# LETTERS OF A ONCE PUNJAB FRONTIER FORCE OFFICER

COL. J. P. VILLIERS-STUART, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E.

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## TO HIS NEPHEW

GIVING HIS IDEAS ON FIGHTING ON THE NORTH WEST FRONTIER AND IN AFGHANISTAN

By

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# PREFACE

IN the last four years I have been asked by a good many people at home, both Staff College aspirants and others, if I knew of a book about fighting on the North West Frontier of India which would fulfil certain conditions. It should be graphic enough to give a picture of the fighting to a man who has never seen the frontier; it should be short; it should tell you where to get more detail if you want it; and it should be in the simplest form.

The book which follows is an attempt to fill the want, and it is hoped that it may be of some assistance, in connection with the manuals, not only to officers at home, but also to those in other parts of the Empire who have not actually seen the frontier.

I wish to acknowledge my debt of gratitude to my brother, Brigadier-General Villiers-Stuart, C.B.E., D.S.O., to Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. Haining, D.S.O., and to Captain R. H. Lorie, who have so generously helped me in getting the book together.

J.P.V.-S.

Whitehall House,
29 Charing Cross,
1925.

## ILLUSTRATIONS.



## FIGURES.

## *CASUS BELLI*

CARLISLE,

August 1st, 1925.

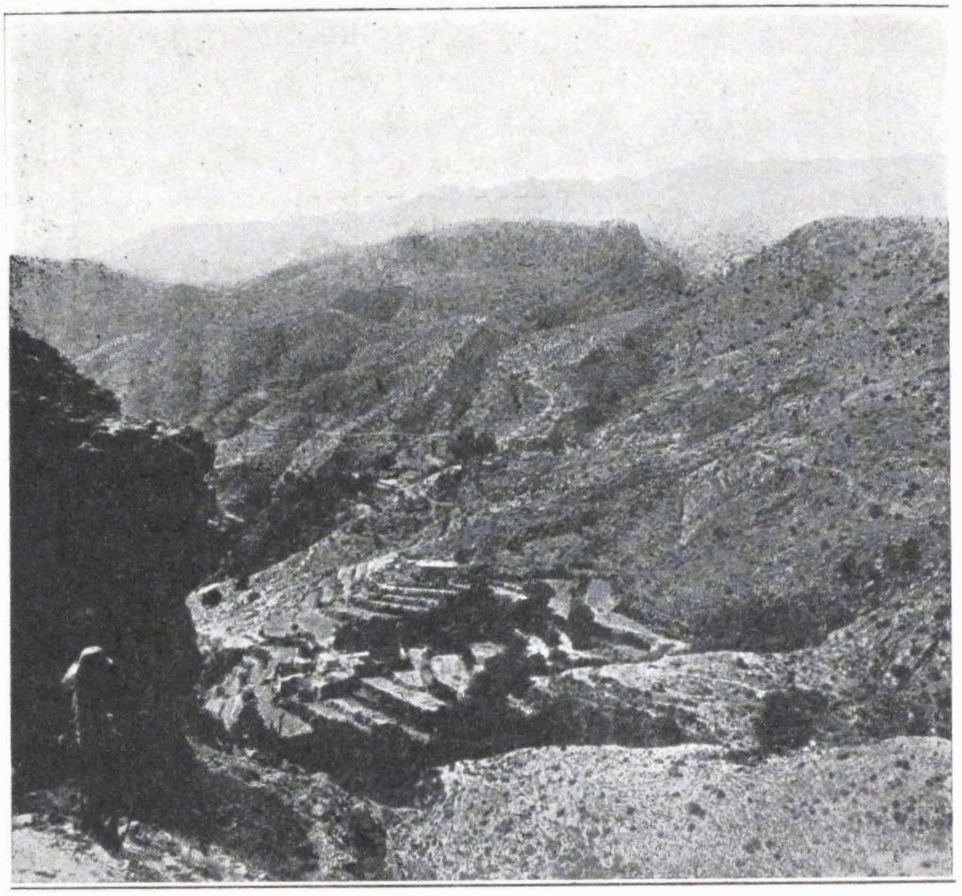
MY DEAR UNCLE,

I want to learn things up a bit about fighting on the North West Frontier of India. I know nothing at all about it. You've been there. I haven't. So write and tell me all about it.

Yours,

SHOLTO MCKECHNIE.

P.S.—Why do we keep things like these frontiers?



KHAIBAR AREA.

## LETTER NO. I

## THE PROBLEM

I WILL start by answering your postscript.

*India's Frontier an Imperial Question*

The first thing you want to grasp is that the defence of the Indian Frontier is an Imperial and not a local matter. There are three outstanding reasons for that. It is not a case of preserving the gentleman of 'India for the Indians' type from having his mouth shut and his jugular vein opened by a border knife. Firstly, there are several hundred millions of good honest and very pleasant simple people in India whom we are pledged to protect. Secondly, India, if not our best customer economically, is something very near it. And thirdly, India is our only possible base in the Eastern Hemisphere at present—and that at a time when sea communications are a good deal more precarious than they were. The more you think of these things, the more you will realize that you have to stand a good way off the hearthrug to keep the home fires burning brightly.

*Potential Dangers*

Danger to the North West Frontier of India can come from two main sources (leaving out of account a Bolshevik invasion which could hardly be staged without considerable warning), (i) from Afghanistan,

(ii) from the 'Independent tribes';

or, more likely, from both combined.

If you look at Sketch 1 you will see a stretch of country between a dotted line and the Afghan Frontier (or ' Durand line '). That is the territory inhabited by the independent tribes. I'll come on to it later.

*Nature of country*

As you can see from any good map, Afghanistan is an intensely mountainous country. In the south, it opens up considerably, and there are wide, uninhabited, desert spaces. But, broadly speaking, it is essentially mountainous. Water is scarce, and not always good. Heat is intense in summer, and so is cold in winter. Altogether not a health resort. And you need not waste time looking for the ' Romance of the Border ' which has been so beautifully depicted by some female novelists. It isn't there. All the same it is a country with an attraction and a very strong one, because it is inhabited by men who, whatever their shortcomings, are men.

Towns barely exist. Kabul and Kandahar are the only two of any size, and, even in them, the vast majority of buildings are only of sun-dried mud. There are ' motor ' roads from Kabul to Landi Kotal (for Peshawar) and to Kandahar, but in their present state they would not stand much heavy traffic.

The vast bulk of the population is purely agricultural and flock-owning. In many cases it is nomadic. But most of the people live in small hamlets, scattered all over the country.

Whilst I'm on this subject of descriptions, I want to say that it is, of course, impossible to give you a real picture. You yourself, from time to time, have endeavoured to describe to me the appearance of the last goddess without whom future existence would

SKETCH No 1.


MIXED RACES (Persian speaking)
USBEGS (Turki speaking)
TAJIKS (Persian speaking)
HERATIS (Persian speaking)
HAZARAS (Persian speaking)
KABUL
AFGHANISTAN
GHILZAI (True Afghans. Pashtu speaking)
PATHAN TRIBES (Some trace as in Independent Territory)
DURAND LINE of AFGHAN BORDER
DURANIS (True Afghans Pashtu speaking)
DESERT
KANDAHAR
QUETTA
BALUCHISTAN
WAZIR
INDEPENDENT
AFRIDI
BANGASH
KHATTAK
N.W. FRONTIER PROVINCE
PESHAWUR
YUSAFZAI
MOHMAND
TRIBES
BAJAUR
BUNER
INDUS

be insupportable. In doing so, you have always added a saving clause, that your description was inadequate, and declared personal observation to be essential. What I'm writing about is much the same—I can only try and show you crudely what to expect, tell you where to get further information if you want it, and finally, to wait till you see.

The inhabitants of Afghanistan are intensely patriotic. Indeed, incredibly so, when you consider the kind of country they live in. But it is a factor to reckon with. The last occasion on which I met a wounded Afghan—desperately wounded—he tried, very earnestly, to bite me in the leg, and remarked that ' if God had not killed him with thirst, his wounds were nothing, I should never have entered his beloved country.' The remark is typical of their feeling.

You can generally count on the Afghans fighting to defend Kandahar, and always to defend Kabul. But, being people who normally live dispersed, dispersion is an easy matter to them. So, though you may beat their armies, they will then break up, and the real difficulty lies in further and final action. Indeed you may say, that the more the Afghan state becomes stabilized, and the more its army is regularized, the better for us. Happily that is what is happening.

The Government of the country is highly centralized and entirely autocratic. The Amir exercises his authority through the governors of the provinces. The system of government is very severe as is necessary with an intensely independent and lawless people. The Pashtu proverb ' Iron makes little mark on a stone ' expresses the necessity for the policy.

One of our main difficulties in dealing with the Afghan Government has always been its non-acceptance of responsibility whenever it suited it. So here again, the more the State 'progresses,' the better for us.

*Population*

The population of Afghanistan is by no means entirely of Afghan stock, as you will see from Sketch 1. Actually the only true Afghan races are the Ghilzai (who used to be the ruling race) and the Duranis, now the ruling race. Perhaps the Pathan tribes on the eastern border should also be included, but as their relatives in 'independent' territory emphatically avow their independence, it is a matter of opinion.

The other races in the country are of quite different origin, mostly Turkoman or Persian. The Hazaras are of Tartar origin. They, especially, are no friends of the Afghans, who subdued them with great cruelty when they rose, about forty years ago. The Hazaras helped us considerably in the campaign of 1879–80, but of course the Afghans took it out of them after we left, so they will think twice before doing it again.

The racial divisions may be useful to us if ever we occupy the country. But I want you to be quite clear that the attitude of the whole nation towards an invader is essentially one of unity. Hatred of an invader is a burning fire with them. There is no other way to describe it.

*Character*

A great many people have tried to describe Afghan and Pathan character, and found it difficult, because it is a mass of contradictions. They are often recklessly brave, and nearly always brave, yet rather easily discouraged by failure. Very proud of their race, and of their honour, yet often treacherous and faithless.

Capable of extraordinary loyalty, yet capable of extreme vindictiveness against a friend on account of even an imaginary wrong. Observant and intelligent, yet credulous and superstitious. Paying little attention to their religion normally, they can easily be worked up to fanaticism. Inclined to be lazy yet with immense reserve of energy and power of endurance; and often at their best under the worst circumstances. Cheerful, sportsmanlike, and frugal, but excitable and lacking in self-control. A strange mixture. However you size them up, their virtues and vices are at least virile and those of men, and few Britishers are not attracted to them. Lastly they are clever and plausible at arguing. But do remember that it is never, at any time, safe to rely on their faith to carry out a promise, unless they know you have power to enforce it. To Afghan mentality it is stupid to do something you don't want to, unless you must.

Physically they are fine men, I doubt if 2 per cent. would be classed below 'A' at 20. In such a country weaklings die young, and it is a case of survival to the fittest. In the field they drink water, and flour and a little salt is all they need for food. They do *not* need cigarettes and cinemas, which, of course, is a big military asset.

*The Independent Tribes*

The belt of land known as Independent Tribal Territory is a curious sort of buffer between us and Afghanistan, and not a very useful one. The character of the inhabitants is much the same as that of the Afghans, but as a whole, the tribesmen are more intelligent, and have a better knowledge of war. This is largely due to so many having served in our army,

where they make quite first-rate soldiers, and charming men to deal with. The disciplined Pathan is hard to beat.

The tribesmen are intensely democratic, and have no form of government beyond a sort of tribal assembly (the ' Jirgas ' you have heard of), convoked from time to time. Their countries, which are completely mountainous, do not really suffice to maintain life. And that is the underlying cause of their raids into our territory—an economic need—though of course accentuated by greed.

*Control of Tribes*

The independent tribes are all, officially, under British influence, and Kabul is supposed to have no dealings with them. We exercise our influence through political officers, and these officers do certainly maintain a considerable measure of authority over tribal actions. Actually, the influence is mainly brought about by a system of subsidies to the tribes which can be cancelled if they aren't good. Or, if you prefer frankness, a system of blackmail.

It is not altogether satisfactory, any more than it was when Alfred tried it on the Danes. It has been going on for more than seventy years. So have raids and punitive expeditions. But it is not easy to see how to produce a better system, in practice.

In Baluchistan a different policy was adopted. There, many years ago now, we went right up to the Afghan Frontier. And it has worked well. At once you will say: ' Well, why not do that everywhere ? ' A good many people have asked that question for a good many years. I don't propose to tackle it now. But I I do want just to give you a few of the factors which

affect the case, because, without that, it is not obvious why we have any frontier question at all. You can take it that the men who serve in governments are doing their best usually, and if they leave a problem unsolved, it's generally because it's fairly unsolvable.

Suppose we advanced to the Afghan Frontier all along, as we have in Baluchistan. First, it is at least doubtful if the success of the Baluchistan policy would repeat itself elsewhere. The Pathan tribes of Baluchistan are traders first and warriors second—indifferent warriors at that. So are their 'opposite' numbers in Southern Afghanistan. On the whole, they prefer peace. Not so the Pathans of the north, who live in wilder country. They are warriors first and last, and so are their Afghan opposite numbers. Say we take over Waziristan, really effectively, right up to the Afghan Frontier. We come up against the Ghilzai. Are we any better off? We are raided, and protest to Kabul. Kabul gives evasive answers. It certainly will, unless it knows we have the means, and the intention, to enforce our demands.

Now as regards enforcing demands, we all know that if the British Lion's tail is sufficiently twisted, it utters a magnificent roar. But it can stand an immense amount of twisting if it takes the form of raids a good many thousand miles away. Which is human nature. And Kabul knows that. Which is also human nature.

'Taking over all the frontier' is a nice chatty expression. But one needs to realize what it would mean. There is some 500 miles of it, and all roadless. Take Waziristan for example. It is about the size of Devon. At present there is one good road through its

heart, and that gives us some measure of power over the country; but would you guarantee to dominate Devon if it were a mass of mountains and contained only the Plymouth–Exeter road? Apart from expense, which would be colossal and difficult even to estimate, we have not the resources to take over all territory up to the Afghan line. Gradually, it may be possible, and it will become more desirable according as the Government at Kabul becomes more stable and straightforward to deal with.

A third alternative is sometimes suggested, namely to withdraw to the Indus. In plain English, to abandon to their fate all the people west of the Indus who have now been British subjects for years, and who look to us for protection—to my mind, unthinkable.

Well, there you have three ways of looking at it. You can decide for yourself. But what is clear is, that a frontier problem exists and is likely to continue to exist. And where there's a frontier problem you'll have fighting.

*Combination of Tribes*

If you look again at Sketch 1, you will see that 'Independent Territory' consists of a number of tribes, and the names of the main tribes are shown. All these tribes are again divided into sub-tribes.

It is instructive to note how the habit of combination against us has grown in the last seventy years. About 1860 if a sub-tribe misbehaved, and we sent an expedition against it, the rest of the tribe often held aloof. Now, if you have a quarrel with part of a tribe, it generally involves the whole. And the tendency is for this power of combination to increase. 'Self determination' has its echoes on the frontier as elsewhere.

*Cis-Border Pathans*

You will also see from the sketch that a certain number of Pathan tribes live in British territory and are, therefore, ordinary British subjects. They give us some excellent soldiers and, actually, I believe, hold the record per head of population, for voluntary enlistment during the war.

*Independence*

Now the thing the independent tribes most cherish is their independence. They would resist Afghan aggression as violently as aggression by us. At the same time they are essentially Mussulmans, and their sympathies are with the Mussulman state of Afghanistan. Consequently in any clash between Afghanistan and ourselves, where the religious cry is raised (and it always will be), we must always expect some, possibly all, of the independent tribes to take Afghanistan's side actively. And, of course, in increasing measure as they see hope of success.

*Afghan Attitude to us*

It may strike you as odd that a small and backward State like Afghanistan with a population of say five million, can think of fighting the British Empire. Well, consider back history.

In 1840 we sent an army to Kabul and—it never came back. We certainly went to Kabul again next year, but it cannot be said that we crushed the Afghans —far from it.

In 1879–80 Lord Roberts' operations were brilliantly successful. But we had bad disasters at Maiwand and Kandahar.

In 1919 from lack of transport we could do no more than repel Afghan invasion.

There is no 'historical section of the general staff' at Kabul, and no garrison library. That work is

carried out by itinerant poets, and naturally when the poet grabs his harp, he sings about Maiwand and not Chaharasia.

Under such circumstances the natural Afghan tradition is that they've given as good as they've got. And so it becomes understandable that they are ready to join issue with us if they see anything like an opportunity.

