BROOKE HENRY FRANCIS

PRIVATE JOURNAL OF HENRY FRANCIS BROOKE

Henry Brooke

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Brooke H.

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Henry Francis Brooke
Private Journal of Henry Francis Brooke / Late Brigadier-General Commanding 2nd Infantry Brigade / Kandahar Field Force, Southern Afghanistan, from April / 22nd to August 16th, 1880

PREFACE

The following Journal or Diary was written by my dear Husband – to use his own words – "for *you*, of course, first, but written in this form *specially* for the dear chicks, and therefore quite simple and plain, so as to interest and amuse them; but I shall be very glad *if* it interests the others if you will send it the rounds, as then I need not try to write the same story over and over again, which is very tiresome."

When on the 20th March, 1880, being at the time Adjutant-General of the Bombay Army, my dear Husband, to his infinite satisfaction and delight, and full of ardour and zeal, was ordered to the Front, to take command, as Brigadier-General, of the 2nd Infantry Brigade at Kandahar, Southern Afghanistan; knowing how deeply interested we (his wife, and children, his mother, brothers and sisters) would be in all his movements and actions, he conceived the idea of writing this Journal, and most regularly week by week, as he found time to write, and as the Indian mail arrived, did I receive it, and most eagerly was it looked for and read. It will be seen that at first going off the wording of it was simple so that the children might easily understand all that their dear Father was doing, and *small* details describing the various stages of his journey up to Kandahar from Bombay are fully entered into with the object of amusing and interesting them, and that they might the more readily picture him both then, and when later on, having reached Kandahar, and before troubles began, he amused himself by daily rides into the neighbouring fields and orchards, and still further into the villages and surrounding districts, not always unattended without a certain amount of risk and danger, and thus became acquainted *intimately* with the country within 12 or 15 miles of Kandahar. But as difficulties developed themselves, and were followed, first by the lamentable defeat and retreat from the battlefield of Maiwand, of a portion of the already too small force that was holding, what appeared to *him*, the very false military position at Kandahar, and ended as a climax, in the Siege of Kandahar itself, the subject matter of the Journal necessarily became of such painful interest, that the language of it on many points almost went beyond the comprehension of the children, or, at any rate, was not too "simple" for their elders, albeit only too "plain" and grievous for all to read hereafter, when we remembered that He, whom we so dearly loved, had been besieged within the walls of that city, and had been in *daily* danger of losing that life so valuable to his wife and children, and which, alas! it was God's will – before the Kandahar garrison was relieved —*should be* sacrificed in the performance, in the first instance, of his duty, as a true and ardent soldier in the service of his Queen and country, during the sortie upon the village of Deh Khoja on the 16th August, 1880, while in command of the attacking party; and, more directly, in the endeavour to rescue from a cruel death a brother officer – Captain Cruikshank of the Royal Engineers – whom he found in the village severely wounded and unable to save himself! This sortie had been determined upon six days before it was actually undertaken, and strongly *then* objected to, for various sound military reasons, by my dear Husband,

as we now know by what is written in the Journal of the events that daily occurred during the Siege of Kandahar, and also from friends who were there themselves, extracts from whose letters – giving us the sad details of that ill-fated sortie – will be found in the Appendix. These extracts speak volumes of themselves, and need no comment from me. The manner and character of my dear Husband's self-sacrificing death are indications in themselves of the ruling power which influenced all his actions.

It will be seen that the Journal itself ends abruptly with the events of the 14th August – all that happened afterwards we have learnt through the letters of kind friends – and when the former was written it was never intended that it should have been printed, but as all relating to my dear Husband has *now* become of painful interest to those most nearly connected with him, I have been asked, and have yielded to the temptation, to print it as it stands, for private circulation among his nearest relations, to whom he was, in each relation of life, *without reproach*, and who now mourn his irreparable loss.

ANNIE BROOKE.

Ashbrooke,
Brookeboro',
Ireland,
June 18, 1881.

JOURNAL

RECEIVED ORDERS TO PROCEED TO KANDAHAR

On Saturday, the 20th March, 1880, I received the official notification that my appointment to the command of a Brigade of the Kandahar Force had been approved by the Viceroy, and I decided to leave for Kurrachee by the mail steamer of the 27th, as, although I had commenced my preparations a few days before, there was still a good deal to be done, and many things to be got to complete the small service kit which I had to take with me. The first thing to be thought of was some horses, as I had only one at the time, and as the season for purchasing horses in the Bombay market was over (the best time is November, December, and January, when the Arabs arrive from the Persian Gulf with horses), I knew there would be great difficulty in getting horses up to my weight. After many fruitless visits to the various stables, I heard of a very large and handsome Arab for sale at the stables of Addool Rahman, the great horse dealer of Bombay, who strongly recommended me to buy him if I was prepared to give the long price asked (£120). After seeing him and riding him, I quite came to the conclusion he was worth the money, and purchased him, getting him for £110. I then bought a Persian horse out of Sir Richard Temple's stud, for which I gave £60, and with my old friend, a chesnut Australian horse which I have now had for four years, I felt quite made up, and requiring only a pony, which I will get in Beloochistan. I have named the Arab horse (an iron grey) "Akhbar," the Persian (also a grey) "Selim," and the Australian's name is "Rufus." Before going further I must mention that I nearly lost both my new purchases the day after they came into my stables, as the Arab got a bad attack of colic, and the Persian got away from the man who was leading him, and got a very bad cut on his hind leg from some wire paling, but fortunately both got better much more quickly than I hoped, and seem very happy and comfortable in their stalls on board this ship to-day (S.S. "Umballa," at sea March 28th). The next thing to do was to find servants, and in this I think I have been fortunate, having got a quiet Portuguese as general servant, to take care of my clothes, cook, and make himself generally useful. He is to get 25 rupees a month, his clothes and food. Each horse has its groom, and they seem good sort of men, but there is not much choice, as one has to take pretty much what can be got, as there is not much desire among this class of men to see foreign parts. They **|Preparations for Kandahar.|** each get 15 rupees a month, and their clothes and food. After the horses and servants were procured the next consideration was how to get all the things I wanted to take with me into the limit of weight allowed us by the Regulations. I have, of course, considerably more than other officers, but even so I find it quite impossible to manage all I should like to do, so I have brought about 100 lbs. over my weight, as I can easily take any quantity I like as far as the railway goes (*i. e.*, to Sibi), and I am told beyond that I shall perhaps be able to hire some private carriage to take the extra quantity on to Kandahar, and certainly to Quetta, where it can be left, and sent on after me to Kandahar, when the press of sending up troops is over. Even with this extra weight I have been obliged, of course, to limit greatly my desires and wants, but I hope I have got together a fairly compact kit with nothing but what is absolutely necessary in it. First of all I have two very small trunks, which contain my clothes (all of which are uniform), shirts, &c., &c. I have, as a great treat, brought two white shirts, to be worn on high days and holidays, as a change from the coloured flannel shirts which, though useful and appropriate for the occasion, are articles of dress I dislike very much. As the cold season is now past, and it is heat rather than cold we shall suffer from, it has not been necessary to bring up warm clothing, although, of course, I have a few warm things in case of meeting sudden changes of temperature which is quite possible. General Hogg, the Quartermaster-General, presented me with an excellent breech-loading revolver, and I have purchased a sword belt

