he was in a position to gather information which was of great value to the military commanders, who constantly sought his advice.

There was also a Baluch Political Officer, known as the Sarhad-dar, who worked under orders from the British Political Officer at Quetta. The Sarhad-dar, to a certain degree, controlled the Sarhadi Raiders, occasionally with the help of the Chagai Levies, which were raised by the Indian Government for this particular work.

Supplies were brought to these scattered posts by camel caravans from India.

Communication with India was maintained by means of the telegraph. Later on it became necessary to send out a wireless troop from India to establish communication between my force

at Khwash and Saindak.

At the same time I did my best to learn all I could about the tribes amongst whom I was going to operate, their ways and customs, and the nature of the country in which they lived.

A glance at the map will show the situation and boundaries of the Sarhad – literally meaning boundary. It will be seen that it extends from Jalk in the East to Galugan in the West. The Eastern part, from Jalk to Safed-koh, is held by a tribe known as the Gamshadzais, under their notable leader, Halil Khan.

The central portion is held by the Yarmahommedzais under Jiand Khan, an elderly man, who has been undisputed chief, and a sort of over-lord of the whole of the Sarhad, for very many years. He has been looked upon by his own and neighbouring tribes as well-nigh a demi-god. As Jiand enters later, and largely, into this narrative all further description of him will be reserved till actual contact is established with him.

Khwash – known also as Vasht or Washt – is the capital of the Sarhad, and is situated within Jiand's jurisdiction, although he is not the actual owner of the town. The word Khwash literally means "sweet," and, I believe, owes its name to the water, which is, by the way, quite warm when it appears at the surface of the ground in the immediate vicinity.

The Western portion of the Sarhad, extending roughly from Khwash to Galugan, is held by the Ismailzais under their redoubtable leader, Juma Khan.

All three of these tribes possess approximately one thousand

families apiece, and, of course, each family has many members, as well as large numbers of camels, and herds of sheep and goats.

Each of these tribes, at the time of which I write, could muster, roughly, from one to two thousand riflemen, chiefly armed with Mauser rifles and modern ammunition.

South of Robat lay a fourth tribe, the Rekis, fewer in number than any one of those already mentioned. This tribe was entirely friendly to the British, and, although nominally under a leader called Ibrahim, paid more heed to Idu, who, as I have already said, was one of the most remarkable men I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. He was also a Havildar (Sergeant) in the Chagai Levies; a local force raised by the Indian Government.

These various tribes all belong to the Sunni branch of the Mahommedan religion, and are of Arab origin. As a whole they are a fine-looking set of men, slim and graceful, with fine, intelligent faces, and aquiline features. Their hair is allowed to grow unrestricted, and falls in long black ringlets, on either side of the face, in true King Charles I. style. In fact, one of these men, with whom I afterwards made good friends, was nicknamed Charles I. on sight, as, with his flowing ringlets and short pointed beard, he bore such a strong resemblance to the pictures of that unfortunate monarch.

These men are fine skirmishers, and will fight with the utmost bravery when well led, and have confidence in their leaders. Being nomads, they possess but few villages, such as Khwash, Gusht, and Jalk; which consist of a mud fort or forts and a

few houses. Their lives are spent for the most part in tents, called Jugis, which are made of camels' hair, dyed black, and are pitched wherever a convenient spot can be found.

Wives, families and herds accompany them on their wanderings from place to place. Their womenkind are often good-looking, and usually lighter skinned than the men. The women's endurance, too, is wonderful, for they can climb the precipitous hills with as much agility as the men, bear the hardships of long marches, the violent summer heat and the intense cold of the winter nights with great fortitude. They go unveiled, and appear to be treated well by their husbands and sons. In fact, in some notable instances, the women of the Sarhad exercise great influence over their husbands, and, when this is so, rule with the proverbial "rod of iron." Each man is allowed four wives, and, though he does not always acquire this number, he never exceeds it.

The tribes literally live by raiding. They know no fear, and seldom show mercy. They not only raid travellers but villages, and, on occasion, large towns. These raids have been known to be pushed as far as Meshed, the sacred town and "Mecca" of Persia, which lies far away in the North upon the Turkestan border. Such expeditions are carried out with immense skill and cunning, and are seldom unsuccessful. The raiders not only loot jewels, carpets, food, cattle and herds, but women and children, whom they subject to a life of utter misery.

Persian ladies are frequently carried off in this way, to become

eventually abject slaves subject to inter-tribal barter. The prices paid for such slaves naturally vary according to quality, age and looks. As much as three hundred rupees may be taken as an average price for a young woman, and as little as twenty-five rupees for a small child.