Now what is it which we have to face :—

*Forces opposed to us*

(i) The Afghan regular army—say 100,000 to 150,000 men, not really well organized or trained, but possessed of all arms (including now a few aeroplanes) and hardy and brave.

(ii) Some 100,000 Afghan irregulars, quite untrained, but armed with rifles and able to shoot.

(iii) The independent tribesmen who, combined, can *keep* 150,000 in the field.

Of these, the greatest problem is undoubtedly, and is now recognized to be, the independent tribes. The Afghan forces, comprising wheeled artillery, etc., must of necessity act to a certain extent on more level ground —*i.e.*, in practice on the highways to Kabul and Kandahar where we can meet them with more modern resources and under circumstances approximating more to European war.

The independent tribesmen on the other hand, start from a base several hundred miles long, and contiguous with our border throughout. Lastly—our line of communication to Afghanistan runs through tribal territory.

There you have an outline of what the problem is. And I think you'll agree that it is a considerable one.

It is no question of fighting a few half-armed savages, but a distinct problem of some magnitude. We are faced by greatly superior numbers. The enemy is less well armed, except in rifles, and is less cohesively trained. But he is brave and a first-class skirmisher, and a man like that is no unworthy enemy. Remember also that for some time yet he is likely to be backed by all the force of Panislamic and Bolshevik propaganda, brains, and money. We can deal with the problem of course. But the point is, to deal with it well, and successfully.

Now the country we shall have to fight in is, to say the least of it, abnormal (especially in Independent Territory) as you can see from photographs even if you don't know it. Is it reasonable to suppose that you can operate successfully in such a country without a good deal of thought, and, if you can get it, practice ?

*How to Study*

I know you agree, and that is why you have asked me how to learn it up. Well, broadly there are two lines :—

(i) *The Study of History.* [I don't know if you are one of those people who pretend to despise history. As a matter of fact if you do, you're a fraud. You exist on history like everyone else. If you had to start for Moscow to-morrow the first thing you'd do is to try and get hold of someone who's been there and ask him how he did it.] Frontier and Afghan operations have been very fully written up. If you read the books you'll find the same mistakes made with monotonous regularity. Why ? Because people won't find out what happened before and so—they get men killed

Read enough and you get a grip on the enemy's mentality and can largely foresee his actions. But a knowledge of 1870 or of the Western Front in 1914–18, will not help you in that respect, because both enemy mentality, and the ground, are utterly different.

(ii) *The study of tactics under the peculiar circumstances of the case.* For this, your basis, as always, must be F.S.R. *Not* only Chapter XI, but the whole book—Chapter XI is only a few outline modifications. But when you come to try and apply the principles in the book, under circumstances utterly different to any you've ever met before, you'll find it extraordinarily difficult without a lot of thought and—when you can get it—practice. You may be a first-class hockey player, but you'll be a lame goat at ice hockey till you learn to skate.

In my later letters I'm going to try to show you some of the methods of applying the principles.

*Historical Instances*

As regards history, I suggest the following to you :—

DEALING WITH THE NORTH WEST FRONTIER.

The official series *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, Vols. I and II, and *Operations in Waziristan*, 1919–20.

There's a great deal in the first two that you can skip, but the plums are there as well. In a later letter I'm going to tell you where to look for particular instances. But meanwhile, speaking generally in the volumes of the former series, I think you will find that reading the following extracts will pay you :—

(i) Operations at Dargai (Tirah) 1897 (*F. and O.E.*, Vol. II, pp. 76–84).

(ii) Reconnaissance of Saran Sar (Tirah) (*Idem*, pp. 89–91).

(iii) Action at Tseri Kandao (Tirah) (*Idem*, pp. 93–95).

(iv) Retirement down the Bara (Tirah) (*Idem*, pp. 99–104).

The above extracts, studied in connection with *F.S.R. II* show almost every conceivable violation of principles, and the result. But, in noting the errors made, you must bear in mind :—

(i) That the 1897 operations followed a period of about fifteen years' peace, except for units actually stationed on the frontier.

(ii) Very few of the troops used for the operations had any frontier experience.

(iii) *F.S.R.* had not been written. The army had little to go on.

(iv) History had repeated itself. After the Afghan war the army had rather slackened off as a whole.

'*Operations in Waziristan* 1919–20' is an extremely instructive book. But it must be remembered that the troops employed were 'played out' by the war, and had not their normal power of offence.

That's not a very appalling list. If you want to go further and study Afghanistan I suggest :—

(i) The official pocket book 'Field Notes on Afghanistan,' which gives a good summary of our relations with the country, and has excellent maps.

(ii) *Lady Sale's Diary* and *Lieut. Eyre's Diary* for the first Afghan war. There's not much of tactical value to be got from any account I know of, but these two give the 'local colour' very well.

(iii) For the 2nd Afghan war—*Abridged Official Account.* Long winded in places but you can skip. Watch particularly: Our lack of preparedness—in connection with *F.S.R.*—the difference between the handling of the actions at Ali Masjid and Peiwar Kotal.

Still with *F.S.R.*, the action of Chaharasia—Lord Roberts' energy in reconnaissance once he reached Kabul—Sherpur—the energy on Lord Roberts' line of communication. Compare on the southern line :—

Ahmad Khel—Maiwand—sortie from Kandahar —lack of energy on the line of communication, and you will see that a passive attitude invites disaster.

Incidentally, by studying the 2nd Afghan war you will be studying the method of (to my mind) one of the greatest commanders in history. It may have been a 'small war,' but if you consider the inadequate resources with which Lord Roberts had to deal, the way he surmounted difficulties, his ability not only as a soldier but as an administrator of occupied territory, I think you will come near agreeing.

*Study of Local Conditions*

If ever you get to the frontier, there is, of course, very much more that you can learn. And the more you learn it, the better for those under you when the fighting comes.

For instance, the nature of the ground varies greatly in different parts. Up Swat way, many of the hills are covered with huge boulders, very difficult to climb at all. The Mohmand and Afridi Hills are generally fairly straightforward. In Waziristan you often come against

sheer rock faces, impossible to climb. Further south, you meet extraordinary gullies, very narrow, and falling sheer for hundreds of feet.

Then there is water, or as often as not, a lack of it. Sometimes you could do with less ; the valley you are working up and which is the only ' road ' contains a stream which you have to wade constantly. Many of the hill streams are heavily impregnated with salts, and antidotes are necessary.

The types of villages (all of them fortified) and towers vary a good deal too, on different parts of the border. Some of the tribes live in caves to a considerable extent. One could multiply the things there are to learn and which it's useful to know, but till you get there, the point is that there *is* a lot to learn.

A great deal of that sort of information you can get from the official gazetteers and intelligence reports on particular sections of the frontier. But most of all you'll get it by learning Pashtu (the local language, and a very nice one) and studying the life these people lead, by going about in the border villages (on our side of the border, of course). It is intensely interesting, and if you learn enough of the language to do it well, you'll never regret it.

# LETTER NO. II

## A MIXED GRILL

*Change of conditions due to hills*

IN my last letter I worked off on you the venerable chestnut about 'the application' being difficult. And the things which make it difficult are the hills themselves. And as you can't dig them up, it's worth considering why.

Hills are only difficult to us, because we aren't used to them. They present no difficulties at all to the tribesmen, whose homes they are. Consequently, if you could lure the Pathan out into the plains and fight him there, it would be splendid. But as he won't come, you have to go after him.

Of course in some cases, and to some extent, you can force a choice of ground. For instance, the southern route into Afghanistan is far more open than the northern, and more adapted to the deployment of an army. But even there you get hills; and as regards independent tribal territory it's all hills.

Where ground is reasonably level and open there is obviously no reason why a battle in Afghanistan should differ from one on Salisbury Plain. So from now on I shall stick to hill fighting exclusively.

*Why hills make it difficult*

Setting aside certain obvious complications of this sort of fighting, such as climbing, masses of pack trans-

port on bad tracks, a fluid enemy who can avoid engagement at will and so on, there are several important points :—

(i) A hill system is even more impenetrable to vision than a forest—until you get to the top, and that takes time. Meanwhile, your enemy is already on the top, and has observation of all your intentions almost better than he'd get from an aeroplane.

(ii) In movement, your protective detachments guarding your flank have to climb hills to do it. Obviously a slow business.

(iii) Again in movement your 'road' generally runs along a very narrow valley—your front is intensely restricted. Troops cannot pass one another easily in a narrow defile. Hence, to enable you to bring the various arms into play for mutual support, you may have to split your column up into sort of blocks of all arms, and the more so, because you may often have to fight in front, on the flanks, and in rear at the same time.

I'm speaking very broadly, of course, and will go into details later. But I do want you to realize that you are liable to get a headache over thinking out the best order of march of a column, to get the best value out of it.

*All trained men and plainsmen*

It's stating no more than the truth, I think, to say that you cannot hope to be good at hill fighting until you've absorbed hills into your system. A hill-bred man knows instinctively what a hill is going to be like on the far side. He can look at a hill, and see in a flash the easiest way to climb it. He knows instinctively

where to go to get the best view. In fact he knows all about it.

A plains-bred man on the other hand, is *lost* on a hill ; and there are no words to describe how lost he is. He has no idea what lies beyond what he can see. He climbs a spur, finds it is the wrong one, and that it doesn't help him at all to get to where he wants to go. Or perhaps he's told to go to a certain peak. On the way, other peaks intervene, and he loses sight of his peak. In the end he's quite uncertain which peak he's looking for, he is tired out, sobbing for breath and perfectly miserable. And I assure you that picture is not overdrawn.

Consequently, if you come to think of it, is it wonderful (if a plains-bred regiment is hurriedly rushed into frontier fighting with no preparation) that twenty tribesmen can fairly easily turn a whole company of otherwise good infantry into a bow knot of agony ? Yet troops have been asked to carry out ' punitive ' expeditions no less heavily handicapped than that.

Why is it possible to teach, say, Gurkhas and Garhwalis so quickly to fight in hills ? Not because they are any more natural *fighters* than anyone else. They need teaching about fighting as their own officers would be the first to admit. But they do know about hills. And so they come with fully half their lesson learnt.

I'm rather going on bleating about this matter of knowing hills, because it really counts. If, some day, you command a brigade containing a British, a Pathan, a Gurkha, and a Sikh regiment, you'll find they all have different powers of speed over hills. And if you are going to make the best use of your material, you

must take that fact into account. Of course, I know that, in theory, all units do everything equally well. But take the most fervent exponent of equality to watch a race between, say, an Ovis Ammon and a Leicestershire sheep down the slopes of Shuidar—and watch which he puts his little wad on.

*First step in training for hill work*

The last thing in the world I mean is that non-hill races cannot become good at hill fighting. They can, and do. Beyond a slight difference in pace they can become the equals of anyone. But what I am certain of is, that the first and essential step in teaching such people is to know and understand and be able to move on hills. There's no reason why any troops shouldn't become good at it after a few months, if they go at it systematically. Only instruction must be gradual, or you'll tire men out and teach nothing. Start on small hills, and work up to bigger ones as climbing muscles improve. Work over hills carrying nothing—or very little—at first; you are teaching *hills*, not fighting. Don't mix the two till the men begin to feel a pride in being able to skip over a hill. It's the same idiotic pride that you feel if you can bathe in the sea on Christmas day, of course, but it's none the less valuable, and once it comes you've won the battle.

Meantime, you can be teaching all the theory of fighting on a sand model, somewhere cool, where men can take it in comfortably. Then you can go on to fighting work in the hills, when the men know what you want. But if you begin by trying to teach fighting on the hills, you'll be sending men up them, calling them down to tell them they are wrong, sending them up again, and generally encouraging them to shoot you.

It's quite wonderful how much the speed of troops over the hills improves with practice. And of course it's very desirable, because you can hardly hope to score off the enemy much unless you can equal him in speed.

I fancy you would hardly believe these letters are on a military subject unless I put in a few paragraphs on 'characteristics of the various arms.' So I will. (Even then, the absence of a 'column of remarks' will worry you, but I see no point in handing you a ready-made space for your missiles.)

*Aeroplanes*

I suppose no bigger form of help in dealing with the frontier has ever appeared than the R.A.F. Already in several cases they have succeeded in reducing sections of tribes to submission single-handed, and they will probably be able to do so still more as they become more and more familiar with the frontier and can get hold of the best appliances for the purpose. There is, of course, just as much for the Air to learn as for us. That they can ever do entirely without the help (or promise of help) of the Army I doubt, because, as the Sultan of Turkey might have said 'aeroplanes cannot sit on doorsteps.' * It is the co-operation between Air and Army which chiefly interests you, of course.

There are a great many difficulties for the Air to overcome, and far more difficulties about co-operation than there are in Europe. Air currents in the hills, and extremes of temperature, do not make things

* The recent French operations against the Riffs and Druses show the difficulty of coercing semi-civilized nations by air action alone. To begin with there is no target, like London, to attack; only scattered individuals. Secondly semi-civilized races have not reached that happy stage where they curse their own Government and not the enemy when things go wrong. Bomb a Pathan or a Riff and he wants to get even with the bomber, not to down his own Government.

easier. Say an airman is reconnoitring a valley. He must fly low enough to be able to see in detail. In doing so, he often has to fly below the crest of the surrounding hills, giving a nice shot to anyone on the hill. Again, at the level at which he is flying, he is at least liable to be jammed for space when it comes to turning. The broken ground often makes recognition of our own and enemy dispositions extremely difficult.

Then you must remember that landing grounds are rare. Usually aeroplanes will have to act from grounds away back, and only in signal communication with Force Headquarters. Obviously that makes co-operation far more difficult. Yet its value cannot be overestimated, and the more you get in touch with the R.A.F. once you reach the frontier, the more you understand how to make the most of them, the better soldier you will be.

*Artillery*

You, I believe, have never had the honour of serving in the Royal Regiment. If you had—or if you had a chance during the war or at Lark Hill of seeing artillery methods in practice—you would realize that it takes artillery an appreciable time to come into action *effectively* except, of course, over open sights at an obvious target. The more you consider that, the more you see that the handling of artillery (if you are to make good use of it) follows the same principles as obtain anywhere else. That is to say, the Commander must foresee and clearly lay down the probable tasks to his artillery commander, so that the latter may be ready when the time comes. What I mean is this sort of thing :—

A clever Commander will be watching the ground and

thinking of probable enemy action all the time. He sees a particular piece of ground ahead on which he guesses the enemy will appear and take certain action. He therefore warns his artillery commander to be ready for that. The opposite line of action (speaking crudely) is just to let the artillery trundle along waiting till something turns up. Hardly giving it a chance as I think any gunner will agree.

*Machine Guns*

All I want to say about them for the moment, is to make the point that they are available, under the Battalion Commander's hand, for quick use against targets of opportunity.

*Lewis Guns*

A deal of controversy has been raging lately over whether a Lewis gun 'is or is not a platoon weapon' in the hills. One side argues that to take the gun away from the platoon is a crime. The other that it is foolish to leave it with the platoon if it's no use there. Personally, I cannot see the difficulty. The thing is only a gun after all, and made for use. Normally, its best place has been proved to be with its platoon. And generally speaking that is the best place for it in the hills. So, the platoon is its home. But if, say, on June 10th, 1926, you come on a piece of ground where far the best support to the rifle sections can be given by working the Lewis guns (or the bulk of them) from a ridge in rear under the Company Commander *temporarily*, for mercy's sake, why not do it? And you will find that instances of that sort of ground occur pretty frequently.

*Tanks*

Tanks have never yet been used on the frontier, though they have been tried in an experimental stage, with most promising result. A tank cannot, of course, climb a rocky mountain and do piqueting—and never

will. But do you want it to? Why go up a hill at all if you can be safe down below, as you would be in a tank? That, obviously, is looking ahead to the days when a suitable tank is designed and we have enough of them. Even then they won't go everywhere. But even now a tank should shortly be producible which would be extraordinarily useful. It would be invaluable with advanced and rear guards in many places. It could butt down village walls, destroy crops and terraces. It would be of extreme use with convoys and so on.

*Co-operation of arms*

As you know, the chief art in fighting is to get all your weapons to co-operate well. If you can souse your enemy on the neck with a sandbag while someone else has his thumb in his eye, you hold a commanding advantage. The difficulty at first is to get a mental picture of co-operation. But I think if you remember that it's all just like European war, only on a tiny scale, it becomes easier. The enemy has only rifles—no guns—in tribal fighting. Hence, generally, you fight closer up. Your own armament is lighter too. And so it almost comes to this—your Lewis guns take the place of M.G.'s your M.G.'s are your 'close support' artillery, and your pack guns your Divisional artillery.