of the kind called the "Sam Browne Belt" (having been invented by General Sir Sam Browne), as it is so arranged that without inconvenience the pistol and ammunition can be carried on it, and the sword itself can be arranged according to one's pleasure, for riding or walking, which is a great convenience. The Government carry for me 200 lbs. weight of tents (for other officers only 100 lbs.), so I have purchased two tents, one for myself and the other |**Service kit for Kandahar.**| for the servants. My tent is 9 feet by 8, and has a double top as a protection against the sun, and a sort of small verandah on one side, which can be used as a bath-room. The furniture of the tent consists of a bed 6 feet long and 2 feet 3 inches wide, a small folding table and one chair. When I get to Kandahar, if obliged to live in a tent, I will, of course, supplement this scanty supply by such articles of native manufacture as I can get. I have a block tin basin, but no tub, as that is too bulky and heavy, and the custom on the march is to have the water-carrier (Bheestie) to empty a skin of water over one, which, though not so comfortable as a marble bath, answers all the purposes very well. My cooking utensils are so arranged as to go into a strong basket 2 feet high and 12 inches in diameter. In this there are 3 saucepans, which fit one into the other, a kettle, a stewpan, a frying-pan, and a pewter teapot, and 2 teacups and saucers pack into the saucepans, and 2 soup plates and 2 dinner plates, enamelled iron, go into the stewpan. In my luncheon basket are 3 knives, 3 forks, 3 spoons, and a couple of glasses, so on a pinch I can give a dinner party of *two*, without resorting to the usual fashion, which is that when you are asked to dinner in camp you bring your own knives, forks, plates, glass, and generally your chair, your host supplying only the table, food, and, if he is a very good manager and very generous, drink. Of course as the country gets more opened up, native traders will push forward, and everything one can want will be procurable, although, of course, at exorbitant prices; and even now I hear almost anything can be bought at Quetta, and a good number of things at Kandahar. My establishment and kit are therefore constituted as follows: —

1 General Man Servant,
3 Native Grooms,
3 Horses,
2 Tents,
2 Trunks,
1 Table,
1 Bed,
1 Chair,

Cooking Utensils and Plates, Glasses, Knives and Forks for two. I have brought up with me a dozen case of whiskey and two small boxes containing a carefully selected assortment of stores to eke out the rations on the march. I have brought some soups, some chocolate and milk, biscuits, sardines, macaroni, tea, pickles and sauces. How far I shall be able to get these three little boxes I don't know, but at the worst they can easily be got to Quetta, and after that must follow me as they can. On the whole, I am quite satisfied with all my arrangements, especially with my horses, which, if I can only land them safely at Kurrachee (a very troublesome business) and get them to the end of the Railway journey without hurt, will, I think, turn out well, and I am sure I hope so, as all one's efficiency and usefulness (to say nothing of one's comfort and safety) depends on being well mounted, and being able to move about rapidly and see everything for oneself. My saddles (each horse has his own) are all fitted with arrangements for carrying coats, rugs, &c., &c., and extras of all sorts, and during the march the horses I am not riding will have to carry their own clothing, and also that of the horse I ride and of the Syces (native grooms). It will be quite a delightful change to me, after eight years continuous office work day after day from ten till five, to live an active life constantly in the saddle and knocking about, and I feel sure the change will be very good for me in every way. I have brought with me a Persian Grammar and Dictionary, and intend, when settled at Kandahar, to work up a little Persian which might prove useful to me some day or other. The last week at Bombay was very busy,

as, in addition to my preparation for a start, I wanted to keep up my work to the last, and leave nothing unfinished, which I am glad to think I did. I had farewell dinners to go to every night, and indeed had not nights enough nearly to enable me to accept all the invitations I received. I must not forget to say that among other superfluities which I have left behind me at Bombay, are my razors and shaving brush, as I don't intend to use either till I return to civilization. To-day is the second day without shaving, and I am very glad to feel that I have only men in the same stage as myself to meet, as one feels very dirty and scrubby, and will continue to do so for the next month at least, especially as I have had my hair and whiskers very well cropped, which, if not becoming, is certainly very convenient.

On Saturday, the 27th, at 6 o'clock, I went down to the Dock to see my precious horses embarked, and found Alfred Christopher had arrived before me and was superintending their embarkation, which we managed without any difficulty, and then drove back to the Camp, where we breakfasted with Colonel and Mrs. Wardrop, and at 10 a.m. embarked in the Steamer "Umballa" for Kurrachee. At the embarking place several of my friends had come to see me off, and General Aitchison, Colonel Maude, and Colonel Wardrop came off to the ship with me and remained until we were going to sail. On board, besides myself, there is Colonel Anderson, who commands one of the Native Infantry Regiments at Kandahar, returning from sick leave in England; Captain Cooke-Collis, who is going up as Brigade Major of one of the Infantry Brigades; and a young gunner called Fox going to join his Battery at Kandahar. We can just make up a quiet rubber at Whist, which is an advantage, as if we can we intend to travel together all the way. There are only two steamers in the week from Bombay to Kurrachee – one on Tuesday which goes direct to Kurrachee in sixty hours (the distance being under 600 miles), and the one leaving on Saturday which calls in at four Ports on the way, and takes seventy-two hours. We shall, therefore, not be at Kurrachee till Tuesday in the forenoon, not in time, I fear, to get off by that evening's train for "Sibi." I was rather afraid we were going to |**By sea to Kurrachee.**| have bad weather, but it was very fairly smooth for the first twelve hours after leaving Bombay, but early this morning, Sunday, 28th March, the wind freshened a good deal, and I found it difficult to get through my dressing, and considered it advisable not to attempt to come down to Breakfast, but to satisfy myself with a frugal meal of toast and iced water on deck. We have just been into the little Port of Verawul where we dropped our mails and some passengers (natives), and are now on our way to another small place (Porebunder) where we shall be in an hour or so. The sea is calmer again, I am glad to say, so I have been able to manage to write. We hear that the heat in Sind, and until one gets into the highlands near Quetta, is very great, or, at least, was so by the latest accounts, but as it is still rather early for very great heat even in those parts, I hope it may have cooled down a bit before we arrive. I am a little bit nervous for fear I should be stopped at Sibi to superintend the forward movement of troops from that place. General Burrows is now there, and has been there for the last six weeks, and he may have arranged to move forward on my arrival, leaving me there till all the troops are passed (about a fortnight later). I hope this will not be the case, but I shall not be surprised if it is, as he has had his share of the work there, especially as Sibi (pronounced See-bee) is, I am told, the most awful place for heat, flies, dust and wretchedness in the whole country.

March 29th.– Tolerably smooth sea, but very warm; called in at a small Port called Mandavie where we dropped a number of native passengers, and took in several more. As the place is most uninteresting, and the sun was very hot, we did not attempt to land.

March 30th.– A very rough time last night and this morning, consequent on a strong head wind and confused sea, and I was very glad when we steamed into Kurrachee Harbour about 12 o'clock noon. A telegram just received says I am to go straight on to Kandahar.

Kurrachee, March 30th, 1880.– On arriving at Kurrachee the first object was to get the horses on shore, which was very successfully managed, and we had the satisfaction of seeing the whole lot safely landed without any ill results from the Journey, or the 18 hours of heavy weather which they had gone through before reaching Kurrachee. Knowing that William French was busy packing for a start with us the following evening, I was anxious, if possible, to avoid giving him the trouble of

putting me up, so went to the two hotels to try and get a room for the night, but, failing to get into either, I had to drive to William French's and ask shelter from him, and found him in great confusion, but he was able to give me an empty room in which I set up my camp bed, table, and chair, and made myself very comfortable. What I cared much more for than a room for myself (viz., loose boxes for my horses), he was able to give me, and this allowed of the poor beasts getting a good roll and a rest after their 72 hours of standing on board ship, and preparatory to 36 very uncomfortable hours in the railway the next day. The Royal Artillery Mess was close at hand, so I had everything necessary in the eating and drinking way without trouble. Kurrachee was less hot than I expected to find it, and the night was actually cold.