But, although they are utterly lawless in regard to other people, their few inter-tribal laws are fairly strictly observed. These laws, however, chiefly consist of the doctrine that Might is Right and Success pardons all Sins. In the Sarhad a man is expected to tell the truth – unless a lie better suits his purpose. Any oath given on the Koran is binding, provided a Mullah or priest is present. Otherwise such an oath is as often honoured in the breach as in the observance.

They have, however, some standards of honour to which they strictly adhere. If, for instance, they come as invited guests to your camp, or if you go as an invited guest to theirs, treachery is not thought of. The laws of hospitality, as in nearly all Eastern countries, are strictly maintained.

Their food consists mostly of flour-cake, made, as a rule, of barley, though occasionally of wheat, and goat-flesh and wild herbs. As their herds always travel with them, except when fighting or raiding, there is always a plentiful supply of meat and milk. Their slaves, on the contrary, are half starved, and present the most pitiful contrast to their own women and children, who are well fed, healthy and provided with ample clothing.

Their country, the Sarhad, is very arid, sandy, sparsely

cultivated, and crossed by range upon range of bare volcanic hills, with rugged peaks and precipitous sides. Some of these hills rise to considerable heights, as, for example, the Koh-i-Bazman, overlooking Bampur in the South. This peak reaches an altitude of eleven thousand four hundred feet. The Koh-i-Taftan is another, of something over thirteen thousand feet, and is snow-capped in Winter and early Spring, despite the fact that it is an active volcano. The word Taftan signifies boiling. Its crater possesses two main outlets, from which clouds of sulphur-smoke are constantly being emitted. The whole summit is in consequence covered with white ash, so giving it a wonderfully imposing and picturesque appearance from a distance, especially at sunset or sunrise. The effect is very like that of Fuji-Yama, but certainly on a grander scale.

The hills of this district are all of volcanic origin, and, for this reason, rich in sulphur and sal-ammoniac deposits. The low-lying country obviously once formed the bed of a sea, for the fossils to be found here in quantity are of marine origin, and the soil is thickly impregnated with salt. Fresh water is very scarce, though large salt water lakes are fairly frequent.

It is interesting to think how much could be done with this country were some scheme of irrigation introduced. The natives have a simple method of supplying water to meet their wants. This is done by means of karezes, underground channels which tap underground springs and so bring the water to where it is wanted.

Trees are occasionally planted by these karezes, in the towns, but otherwise are scarcely ever seen in this inhospitable, arid region, where it is even hard to find sufficient food for camels, horses or herds, when on the march. There are occasional valleys through which a small stream may flow for a certain distance, but which, very soon, disappears again into the sand. In those rare spots where water is plentiful the luxuriance of the vegetation is phenomenal, proving how fertile the country might become were it irrigated in the same way as are certain parts of India. Wheat, barley, spinach, cucumbers, pumpkins and green vegetables grow readily where water exists.

Climatic conditions in these regions are curiously extreme. Great cold prevails in the Winter, but the heat in Spring and Summer is terrific. There is, too, a curious feeling of intense lightness in the atmosphere which induces a queer feeling of "emptiness" in those unaccustomed to its rarified quality. A hot wind, impregnated with sand, blows in Seistan more or less continually from April to July, so adding to the general discomfort of the white man. This wind is known as the Sad-o-bistroz (literally, "wind which blows for one hundred and twenty days"). But, though disagreeable and irritating, this wind saves the health of the Seistani inhabitants during the most trying months of the year, as it checks malaria by blowing away the mosquitoes.

This rather vague, and very incomplete, attempt at a sketch of the people who were causing such serious trouble to our

Government, and of the country in which they lived, may, at any rate, serve to give some idea of the foe, and his terrain, in this small but terse campaign which I shall make an attempt to describe in the following chapters.

It grew more evident daily that it was necessary to organise a movable column to operate against the Raiders as soon as possible.

There were more troops at Nasaratabad than at any other post, and I considered that some of these might well be taken for the purpose. Moreover, there was a British Consul there whose advice and information would be very valuable. Accordingly, Landon and I arranged to go there by car on the first possible day.

But I thought it would be a good preliminary move to find out exactly how the land lay with regard to the Raiders, and to force them, so to speak, to declare their policy towards us.