*Enemy Armament and Tactics*

The Afghan regular army is, of course, armed more or less on European lines. The tribesman's armament is a rifle—small bore in many cases as you've seen—and a knife. They shoot to kill at 800 yards as a matter of course, so one can say their musketry is of a very high standard. Broadly speaking, against well-trained troops they prefer to fight at longish range. But they

will attack readily if they see a chance, and when they do they make very clever use of covering fire. They also occasionally put in very determined charges of swordsmen—covered by rifle fire—either by day or night, and these charges need a good deal of stopping. They always come suddenly. It may sound odd that such charges can succeed, but I have myself seen a party of fifteen men of a thoroughly good regiment cut up with swords and knives in broad daylight. So it can happen.

*Objectives against Tribesmen*

In operating against tribesmen we have two objects in view :—

(i) (Emphatically) to kill as many as possible, that being by far the most convincing form of argument.

(ii) To destroy his villages and stores of food, and capture his cattle and sheep.

Sometimes, as in 1919–20, the tribesmen may think they have every chance of bringing off success. If so they will stand and fight and you get your chance. But if they think the troops are likely to get the best of it, probably they won't try it on. They will fight at a distance and not stand. And so, to make them stand, you may have to go for their villages, etc.

*Effect of Sub-Tribes*

Now a tribe—*e.g.*, the Wazirs—is intensely patriotic as a whole. But all tribes are divided into sub-tribes, *e.g.*, you have the Madda Khel, Jani Khel, etc., all small entities of their own, though owning allegiance to the tribe as a whole. It's very like the States of the U.S.A. before the Civil War.

These sub-tribes correspond, roughly, to the inhabitants of a valley or group of valleys. And human nature

being what it is, the sub-tribe usually prefers to defend its own valley, if you threaten it, to any other. Logically, therefore, if you operate in all valleys at once, operation will be weak, and you can destroy easily. On the other hand, operate up one valley alone, and you get the whole tribe on top of you. But in practice that doesn't always hold good. So far the Mahsuds and Wazirs have generally split up to defend sub-tribes' valleys. But the Afridis have often combined very cleverly against detached columns and given them a bad time.

*Tactics Differ*

*Large and Small Columns*

A large column operating up one valley tends to be very slow and can do little towards chasing and harrying an enemy. It's all right if he stands, but may be quite ineffective if he doesn't. Small columns are far more mobile and can harry more. But remember a column must not be unduly weak. A number of columns may easily be in signal communication in the hills, and may actually only be operating on parallel lines a few miles apart. But where a mass of hills lie between them they may be the equivalent of twenty miles apart as far as inter-support goes. Also, remember that though many columns may make opposition and destruction easier, they may also lessen your chance of a big fight and a good human target.

*No definite Rule*

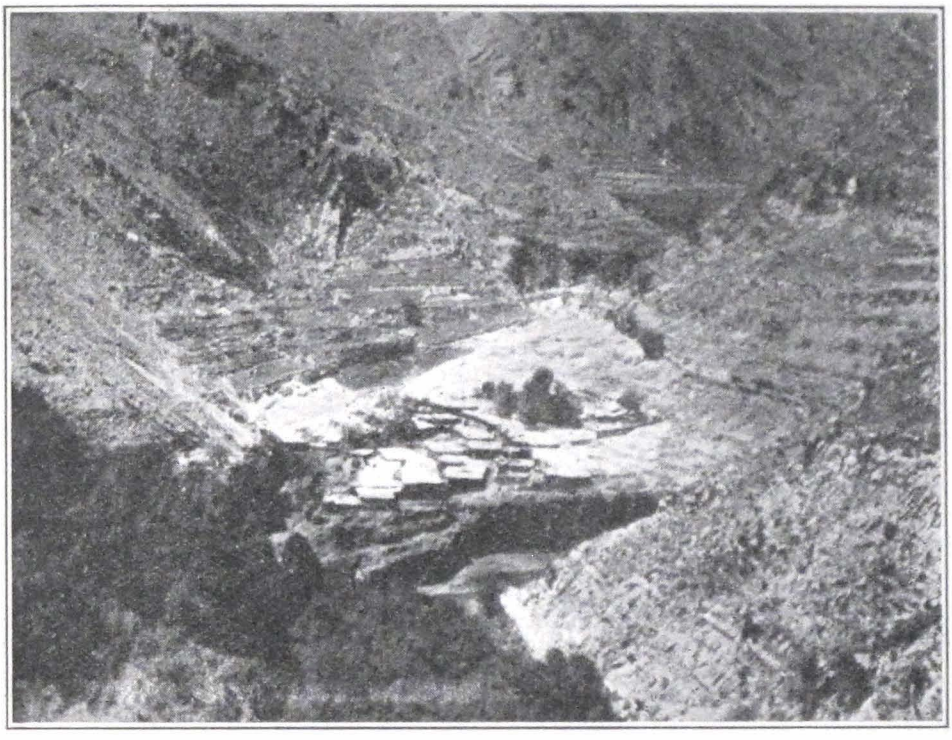
There is, of course, no definite solution to the question of single or many columns. Each case must be taken on its merits, keeping the following factors, amongst others, in view :—

(i) What is the probable line of action the tribe will take ?

(ii) What are the valleys like up which we are to go ? How large a force can you move in them with sufficient speed ?

(iii) How much, or little, can columns inter-communicate ?

(iv) What chances are there of water, forage, etc., locally ?



KURRAM AREA.

*Deliberate or Rapid Advance*

Just in the same way, there is no rule naturally as to whether you should carry out a slow, deliberate advance, securing your line of communication firmly as you go, or whether you should carry out a rapid advance. The first is the better (if the enemy will play) because you kill more of him. But if he won't

stand and fight, you must do the other. And a rapid advance needs the more skilled force of the two.

*Proper Composition of Columns*

One point I would like to impress on you though, as its non-observance has been chronic in the past, and usually with bad results. And that is that all columns, to the extent possible, should be composed of definite units, with proper commanders, proper staff and intercommunication troops. A collection of detachments, inadequately staffed, is hopeless.

*Afghan Supply*

Supply to the Afghan regular forces approximates to the normal to the extent that they are supplied by convoy when possible. They are normally, at least, rationed. But remember they can live on half the food and water we need and can all of them at need revert to the tribal system. Still, they have a system, and that is all to our advantage as it makes it easier for them to be brought to battle, and more difficult for them to disperse.

*Tribal Supply*

The tribesman usually takes the field carrying ten days' food. When that is done his small brother brings him more—or he goes home in relays and gets it —which makes his mysterious appearances and disappearances easy. You will note in every Afghan and frontier war the *complete* disappearance of the enemy after defeat. You will also note (or I hope you will as so many people have been caught out by it), his sudden and miraculous reappearances—which must be guarded against. It's the supply system which makes this possible, just as it did for the Spaniards when fighting the French.

*Enemy Observation*

Another and most important point to note is, that from the moment you cross the border you are under

*incessant* observation. You may see no one. Probably you won't. But all the same, someone is watching everything you do unceasingly. Your methods, the quality of your troops, your dispositions, are all being studied by people who are about the quickest tactical critics in the world. Any mistake you make will at once be taken advantage of. And their patience in waiting for a chance is amazing—just like a wild animal. They'll wait days and weeks for it. So *never* make the mistake of thinking because you see no one, no one is there. It's the commonest mistake made. An exception to this rule is possibly at night. I'll deal with that later.

*Light and Shade*

It is extraordinarily difficult to see the enemy moving on the hills, and one of the reasons is the clever use they make of light and shade. Of course you can't always move in shadow, but you often could when you don't. It's a thing we ought to teach our troops much more than we do.

*Visual Training*

Troops need a lot of practice in spotting an enemy in the hills. A cockney's vision is usually limited to a street ; a Sikh's to the nearest sugar cane patch. There's nothing physically wrong with their eyes, but it's a fact that they are not used to focussing them over long distances and on unusual ground. So they need practice in vision and in what to look for. That you can give by having a sham enemy—preferably Pathan soldiers of our own in their own clothes. If the enemy always sees you ten minutes' soonest, you are at a disadvantage.

*Range Taking*

Range taking and judging distance is of great importance in the hills. Calibration of guns is almost routine

now. But how many think of calibrating rifles and M.G.'s, though you are going to fight say 8,000 feet up, and your weapons are sighted for sea level? Moreover, shooting will usually be plunging or the reverse. Equally with judging distance. You may be A.1 on the flat. But you'll be incredibly out in the hills without practice.

Conversely, remember that in a country where inter-tribal feuds are chronic, every man knows all the local ranges to a hair. So prominent landmarks are even more to be avoided than in Europe.

*Readiness to Shoot*

As regards setting of sights and so on. If the enemy is fighting at fairly long range and standing off, the opportunities to damage him are fleeting. You cannot hope to do so if you wait till he appears, then set sights and so on. Of course, you often will have to. But, as far as possible, the art lies in spotting where he will come, ranging on the places, and remaining completely ready. That is what he does.

*Tribesmen's Appreciation of Units*

It's curious the way the tribesmen watch the quality of the various units in a force. They soon find out their relative efficiency. They then avoid fighting when the good ones are in the picture, and go for the weaker ones when it is their turn. Say 'A' regiment is covering a retirement and being followed up hotly. In time it passes through 'B' and pursuit entirely ceases. 'B' passes through 'A' again, and once more 'A' is heavily pressed. The enemy has been following all along, but doesn't think it safe to go for 'B.'

*Moral Effect of Hills*

It is, perhaps, worth mentioning that hills have some sort of a moral effect of their own till troops get used to them. The extraordinary silence, the big distances,

the dispersion of units, and the crashing echoes once firing begins, are all rather abnormal. It's liable to come rather suddenly on troops the first time they meet it.

*Repetition*

My last point in this letter is really of very great importance, and it's this. In fighting on the border avoid doing the same thing the same way day after day. It's one of the very commonest mistakes made and is *always* punished in the end. Remember the enemy is always watching and waiting for his chance. Moreover, as regards our own troops repetition becomes routine, routine becomes carelessness. So, whether it be reconnaissance, convoy escort, or any other duty, see to it that times and methods are constantly changed. If you don't, the enemy will certainly catch you in the end. You will find that this point was very carefully attended to in Waziristan in 1919–20 (official, p. 149).

## LETTER NO. III

### *F.S.R.* II, CHAPTER XI

When you read *F.S.R.* II, Chapter XI, you are, as a matter of fact, reading the concentrated experience of about eighty years on the border. *F.S.R.* has to be kept short and so everything is boiled down to a point which makes it a little difficult to see what lies behind the principles. Actually, there are dozens of historical examples to pretty well every sentence in the Chapter, and perhaps it may help you if I tell you where to look for instances of some of them. Only the books I've already mentioned are involved, and I shall abbreviate their titles in referring to them :—

*A.W.—Abridged Official Account of 2nd Afghan War*
*F.E.—Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India.*
*W.—Official Account of Waziristan Operations*, 1919–20.

Sec. 120, 2.—*Self reliance.* Look at any photograph of the ground, and see how a unit must get split up to take advantage of it. A section commander has far more initiative thrown on him than in normal war, and that holds good, too, higher up the scale.

*Vigilance.* Read in Lieut. Eyre's *Diary of 1st Afghan War* of our lack of vigilance at Kabul, and the result. *F.E.*, Vol. II, p. 234, gives an example of an escort to a road repairing party being overwhelmed treacherously —on p. 431 you will find an account of a treacherous attack on troops who were actually being entertained

by tribesmen to food, and in *W.*, p. 44, you get an example of how a post can be captured through lack of vigilance. In *W.*, p. 103, you can read about the way the enemy infiltrate unless very carefully watched. And these are only a few instances. Compare Lord Roberts' extreme energy in Kabul (*A.W.*, Chapter VIII).

*Beating the enemy at his own tactics.* Read about the operations round Kandahar in *A.W.*, Chapter XVI, and the difference that occurred when Lord Roberts arrived with his skilled leadership and well-trained force. It really was rather like mother coming into the nursery—all the trouble vanished at once.

Sec. 120, 4.—*Hesitation, delay . . . a vigorous offensive.* Study our failure to support our outposts in the Khaibar in 1897 (*F.E.*, II, p. 69) and what it entailed. See how much the same situation came about in Waziristan in 1919 (*W.*, p. 63). Compare the results of Lord Roberts' handling of the situation at Chaharasia (*A.W.*, p. 214). I do not mean to suggest that the situation was similar in these cases, but the lesson as regards 'hesitation' and 'vigorous offensive' is plain.

*Study of the mode of fighting, habits and characteristics of the enemy.* Follow the operations in Waziristan 1919–20, remembering how the troops employed had been reduced in efficiency by prolonged war. Watch how the commander of the striking force constantly changes his methods, and successfully, but always based on a knowledge of enemy methods. If he had not had that knowledge, and he gained it by years of study of past events, the result might have been very different.

Sec. 120, 7.—*Reconnaissances, even when everything appears absolutely secure.* Things *appeared* secure at

Kabul in the first Afghan War (Lieut. Eyre's *Diary*). In the second Afghan War no such enemy concentration as occurred at Maiwand (*A.W.*, p. 497) appeared likely. In 1894 the attack on Wana Camp came as a surprise (*F.E.*, Vol. II, p. 418). And in 1919 near Dakka, the sudden reappearance of the enemy would have achieved surprise, but for timely reconnaissance. So you see the statement holds good all along.

Sec. 121, 4.—*Ravines should be avoided* UNLESS . . . Obviously, if you are in a ravine and the enemy hold the sides you are like a rat in a trap. Inexperienced troops are liable to forget this though. You'll find an example of thirty-five men being cut up in 1897 in *F.E.*, Vol. II, p. 267, and there's an instance of it again in *W.*, p. 103.

Sec. 122, 2.—*Cavalry.* I'm inclined to think that the wording of *F.S.R.* here hardly shows up how intensely useful cavalry can be when they *can* be used. Certainly it is not often that they can, but their value is amazing when they get the chance. And perhaps it is possible that they might be exploited more fully than they often are. The enemy's two main weapons are his rifle and his mobility. Destroy the latter, and he feels pretty helpless. That is why he fears cavalry so much, when it can act.

Lord Roberts used cavalry to guard his camp at Chaharasia—an unusual use of cavalry but a very sound one, under the circumstances. Because in face of it, the enemy dare not come down into the plain (*A.W.*, p. 215). Cavalry made a most effective pursuit after the attack on Wana Camp had been driven off (*F.E.*, Vol. II, p. 418).

In 1897 one and a half battalions and a field battery were being forced to retire by a Mohmand attack. But the attack was easily routed by a charge of only a couple of squadrons (*F.E.*, Vol. I, p. 474). Again in 1897 two troops of cavalry defeated an enemy turning movement of some 1,000 men and drove them from the field (*F.E.*, Vol. I, p. 531).

Sec. 124, 2.—*Limits the day's march. Every precaution . . . to avoid . . . delay.* The retirement down the Bara in 1897 (*F.E.*, Vol. II, p. 100) is a good instance of lack of consideration of these two principles. Notice in this connection the failure to improve transport exits from camp and compare how carefully both 'distance' and 'delay' were considered by the Commander in 1919–20 in Waziristan.

Sec. 127, 4.—*Often be advisable to halt in the most favourable position.* One feels inclined to substitute 'Almost invariably' for 'often.' As I will try and show later, night operations on the frontier can be carried out with great success. But a *withdrawal* in the dark, in contact with an enemy who knows every inch of the ground can hardly ever be other than extremely risky. Examples of disaster are pretty common. *F.E.*, Vol. II, pp. 95 and 101, give instances of both trying to continue a withdrawal and of halting.

Sec. 132.—*Night Operations.* Night operations have been carried out on the frontier from the earliest times (there is an instance of a very good one in 1855) and, nearly always successfully. You find examples in almost every campaign, though their advantages were never exploited before to such an extent as in Waziristan in 1919–20.

In considering night operations there are, I suppose, two main factors to consider. First, the extent to which you can organize the operation. An unorganized one is, of course, as dangerous as it would be anywhere else, perhaps more so on such ground. Compare the measures taken to make the night operations against Ali Masjid and the Peiwar Kotal a success (*A.W.*, p. 22 and p. 104). Also notice the extreme care in preparation, and the essentially limited objectives set as tasks, in the Waziristan operations of 1919–20.

Secondly, there is the question of the attitude of the enemy. You must remember that, though the enemy is a brave and skilful fighter, he is under no sort of discipline and has very little cohesion.

As regards discipline, there is nothing at all to keep him in the firing line if he doesn't wish to stay. There is no sense of 'duty' amongst the tribesmen, and if it is a bitterly cold night (say) he's as likely as not to go home to bed as to keep watch. And so comes about the one occasion (which I referred to earlier) when you are not under incessant observation.