Leave Kurrachee

Wednesday, 31st March.– The journey from Bombay to Kurrachee by sea may be looked on as the first stage on the way to Kandahar, the second being the railway journey from Kurrachee to Sibi, a distance of about 530 miles. Till quite lately only a portion of this distance could be done by rail, which last October only went to Sukkur, leaving 131 miles of desolate desert, for the most part, to be traversed on horseback. In October last it was decided to begin the railway to Kandahar, and the work was put in the hands of Sir Richard Temple (assisted of course by skilled engineers), who was told that no money or exertions were to be spared to complete the line as far as Sibi, so as to avoid the awful journey of nearly 100 miles across a sandy desert, without water and without shade. Owing to the extraordinary energy displayed a feat was accomplished which, I believe, has never been approached; as a train drawn by an engine entered Sibi, 131 miles from the junction with the old line, in 101 days from the date on which the first sod was turned, being at the rate of 1⅓ miles of line each day. No one who has not had to cross the great Cutchi Desert, which lies between Jacobabad and Sibi, can, I believe, imagine what a terrible journey it was, but the number of men and animals who have died of thirst and heat in trying to cross it, proves very clearly the horrors of the journey. Now one goes through it in a comfortable first-class carriage during the night, and the discomfort and danger is a thing of the past. The train for Sibi leaves Kurrachee at 6 p.m., at which hour our party of the "Umballa," reinforced by William French and his horse, left for the second stage of our journey. The evening and night was fairly cool, and we all slept very well all night, having passed by Hyderabad about midnight, and not waking until we were 200 miles on our way.

By rail to Sibi

April 1st.– We had a very fair breakfast at one of the refreshment-rooms, and were fortunate enough to have a moderately cool day. The railway strikes the River Indus at Kotree, opposite Hyderabad, and runs parallel with the river to Sukkur, about 10 miles short of which places, at a station called Ruk, we turned off on to the branch line for Sibi, which, passing through Shikarpore, reaches Jacobabad in about 36 miles from the junction. The whole of Sind, for want of water, is a desolate, dusty waste, with but few trees, but the whole country covered with a low underwood which would possibly be green were it not for the heavy coat of dust which is always on it. There is little or no cultivation, except where water is obtainable from canals or wells, and consequently there are but few houses or villages, and one may go for miles without seeing a living creature. Even birds seem to think Sind too dreadful a place to live in. Shikarpore, which is a very large village, is a remarkable place, as poor and squalid as it looks it is inhabited by some of the richest men in India, native bankers, who trade with all parts of the world, having their correspondents in every great city in Europe, Asia, and America; and in this dirty village, in the middle of the jungles of Sind, an order for £1,000 could be obtained on London, Paris, St. Petersburg, or New York without the slightest difficulty. Shikarpore used in past days to be the great mart to which all the merchandise of Central Asia came, and from

there was passed on, on the backs of camels, to Calcutta and Bombay, and from there to Europe and America. A railway to Kandahar will, of course, ruin Shikarpore, and even now it has begun to lose its importance. 26 miles beyond Shikarpore we came to Jacobabad (or the town of Jacob), so named after General Jacob, an officer of the Bombay Army, who, some 40 years ago, established a military station at the place which was then known as Khanpur, since which time 3 Native Cavalry Regiments and 1 Native Infantry Regiment has always been kept at Jacobabad, as a frontier station, to keep the wild tribes which live in the surrounding hills in order. At Jacobabad we were met by the officer commanding who had prepared dinner for us, which, with a bottle of champagne, we found very refreshing, after 24 hours of dust and heat in the train. At half-past eight o'clock, p.m., we started again, and nine miles from Jacobabad entered on the Kutchi Desert which proved on this occasion to be singularly cool and pleasant, and we all slept with much satisfaction until half-past four, a.m., on the 2nd April (Friday) when we were woke up by the cry of "Sibi," "Sibi," to which we added "change here for Quetta and Kandahar." It was quite cold when we arrived, and we kept under our rugs and blankets until it began to get light, when we turned out to collect our things, and get the horses disembarked. The line goes on to about 8 miles from Sibi to a place called the Nari Gorge (you will see the Nari River on the map), but as this would take us several miles to the right of the direct road to Quetta, and into very wild and dangerous country, travellers are required to get out at Sibi and follow the more circuitous route by the Bolan Pass to Quetta. The **|Sibi described.|** first view of Sibi is not exhilarating. Sandhills everywhere, not a blade of grass, not a tree, and not a drop of water. A few tents here and there, huge piles of bags full of grain, a string of camels, or a procession of creaking carts, drawn by two bullocks each, make up a scene which, curious by itself, is made still more odd by the sight of railway engines moving about, and all the ordinary work of a railway station going on, as it were, in the midst of a desert. A little further on, at the back of one of the sandhills, we came to the tent of my friend General Burrows, who is commanding here, and hospitably arranged to put up William French and me, and feed us while we are here. I suppose it is hardly necessary to say that putting up in this part of the world does not mean a nicely furnished bed-room and a comfortable sitting-room, and all the luxuries of the season, but, even so, it means a good deal. First of all a tub of water and lots of soap, a cup of tea, and a right to put your camp bed either in the tent, or outside of it, according as the night proves hot or cold. At present the heat at Sibi during the day in tents is unbearable, and so all the Europeans in the place congregate in a small three-roomed shed, which has been built for the purpose, and in which a rough kind of mess is kept for all comers. I am writing in this place now (as tents won't be possible till five o'clock in the evening), and writing under the circumstances is not very easy, which must be my excuse for any shortcomings in to-day's portion of my journal. On arrival here we heard that an officer had been set on by a tribe, supposed up to this time to have been friendly, and had been killed. This officer is Captain Howe Showers, who was A.D.C. to his father, General Showers, when I was A.A.G. at Calcutta, in 1865-66. It appears that he was passing through a part of the country to the right of the road from Sibi to Quetta, and thinking it quite safe had reduced his escort from 50 Native Cavalry (of an irregular levy he had just raised) to 12 or 15 men. At a spot in the hills called Chappur the party were fired on by a large party of men, who had up to that moment been concealed in the rocks. At the first volley Showers fell dead, as did also two of his men, and the remainder immediately retired, which could not be wondered at, seeing they were really no better men (probably worse) than the much stronger party who were safely posted in the rocky gorge of the mountain. We hear by telegraph from Quetta that one of the *friendly* native chiefs succeeded in securing poor Showers' body and those of his two men, and is bringing them into Quetta. An avenging force is to-day being concentrated at Chappur to punish this treacherous attack, and, I hope, will prove successful. The operations along this country are in General Burrows' hands, and he is proceeding there to-morrow, and as he is receiving good reinforcements from India, I have no doubt he will quickly mete out the proper punishment to all concerned; though for my own part, had I been commanding here, I think I should not have allowed any attack to be made until I had some