I therefore told the local Baluchi political officer to send out notices to Jiand Khan, the leader of the Yarmahommedzais, to Halil Khan, the leader of the Gamshadzais, to Juma Khan, leader of the Ismailzais, and to the leader of the Rekis, to meet the new British General, just arrived from India, so that counsel might be taken together on a certain date at a small post called Kacha.

Of course, from all I had heard, I did not for one moment expect these Raider Chiefs to keep the *rendezvous*. But if, by some amazing chance, they did, we might come to some amicable arrangement and so avoid actual fighting. If, on the other hand, they refused to do so, it would be tantamount to a

declaration of war.

A few days later I kept the appointment I had made, but, with the exception of the Reki leaders, who assured me of their consistent loyalty to the British, not a single Raider Chief turned up.

Thereupon I returned to Robat and planned my campaign.

Already I could see I was going to be badly handicapped by my lack of rank, and determined to make a bid for the rank which would give me more authority. With this object in view I sent a telegram to General Kirkpatrick – already mentioned as Chief of Staff at Simla, and acting as Commander-in-Chief in the absence of General Sir Beauchamp Duff – asking him to make me a General, and stating baldly that I considered it necessary.

It may seem strange that, in this wild, desolate country, largely in the hands of lawless, rebellious tribes, it was possible to send a telegram at all. But a fine telegraph line, right across Persia, connecting Europe with India, has been in existence for over fifty years. The concession to erect this line was obtained from the Shah by Mr Eastwick in 1862, then British Chargé d'Affaires in Teheran.

There had been long negotiations over this concession, which had been consistently refused by the Persian Government; but the Shah's personal friendship for Mr Eastwick prevailed where diplomatic negotiations had failed. It was a particularly advantageous arrangement for us, as, by the contract drawn up by the Persian Government in 1864, that Government undertook

to construct a telegraph line from the Persian frontier, near Baghdad, to India, at the expense of Persia, but to place it under the control of British officers. This and other telegraph lines had not been interfered with or cut in any way by the Raiders, for the simple reason that they have strong superstitious fears of telegraph wires, and imagine them in some way to be in close communication with Sheitans (devils).

Whilst I was awaiting a reply to my urgent request for an advance in rank, Idu, Landon and I took counsel together. I asked Idu whether he had two first-class liars amongst his friends, in whom he could place implicit trust. His eyes twinkled as he assured me he had many friends on whose complete fidelity, as well as on whose absolute qualifications, he could rely.

I then unfolded to him my scheme. It was quite obvious that it would be utterly impossible to defeat the Raiders in open fight. They numbered several thousands of fully armed men, amply equipped, and supplied with all the ammunition and food they needed. They were also in their own country, every yard of which they knew well.

In a straightforward fight any small force we could muster would be wiped out in a few minutes. But as it was necessary to fight and beat those Raiders, who were doing us such immeasurable damage, bluff must be used to strengthen our arms.

I suggested to Idu that he should procure his two skilled friends and tell them, at the outset, that if they succeeded in

the plan entrusted to them their pockets would be literally lined with rupees. They were, then, to run away from me to the two principal Raider Chiefs, Jiand and Halil Khan, and their story was to be that they had managed to escape from the great and famous British General who had just arrived with five thousand fully armed troops. Also, that this General Dyer was greatly incensed at their disobedient method of treating his summons to meet him at Kacha, and that he was starting in great force to attack them, but that he was planning to march first against Halil Khan in the direction of Jalk.

If Idu's men succeeded in making the Raiders swallow all this, the immediate stroke I had in view, namely, an attack on Khwash, might hope for some success. It would at any rate draw the Raiders off the lines of communication and so enable supply caravans to proceed to Robat.

Idu was greatly taken with the idea. It appealed to his sense of humour, and he had soon produced his two spies, on whom, he assured us, he could rely as on himself. Their mission fully explained, Idu's friends started off at once.

Meanwhile, though I was not yet a General I determined to act the part. The 28th Light Cavalry made crossed swords for my shoulders and the necessary red tabs. The former were considerably bigger than the regulation pattern, but were otherwise well made. Then Landon and I went off by car to Nasaratabad.

We found the place to be a small mud-walled enclosure with

walls of great thickness. Inside the enclosure were something like a hundred shops, for the most part kept by Persian soldiers, whose military duties are not usually onerous. We made our way to the Consul's house, and had a very interesting interview with him. Whilst we were there a telegram arrived from Simla informing me that I had been promoted to the rank of Brigadier-General. This was a great relief, for I now no longer felt an impostor.