As regards cohesion, where discipline is absent, unless he can *see* his comrades sticking it out, he is apt to wonder whether they are or not.

Then there is observation. Half his tactical skill comes from the fact that by day he can spot from a hill top what you are intending to do long before you get it really going. By night he cannot do that. So there are a good many reasons, and solid ones, why he should hate night operations, and why they are very often worth considering on our part.

But of course you cannot say they would *always* pay.

If the enemy is being fairly successful in his day fighting against you, or if it is abominably cold at night, he is very apt to take the night off. That may account to some extent for the success of the *continuous* night operations in 1919–20. But if he's getting all the worst of the exchanges by day, or in the hot weather, he's apt to make night a pretty active time, and to snipe very much at night. Under such circumstances the success of a night operation is obviously more problematical—though by no means out of the question (if carefully prepared) because of the disadvantages under which the enemy labours.

All of which leads one to feel that smoke would be a most useful accessory to frontier fighting if a sufficiently non-volatile type could be evolved and a fair amount could be carried. The value of stopping enemy observation can hardly be overestimated.

There is a rather curious proof (I think) of how the enemy hates fighting in the dark (except of course in pursuit of a withdrawal) in the fact that it has always proved most difficult to surround tribesmen by night operations. It has been done, but not often. Logically you'd think he would take advantage of the difficulties under which the attacker labours in the dark, to stand and fight. But his instinct seems to be to bolt at once. I suppose the lack of certainty about what his pals will do, is too much for him.

Only, however much night operations may have proved successful in the past, do not imagine you can bring them off *without* the most careful consideration of what the enemy is doing at the time, careful preparation, and previous training.

## LETTER NO. IV

## PROTECTION IN MOVEMENT

*Need for Flank Protection*

IF you look at a photograph of almost any frontier valley, it's clear that your flanks need protecting every bit as much as your front and rear. And it's equally obvious that no flank guard could move over the hills and yet keep up with the main body in the valley. Very well then, you have to do something else, and that is, detach 'piquets' as you go along for flank protection. The word 'piquet' is used in such dozen of ways that it may help if I make clear as far as I can what I mean when I use the word.

There are 'camp protection' piquets—which we'll come to—virtually small forts, and mainly if not entirely 'passive' in their action.

Piquets established on the forward line of march as the result of heavy fighting, or of surprise (many examples in 1919–20), with a view to assisting next day's operations.

Practically they amount to preliminary operations in an attack.

Temporary piquets, posted for flank protection during real movement. It is this type that I am discussing in this letter.

The troops who are to find these piquets must be as far forward as possible, because they have to climb into

position, which takes time. Hence they march just behind the advanced guard.

*Responsibility for Flank Protection*

Now *someone* must be responsible for posting the piquets. And since the posting can only be done from the extreme front of the column, and as it is obvious that the advanced guard and piquets must work in close co-operation, the advanced guard commander is the man responsible. Of course, whether he posts them with his own fair mouth or not is another matter. Like any other commander he can delegate authority if he sees fit. But, actually, he is responsible.

As a result, the piqueting troops form part of the advanced guard, which consequently consists of vanguard, mainguard and piqueting troops. (In the unusual event of being able to work advanced guard mounted troops the country would probably be open enough to dispense with piquets.)

*Necessity for Advanced Guard to remain Unchanged*

A clear cut sub-division between the advanced guard proper (*i.e.*, V.G. and M.G.) and the piqueting troops is essential, as I think you'll see as we go along. Because the duties of the first demand continuity of action, and the latter is a vanishing commodity—it gets expended as you move on. If you refer to the diagram of movement as you read (Sketch II in pocket), perhaps what I'm trying to say in this letter will be clearer.

*Duty of Advanced Guard*

The duty of the advanced guard ' proper ' is primarily the same as elsewhere. But its action is limited to some extent by the ground. Broadly I think you can say that it is responsible for the valley, and for the lower under features which do not come within the province of the piquets.

In addition it must be ready, if necessary, to support the piquets in getting into their positions, by fire.

*Position of Piqueting Troops*

It is unfortunate, but obviously unavoidable, that the piqueting troops should have to march behind the advanced guard. Piqueting, even with the best hill troops, is slow work, and of course the farther back they start from, the longer it takes. But various factors make the delay not as bad as it looks, and there are ways of lessening it, which we'll come to.

*Strength of Advanced Guard*

Remember the enemy is armed only with rifles. Hence you do not need the great depth within formations, such as an advanced guard, that you do in Europe. The vanguard will usually be infantry only—without M.G.'s.

In such ground M.G.'s are not sufficiently mobile and can do better work farther back. Now having the enemy armament in view, the head of the mainguard will probably be only 300–500 yards in rear of the tail of the vanguard. The mainguard must, of course, be composed of all arms likely to be useful, and available. But provided it is adequate to its task, the smaller it is the better, being easier to control, offering less target, and allowing the piqueting troops to be nearer the actual front. So in the end, you see, the piqueting troops are pretty close up.

*System of 'Next for Piquet'*

Then again, the officer posting the piquets (advanced guard commander or his delegate) will be as far forward as possible so that he can see. Probably at least at the head of the M.G. And he usually has with him the two or three batches of troops 'next for piquet.' As they are sent off, fresh parties are sent up automatically from the piqueting troops; and so you satisfy pretty

well all requirements of keeping your advanced guard properly clear, yet being early off the mark with piquets.

*Considerations before a March*

The day before a march the Commander will tell the next day's advanced guard commander his plan in the usual way, of course. But it's very important that he should tell him early. If the advanced guard commander can get up some high hill before dark, and get a look at next day's job, it helps him materially. Of course a suitable hill isn't always available. Personally I should always like to get a run over the course in an aeroplane these days. But you won't often get that, from lack of landing grounds.

*'Distance' of Advanced Guard*

Then the question arises, how far ahead should the advanced guard start? On the level it is a question of getting distance. Here, distance is relatively a small matter. The main factors are that piqueting at best is slow, hence movement of the main body can only be slow. Hence again the job of clearing camp is slow, as you can't get along. Hence often an excellent target for the enemy, and rearguard complications. So the farther ahead the advanced guard can go—*i.e.*, the more of the route that can be piqueted so that the M.B. can at least start at a fair pace, the better. How far ahead is it safe to send the advanced guard is another matter and can only be decided in each individual case. Now please take it that the column is on the move, and that dispositions are as I've been saying.

*Sending off Piquets*

From his advanced position the 'Piquet Poster' points out the points to be piqueted, orders the strength and serial numbers of the piquets, and keeps a record of what he has posted. This record, of course, is for the

use of the officer (usually rearguard commander) who eventually withdraws the piquets.

Clearly the quicker the 'piquet poster' can decide positions the better. The ideal is to decide so early that piquets can double out ahead of the vanguard, which of course draws level as they climb, and so be actually up in time without delaying steady movement forward. But that demands really good hill troops; and remember undue hurry, and sketchy orders lead to trouble.

*Strength of Piquets*

As to strength of piquets—it is impossible to say. It depends on your enemy, and on the quality of your troops. As a very rough shot, say fifteen—twenty. Over piqueting, either too many piquets or too many men in each, is bad, You soon use up all your troops. Under piqueting is bad. You have disasters. And remember branch nullahs, and indeed any places where the enemy can lie up, need piqueting as much as hills.

*Detailed and Bulk Piqueting*

What I've been trying to describe above, you might almost call 'detailed' piqueting. Very often you *can* only do it piquet by piquet. But, where the ground divides itself into clear cut 'massifs,' it is far quicker and easier, and much more in conformity with the normal chain of command, to hand the 'massif' over to a definite unit (say a company) and let its commander do the detail in his area.

*Support to Piquets*

When piquets have to be sent far out, a support to them is often necessary. One such support is often sufficient for several piquets. The unit which finds the piquet finds the support.

*Duration of Time on Piquet*

Before going any farther it is necessary to remember that various things may happen to a piquet:—The

force may be moving forward and not intending to return. Or, it may want its piquets released as soon as possible for some other reason. In which case piquets will be withdrawn by the rearguard as it *advances*. On the other hand the force may be returning the same day. Then the piquets will probably be wanted to stay up till it does, and will be withdrawn by the rearguard when *retiring*. Or, they may have to stay up all night. Now we can go on again.

*Detail of Sending off Piquets*

In 'detailed' piqueting, the Company Commander (having got his orders from the officer posting piquets either through his C.O., or direct as circumstances dictate) explains his task fully to the piquet commander he is sending off. If 'piquet tickets' are in use, he gives him one. These tickets are issued by the officer posting piquets, who keeps a counterfoil as a record of piquet positions and detail.

The Company Commander must make sure that the piquet commander knows and understands his instructions. You can't put things right later. Chief among many points are, perhaps, the exact point he is to reach, whether he will be withdrawn 'forward' or 'back' or if he is to stay out all night. Previous training makes short instructions possible.

*Company Commander*

The Company Commander controls things, once his company is out, through his reserves. He's become the commander of a tiny extended army in fact. And he must trust his subordinates. It is very important for him to get in touch with his piquet commanders (through proper channels of course), as soon as they are up.

They frequently will find they have to change positions to some extent, which will involve other

adjustments. Hence piquets must have means of communication—a signaller best, or a semaphorer or trained runner.

*Platoon Commander*

The Platoon Commander's duties do not call for any special comment except to say that even the platoon will be much extended and that control will be mainly by supervision. So here again comes the point of clear, comprehensive, and elastic instructions before parties move off. In the hills you can't just step across and complete deficiencies.

*Piquet Commander*

The piquet commander must be taught to ask, if he doesn't understand his orders, and not just to risk it. Having got his instructions he moves his men clear, tells them the orders and his plan, and makes sure that all of them understand, as he may be knocked out and the plan must be carried through.

He tells off his piquet into as many lines as necessary to enable each line to work up a spur without overlapping into re-entrants. In choosing his spurs he should do so well away from the hill to avoid being confused by under features. He must tell off ground scouts, and good men to watch the flanks. His own position will be with one of the support lines. All rifles loaded, and his men must keep their eyes on the danger zone, if they want to be quick enough to deal with the enemy when he appears. Sounds easy enough, but one's natural inclination in climbing is to look at one's feet.

*Moving up a Hill*

The way up must be by a spur, never by a re-entrant. Straggling up must not be allowed—proper time must be given to allow formation to be kept. But subject to that, and to fighting efficiency, the pace should be the maximum possible.

On nearing the top of the hill the leading line halts and allows the others to close up. Bayonets are fixed. The commander now decides how to proceed. His chief dangers are a counter-attack round the shoulders of the hill, or on the top as he arrives, or attack by fire followed by a charge if his party put their heads over carelessly on reaching the top. Usually the best course is to move on in three parties, one straight on, the others round the shoulders so as to catch any intended counter-attack. The last few yards are a regular stalk—fingers on triggers. On arrival at the crest the greatest care must be taken not to show up, and also observers must use care in looking over. Remember too in 'reaching the top' that most hills have false crests. For an example of counter-attack see *F.E.*, Vol. II, p. 379. The instance quoted was not a counter-attack on a piquet —curiously enough none is recorded though plenty have happened. But it shows the sort of thing.

*Support to Piquets Climbing*

Assistance to a piquet will, if opposed, be furnished in the first instance by any supports and piquets within range, and by the M.G.'s and guns of the mainguard, which must be disposed with this end in view.

*Connection*

Having got into position one of the first duties of a piquet commander is to make connection with neighbouring piquets, supports, etc. Sometimes it is not easy. Perhaps there is dead ground near his piquet necessitating a detachment. Perhaps the piquet cannot see the support and so on. All that means men employed for connection, and if the piquet is unduly weakened thereby it is the commander's duty to demand more men ; but not to lose connection.

*Shifting Position*

As piquet positions are chosen from the valley a piquet commander often finds that the place pointed out to him, though generally suitable is not actually so. If so he must change it on his own responsibility, but must, of course, report his action if the change is material.

*Disposition of Piquet*

As to disposition of the piquet, all one can say is that it will be so as best to carry out its task. Now a 'flank piquet's' duties are observation, resistance, and retention of liberty of manœuvre, a very different thing to those of a night piquet. So its duties demand dispersion rather than concentration. It cannot carry out its work if concentrated all in one place. Moreover concealment will be difficult. Also, it is very difficult to get out of a piquet, once cooped up in it, if you are attacked when trying to withdraw.

It should, and must, arrange for defence, but with due regard for its other duties. For an example of how a piquet can get tied up by not observing these principles see *F.E.*, Vol. II, p. 93.

*Reconnaissance for Retirement*

Immediately after a piquet commander has completed his dispositions he must send out and reconnoitre his line of retirement. It is never safe to put this off as you may be suddenly withdrawn at any time.

Not less than four men can be sent safely and they must be capable men. On their report the commander makes his plan, and tells everyone about it forthwith, so as to be ready for a sudden call.

*Road Sentries*

At times piquets should post a 'road sentry.' A 'road sentry' is simply a man sent down to the valley to notify the exact position of the piquet to the rearguard commander. Road sentries are useful if (as sometimes

is unavoidable) connection with the valley cannot otherwise be maintained. Otherwise they are a waste of men.

*Withdrawal*

In a withdrawal, the rearguard commander withdraws the piquets. In other words, piquets stay up till the rearguard is ready for them to come down. They must never, of course, retire without permission.

*Withdrawing Piquet*

The rearguard commander notifies to piquets *permission* to withdraw. But the actual moment and method of withdrawal must be left to them (subject of course to normal control within the unit), for reasons of ground, time and space, enemy action at the moment, all of which the rearguard commander cannot judge from his position.

At the same time piquets must not read into this system licence to wait unduly, because they see a chance to score off the enemy. The whole retirement is a concerted movement to which they must conform.

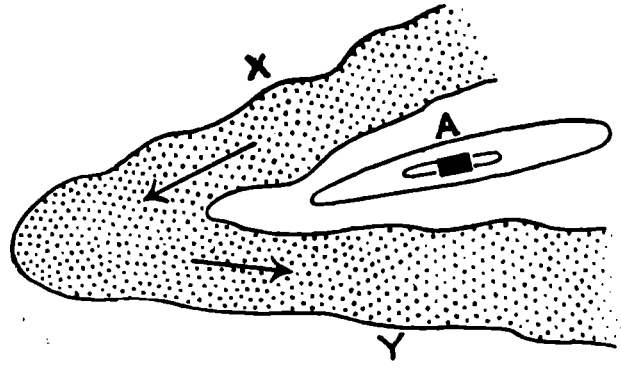
The rearguard commander usually signals permission to withdraw with a large flag. The actual method, of course, is quite immaterial as long as it works. The piquet commander must acknowledge the signal, otherwise there is no proof that he has received it. But in acknowledging it he should do so by a salute or some reasonable method. So often you see a man stand on the skyline and repeat the retire signal—thus giving the show away generously to the Amalekites.

In timing his retirement the piquet commander aims at reaching the foot of the hill just as the tail of the rearguard passes it.

*Angle Piquet*

Here's a good concrete instance of *one* of the reasons why piquets receive 'permission' and not 'orders' to retire :—

Take a force retiring down a valley in the direction of the arrows. Assume a rearguard commander who does not know of the bend in the nullah when he gets to X, and *orders* the piquet at 'A' down. Obviously if it does come down, the rearguard will be in the soup when it gets to Y.




*Mutual Support*

As the retirement of the force progresses and the rearguard approaches, the piquet commander must watch the next piquet retiring and prevent the enemy following it up or damaging it by fire. Sometimes a tiny rifle 'barrage' even is useful to keep the enemy off commanding points.

No piquet must ever withdraw till those on the exposed side of it are safely away. The essence of the whole thing is co-operation, and mutual support.

*Information to Rear-Guard Commander*

It is, of course, of material assistance to an rearguard commander if higher leaders in infantry units—*e.g.*, C.O.'s or sometimes Company Commanders can meet him as he approaches their zone and say what their plan for withdrawing is. But it's not a thing you can count on. Commanders must be where they can best control.

*Details of Retirement*

When a piquet retires it must do so irregularly, from here to there, men being told off by name, and the slowest going first. Flank men remain till last, and if

the enemy is coming on, increase their rate of fire so as to deceive.

But this firing needs instruction and practice, or it won't deceive a baby. The last five or six men all leave together.

Great care in crawling away at the start of a retirement is necessary. One careless man can give the whole thing away.

That too needs practice, which must be done in F.S. order or the difficulties are not realized.

*Speed*

Piquets must always retire at top speed, even if the enemy do not appear to be following up. It is never safe to assume they are not because you don't see them.