artillery at my disposal, and then only under my own command, or that of some selected officer. I think the state of the tribes along these Marri Hills is such as to cause some anxiety, as though not powerful for real harm, they are sufficiently strong to be very mischievous, and by constant raids and attacks may succeed in frightening away the workmen on the line of railway now being pushed on from Nari Gorge through Hurnai to Gwal. These places will be seen on the map, as also a place called Thal, or Tull, which is one of the positions which we hold in some strength. I may as well mention that a very strong difference of opinion exists among people who are in a position to judge as to the proper line for the railway to take from Sibi to Quetta – one side, led by Sir Richard Temple, have advocated the line by Nari (I see these places are not marked on my map, but a place called Baghao is in much the same line), Harnai, and Gwal, in preference to the one through the Bolan Pass. The former is shorter and easier in an engineering point of view, but it is through a country which, if not actually hostile, which many say it is, is certainly unfriendly. The latter, on the contrary, has many engineering difficulties, but is through a comparatively safe country. The advocates of the former route have carried the day, and I fear poor Showers' death goes some way to prove that those who thought the other route would be the best in the end were not very far wrong. I am now sorry that I am not to take General Burrows' place here, as I think there will be a good deal to interest one in these parts for some time. We have settled to march very early to-morrow morning, and hope to get away from this so as to be on our new ground and tents pitched before the sun can make itself felt. The first four days after leaving Sibi will be hot, but after that we shall get into a more reasonable temperature. Our route from here lies through Kirta, Beebee-Nani, and Sir-i-Bolan, all of which are shown on the map I sent two mails ago. (The figures on that map, under the names of places, show their heights above the sea level in feet).

Sibi – End of the railway

Friday, 2nd April.– At Sibi there are enormous depots of all sorts of commissariat stores, provisions, and clothing, both for Native and English troops, all of which have had to be transported great distances, especially the grain and the clothing, as most of the former comes from Bengal, and nearly all the latter from England, or at nearest from Bombay. Thousands of pounds of grain is daily used to feed the transport animals who are in thousands – camels, horses, bullocks (both for carts and packs), ponies and donkeys. Besides these there are some 2,500 to 3,000 cavalry and artillery horses, and about 1,000 horses, the property of officers, to be fed every day, and as there is little or no cultivation in Afghanistan, some idea may be formed of the arrangements, the labor, and the expense which are required to keep this one matter of the forage supply in working order. Armies fighting in Europe can expect to draw a good proportion of their supplies from the country in which they are operating, but the fact that almost nothing required by European troops, and very few of the articles required by native soldiers are to be got in Afghanistan, renders a war such as that we are now engaged in, a fearfully difficult and expensive matter. We dined at the rough camp mess at Sibi at which 15 officers were present, and went to bed (in the open air) at 9 p.m., as we had to be up at 1 o'clock to pack our camels for a start at 2 a.m., as we proposed to march 14 miles to Muskaff.

Preparations for marching

Saturday, 3rd April.– I was woke at 1 o'clock, and after dressing almost in the dark began to have the camels loaded, but everything was against us. First of all, for the 6 camels sent for mine and Wm. French's baggage, only one camel driver appeared, and he seemed perfectly ignorant of everything connected with camels, and more especially with that most delicate of arrangements, the loading of a camel; and to make matters worse he proved to be a wild villager from the neighbouring hills, whose language we could not understand, nor could he understand us. Then nearly all the ropes

and harness required for the pack saddles were wanting, and the saddles themselves were of the most antiquated patterns. After many delays these minor difficulties were partially overcome, and after at least an hour spent in vain attempts to load the 6 camels, we had the proud satisfaction of seeing two of the lot ready for a start, when a demon entered into the two loaded animals, who rose from the ground (camels sit down to be loaded) and kicked the whole of their loads off. In the first instance this was rather ludicrous, and we laughed at it, and began again; but when 4 o'clock came, and daylight (which meant intense heat) began to appear, and yet not one camel could be induced to let the loads remain on their backs, things looked serious, and we despaired of getting off at all. However, we determined to make one final effort, and this time were so far successful that we made a start at 5 a.m., meeting the rest of our party about a mile out of Sibi, and heard to our distinct satisfaction that they had been equally unfortunate, and had only succeeded in getting off after many failures. The only wonder was that we got off at all, as it turned out that the camels had only been purchased two or three days, and were perfectly untrained. Our satisfaction at effecting a move was but of short duration, as we had not gone a mile before half the loads were on the ground, and had to be repacked again and again. The sun was by this time too high to allow us to think of our completing the distance originally intended, so at 8 o'clock we halted for the day on the banks of the Nari River, where there is a depot of transport animals to supply changes of bullocks for the cart train which passes daily each way between Sibi and Quetta. To carry this out there are reliefs of bullocks every 6 or 7 miles, and the arrangement works with wonderful regularity. We could not afford time to march only 6 or 7 miles a day, so could not avail ourselves of the cart train, but are condemned to the daily trial of loading camels, than which nothing is more trying to the temper, I am bound to say. The transport officer at the halting place was good enough to allow us to share his hut, and so saved us going into tents in which the thermometer during the day stood at 120 degrees, and even in our kind friend's hut was over 100 degrees, a heat which is required to be felt to be understood, as the entire absence of air, except now and then a hot blast, as if out of a furnace, made it most oppressive. Towards 6 o'clock it grew wonderfully **|First halt on the march.|** cooler, and at 6.30, when we sat down to dinner at a table placed in the open, it was quite delightful. This was the first of our mess, and, considering we were in the wilds, we did very well, having some preserved soup, a leg of mutton, and curry of sardines – I don't, however, recommend the latter to anyone who is not very hungry and hopeless of getting anything else – whiskey and water – very little of the former, and a very bad quality of the latter – completed the sumptuous repast. Just as dinner was over a noise was heard from the line of horses to which we all rushed to find that Mr. "Selim" (who is a pugnacious sort of gentleman) had drawn his picket pegs and was doing his best to completely destroy poor "Rufus," who being picketed was powerless to retaliate. For about ten minutes we were afraid we should lose "Selim" altogether, as the night was dark, and if he had rushed away into the open plain we should never have seen him again. Fortunately he was too anxious to return to finish his fight with Rufus, and we managed at last to catch him, neither horse being, wonderful to say, anything the worse. The fact is the horses are all quite wild after their long confinement and want of work, and this is a thing three or four heavy marches will all too quickly cure. To pay him out for his games, I decided to give "Selim" the pleasure of carrying me the first ten miles the following morning, "Akhbar" bringing me in the last five miles, and so giving "Rufus" an off day to allow him to recover the effects of his bites. We turned into bed at 8.30, sleeping, as usual in these parts, in the open air.

April 4th.– After several false starts, and many difficulties in loading the camels, we started at 3.15 a.m. for a 15 miles march, and as I wanted to inspect the transport and commissariat depots at Muskaff, I rode on in front with a couple of the men of my escort (I have a native officer and 20 men of one of our native cavalry regiments, the Poona Horse, as an escort to Kandahar), and having a second horse for a change half way had a very pleasant canter on "Selim" (the first time I had ridden him), whom I like very much indeed. The two colonels followed at a quieter pace, leaving Captain Collis and Mr. Fox to bring up the rear. It was a lovely morning, and the road was very nice