As a set-off against this bit of good news, I heard that the whole of my kit, which had followed me from Nushki, had been captured by the Raiders. In addition they had killed my horse, Galahad, robbed the groom of all his clothing and torn his golden ear-rings from his ears. On my return to Robat he came to me stark naked, with his nerves utterly shattered, and absolutely useless for any further service.

We also met Colonel Claridge, who was commanding the 28th Cavalry and the troops at Nasaratabad. I asked him to send to Robat as soon as possible all the food supplies he could collect, two mountain guns, a squadron of cavalry, and as many infantry as he could spare. I was very disappointed, however, at the few troops available at Nasaratabad for the expedition, but I realised that the situation in Afghanistan demanded the presence of a fairly strong garrison at Nasaratabad itself.

On the way back to Robat we stopped at a post where I was accommodated in a room with a domed mud roof, which had been whitewashed. As I lay on my blankets in the morning,

gazing up at the roof, I noticed that the dome was covered with small black spots. As the light grew stronger I realised that they were flies, thousands of them, in a comatose condition, owing to the cold of the night.

As the morning advanced, swallows flew in by the open door, and, fluttering round the dome, picked off the helpless flies one by one, until not a single one was left.

Directly we reached Robat Landon and I set to work on our plans. After considerable thought we determined to make an attempt to capture Khwash, the capital of the Sarhad, and so endeavour to entice the Raiders off our lines of communication. But it took some time to get the guns and food supplies to Robat, for Robat was quite one hundred miles from Nasaratabad. It was also necessary to get in enough supplies for a month at least, as it was useless placing reliance on anything reaching us from India. In other words we had to be quite independent of all lines of communication.

At last the two guns, and supplies, under Major MacGowan, reached Robat, where were now collected about a dozen or fifteen of Idu's Chagai Levies, and seventeen Sawars of the 28th Light Cavalry under Lieutenant Hirst. But I still had no infantry. That, however, I hoped to get at Kacha, the garrison of which consisted of a hundred sepoys of the 19th Punjab Infantry, and two maxim guns.

Therefore, Landon and I arranged to go to Kacha for the infantry, while MacGowan proceeded with his two guns,

seventeen cavalrymen and supplies, direct to Mirjawa, via Saindak. We would then join him there, as soon as we had collected the infantry for our advance on Khwash.

Our real movements had been kept marvellously secret, whilst the news of the five thousand fully armed troops under my command had been spread far and near by Idu's spies; the consequence being that the Raiders were all quietly retiring, from raids upon our lines of communication, to organise their own *lashkars* (armies), and their own defence.

Thus, and at any rate temporarily, the lines of communication of our scattered frontier posts were cleared, and without striking a blow. One small objective had at least been accomplished.

While MacGowan's little force was making its way to Mirjawa, Landon and I rode to Kacha, reaching that place on the 2nd of April. There Lieutenant Yates, of the 12th Pioneers, paraded all the men he could lay his hands on in front of the mess-house, and, as we rode up, gave the order for the men to present arms.

The result was a shock.

I dismounted and called on all those men who had ever fired a shot in their lives to fall out.

To my dismay only nine men obeyed.

Lieutenant Yates told me that he had done his best with the men, but the greater proportion of them were mere raw recruits. It was a bitter disappointment, and it was very obvious that a great deal of brick-making had to be done without straw. But

there was nothing else for it. These were the only men, trained or untrained, available for the expedition, and I had to be thankful for them.

I took the nine trained soldiers, sixty-five of the untrained recruits, and two maxim guns belonging to the 12th Pioneers, and, with these, Landon and I made our way to the *rendezvous* at Mirjawa, where we all met on the evening of the 6th of April.

CHAPTER IV
BLUFF AND ARMS

Ladis and its fort – A force without arms – First sight of the enemy – Shah Sawar and more bluff – Battle – Bluff succeeds – Casualties – Bad news from the North – Idu's proposition – Jiand's stragglers – Jiand's white flag

The following day we marched to Ladis, reaching that place just before nightfall, and without incident.

Ladis is a camping place situated in a comparatively fertile tract of country fully four thousand feet above sea-level on the slopes of the famous Koh-i-taftan. A considerable stream flows through the valley. If this stream were exploited for irrigation purposes the whole district could be made most productive and profitable. The climate is far better than in the greater part of the Sarhad, and there is an abundance of chikor and other partridges, ibex, and wolves.

On the right bank of the stream is a fine old deserted fort, which is far more substantially built than the occupied forts of Khwash and Jalk, but it has been ruined by the disintegrating

effect of the water on the banks on which it is built. A passage at the base of it indicates that at one time an underground tunnel connected the fort, which lies on the right bank, with the left bank, thus affording a means of escape, or of reinforcement, for the garrison.