*All Clear*

When the last party of a retiring piquet is defiladed from enemy view they should signal the ' wash out ' as an indication that their last position is clear and can be fired on.

*Assembly Point and Bounds*

The place of assembly in the valley should be made known to everyone by the piquet commander in laying down the piquet's plan of withdrawal. It should be well away from the hill, or well under cover of the next support or piquet. Sometimes of course on a big ridge the best way for a piquet to retire is practically straight through the next.

When possible it is far best to make the retirement in one bound. What you are at, is to get away. But, if the descent is very long and difficult, bounds may be unavoidable. In that case it is usually best to work by half piquets.

*Bad places and looking back*

If there are impassable places on the way down, men must be left there to warn the last comers. And all men retiring must frequently look back to see if anyone

has been left behind. Sprained ankles occur besides wounds. And, as I say, the tendency is to look at your own feet going down a hill.

*Casualties* If a casualty occurs amongst the last men retiring, the men not required to carry off the casualty, and in some cases everyone present must counter-attack *at once* to prevent the enemy getting a close target. If the piquet is small, help should be sent up at once. Wounded should not have first aid administered on the spot, unless an artery has been cut. The first thing is to get them away. If many casualties occur it may be necessary to retake the hill, to get the wounded away. Against such an enemy, unless men know they will be brought off if wounded, morale suffers. Getting wounded away is very difficult. Everything turns on the immediate, instant, counter-attack, and that doesn't come without training. (Instance, *F.E.*, Vol. II, p. 91.)

*Lost Piquet* In the event of a piquet having lost touch completely and having been left out unnoticed by the rearguard, the commander must act on his own initiative and get back as best he can. It is the only occasion on which a piquet should retire without permission. In doing so he must of course observe the ordinary precautions—keeping to high ground, taking up a position before dark, etc. The circumstances described should never occur—but they do sometimes.

*Reporting all in* Having got his piquet down, the piquet commander checks it and reports to the rearguard commander either through his superior, or direct according to circumstances. Piqueting troops in retirement are the property of the rearguard commander until he has

done with them. So when they come down it is for him to say if they are to join the rearguard or rejoin the main body. But he should only keep them in emergency. They may be needed in front. Assistance to piquets withdrawing is afforded in the same way as in advance, that is by neighbouring piquets and supports and by M.G. and gun fire from below. *The Rearguard*

The composition and dispositions of the rearguard, and its duties too, are very much those of an advanced guard reserve. But rearguard actions can be mighty unpleasant unless well run. When they are well run, they can be great fun. The whole thing turns on proper arrangements and allowing sufficient time. You want to 'lay out' your retirement so that the enemy in pursuing is always bumping into something unpleasant. See *F.S.R.* II, 52, 10, which puts it much better, I think, than anything in Chapter XI. And if you want an example, compare the withdrawal from Makin (Waziristan, 1919–20) where the enemy gave up pursuit in disgust, with the withdrawal from Saran Sar (*F.E.*, Vol. II, p. 89). *Detailed and Bulk Piqueting*

In speaking of the withdrawal of piquets you'll notice I've tried to describe the system for withdrawing them when posted 'in detail.' Of course, just as it's better to post them 'in bulk' when you can, it's far simpler to withdraw them in bulk too. But it's not always possible by any means, and only possible when they have been organized 'in bulk.'

## LETTER NO. V

## CAMPS AND PROTECTION AT REST

*Villages*

ACROSS the border you naturally don't find 'billets' as you do in Europe.

Still, villages are sometimes very useful to include in your camp area.

The inhabitants will, of course, have cleared out before you get there. But not their fauna. Consequently you will find Messrs. Keatings' preparations one of Nature's priceless boons. All the same, do not despise them, as they give good defilade against enemy sniping.

*Sanitation*

Sanitation is of even more importance than in Europe. I don't know if you've ever seen flies at their best—when you have to eat with one hand and wave flies off the spoon with the other. All those sorts of joys 'go to production' quicker in a hot country than they do at home. But you can keep them down by taking proper precautions—provided you do from the start.

*Water*

Water is often a difficulty. Where it is limited you often have to make considerable arrangements for improving the supply, and have to work to a 'time table' for watering animals. A special officer for water pays then. Remember you'll have only a limited time in which to water—after arrival in camp and before

dark for instance. Whoever is doing the water calculations does it easiest I think this way :—

Work out the time it will take all animals to water on a given length of single water front—say on fifty yards. From that, you can always calculate how many yards of front (or half that if a double front) you need to water in a given time ; or, if time is your trouble and not available front, how much front you want to do it in time.

*Arrival of Force at Camp Site*

When the force gets to a new camp site, the advanced guard commander is responsible for protection of it, pending more elaborate arrangements. A staff officer of the force lays out the actual camp.

*Selection of Camp Site*

In selecting a camp site what you are after, of course, as far as defence goes, is that it can be defended by the minimum number of piquets, and that the site gives the best possible defilade from sniping. Very often you get that best by having one side of your camp right up against a hill. Other things that influence you are that you must be near the water, and that your site must be convenient for moving on from. In the end, as usual, you have to make the best of what you can get. A site with a possible R.A.F. landing ground is naturally worth a lot.

*System of Defence*

The defence system is like this :—

The camp itself is organized for perimeter defence. ' Peri,' I believe, is a Greek word meaning all round, and ' meter ' you might roughly translate as ' a blamed long way when you come to construct defences.' Anyway, the basic idea is a wall all round the camp, defended by the infantry, and with other arms and non-combatants inside them again.

Sketch III gives you the rough idea. Outside that, you have a ring of piquets on the hills, designed to deny the enemy the chance of firing down into camp.

*Limit of Size of Camp*

Now I want you to grasp (and you'll see as we go along) that there is an immense amount of work in constructing camp defences and piquets, and that, by men who may have been climbing hills all day, and are not exactly shouting for the 'right to work.' Consequently camp must be kept as small as possible, or you increase work to be done—as small as possible that is, consistent with not jamming. And, really, that can be very close packed. The best analogy I can think of is a battleship. The matelots live very tightly packed, but by arranging things really neatly, they have plenty of room in practice, and it's the same in camp.

If you look at Sketch III again you'll see that the infantry have a long narrow strip—very narrow, say about twenty yards perhaps often—but it does perfectly well, and is all designed to reduce size. A free road all round camp is kept at the back of this 'infantry' strip, as it, of course, is the real defence area.

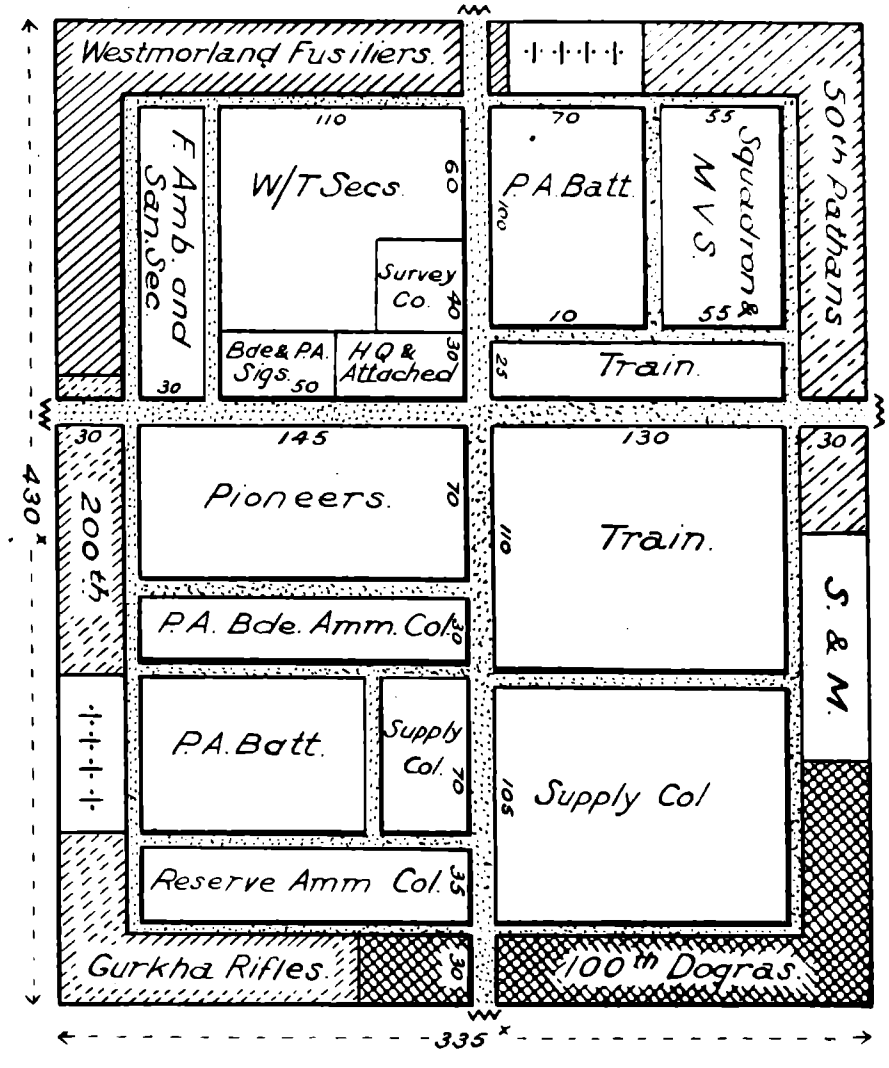
*Various Arms*

Of course you can put other arms besides infantry on the perimeter. Very often it is useful to put guns. There may be something they can be ready to shoot on there. But, generally speaking, 'other arms' are not designed for the job and have other things to do. So don't put them on the perimeter unless short of infantry. As to the kind of defence you construct, I think it is obvious that it is better to build breastworks *up* than to dig *down*. Because the two things you are most guarding against are sniping-fire, and a rush.

SKETCH No. I

# DIAGRAM OF LAY OUT OF A CAMP.

NOTE :- In the Camp shown the batteries happen to be on the perimeter, and so are the Sappers and Miners.




Scale of Yards.

Yds. 100 80 60 40 20 0 100 200 300 Yds.

Sketch IV gives a picture of the details of the system of infantry and M.G. defence, and I think explains the idea better than any words can. You see it is based on the M.G.'s and L.G.'s. Also that supports and reserves are *kept mobile*. They are (except general reserve) admittedly right up with the fire garrisons. That is on account of space. As in all this fighting, everything is foreshortened. But they are definitely organized and so available to move.

*Action in Case of Attack*

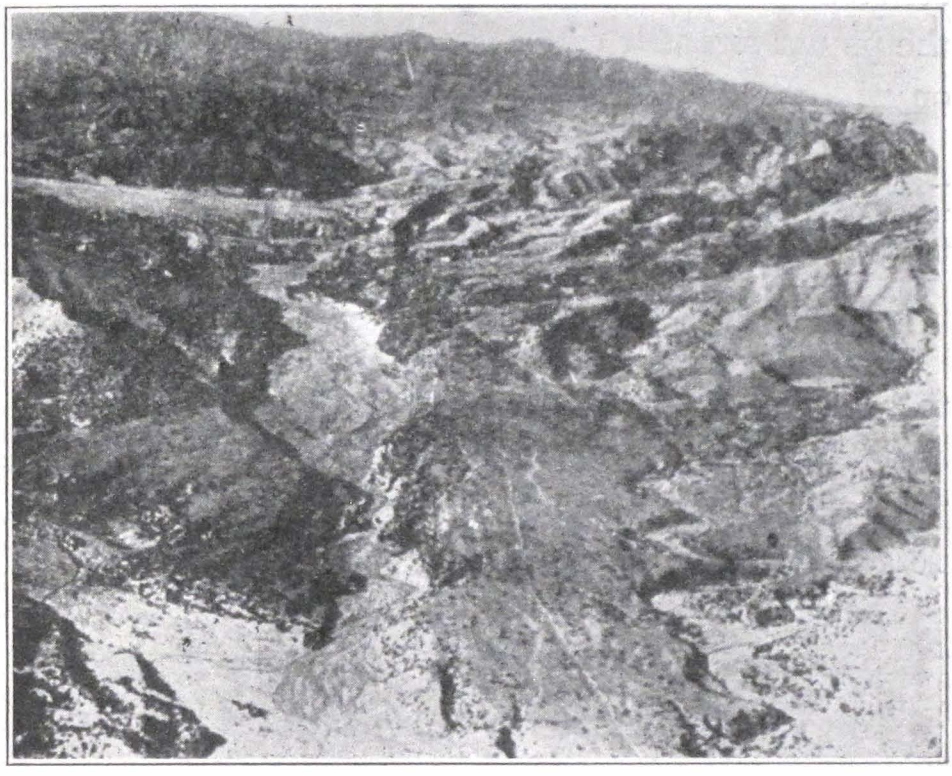
In case of attack the fire garrison repels it by fire. If it penetrates, supports and local reserves deal with it in their own areas. Finally, the general reserve is available if 'areas' should be overwhelmed. You will note that no M.G.'s or L.G.'s are kept in reserve—for the obvious reason that they would be useless there. Bayonets only once the enemy gets inside. Reserves act along the camp roads of course, so it is important that they should be good and wide. 'Moppers up' are very necessary in rear of a bayonet charge, as the individual enemy is dangerous even when badly wounded.

Note also, that unit boundaries should never be at a corner, an entrance, or any place which makes definite responsibility doubtful.

Sketches IV and V (in pocket) give the details of a highly organized camp. As you will see, it cannot be made in a day, and its completion is impossible in day to day moves. But it gives an idea for when you have time, and a model to work towards when you haven't. If you were moving every day and reaching camp late, you'd probably not get beyond the first step in construction.

The outer ring of protection, the camp piquets, are posted as I say, to prevent the enemy firing into camp. And so they can, on any big scale. But, of course, it's impossible to prevent odd individuals creeping through and sniping. Hence the elaborate defences in camp against sniping.

*Camp Pique*



WAZIRISTAN AREA.

The location of these piquets obviously depends on the run of the ground. Some may be quite close in, others as much as 2,000 yards away. Their strength will vary with the intensity of fighting the enemy is putting up, distance, strength of defences you have time to construct for them, and so on. But the point is this. They must be strong enough to be entirely self-sufficient. If a piquet goes, the enemy can fire into a packed camp at will. Hence piquets must hang on.

The operation of supporting them and relieving them at night with infantry, when attacked, has been carried out. But it is exceedingly dangerous and difficult as the enemy knows just what you are doing and has all the initiative.

In case of attack, camp piquets can be materially assisted at night by gun and M.G. fire. For instance the piquet signaller can show a light through a loophole on which guns can lay, and then deflect.

Arrangements can also be made for infantry assistance. But the main thing is that piquets should be able to take care of themselves.

*'Finding' of Camp Piquets*

Camp piquets are usually found by the unit on whose front they lie, at least when you are moving from day to day. As a result, you have detachments out from every unit. And so, when you start again next day, you are liable to move off with all units deficient of their detachment. (I'll come to relief of night piquets later).

That is bad, but consider. A C.O. is responsible for the efficient work of his unit. There is little time before dark on reaching camp. If one unit were to take on all the piquets the C.O. might be responsible for a circle of 2,000 yards radius. And there are various other reasons with which I won't choke you up. Of course there are occasions when it is possible, and better, to let one unit do it all. But I want you to grasp that it usually is done by detachments from all units, and how that inevitably leads to complications when you move on.

*Laying out Camp*

I said up above that a 'staff officer lays out the camp.' And it is no mean job; he cannot go ahead of the advanced guard to see the ground. The distance

between advanced guard and main body is small, as you know. So, the main body is on top of him almost as soon as he begins. Unless he knows his job he is done. He must have a clear picture in his head of the areas different units need—based on their actual strength. And he must have a rough idea of how to piece camp together in various shapes—oblong, square, triangle, etc.—for the ground is never the same. It is just as important that 'camp colour parties' of units (the 'billetting parties' of Europe) should be able to work quickly in laying out their areas. And all that means previous training. You see if you arrive at camp by say 14.00 hours, there are only a few hours till dark (and you may arrive much later). Once you start getting into camp you have 'surrendered all initiative' and the quicker you get in the better. So everything must work for speed.

*Orders*

As units arrive at the camp site they want orders of course. And the art of command and staff work in that respect undoubtedly lies in giving all orders as comprehensively as possible; so that a C.O. gets in one whack all he is going to be required to do, as opposed to getting it in driblets. If he gets it in one, he knows where he is and can divide up the immense amount there is to do in the time in the best way. Broadly speaking, a C.O. wants to know:—

(i) His strip of perimeter, area, exits for which he is responsible, and any working parties and so on he will have to find.