for cantering, and I enjoyed the ride and the attending circumstances very much. After inspecting at Muskaff, I got on my arab ("Akhbar") and had a good opportunity of trying his paces, which will be very good, but at present he is quite raw and untrained, and gives one plenty to do to watch his antics, which, however, are all of the purest kind of play, as, like all well-bred arabs, he is as gentle as possible. The latter part of the march into Pir-Chokey was very dusty and extremely uninteresting, and uncommonly hot. I picked up the colonels (who had passed while I was looking at the transport and commissariat depots at |**March into Pir-Chokey.**| Muskaff), about two miles from the end of the march, which we completed at a quarter to 8 o'clock, but it was past 10 when the baggage came up, the loads having frequently been thrown by the camels during the march, so our two young friends who were in charge arrived thoroughly tired and done up. A little tea and a rest, however, soon put them right; and when at 6 o'clock in the evening, when the sun was setting, we all got a plunge into the Bolan River, which is a clear and extremely rapid running stream, we found ourselves as fit as possible, notwithstanding that the day had been even hotter than the previous ones. Pir-Chokey is a station established by us exactly at the mouth of the Bolan (N.B. – 1st syllable *short*; 2nd long) Pass as a resting and feeding place for the transport animals and troops proceeding up and down. The Bolan Pass is the only really practicable passage through the range of mountains which separates India from Beloochistan and Central Asia, and has been used for ages by the caravans coming to India from all parts of Asia. Until we went up by it to Kandahar in 1839, '40, '41, the road was a mere track through the bed of the river, and on that occasion we did very little to improve it, and never dreamt that 40 years later we should have to make a road practicable for wheeled carriage through it; but this is what we have done, and carts now run from Sibi to Quetta and still further on the road to Kandahar. It must not be, however, supposed that the road is of the appearance or quality that people at home would call a road, as all that has been aimed at is to make a track clear from stones or serious inequalities along which carts can go. At Pir-Chokey are stored thousands of pounds of grain of all sorts, flour, rice, sugar, tea, potatoes, &c., &c., indeed everything required to ration both man and beast, and many extras also, as we were able to obtain from the Government stores there, on payment, such things as Ropf's concentrated soups, French preserved vegetables, &c., &c. There is a shed for the use of officers and a couple for the men, as there is at nearly all the stages in the Pass, which is a very good arrangement, as it saves us pitching tents, and the huts are much cooler than tents during the day; and as dew or damp are unknown here everyone sleeps in the open at night. We were in bed at half-past 8, and I was so dead tired that I never woke through all the row of the packing, but had the satisfaction when I woke to find the camels gone and everything packed. Captain Collis, my Brigade Major, is very good in this way, and does a great deal for me, which my orderly officer would have to do if I had one, and as I might have had, had General Warre been agreeable and allowed me to take the officer I wanted.

March out of Pir-Chokey

April 5th.– As we had a very long march (between 19 and 21 miles) we had to move off very early, the more especially as I had two sets of depots to inspect on the way; we had let the baggage have three hours start of us, having sent the native officer and 16 men with it, keeping only 4 men for ourselves, as we considered our five selves good for any number of the cowardly marauders who hang about the Pass, but who never seem to venture to attack armed parties, but always to swoop down on one or two unarmed natives if they get the chance. 500 yards out of Pir-Chokey we had to ford the Bolan River, and the winding course it takes may be imagined from the fact that in the first 10 miles of the march we forded it 18 times. It is, however, never more than a couple of feet deep, and from ten to fifty yards wide. The whole of the road from Pir-Chokey to Dirwaza (78 miles) is called the Bolan Pass, and most of the way is properly so called, though there is a great plain of 20 miles across, which, though surrounded in the distance by hills, has none of the appearance

of what one understands as a Pass. For the first 12 miles the road is indeed a pass or gorge in the mountains, as in places the cliffs are not more than 60 to 100 yards apart, and rarely open out to more than 150 to 200 yards apart. Passing along this in the early morning with the moon just setting is very striking and dismal, as the hills, which are very peculiarly shaped, are very high and abrupt, and are absolutely bare of vegetation of any kind, except that the banks of the river are here and there fringed with Pampas grass and Oleanders, the latter just now in full blow, and very sweet. It is quite the most desolate, forsaken scene I have ever witnessed, and the least enlivening. It is fortunate that the tribes in the vicinity of the Bolan Pass are fonder of rupees than of fighting, as they could easily prevent anyone passing up if they so desired it, but for a consideration (a very heavy subsidy, I fancy) they agree not only not to resist our advance, but to act as the police of the Pass, and so enable us to dispense with any great strength of soldiers here. – I must digress for one moment to describe the circumstances under which I write, so that allowances may be made for bad writing and stupidity. First of all, I am in a large tent, permanently pitched, as there is no rest hut here (Beebee-Nani, April 6th), the thermometer is at 96°, a gale of wind is howling outside, and shaking the tent so violently that I watch the poles with apprehension; everything is gritty with the clouds of dust that are flying about; the flies, which are in millions, I should say, are gifted with a pertinacity which is quite marvellous, and insist on settling on your nose, or in your eyes or ears; my four companions are stretched on the ground fast asleep (I never sleep myself in the day time), and by some curious fatality have, one and all, established themselves on their backs, and are snoring most awfully; and last, but not least, the heat is making the ink quite thick and preventing it running freely, and with it my ideas also I fear. I think it will be acknowledged that any one or two of these drawbacks would be fair excuses for not doing much writing, so I hope the lot together will bear me harmless from criticism now and hereafter. – To return to my story now: As the sun began to rise the whole scene changed, and what had seemed weird and desolate now got a color that made the scene one that I would not have missed for any consideration; the effect altogether, of course, of the beautiful coloring which sunrise always bring with it in the East, but which rapidly fades as the sun gets higher. At nine miles from Pir-Chokey I came to one of the transport stages, which I found in charge of a sergeant of the 66th Foot, with a guard of 12 native soldiers; not another European within ten miles of him on either side. He said it was, of course, lonely, but he had lots to do, and that all his spare time was given to fishing in the Bolan River, which swarms with fish of the most confiding nature, as they greedily seize any sort of bait, and can even be caught in the hand at night by the use of a light – a way of catching fish not quite unknown in our own part of the world. Five miles further on I inspected another depot, which is situated at the end of the first part of the enclosed portion of the **|March into Kirta.|** Pass, after which we descended into the plain or valley of Kirta, an extensive plain more than 20 miles across, and almost circular in shape, the mountains rising to a considerable height all round it. About six miles further ride brought us to the rest house of Kirta, where we were to put up for the day, and where, on arriving, I received the agreeable information that the camel carrying my two small trunks, which contain every stitch of uniform, clothing, linen, towels, sheets, socks, warm clothing, &c.,&c., in fact, everything I possess, except what was on my back, had fallen down in one of the fords, and that the two portmanteaus had been well under water for five minutes at least. The first and only thing to do was to open the boxes and dry the things (for which purpose there was no lack of sun, at any rate), and ascertain the amount of the damage done. Every single thing was more or less wet, but fortunately, except my cloth uniform, my few books, and my stock of writing paper, there was little to spoil seriously; my patrol jacket had got off wonderfully, having been well in the centre of one box, and was only damp, and my other cloth things had not much suffered, and the rest of the things (except my paper, books, and papers, which are ruined) will, I daresay, be all right after they have been washed and done up. On the whole, I got off wonderfully well, but it was a great business unpacking everything, drying them, and then repacking all again, which, however, I managed to do in a fairly satisfactory way. At Kirta is another large depot for the transport and

commissariat departments, and also a rather superior kind of hut for the accommodation of passers by. The plain of Kirta itself is one vast scene of desolation, not a tree, or a blade of grass, and nothing but fine sand, thickly strewn with round stones of all sizes and forms.