We found, waiting for us at Ladis, a band of about fifty Rekis, who had come to join the expedition in answer to an urgent appeal from Idu.

I found they had no arms, ammunition or equipment, and asked them where their rifles were.

"We have none, Sahib," their spokesman replied. "We thought the General Sahib would give us rifles."

I was obliged to tell them that we had no spare arms, but as every extra man would be an asset in our great game of bluff I was not going to let them go, and would find some means of utilising their services.

At first they were greatly disappointed to find that they were not going to be awarded a free issue of British rifles, and commented on the absurdity of a force of the size they saw before them attempting to attack the great Raider Chief, Jiand Khan.

"Why, Sahib," the spokesman said, "Jiand has fully two thousand well-armed men, all out to meet you. They will wipe you out in about two minutes."

If it came to an open fight we all knew that this was literally true. But we were relying on bluff and luck.

The local political officer, a Baluch, was entirely of the Rekis'

way of thinking, and did his utmost to persuade us to turn back and save our skins. But we had not come so far to turn back. Orders were, therefore, given to go forward.

Fortunately for us, and before we struck camp early on the following morning, another political officer arrived to supersede him – a man of totally different calibre. Khan Bahadur, the Sarhad-dar (the chief political officer of all matters concerning the Sarhad) was full of fight, greatly taken with our game of bluff, and fully prepared to enter into its spirit, the only spirit which could possibly bring such an enterprise as ours to a successful conclusion.

From Ladis the force marched South in the direction of Khwash, covering about eighteen miles. This was not bad going when it is remembered that the average rate for a camel caravan over rough sandy country of this sort is about ten or twelve miles a day. We camped that night in a narrow valley, surrounded by hills, and with a good water supply.

The following day the march was resumed, and we were beginning to wonder how soon we should get in touch with Jiand's forces when our advance scouts reported that the enemy was just ahead, and encamped on the low hills running out in spurs from the Koh-i-Taftan.

Our force was halted, and, riding forward myself, I dismounted and took a good look at the enemy's position. This appeared to be, as I had to admit to myself, a very strong one, and, as far as I could gather, it looked as if it had been no idle

report that Jiand's force numbered something like two thousand men. In any case we were in for it now, and must take our chances as they came.

I rode back, ordered the mountain guns to be brought up to some low hills on the left, and the cavalry to move forward under cover to the right.

The transport camels, numbering about six hundred, now came up, under cover, and were put in charge of the sixty-five untrained infantrymen. The two machine guns were brought up to a favourable position in the centre, and our little force was now fully deployed for action.

At this moment a man mounted on a camel was seen coming from the enemy's camp, accompanied by a man on foot carrying a white flag of truce.

When the messenger had approached nearer the Sarhad-dar exclaimed, "Why, it is Shah Sawar himself!"

Now Shah Sawar was a very famous Raider Chief, and a relation of Jiand's. At one time he had been the owner and governor of Khwash, but it appears that he had greatly coveted, as a bride, a very beautiful lady known as the Gul-Bibi, or Rose Lady. As usual, negotiations were conducted between the prospective bridegroom and the lady's nearest male relative, who, in this instance, happened to be a somewhat weak-charactered man named Mahommed-Hassan. The price that Mahommed-Hassan placed on the Gul-Bibi was no less than the ownership of Khwash itself. Shaw Sawar's infatuation drove him to pay

the price, though, from what I came to know of the ruffian afterwards, I am perfectly convinced that he had every intention of recovering his patrimony as soon as a favourable opportunity presented itself.

When he rode up to me, preceded by the flag of truce, I was struck by his fine appearance.

He announced that he had come with a message from his kinsman, Jiand Khan, to the effect that, "If the General Sahib, accompanied by only one man, would meet Jiand half-way, Jiand, also accompanied by one man, would meet him and discuss the situation."

Of course the very last thing I wanted to do was to prolong any negotiations. Every moment that passed increased the danger that our bluff would be discovered, for it was quite obvious that, up to date, Jiand believed in the existence of the great force being brought against him under a British General, as reported to him by Idu's spies. Therefore, it was necessary to bluster, and answer indignantly, "How dare you come to a British General with any such proposal from a scoundrel like Jiand? Go back and tell him that I am coming, not half-way, but the whole way, and at once. I will give you time to take him my message. I will then fire a shot into the air as the signal that hostilities have begun, and the attack, which will wipe him out, will commence."