(ii) Any orders for co-ordination of M.G. defence.

(iii) The position and strength of camp piquets which he is to find.

(iv) Any reserve, guards, etc., he is to find.

(v) Administrative arrangements, such as water, sanitation, traffic, and so on.

(vi) Headquarters and inter-communication.

(vii) Warning orders for next day, as early as possible.

*Orders within Units*

The 'comprehensive' issue of orders within units is just as important as it is from Headquarters to units. (I am following infantry battalions really, as the main work falls on them, but other units have similar problems.) Work on the perimeter should be started at once. As soon as that is in hand, the camp piquets should be sent off to relieve those put out temporarily by the advanced guard. The men for these piquets would usually have been 'warned' the day before, and have been given as easy a time as possible during the day. The question of whether they should feed before going on piquet, or whether food should be sent up to them always arises. With the piquet must go an equal number of men as a working party. It is absurd to suppose that a piquet can construct its own defences unaided. It must carry out its duties of observation and protection (including protection of the work of constructing the piquet defences) and it cannot do that *and* construct. So, say you have a company finding camp piquets, another company is working for it—half your battalion away. And you begin to see why it is so important to make the size of camp as small as possible to save labour.

The working party should not return to camp till the defences have been 'passed' as satisfactory. In going and returning it should study the ground carefully,

because, in the unfortunate event of having to send up help to the piquet, obviously these are the best people to send. Range takers should go out with piquets, complete their work there, and then return and do camp. The defences will usually consist of Sangars (pronounced Sungurrrs and not like Lord George Sangar of circus fame), which are little dry stone forts. I'm not going to attempt to describe how to build them, it would take too long and you'll learn it on the spot. But I'll say this much. It's not a bit easy to do, and it will pay you hand over fist to teach your men how to before you cross the border.

*Sangars*

As a rough guide to time, twenty-four trained men (including six good 'builders' and eighteen stone carriers) can make a sangar for twenty men in two-and-a-half hours.

Piquets should be self-contained as regards food, water, reserves of ammunition, tools (not many wanted in stony ground), and they must have day and night means of signal communication. In addition they must have enough warm clothing. It can be bitter on a hill top, and they'll have sweated freely. Also, I think personally they should always have some morphia pills, or some sort of dope. A man hit on piquet can't be got away till next day.

*Stores*

The action of a camp piquet by day is that of any other form of outpost—observation and resistance. Consequently by day it will be disposed with those ends in view. By night it is in principle passive—a denier of ground to the enemy—and remains in its defences.

*Action*

Now we can go back to camp.

*Details*

There is a mass of small matters to think of. To carry fuel on pack transport would be an impossible job. So you usually have to collect firewood locally—which means working parties. Then there is the question of cooking and latrines. With an enemy who creeps up under cover of darkness hoping to cut off stray men, special precautions are necessary. All cooking in the dark must be done inside the perimeter—not always easy in a confined space; but lights at night being dangerous, night cooking should be avoided. When it has to be done, then earth must be by every fire to enable it to be extinguished quickly. Night latrines are seldom safe outside camp—even when apparently well under view of a sentry. So they must be inside. And they should be provided for all units, sub-units, etc., to prevent too much movement at night, and also, so as to fix responsibility for sanitation. Outside latrines cannot be used till daylight, and even then not till the ground has been searched by patrols and reported 'all clear.' All these matters need co-ordination, and fixing of responsibility.

*Exits and Approaches*

Proper closing of the actual exits from camp at night is important. Most experienced units prefer, I think, to go the whole hog and build them up, knocking them down next morning. Then there's no doubt about it.

As regards the importance of approaches, with a view to getting your transport out of camp, you'll only have to study the difficulties they got into in the retirement down the Bara which I've referred to, and the extreme care taken in this respect in 1919–20. Nothing can be worse than having all operations upset because the

transport has stuck. You see, most camps are on some sort of plateau, above the river bed which forms the 'road.' And so approaches are nearly always steep, and, if it rains, liable to be slippery.

*Protection within Camp*

Sketch IV shows the interior of camp bare. Well, of course, all units in that space need protection and defilade from sniping as much as any others. So actually they build up parados and dig down their tents, just on the same principle as the infantry do.

*Organized System, and Silence*

As you'll see, the cardinal principle of camp defence is based on organization—everyone knowing their places and jobs. Everyone inside the defences by dark, and the minimum of movement after that. Also, and equally important, the prevention of the enemy getting to know defence arrangements. In consequence, hawkers of fowls and eggs, etc., should never be allowed near camp. If political officers wish to interview inhabitants, arrangements must be made to do it well outside. And so on.

The enemy never attacks a camp without careful reconnaissance. And the harder you make it for him to find things out, the less he is likely to try it. So you want complete silence in camp after dark. Sentries invisible and silent, and in different places to what they occupy by day. Frequent changes of arrangement in a standing camp. Sentries connected with their commanders by means of a rope or something, so that they can call them up silently. No lights except those of offices or hospitals, and those properly blinded. No firing except to give the alarm, by order of an officer, or if the enemy can actually be seen. No firing at all inside camp of course. And if troops turn out at night

hurriedly they must put on proper head dresses—otherwise it is hard to distinguish friend from enemy.

*Alarm Posts*

To make sure that everyone knows his place and job (including transport drivers and followers) the whole camp parades on alarm posts every evening before dark. Anything that wants adjusting can then be checked and put right. An enemy attack on camp often comes in from several directions, and often in echelons. Hence the great importance of everyone sticking to their allotted job.

*Snipers*

Uncontrolled firing in the dark at snipers is a mug's game. He's doing it partly to annoy you and keep you awake, partly in hope of killing you, and partly to make you give positions away. If you don't answer, he may succeed in the first two, but he doesn't know he has, and the game soon becomes dull. Your chance of hitting him is small, because of course he moves as soon as he's fired. The proper antidote to sniping is a good system of traverses and parados. If you have well-trained troops, really cunning at nightwork, ambushes are sometimes very effective. But you need jolly good troops at the game to do it.

*Transport*

Transport on arrival at camp has to be unloaded at once of course. As far as units on the perimeter are concerned, I think it is usually better to off-load outside the perimeter, and carry the load inside by hand afterwards, at leisure. The off-loaded animals can then go off direct to their transport lines. Off-loading outside makes for less congestion in the narrow infantry strips. Moreover, animals usually stale on first halting, so it keeps the ground cleaner.

All 'attached' transport camps in the interior of

the camp under its A.S.C. officers. Sometimes unit equipment animals are put in the interior too. Personally, I prefer equipment animals to be with their units, as in Sketch IV. They can be accommodated perfectly well and are just as safe there.

Remember that the tightening up and adjustment of loading ropes on pack loads is a thing which has to be catered for over night, before next day's march—another little fatigue.

Loading pack transport and getting it under way is a difficult problem to do well. A loaded pack animal carries its load easily enough when moving. But it soon tires standing. One animal bumps another—loads fall and so on. So your ideal is to get transport loaded just at the right time, so that it can move off smoothly in a continuous stream and not stand about. To reach that ideal would mean very large loading parties, drawn from your fighting troops as they alone are available, which wouldn't do. So you want compromise, balancing the need for smooth movement against too large working parties. But don't keep your transport standing unduly. I need hardly comment on the importance of good loading.

*Relief of Camp Piquets*

The relief of camp piquets depends, obviously, on what you are doing. If you are in standing camp the operation is like any other relief. Of course it must be all completed before dark.

If you are moving, *i.e.*, vacating the camp site for good, then you can do it in various ways. The piquets may consist of various units, and you may want to get all those in, replacing them by one unit before you start. That will take time of course. Or, you may

leave the existing piquets till the last moment. In either case the eventual withdrawal of them comes to the same thing. The rearguard takes up a position to cover their withdrawal, and they come away just as described for 'flank' piquets in my last letter. Only, do remember that they must *not* remain cooped up in their piquet defences till the last minute, or they will find it very hard to get out of them when the time comes.

# DIAGRAM OF DISPERSION.

SKETCH Nº VI.

BATTALION in India organized as at Home, but only 4 M.G's, and 1 L.G. section per platoon.

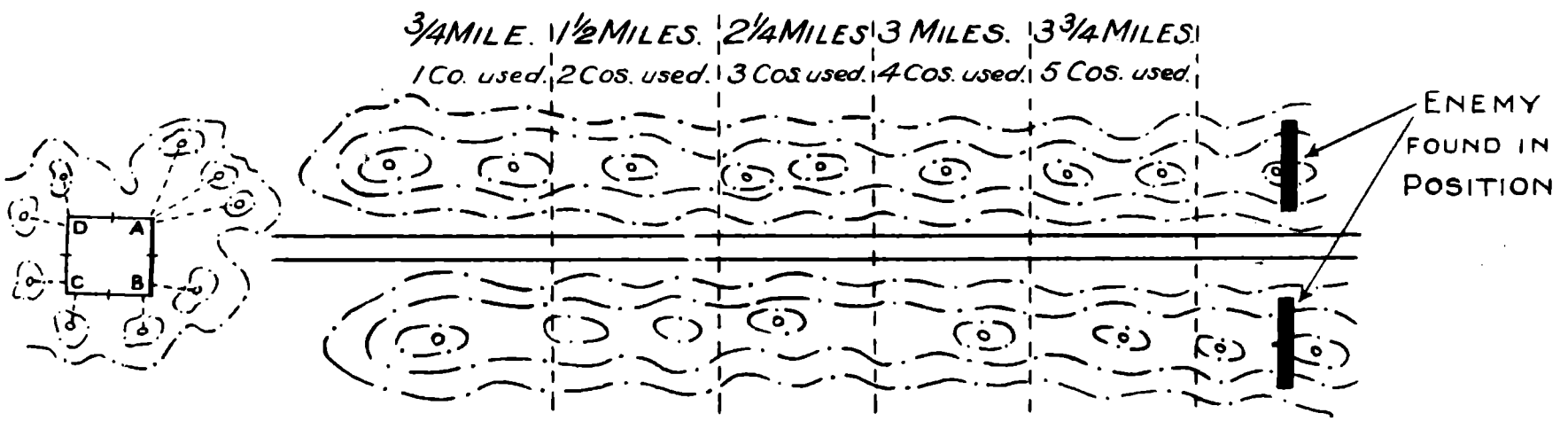
OTHER RANK Strength. (M.G's excl.) - Estab. 600. Company 150. Platoon 37. Section 9.
Actual strength say 500. 125. 31. 7

FORCE OF ALL ARMS includes 4 Bns. and one Pioneer Bn. (3 Cos.).
Force halts for night. Pioneers are finding no Camp picquets. "A" Bn finds 3 picquets remainder 2 each all of "not less than 50". Hence each two platoons? "A" Bn's picquets so situated as to be difficult to relieve before moving on next day. It is intended to relieve the others before moving.

| POSSIBLE DETAIL FOR NEXT DAYS MARCH. | "A" Bn. | "B" Bn. | "C" Bn. | "D" Bn. | Pioneers (only 3 Cos.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2 Cos. Adv. Gd.<br>1½ Cos. still on night picquet<br>2 Secs. with baggage<br>1½ Platoons "spare" | Picqueting troops (less) 2 Secs. with baggage) | Main Body (less 2 Secs. ※ with baggage | 2 Cos. Rear Gd.<br>1½ Cos. relieving night picquets<br>1½ platoons "spare"<br>2 Secs. with baggage. | 2 Cos. Main Body<br>1 Co. various escort duties. |

※ This pre-supposes it will be possible to reduce the night picquets 50% after daylight. Often it will not be. This relieving 1½ Cos. eventually is withdrawn by the R.G. and joins the column.

Flank PICQUETS are to be "not less than 20". Break platoons or not? Estimate in this case say 3 or 4 picquets to 1,200 yds., or ¾ mile. On this basis each picquet a platoon i.e. pltns. not broken up. One platoon perhaps finding a local reserve.




AFTER ADVANCING 3½ miles Main Body reduced to 3 Cos. "C" Bn. and 2 Cos. Pioneers. But first picquets etc., perhaps coming up from rear.

IN HAND for attack if nothing yet up from rear:-
2 Cos. "A" Bn. (Adv. Gd.)
3 Cos. "C" Bn. (M.B.)
2 Cos. Pioneers (M.B.)

Possible available total for attack:-
"A" Bn. 2 Cos. Advance Gd. (already committed)
1¾ Cos. just doubled up from Camp picquet.
"B" Bn. 1 Co. off flank picquet.
"C" Bn. 3 Cos. from M.B
"D" Bn Nil.
Pioneers - 2 Cos. but attack not their proper work.
Total 9¾ Cos. (5¼ Fresh, 4½ Tired).

hills at all. He is camped somewhere Next day his job is to go and destroy some villages which are far enough off to make him realize that it will be just about all he can do to carry the task out and get back to to-day's camp—which is what he wants to do. In other words there have got to be no mistakes and everything has got to go quick. Now I suggest that any commander in that position will want to use his handiest units for the difficult parts of the job. It's not only human nature, but common sense. But to fit them into the order of march so as to get the best out of them is a proper jig-saw. It's rather interesting. Call 'A' and 'B' the two best battalions, 'C' the fair one, and 'D' the weak one.

The first step is fairly easy. He can probably arrange for 'D' to do all camp piquets the night before, and to find anything more required to guard camp while the force is away. For the advanced guard and vanguard 'proper' he'll no doubt detail some of 'A' or 'B' battalion. The next problem is, is he going to leave all flank piquets up during his advance, so that they will be all ready in positions as he falls back? If he does, obviously his retirement will be easier and quicker. And under those circumstances he would probably begin piqueting with 'C' battalion, so as to keep 'A' and 'B' available as far as possible for the trouble at the enemy end of the march.

However, the march to the village may be so long that he can't afford to leave piquets up. If he did, he'd have nothing left at the end. And so they must be withdrawn 'forward' as the force advances. As a result, the troops in hand at the end of the march will

be those who *first* went on piquet, and have come forward again. So in that case, if he wants 'A' and 'B' troops in hand at the end, he should begin piqueting with them.

That may be an extreme case. But it is by no manner of means an impossible one. And I think the two examples show as well as anything could, the difference between this and European fighting. You can't say the principles aren't the same. But you'd look at the two situations for hours without thinking of twins.

*Ground Dispersion*

A third reason for dispersion comes in actual operations, and is due to the run of the ground. *F.S.R.* rightly says that the attack should be up spurs. Well, follow the idea out, and you see it amounts to a chain of attacks, separated by ravines, where mutual support from *some way off*, and cross fire, are everything. On the other hand 'distances' tend to be less—partly on account of enemy armament, and partly because fire is more 'plunging' in the hills. And a very good thing it is too, because 'distance' spells 'time.' A supporting line must be close enough to the one in front to get there in time. And since you can't go as quick up hills as you can on the flat, you need supporting lines closer.

*Defence*

As regards defence, see my letter on snakes in Ireland. At least that's about what it comes to. You have, of course, defence of camps, of the lines of communication, of posts. And occasionally, defence of large 'posts' like Lord Roberts' defence of Sherpur, and the defence of Kandahar. You have retirements too. But it's impossible to picture taking up a defensive attitude, in the European sense, on the border. And it's pretty safe to say that if you did you'd be wrong. Attack instead.

*Destruction of Villages*

Now for destruction of villages. No doubt you've often tried to light a fire, and found it fairly difficult. But I bet you've never yet tried to do it while someone sloshes you over the ear with a broken porter bottle And that, my dear nephew, is very much what the operation amounts to.

It is, of course, a means to an end, not an end. The real object is to get the inhabitants to stand and fight. Still, destruction of villages and capture of live stock is the only material form of pressure we can bring to bear—and it is valuable.

*Extent Desirable*

The amount of destruction it is desirable to carry out varies. Where a tribe is usually satisfactory, supplies good recruits to our army (and remember transborder men have fought grandly for us in many wars), and has broken out rather badly merely, yet is fighting cleanly—then you don't want to create a lasting sense of injury. So, to destroy houses and to carry off live stock would be sound. Both can be replaced. But to ring the bark of trees, grown with infinite difficulty and almost irreplaceable would not be sound. But, of course, if a tribe is persistently defiant it's another matter.

*Time Limited; Organization*

Effective destruction of villages is anything but easy in the time available. Consider your approach march, work on destruction, and withdrawal. The work must be done quickly. Yet, if it's to have any effect as a punishment it must be thoroughly done. All this spells organization and training.

*Protection*

Consider a column going out to destroy a group of villages. The approach march will be exactly the same as I've already described. Arrived at the village the

procedure for protection will be just the same as the preliminary day arrangements for the outer ring of protection of camp.