Dust storm at Kirta

Monday, 5th April, continued– At the Kirta rest-house we found a very scientific party of engineers (Mr. Molesworth, Col. Lindsay, and Major Peters), who had been prospecting the railway line to Kandahar, and were returning by no means impressed with the delights, use, or value of Afghanistan. I don't wish to form too hasty a judgment, but I must say as far as I have gone I have seen no reason to modify the opinions formed eighteen months ago, namely, that a more useless and unnecessary thing than an expedition into this country could not be imagined. Committed to it as we now are, a sudden withdrawal would be madness, and in any case, it would be a wise man who could form an idea as to the final results, or what and when the end will be. Up to the present, though the days have been intensely hot, the nights have been very pleasant, and the mornings charming, but at Kirta just as we were looking for the change from the heat of the day to come (half-past five o'clock), the wind suddenly chopped right round and blew a hurricane, like a red-hot blast of a furnace, bringing with it thick clouds of dust, which made breathing, or keeping one's eyes open almost an impossibility. Of course I have been in many dust storms in all parts of India, but it has never been my fortune to spend so entirely miserable a time as we had to undergo between 5.30 on Tuesday evening, and 8 o'clock the next morning. The rest-house has no glass in the windows, and even had it been possible to close the wooden shutters, they were so roughly made that they would have been useless to keep out either the burning wind or the dust; but even the wind and dust were preferable to the suffocation of no air at all, and so, through a very long dark night, we could do nothing but toss about on our beds and long for morning.

Tuesday, April 6th.– About 3 A.M. the hurricane seemed to moderate, so we got up and dressed and set to work to pack our camels, in the middle of which operation the gale recommenced with greater force than ever, and made our work almost impossible; however, by 4 o'clock, with the assistance of some men from the transport depot the work was finished and the camels with their escort started for a nine mile march in the teeth of the gale and dust. I waited on in the rest-house till 6 o'clock in hopes of the weather changing when the sun rose, but finding no change likely, had also to face the dust and wind, and continued to ride against it for about two hours, when, getting under the shadow of a big mountain, we ceased to get the dust and the gale grew much cooler, and to our great |**March into Beebee-Nani.**| relief we found a much more bearable climate at our halting place, a little transport depot called Beebee-Nani, where I am now writing. It cannot be called pleasant here, but compared with the past 18 hours the change is distinctly for the better. Desolation reigns here also, no trees or vegetation to be seen; nothing but sand, stones, and barren rocky hills rising in tiers one behind the other, till the last and highest range is barely visible in the hot and dusty haze. At this halting place there is no rest-house, but instead a good-sized tent, which answers the purpose very well. A stream of beautiful clear water flows past the tent, being brought in a small canal or channel (made by our troops) from the Bolan River, which is two miles off. The water is bright, and pure, and good, and quite cold, and is accordingly in this land of bad and scanty water a priceless luxury to all. The hill tribes near this are not very well-disposed, and they frequently cut off the water by damming up the place where it leaves the river, but a small party of native soldiers, who are at once sent out, soon hunts the enemy off, and sets the water flowing again. We are now beginning to ascend, and it is decidedly cooler than it was (speaking comparatively), but the air is unpleasantly dry and harsh, and our lips and skin generally are suffering accordingly, all the more, no doubt, that of late we have been accustomed to the damp, relaxing climate of Bombay. This morning we passed many of the migratory tribes who, during the winter, leave the districts round Quetta on account of the cold

and go with their flocks and herds down towards Sibi, where they remain till it gets too hot, when they return to Quetta. They are wretched-looking people, evidently very poor in everything except children, of whom there seems to be no lack. Their whole household goods are carried on camels, and the women and children trot along behind seemingly very happy and light-hearted. On one camel to-day we saw an uncommonly pretty young donkey rolled up in a blanket with his head only to be seen, looking quite pleased with himself, and being balanced on the other side of the camel by a jolly but extremely dirty baby of 8 or 9 months old. They make very picturesque groups these people, but certainly among them the men carry off all the good looks, as the women seem to be singularly plain and unprepossessing. We are getting very bad hay for our horses now, which is very unfortunate, but as it has all to be brought from places miles away we ought, I suppose, to be very thankful that we get any at all. So far my three are very well, and I am quite pleased with my new purchases, and very glad, indeed, that I brought my old friend up with me, as he is a most pleasant horse to ride. To give an idea of the sort of country this is I may mention that the ground is too hard to allow of our driving in even iron picketing pegs for the horses, and we have therefore to collect a heap of heavy big stones and fasten their picketing ropes to these!

March to Mach

Wednesday, 7th April.– We had a very long march before us (17 miles) to a place called Mach (pronounced Much), so started off the heavier portion of our baggage and all our servants in charge of half of my escort at 10 o'clock the previous night, keeping only 2 camels to carry our camp beds and bedding, and the warm sheets and rugs of the horses we were to ride. We had a fairly good night's sleep, although the high wind was not pleasant, and towards morning became bitterly cold, for which some of the party were not prepared, and were consequently very cold indeed. I had my two thick blankets, and found them nothing too much, although 12 hours previously we had been undergoing a heat of nearly 100°. These changes are very trying to people who are not thoroughly strong, but barring slight colds all round, we have not suffered on this occasion. Colonel Anderson's horse had hurt itself, so I had to give him a mount on "Rufus," which, as he weighs 15 stone and the march was 17 miles, I would altogether have preferred not to do, but as the alternative was his walking while I had 2 led horses I could not possibly have done otherwise. The road for the first 8 miles took us over a barren, desolate plain, across which the cold wind whistled and drove in a way that made us all wish much we had kept our great coats out, and which made us hail with delight the appearance of the sun, which up to this had been our greatest enemy. Eight miles from Bibi Nani we came to a small transport depot called Abigoom, where I changed my horse "Akhbar" for Selim, who had gone on with the heavy baggage the night previously. Here Captain Collis, who had been riding some way in rear, came up to tell me that one of my Syces (grooms) declared he was so seriously ill that he could not possibly go on, even though he knew that if left behind by himself on the side of the road he would probably be murdered by some of the ruffians who hang about to wreak their vengeance on any one who is defenceless. Fortunately I was able to get a cart and pair of bullocks at the transport depot at Abigoom, and we went back and picked the man up and brought him into Mach, and he is all right to-day. I don't think there ever was much the matter with him beyond having eaten too much, which these people, now that they are fed by us and not by themselves, are very ready to do. The morning, once the sun was up, was most enjoyable, although the country we passed through was of the same desolate, dreary sort that is met in this part of the world. Brown arid mountains and red clay plains covered thickly with enormous boulders; no trees, no water (except when now and then we cross the Bolan River), no habitations, and no cultivations. As a sergeant of the 66th, who was in charge of one of the transport depots, said to me, "Why, sir, there are no birds in this awful country, and when I see a country as has no birds I think badly of that country." The poor fellow's views of life and of the pleasures of campaigning had been jaundiced I fancy by a lonely residence for 4 months