Shah Sawar was visibly impressed, and, after a few moments' hesitation, beckoned to the man who had come with him. After a whispered colloquy the latter returned to Jiand with the General

Sahib's message. Shah Sawar himself said that he intended to remain with me.

He was obviously cowed and bewildered. He firmly believed we had a great army in the low hills behind us, and deemed it safer to remain with us as a prisoner than to return to Jiand's camp and engage in a battle against five thousand troops – which he could not see from his present position!

Whilst the messenger was racing back to Jiand the seventeen cavalrymen were ordered to show themselves, and as they topped the hills, apparently the advance guard of a great force, their big horses looked most imposing.

Lieutenant Hirst, commanding them, was directed to make a pretence of threatening the left flank and rear of Jiand's position, but ordered not to go too close!

Then, as soon as information came that Jiand's messenger had reached his camp – some six hundred yards distant – and had had time to deliver his message, one of the Chagai Levies was ordered to fire a shot into the air as a signal that the battle had begun.

He pulled his trigger, but nothing happened.

I told him to try again.

Again he pulled the trigger, and this time with the desired result.

The battle had begun.

The order to charge was given. The cavalry moved rapidly to the right, the machine guns rattled, and the infantry – nine

trained men and a handful of Chagai Levies, rushed forward in the centre.

What happened in the enemy's camp I only learned afterwards, but it appears to have been as follows: Jiand, seeing the cavalry advancing as if to threaten his retreat, really believed that the mythical army of five thousand was commencing its attack in full force, and, mounting his own camel, he gave an order which literally amounted to a "*sauve qui peut*." In any case, and in a moment, his force was scattered in a frenzy of terror, and in full retreat, amongst the hills and valleys.

For a moment Landon and I looked at each other. Then, as we realised that the great bluff had succeeded, we rushed forward, with a loud whoop, closely accompanied by the Sarhad-dar. As we were mounted, we got ahead of the others, and actually overtook a number of Jiand's men retreating down a nullah. We emptied our revolvers into them, and some of our infantry coming up, their terror was increased, for they thought they had been trapped by overwhelming numbers.

The enemy had suffered a loss of seven killed. On our side we had one man wounded, and I honestly believe he was wounded by one of our own untrained infantrymen, who, in the excitement and enthusiasm of the moment, had disobeyed orders and joined in the chase.

By the evening there was no one left in sight to chase, so we halted and made preparations to camp where we were. Only a few hours before we had known that if the truth of our numbers

had leaked out not one of us would live till night to tell the tale. Fortunately the secret had been well kept, and, although we had only accounted for seven of the enemy, it was obvious we had won a decisive victory. Jiand's entire force was scattered and demoralised, and it would take him a considerable time, even when he did learn how he had been tricked, to collect them again.

He was a very notable man, with enormous power and prestige, not only with his own tribe, the Yarmahommedzais, but with all the nomad tribes of the district, and was regarded as a personage by the Governments of both India and of Persia. His defeat would be a very bitter pill for him to swallow. Although he was looked on by the Ismailzais and the Gamshadzais as a sort of over-lord, even of their own Chiefs, there was always great rivalry between the various tribes, and he would know that Juma Khan, whilst outwardly sympathising with him, would, in reality, be jubilant.

Accordingly, and for the sake of his own prestige, he must make the most of the forces brought against him. That very evening I learned from one of his men, who had been overtaken and brought back as a prisoner, that he had given out that he had had seven hundred men killed and amongst the number was his own favourite son. The death of this son, I afterwards found, was a bitter blow to the famous old Chief, and I have always been sorry that he credited my hand as being the one which had struck him down, though this was absolutely untrue.

Seven men multiplied by a hundred was not bad as a free

advertisement. But I determined to go one better.

"Seven hundred!" I retorted to the trembling prisoner. "Nonsense! If you had said seven thousand, it would be far nearer the mark."

Now the great thing was to make the most of our almost bloodless victory near Koh-i-taftan, and pursue Jiand and his men as far as possible amongst the rocky fastnesses of the hills into which they had fled. If only the old ruffian could be persuaded to surrender before the bluff was called, it would be just possible to make the other tribes think that the whole game was up, and so make terms with us; thus obviating a long and harassing campaign.

So we pursued him for two days, as far as Kamalabad, his own special winter headquarters, nearly overtaking him. But he just eluded us as we entered the place by riding out at the other end, and so escaped into the Morpeish Hills, where it was quite hopeless to think of following him with our very small force.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.