*Reserve*

It's essential that the commander should keep as large a reserve as possible in hand. While the work of destruction is going on, obviously one surrenders initiative to the enemy. And troops engaged in destruction cannot be expected to fight at a moment's notice in any direction. So the organization works out :—

(i) Protective troops covering the work.

(ii) An adequate reserve, completely ready.

(iii) Working parties for destruction.

*Villages held*

As a rule, tribesmen don't hold their villages. They prefer to fight outside and retain liberty of manœuvre. So you find the villages empty except for a few highly dangerous desperados. But sometimes they do hold them. And then they aren't always easy to take quickly without considerable loss.

Transborder villages are very strong—up to a point—and tactically designed. Types vary, but broadly speaking they are surrounded by irregular bullet proof mud walls, loopholed and providing flanking fire, and also provided with one or more towers, loopholed in several stories, and giving command and observation. The base of the tower is solid masonry, proof against pack-gun shell, and taking a very large amount of explosive to blow up. Above the masonry is a door, which you reach by a pull-up ladder. Above that the tower is bullet-proof mud.

*Towers*

Towers are dangerous even when apparently empty. Many have underground connections, and unless watched

they are liable to be re-occupied just when you think all is well.

Towers can be destroyed by guns of course, but a sensitive fuze is essential, or the shell goes through the walls without exploding. Average ammunition expenditure per tower—one round per 100 yards of range. In default of guns you can mask the loopholes with M.G.'s and Lewis guns. Not so nice, but it works. Only remember to keep the loopholes masked till you've cleared the tower.

However, please take it that the village has now been captured, that the outer ring of protection is complete, and that an adequate reserve is suitably placed.

*Commanders' Instructions*

The commander must now :—

(i) Divide the village (or group of villages) into areas, and appoint a distinct and properly organized destruction party to each.

(ii) Give instructions as to whether towers are to be blown down or not (an R.E. job).

(iii) Lay down time available for work.

(iv) Lay down alarm signal and alarm posts.

(v) Lay down the general arrangements for withdrawing, and signal for it.

(vi) State position of reserve where prisoners, forage, cattle are to be collected, etc., etc.

(vii) Arrange for collection of reports as to villages being ready to set fire to, and signal to fire.

*Destruction Parties*

I've mentioned 'properly organized destruction parties.' Such parties include :—

(i) *Door breakers.* Men with ropes for slinging beams as rams, and axes.

(ii) *Roof draught makers.* Men with crowbars and picks for holing roofs.

(iii) *Forage men* for collecting forage for removal to camp, equipped with nets or bags.

(iv) *Forage men* for collecting forage as fuel for burning village, equipped with nets or bags.

(v) *Port fire men* for firing the village. Matches are useless. But petrol very useful.

It's clear that all the above must be equipped *before* you leave camp—or, anyway, equipment arranged for.

(vi) Escorts for R.E. blowing up towers.

(vii) Observation posts in and outside the village.

(viii) Prisoners' escorts and cattle drivers.

These parties can be told off on the spot of course, but the better the organization, the quicker the work.

*Precautions*

Experience shows that certain precautions are advisable in villages, because usually a few desperate fanatics are left in them :—

(i) Bayonets fixed all the time, and rifles loaded with catch up.

(ii) Move about in groups of not less than four, generally—anyway *not* singly.

(iii) In entering doors, show in the light for minimum time. A bomb, is useful if in doubt.

(iv) Avoid honeycombs. There are several instances of bees having been started by taking honey.

As regards how to destroy :—

*What to Destroy and How*

(i) *Towers* can only be dealt with by explosives.

(ii) *Houses.* The long roof beams and doors are the things to go for, because they are the real trouble to replace. But to get them burning well there must be a good draught. So all doors must be open, good holes in the roof, and a good heap of forage and dry wood piled in the house to give the fire a good start.

(iii) *Crops.* To my mind seldom worth tackling. You can trample them with transport, etc., but it's a big labour. And they won't burn properly when standing. Tanks of course would do the job beautifully and be grand for smashing down the retaining walls of terraced fields.

(iv) *Water channels.* Worth tackling with explosives if you can find a place where water is led through a tunnel as sometimes is the case.

(v) *Forage.* Usually grain, and chopped straw. Doesn't burn any too easily. It must be got out of houses and caves into a draught. Very often villages have a pond. And if they have it's often quicker to tilt the forage into that than to try and burn it.

*Firing a Village*

While the village is being prepared for burning, the port-fire men should get to know their sub-area and be ready to start firing ; of course working from down wind up wind. It's generally best to blow towers before firing begins, in case of failure of a charge. Precautions must be taken for clearing men away before

blowing or firing. And both should be begun by concerted signal.

A properly prepared village generates intense heat, and a dense cloud of smoke. The latter must be borne in mind as regards signals.

*Retirement*

If you are going to withdraw after destruction and not going to camp where you are for the night, the sooner you withdraw after the village is satisfactorily burning, the better of course. In this connection there are several points :—

(i) The withdrawal will certainly be closely pressed. People don't like having their homes burnt.

(ii) The more time you give the rearguard commander (probably the original advanced guard commander) to make his plan and ' lay out ' the better. Hence, concert measures with him the moment you have done instructions for destruction.

(iii) The withdrawal may easily take about twice as long as the advance did, which gives you a key as to how long you have for destruction.

This last is only a very rough guide. It's pretty true if you are only lightly opposed in advance. If you are heavily opposed, your advance will naturally be slower ; but you may so hammer the enemy that you will have little trouble later.

(iv) You may have left camp in the morning intending to return to it at night. So you left your route piquets up and did not draw them in after you. On arrival at the villages you find you've taken on too much and doubt if you *can* get back. Well, you must decide quickly what you will do. Probably

you will decide to camp at the villages. In that case you'll have to send back part of your force to bring in the route piquets.

And, remember, you must foresee the possibility of such an eventuality or you won't be prepared and equipped to stay out all night. Moreover, perhaps you won't have arranged adequate defence, after dark sets in, of your original camp. And if you have not, you are for it!

## LETTER NO. VII

## THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION, STRATAGEMS, ETC.

THE main trouble on the lines of communication is the defence of convoys, of supplies and stores moving up. Naturally, where pack has to be used, there are large numbers of animals; and whatever the nature of the transport, it needs protection on the move, and a safe place at night.

Roughly speaking, you can, I think, divide the lines of communication (as regards defence) into two areas. There is nearly always a strip *inside* our border which needs defence. Not on any great scale, but still marauding bands may come down and attack convoys —so you have to be prepared. The kind of area I have in mind is from (say) a place like Tank, to where you begin to enter the hills in any direction.

*Defence in back Areas*

In that sort of area the defence consists usually of regular 'posts.' That is to say a small mud fort, probably a couple of stories high at least, with quarters for the garrison, and with a walled-in outwork, defended mainly by flank fire, in which the transport will be safe for the night. The garrison is calculated so as to be sufficient to defend the fort, and also to find escorts to the convoys on to the next post—or half way to it.

In many cases the escort need not be large in such circumstances. Somewhere on the line there will be some force of mobile reserves, of course, as a backing to the whole thing, and to enable an aggressive defence to be carried out.

As regards actual protection of convoys, I need hardly rub in how great a difference the nature of the transport makes. One three-ton lorry = seventeen camels or forty-two mules.

*Defence in the Hills*

But when you come to the hills, defence of convoys at once becomes far harder. You have all the trouble of piqueting added. What happens, roughly, is this. The camps vacated by the striking force as it moves on, are adapted to take the convoys for the night. For movement by day there are, really, two ways of getting at it.

*System of Piqueting 'when required'*

(i) The garrisons of the 'camps' or 'posts' are given sufficient troops to enable them to piquet on to the next post and find an escort, as well, whenever a convoy is moving. And, of course, a central reserve at selected places on the line. The piquets and escort may only go halfway and then be relieved by troops from the next post; or, they may go right through according to circumstances. But the point I'm at is, that they return to their camp each night, and so, except when they are out on convoy protection, the whole area between 'camps' or 'posts' (whichever you like to call them) is free ground to the enemy.

*Weak Points of System*

It is anything but an ideal system. Such work is intensely monotonous and boring for troops in

addition to being very hard work. The tendency is for them to get into a state when they carry it out in a routine and perfunctory way. They occupy the same ground for piquets every day—they manœuvre the same way every time to reach those piquets, and so on. Where the enemy has a completely free hand, as he has, it's obviously only a matter of time before you have a minor disaster of some sort. There's nothing on earth to prevent him preparing the most elaborate ambushes.

*Unavoidable sometimes*

But don't forget that this system may be the only one you can employ if you are only going to use a line of communication for a *short time*. The alternative system takes time to create. So it very much depends on the nature of the operations you are carrying out, whether 'flying' or 'deliberate' type, which you will use. (Of course in the extreme 'flying' type, a 'flying column' you have no line of communication, and take all you want for your operation with you.) When a line of communication is only used for a short time, the 'routine' disadvantages of this first system are not so marked.

*Permanent Piquets*

(ii) The second system is to establish permanent piquets on the line of communication, with 'camps' or 'posts' for the convoys at night, and central reserves as before. A permanent piquet is merely a well-constructed assault-proof piquet with a self-contained garrison which is not relieved for (say) a week or ten days.

It needs no argument, I think, to show that you are in a safer and better position if your piquets are up and established, than if you have to put them up. That has been recognized for many years, and has been acted on in greater or less degree, but was never before 1919–20 exploited to the extent it then was. But I want you to grasp that the true value, the essential value, of the system, lies in its power to dominate the line of communication area and make it *yours* and not the enemy's. Unless executed in that spirit you will admittedly have better protection for your convoys in case of attack. But little more. You will do little to obviate the likelihood of attack.

*Aggressive Defence Essential*

If you don't believe me, study the difference between the way Lord Roberts conducted the defence of his line of communication in the second Afghan War, and the way it was done on the Kandahar line. In principle I mean not in detail. Lord Roberts was aggressive the whole time.

Permanent piquet defences must be really strong. The enemy can attack from any and all sides. He has excellent view points and can study the piquet and its defence system at leisure. The piquet is a small thing, and concentration of fire on it is simple. Consequently it would be wrong to suppose that you could defend it indefinitely by firing *over* the parapet, if the enemy really means business. So you must have loopholes well down the walls, and they must be cleverly concealed and usually flanking. If not, the enemy can study

them at leisure, and neutralize them in attack. You need wire to stop a rush. Room in the piquet for stores, wounded, etc. Some sort of roof to prevent bombs being thrown in—probably sloping rabbit wire. And so on. A really strong little fort, well traversed against sniping.

Obviously the construction of such a fort takes time, especially when you remember that it may easily be 2,000 feet up from the valley, that carrying to it will at best be by pack, and usually for some distance by hand.

*General System of Defence*

Now I want to try and describe the general system of 'aggressive defence,' and I'm picturing a situation where there's been time to develop the system. Piquet defences are gradually improved until a very minimum of the garrison can safely hold them by day, the rest being available to 'dominate' outside. For instance, if the piquet has reached the stage of building a small tower, quite assault proof, two or three men and a Lewis gun might be enough to leave in, all others being available for outside. (Extra automatics are invaluable, so that platoons can take their own out with them. If you can get them!) The work of those who go outside is to patrol the country thoroughly, get to know probable enemy lines of advance, lying up places, and so on, to reconnoitre and select positions from which to take him on if he does come on; and by day to go out and take up those positions. Of course the whole thing needs co-ordinating, each piquet's plan interlocking with that of the next. And all sorts of alternative positions are chosen. The lay-out is never

the same two days running. Ranges are marked up, bomb fields laid, and so on.

As a result, if the enemy wants to attack, he is not dealing with a stationary piquet, marked down and avoided if he's after a convoy, but with people whose whereabouts he doesn't ever know (provided they get into position cleverly). Those people have arranged a system of interlocking cross-fire which catches him in flank whatever he tries. And our own people have always the piquet to fall back on in case of need.

A good inter-communication system between piquets (and Headquarters) is necessary, of course, to make things go well. Finally, the central reserve carries out periodical 'sweeps' of the surrounding country. Never the same way twice. And so the enemy never knows what's up. This system has been put into practice with very great success, and has resulted in real domination of the lines of communication area.

*Economy of Force*

The permanent piquet system is more economical of troops than the other. And it enables you to reduce the actual escort to the convoy as a rule. Though it would seldom be safe to have no escort.

*Enemy Cunning*

One hears a lot about enemy cunning. As a matter of fact he's not nearly as cunning as he's made out to be. Nearly all his strategems are as old as the hills, and lose most of their point once you know them. All the same he is cunning up to a point. And so it is essential always to be suspicious about him. For instance a humble old man who comes all alone to make a few honest pence by selling eggs to a permanent piquet is really an agent discovering its dispositions. The transborder man too has incredible patience when

waiting in ambush or in preparing one. And he seldom misses a chance, though he has quite patience enough to let an apparently good chance go in order to get a better one next day. That explains why a slovenly piece of work on our part goes unpunished quite inexplicably, sometimes. But a repetition of it seldom does.

*Preventing Enemy Reconnaissance*

Remember that all the enemy's actions are the result of calculation. He is essentially cautious. He believes in death and glory—your death and his glory. So he doesn't act without careful reconnaissance. Foil him in that and you've removed his sting. Consequently if you always do the same thing the same way, if sentries stamp about and make a row, if loopholes and defences are obvious, and so on, you are merely playing his game. On the other hand the transborder man has an inveterate belief that he is far more cunning than you are—a very useful basis for fooling him on. And his moral is always very severely affected if you succeed. By the way, if you do fool the enemy, it should, of course, be done cleanly. Apart from ethics, a low down form of fooling only engenders bitterness, and then if any wounded are captured by the enemy, the results are liable to be unpleasant. And mind you, clean fighting and its effects are worth remembering. In the first Afghan War the Afghans did not injure the British women they captured. And the few British prisoners of war captured by the Afridis have always so far been reasonably treated.

*Stratagems*

The more common enemy tricks are as follows :—

Say a party is proceeding along the bed of a ravine with the heights on either side NOT piqueted. Such things happen at times, whether from carelessness or

necessity. The enemy plan would be a couple of shots from one bank of the ravine. The party naturally goes to that bank, when the real ambuscade opens from the other bank, in rear.

Possibly too, there is a third enemy party, in the ravine, ahead.

It is a very dangerous situation unless everyone *knows* that they must counter-attack eccentrically at once, without pause.

If the enemy notes that piqueting of the heights is being well done, he often tries lying up in the branch ravines leading in to the main route. You get an example on p. 115 of the 1919–20 official account of Waziristan. Sometimes the enemy puts out a bait. You see an enemy party apparently off their guard (which they never are) fairly low down on a spur. It looks easy to get above them. You decide to go only just high enough above them to catch them, and not to waste time by going to the top. Everything works well till the last moment, when your prey suddenly wakes up and counter-attacks, whilst another party comes down on you from the top of the hill. You've underrated your enemy, and not guarded your flank. Say the enemy note that flank piquets are careless in watching their flanks when going up a hill and that they straggle and so on. In such a case they give up any idea of holding the hill top. They divide into two parties—possibly with a couple of men left on top as bait—move down the hill a little way, and then, as the piquet straggles up to the top they come round and attack it in flank and rear from both sides.

Where hills are convex, or covered with shrub, the

enemy often employ this method of creeping round the shoulder of a hill to cut off a piquet in retirement. Antidote—proper protective precautions and observation. But the ambush is a most effective one if piquets do not take precautions and the enemy is allowed to collect. Or the enemy notes that piquets come up carelessly, and that on reaching the crest they all stand up and look over. He waits twenty yards down the reverse slope, and when they appear, fires and charges.

Sometimes a force is advancing up a defile and flank piquets are going up. A piquet sees a nice ready-made sangar just where it wants to go. It's a bit cautious at first as it thinks it may be occupied. To its joy it's not, and the piquet crowds in. Then from quite close comes a heavy fire, and as naturally the enemy have taken good care to make the sangar non bullet proof, the piquet are for it.

Then, perhaps, a force has gone up a defile and piqueted the heights. The piquets have little to do, having made their arrangements, till its return. Below them, on the outer flank, is another valley. Suddenly a piquet commander sees three unarmed men hastily driving off 100 sheep. So he sends down three or four men to collect this easy prey. These men are allowed quite close when they are attacked by a concealed party. Result : four killed and four rifles gone.