in a desert without a single European near him, although he said on the whole he did not dislike it, as he had heaps to do all day, and the nights were much too short for the amount of sleep he would like to have had. Ascending gradually from Abigoom we reached an elevation of 3,500 feet at Mach, and found ourselves in an European climate, which Captain Collis and I celebrated by drinking hot whiskey punch for dinner!! Mach |**Receive English letters at Mach.**| is quite a big place, and there is a post office and telegraph office there, and a good rest house, and we spent a very comfortable time there, especially when we recollected the disagreeables of the previous days. We were able to replenish our larder and stores from the Commissariat, getting from them bread, mutton, tea, sugar, potatoes, preserved soups, &c., &c. To my great delight I got my English letters here, – those of the 12th March, which had reached Bombay 30th March, – and we posted our letters for home, as, although it was a little too early, it was our only chance, as there is no other post office till we get to Quetta, and the English mail will have left that place before we arrive. As the next day's march was not a long one we decided to have a good sleep, and not start till 4 A.M. (which meant getting up at 3 o'clock), and as we all turned in at half-past 8, we had had a very fair night of it, when at 3 A.M. on Thursday, April 8th, I was woke by Colonel Anderson with the extremely unpleasant news that the native officer of the escort reported that the whole of our camel drivers had disappeared – run away to their homes it was supposed. The question was what was to be done, as we had no wish to lose a day at Mach, so I sent and woke up the transport officer (a smart young fellow of the 15th Foot), who before I at all expected it, was in the rest-hut fully dressed, asking to see "the General," who being extremely cold was quite invisible among his blankets. I had a further search then made for the camel men, but it was clear they had bolted, so I was forced very unwillingly to take advantage of my being "the General Sahib," and take carts to take us into Quetta. Carts are not, as a rule, given to officers, as they are used for Commissariat stores, and so up to this time I have resisted the temptation of appropriating some (they are far pleasanter means of carrying baggage than camels), not wishing to have any advantages over other officers, especially at the expense of the General Transport Service; but now that the camel men had deserted I felt I might fairly take carts, as it was clearly not advantageous that I should remain idle for days at a place like Mach. I, however, kept the demands of my friends and my servants as low as possible, and we succeeded in getting off without reducing perceptibly the carrying power of the transport, or causing any stores to be delayed. Carts drawn by bullocks are very slow, as they barely do more than 1¾ miles an hour, but they are very sure and steady, and require no elaborate packing as camels do. On the other hand they are very liable to break down or to fall over the precipices, so their possession is not an unalloyed satisfaction. On the whole I think if I had good camel men I would prefer camels. At Mach we found a Major Greig of the Artillery, trying to work his way up alone, taking advantage of any convoys or escorts he could meet, and as this was very dismal and very slow, I asked him to join our party, which now numbers 6. It was 5 o'clock when we succeeded in getting away from Mach, and it was then so cold that I rode the first half of the way in my great coat. The road was very up and down, and at places very steep, but still wonderfully good; the country still as barren and uninteresting as ever. Four miles from Mach we came to a place called Sir-i-Bolan, which means the head or source of the Bolan, and here are the springs from which the river rises. They rush out of the solid rock in a splendid stream, but curiously one of the jets is distinctly some degrees hotter than the others are.

Maidenhair Fern – Sir-i-Bolan

Thursday, 8th April.– The place (*i. e.* Sir-i-Ab) is covered with Maidenhair Ferns, a piece of which I enclose; I have also taken a root of it, and intend to send it to Florence to see if she can force it back into life, as a plant of Maidenhair Fern from the source of the Bolan would be a kind of

curiosity, I dare say.[1] After passing Sir-i-Bolan, the road led through a very narrow valley, with high and precipitous cliffs on both sides, quite overhanging the road, and not more than 50 yards apart at some places. The effect is wild, and the morning air being sharp and fresh, with a bright sun, the ride was quite enjoyable. Our halting place for the day was Dozan (or the place of thieves), which is a good sized Commissariat and Transport Station, possessing a good rest-house and quite a large number of people of sorts. There is not, however, naturally any water here, but we have brought it by an aqueduct from some spring 2 miles off, and there is now a plentiful and excellent supply – the last really good water we shall see for some days. This station is in charge of a very nice young fellow of the 83rd, named Adye, quite a boy, but a very good style of fellow, and one who does his work well, as his bullocks, carts, and everything in his charge shows. The life these young fellows lead does not seem very delightful, but it is wonderful how clearly one can see which are the really good officers who take interest in their work, and have no time or inclination for grumbling about themselves, and I am delighted to say the great majority are of this sort, indeed it is the exception when the reverse is the case, and as the same can truly be said of the Sergeants similarly employed (all quite young men), I don't think the army is going to the dogs quite so much as dismal prophets would have us think. It is also most satisfactory to see how well our native soldiers (non-commissioned officers and men) on this detached and independent employment get on, as they develope in intelligence and readiness in a remarkable way, and show that what they really want (as do our English soldiers) is less nursing and coddling, and care, and being made at all times to do more for themselves than they now are.

Dozan – Cantonment – Abandoned

Friday, 9th April.– After starting off our baggage we took a detour to the right to visit a plateau about 1,000 feet higher than Dozan, where, during last summer, General Phayre's brigade had been encamped, and where, thinking the place would become a permanent station, he had expended much labor and trouble in making roads and laying out the future cantonment. Now, however, the troops are withdrawn and the place is deserted. Among other things which had been made was an excellent lawn tennis ground which looked very English and civilized in the midst of the desolation. At this place are the springs from which the halting place is supplied with water, and here, as elsewhere in this extraordinary country, it is wonderful to see the rush of water which pours out of the solid rock, reminding one (all the surrounding circumstances having also a considerable similitude) of the water rushing out of the Rock when struck by Moses during the travels of the Israelites in the Wilderness. We rejoined the road about 4 miles from Dozan, and for 4 miles our way continued through the narrowest and wildest part of the Bolan Pass, till at 8 miles from Dozan we crossed an abrupt ridge of hills which lie across the mouth of the Pass, and descended into a plain surrounded by mountains the tops of which were still tipped with snow. Two miles farther on we came to our halting place, which is called Darwaza, or the door or gate, this being the entrance to the Bolan Pass, the journey through which we had then completed. There was a good rest-house at Darwaza, and a small fort, inside of which we were glad to find shelter for our horses and servants, as a piercingly cold wild wind was coming from the mountains, and there were decided threatenings of snow or rain, and very shortly after we arrived it did begin to rain. I had an anxious day with my Australian horse as he was very ill, and, being almost without medicines, I was afraid I should have lost him. He had not taken at all to the bad grass or hay which we have had through the Pass, and had not been really well for some days. This was what I feared in bringing him with me, as Australian horses are notoriously dainty about their food, whereas Arabs eat anything and seem to flourish on anything. We tried all the native remedies at our disposal, and the old horse pulled through all right, and before night was able to eat a bran mash and was quite out of danger. He has, however, got a cracked heel, the result of the cold

[1] The Fern mentioned above is now in the Stove House at Narrow Water, and has grown to quite a large healthy plant.

dry wind after crossing the numerous fords which we have had to pass over daily, and I fear I shall not get much riding out of him, which is a disappointment, as he is a steady old boy who goes along without any trouble, while the other two are young and foolish, and as yet not contented to plod along at a walking pace for any time. The evening at Darwaza turned out very wet and cold, and the night threatened to be so bad that we had to give up the idea of an early march which we had intended to make, so as to get over the long and wearisome journey which lay between us and our next halting place. Darwaza is one of the highest points on the road to Kandahar (the highest except the crossing of the Khojak Pass), being 6,000 feet above the sea level, and until a month ago the whole country round had been covered with 18 inches of snow, some of which still remained on the mountains near.

March across the Dusht-i-Bedaulat Plain

Saturday 10th April.– We started at 6 a.m. to march to Sir-i-ab, to reach which place we had to cross a great plain (16 miles across) which, owing to its miserable and wretchedly desolate appearance, is called the Dusht-i-bedaulat (the au has the sound of ow) or the plain of poverty or wretchedness, and certainly it well bears out its name, as for mile after mile nothing is to be seen but sand and stones, and desolation everywhere. No one lives in the place, and no one crosses it except when obliged to do so, as almost always a howling wind, which is either hot as a furnace or cold as ice, drives across it, carrying clouds of dust with it, and making the journey not only wretched but even, to weakly people and animals, dangerous. There is no water from Darwaza to Sir-i-ab, a very serious consideration in the hot weather. We, however, were singularly fortunate, as the storm of the previous day had spent itself, and the rain had laid the dust, and we crossed the Dusht without the slightest inconvenience, indeed with some enjoyment, as the morning was lovely and fresh, and the mountains covered with the snow, which had fallen in the night on their higher peaks, were looking beautiful, and took away in a great degree from the otherwise desolate appearance of the scene. As we approached Sir-i-ab, we saw more signs of civilization (though of a very rude kind) than we had met since we left Jacobabad, as there were numerous villages to be seen, each surrounded by its orchards, containing peach, plum, and mulberry trees, which were all in full leaf, and looked green and bright to us who had not seen a patch of green for so many days. At Sir-i-ab we put up in a deserted village, in which was established our Commissariat and Transport Depot, and a few houses which were set apart and kept clean for the use of officers and men passing through. The people to whom the village belong had migrated to the lower regions during the winter, and were now on their way back, and had sent word that after the middle of this month they would require the place for their own residence, and we were, in consequence, clearing out our Commissariat Stores and Transport animals into a camp outside the village. Although the people had left the village for their own convenience, as they would have done whether we had been there or not, we had actually been paying them rent for the empty houses, and now at their request were quietly submitting to be turned out. This is the curious way we make war, and add to the terrible expenses of it quite unnecessarily. An Afghan village is a collection of mud huts, with flat mud roofs, and so arranged, and the huts joined together with high walls, as to form a kind of Fort, as in this country every man's hand is against his neighbour's, and every one goes armed and prepared for treachery and violence. The people are a distinctly warlike race, and fight bitterly among themselves.

March into Quetta

Sunday, 11th April.– A short march of 7 miles took us into Quetta, which looked charming as we rode into it at 8 o'clock in the morning, the air bright and fresh, and the sun shining just sufficiently to take the sharpness out of the air. There were quantities of purple crocuses in flower, and the hawthorn was covered with flower and looked very home-like indeed. Quetta lies in a small circular

plain about 5 miles across, surrounded by high mountains, and well watered by streams of clear water which come down from the mountains and enable the people to cultivate their orchards and fields most successfully. Originally there was only a moderately sized native town at Quetta, with, from a native point of view, a very strong Fort to defend it; but since we have occupied the place (now some 4 years ago) houses after the English fashion have sprung up, and the place is assuming the appearance of an Indian Station. We have taken over the Fort and use it as an Arsenal, for which purpose it serves sufficiently well, though it would be quite useless as a Fortification against any enemy who possessed guns of any kind. The native name of Quetta is Shawl or Shalkot, and it is by the latter name that natives generally know it. It is not in Afghanistan, but belongs to the Khan of Khelat, who has lent it or ceded it and the surrounding country temporarily to us on the understanding that we pay him as much revenue as he used to get out of it, which we find we can do, and have a good balance for ourselves without oppressing the people in any way, which shows that the Khan must have been very much cheated by his officials formerly. We have established a regular civil government, and administer the country exactly as if it were India. The civil authorities of course say the people like our administration, but I confess I doubt it, as they are a very independent lot, and prefer, I think, injustice and oppression from their own people than justice and order after an English pattern. The revenue is paid in a very primitive manner still in these parts; one-sixth of the whole produce of the land goes to the Government, and as soon as a field of wheat or an orchard of peaches is ripe, and the crop collected, Government officials go and put on one side what they consider the Government share, which is then sold by auction, the farmer taking away the remaining five-sixths; and I am told the system works well, and there is very seldom any attempts to cheat the Government of their dues. There is a club at Quetta, of which we were made honorary members, and where we lived during our stay. The club has managed to get up a capital library, and have all the English and Indian papers and most recent telegrams, so we felt quite back in civilization again after our wanderings in the deserts and wilds of the Bolan Pass.

Visit to hospital at Quetta

April 11th & 12th.– The chief civil authority at Quetta is Sir Robert Sandeman, who has an extremely nice house, very well furnished, and will eventually have very nice gardens and grounds round it. He asked me to go and put up with him, but as we had agreed not to break up our party while at Quetta, but to keep together, I refused his invitation, but dined with him one night. He is a great supporter of the policy of pushing forward our frontier into Afghanistan, and interfering in the internal arrangements of that country, and as I think we have gone much too far in that direction he and I had a good deal of warm discussion. I went with him to the hospital to see the 2 native soldiers who were wounded when Captain Showers was killed, and I heard from them the whole particulars of the catastrophe. It appears that poor Showers (whom I have known well for many years) was warned by some friendly native chiefs not to take the road he did, but he told them an Englishman never turned back, and he would not do so. He had only 12 or 14 men, all natives, with him, and at a very narrow gorge in the mountains, through which the road passed, they came upon a party of some 30 or 40 men posted up among the rocks in a position quite inaccessible from the road. These men received |**Account of attack on Captain Showers.**| Showers' party with a volley which killed him and a couple of his men. There was some desultory fighting between the rest of the escort and the enemy, but the unfortunate escort without their officer and down in the valley mounted could do nothing, and so the remnant had to retire, leaving 3 or 4 dead, and the two wounded men I was talking to, on the ground. The men told me that poor Showers' death must have been instantaneous, as he was hit by 3 bullets at the same minute, and never spoke or groaned. Sir Robert Sandeman said to one of the men who happened to be a sergeant, that he was glad to see he was getting better, and adding "you see your fate is good" (N.B. – This is a kind of usual expression when a person has been fortunate, as

all Mohammedans are great believers in "Kismet" or fate), on which the poor fellow, with tears in his eyes and with wonderful energy and spirit, said, "Ah, Sahib, don't say that; don't say my fate is good, for I am filled with shame to think that my Sahib is dead and I am alive. It is a great shame to me that I am alive; my fate is bad." It was very touching, and there was no doubt of the man's sincerity and honesty, as we who heard him could testify to. What he said loses greatly by translation, and by not being heard, but it was really a most impressive sight. This wild Beloochie, with his long black hair all about his face, which was quite pale from pain and loss of blood, getting, in his excitement, on his elbow as he lay in his bed and speaking with the greatest earnestness, and then falling back on his pillow quite overcome with weakness and agitation. The men all liked Showers greatly, as his pluck and dash appealed to their feelings strongly. This man was the senior of the party, and he told me he said to Showers that he had better not go by that route, but that the Sahib only laughed and asked him if he was afraid. I asked him what he did then, and he said "Oh, the Sahib was only joking; he knew I was not afraid; but I wanted to save him, but of course, as he was determined to go on, we said nothing more." When the rest of the party retired, the enemy came down and stripped the two wounded men of all their clothes, except their linen shirts and drawers, and there they lay for 2 nights in the piercing cold. This man said, "Oh, Sahib, it was so cold and I had such pain, I prayed all night to God, and said 'let me die,' but God would not let me die, and here I am. No, my fate is not good!!!" It is a long story, but I tell it to you to show the sort of fellows many of our native soldiers are, men that anyone might be proud to serve with. For myself I would go into action with our native troops without a hesitation (especially men of certain races), assured of their fighting well and gallantly. This man of whom I have been telling you was a countryman of the people who killed Showers, and yet he was perfectly loyal, even to losing his own life, in the service he had taken. There is no doubt Showers ought not to have gone the way he did, and in no case ought he to have gone so weakly escorted. His body was recovered, and he is buried at Quetta, and punishment has been awarded to the men who attacked him.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.