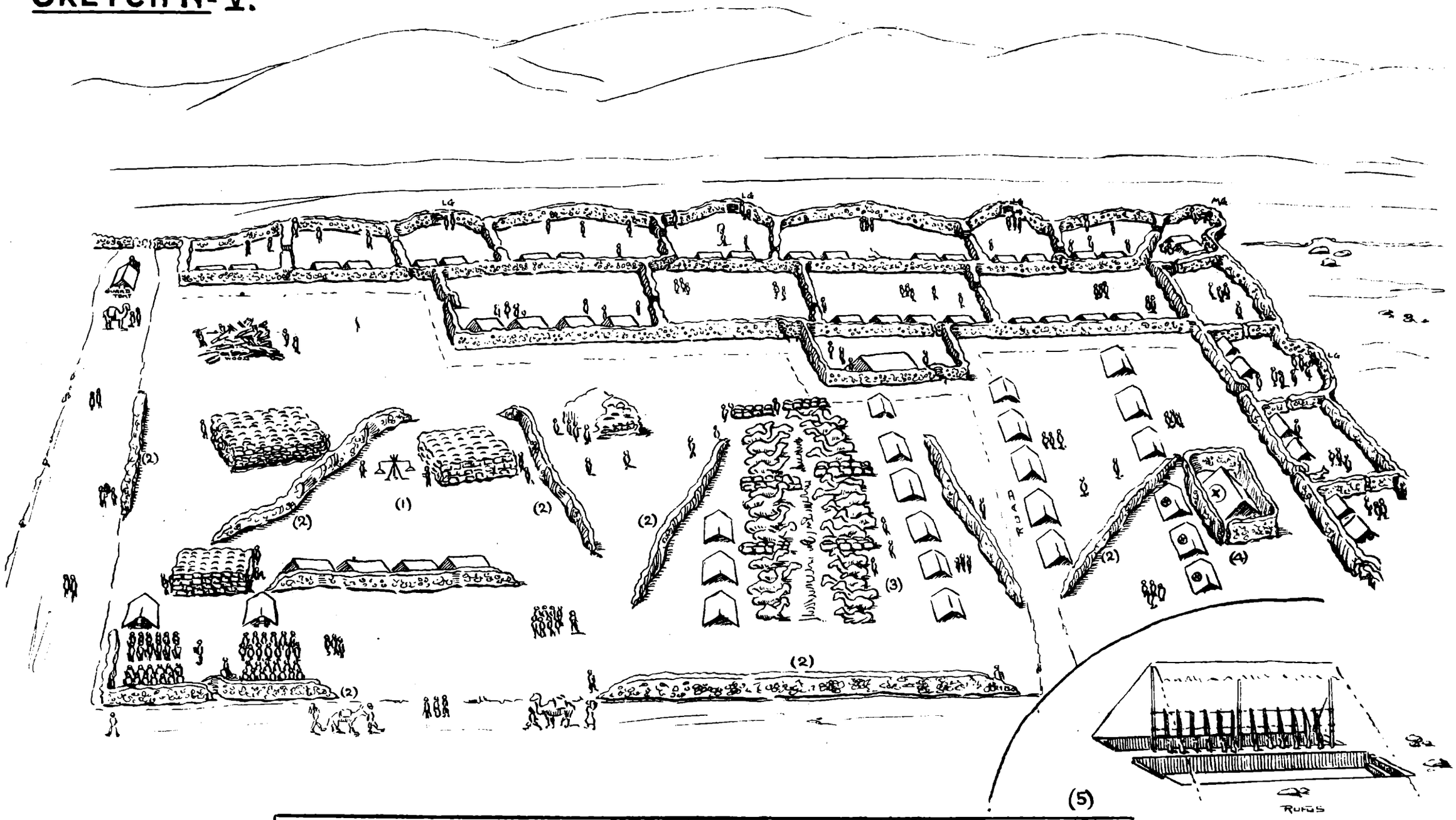
Those really, in some form or other, are the basis of most enemy stratagems. And you'll note that they have little chance of success if we are doing our job properly.

Of course, on our side, we can use stratagems against them, only, like everything else, they must be well

carried out to be any use. And the enemy stratagems, turned round against him, are what you'll find to be the basis of most of what you do. For instance, if a piquet finds difficulty in getting clear to retire, it acts like the enemy does in dealing with our piquets coming up.

In your first letter you asked me cheerfully to 'tell you all about it.' I haven't of course. I've barely begun. But I hope what I've sent you may give you a general picture. In any case I quite realize that you asked me in the spirit that *Da hajat ṗa waqt sarei Kharah ta hum 'Baba' wai*—to the translation of which I will leave you.

# SKETCH Nº V.




## VIEW OF PORTION OF SKETCH IV.

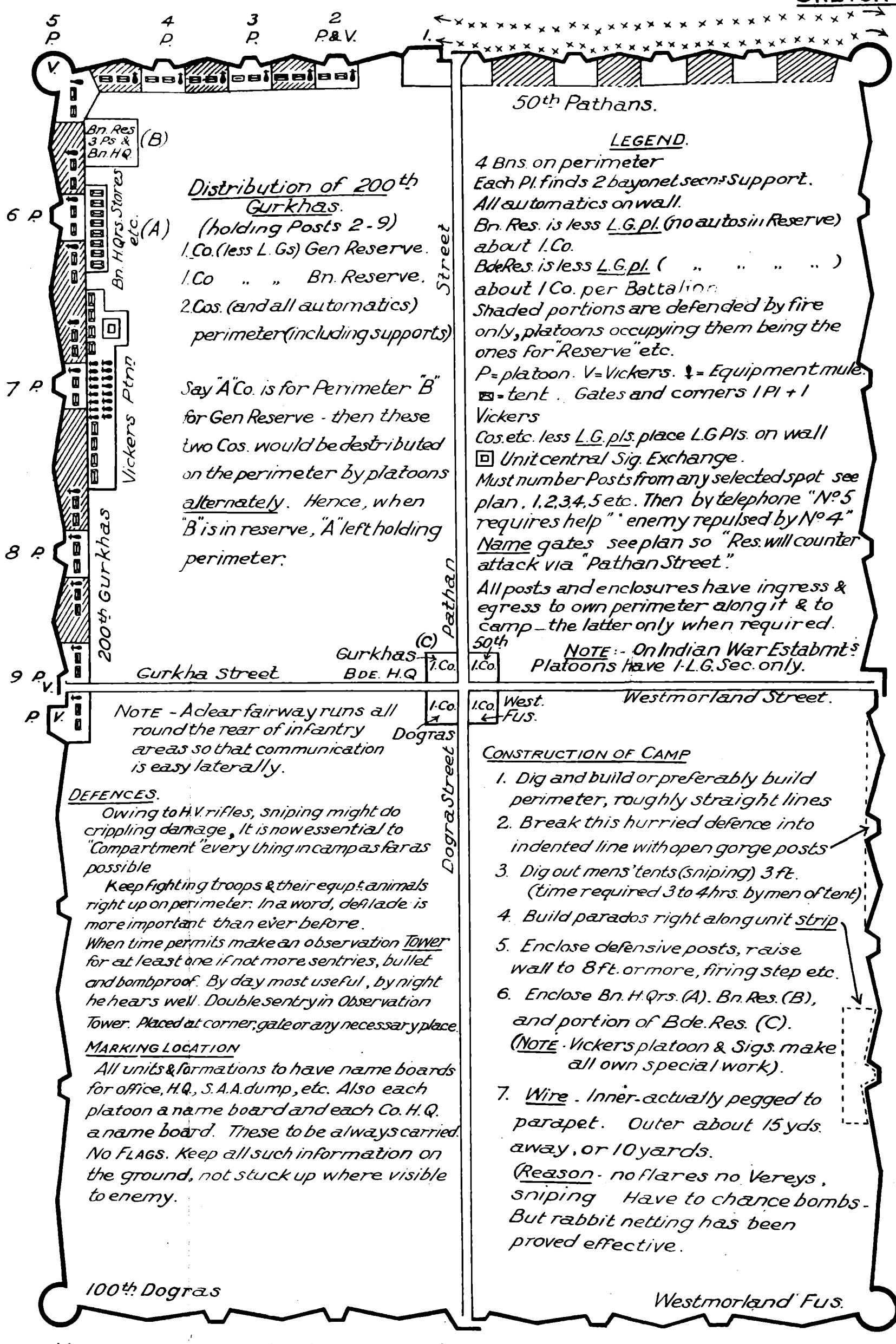
**Legend :—**

(1) Supplies,
(2) Traverses, built quite irregularly as need may be, at **right angles** to an anticipated line of fire.
(3) Camels, with grain bags, etc., used for traversing,
(4) Operating tent, walled in for protection and to screen light at night.
(5) Ground of tent dug out so as to give cover.

NOTE—A Supply Depot, some Camels, and a Field Ambulance have been shown in the space behind the infantry. Actually of course, the camels of a force would usually take up far more space and would occupy perhaps the whole of one such area. The details shown for this area are merely to illustrate types of defence arrangements and give no idea of space occupied, which can be seen in sketch 3.

# DIAGRAM OF DEFENDED CAMP.

SKETCH No. IV.




## Distribution of 200th Gurkhas.

(holding Posts 2 - 9)

1 Co. (less L. Gs) Gen Reserve.
1 Co " " Bn. Reserve.
2 Cos. (and all automatics) perimeter (including supports)

Say "A" Co. is for Perimeter "B" for Gen Reserve - then these two Cos. would be destributed on the perimeter by platoons alternately. Hence, when "B" is in reserve, "A" left holding perimeter.

## LEGEND.

4 Bns. on perimeter
Each Pl. finds 2 bayonet secns Support.
All automatics on wall.
Bn. Res. is less L.G. pl. (no autos in Reserve) about 1 Co.
Bde Res. is less L.G. pl. ( " " " " ) about 1 Co. per Battalion
Shaded portions are defended by fire only, platoons occupying them being the ones for "Reserve" etc.
P = platoon. V = Vickers. ! = Equipment mule.
⊠ = tent. Gates and corners 1 Pl + 1 Vickers
Cos. etc. less L.G. pls. place L.G Pls. on wall
⊡ Unit central Sig. Exchange.
Must number Posts from any selected spot see plan. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 etc. Then by telephone "No 5 requires help" "enemy repulsed by No 4"
Name gates see plan so "Res. will counter attack via "Pathan Street."
All posts and enclosures have ingress & egress to own perimeter along it & to camp - the latter only when required.

NOTE :- On Indian War Estabmts Platoons have 1 L.G. Sec. only.

NOTE - A clear fairway runs all round the rear of infantry areas so that communication is easy laterally.

## DEFENCES.

Owing to H.V. rifles, sniping might do crippling damage, It is now essential to "Compartment" every thing in camp as far as possible

Keep fighting troops & their equpt animals right up on perimeter. In a word, defilade is more important than ever before.

When time permits make an observation Tower for at least one if not more sentries, bullet and bombproof. By day most useful, by night he hears well. Double sentry in Observation Tower. Placed at corner, gate or any necessary place.

## MARKING LOCATION

All units & formations to have name boards for office, H.Q., S.A.A. dump, etc. Also each platoon a name board and each Co. H.Q. a name board. These to be always carried. No FLAGS. Keep all such information on the ground, not stuck up where visible to enemy.

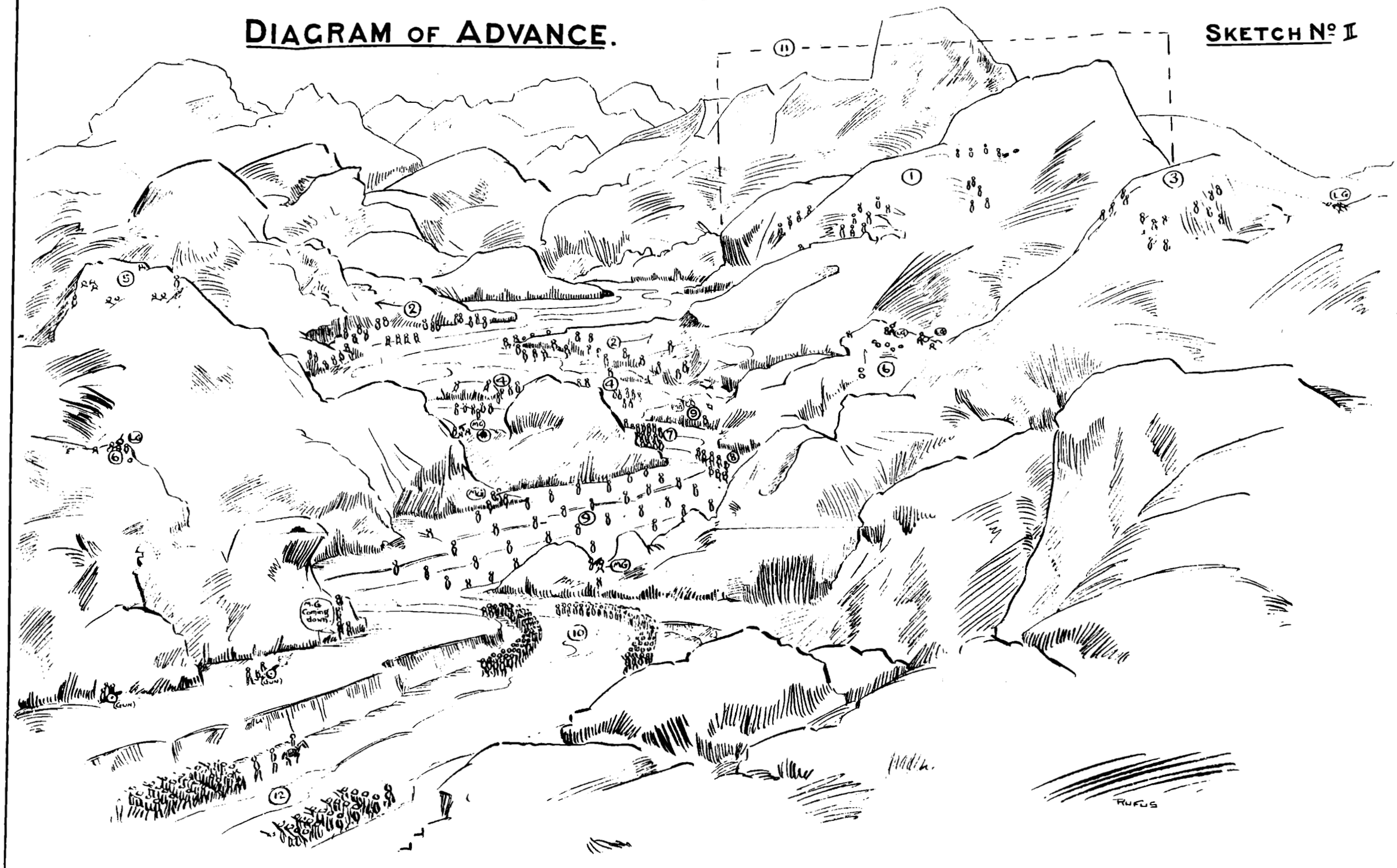
## CONSTRUCTION OF CAMP

1. Dig and build or preferably build perimeter, roughly straight lines
2. Break this hurried defence into indented line with open gorge posts
3. Dig out mens' tents (sniping) 3 ft. (time required 3 to 4 hrs. by men of tent)
4. Build parados right along unit strip
5. Enclose defensive posts, raise wall to 8 ft. or more, firing step etc.
6. Enclose Bn. H.Qrs. (A). Bn. Res. (B), and portion of Bde. Res. (C). (NOTE - Vickers platoon & Sigs. make all own special work).
7. Wire. Inner - actually pegged to parapet. Outer about 15 yds. away, or 10 yards. (Reason - no flares no Vereys, sniping Have to chance bombs - But rabbit netting has been proved effective.

NOTE :- Where all know how to work, two days will do all above well, provided there have been no mistakes in tracing, and no alterations.

# DIAGRAM OF ADVANCE.

SKETCH Nº II




**Legend:**

(1) Piquet climbing into position.

(2) Piquet doubling out ahead of vanguard to get into position.

(3) Piquet reaching crest and moving up by flanks as well as front.

(4) Vanguard, protecting front and lower features only.

(5) Piquet up. Men posted for look-out, remainder kept under cover.

(6) A support.

(7) Officer posting piquets and troops, "next for piquet."

(8) Another batch of troops, "next for piquet," doubling up.

(9) Main guard. Shown extended as a type of what is done when valley very open and no cover available. Would probably be hugging banks on each side.

(10) Piqueting Infantry, hugging banks of nullah for cover.

(11) This block of hills being a distinct "Massif" might best be dealt with by handing it over en-bloc to a suitable unit or sub unit to deal with as opposed to posting piquets in detail.

(12) Head of main body.

NOTE:—The wonderful observation which the enemy gets from the hill tops.