

CHITRAL MEMORIES

THE SIEGE OF CHITRAL

LIEUT.-COLONEL B. E. M. GURDON

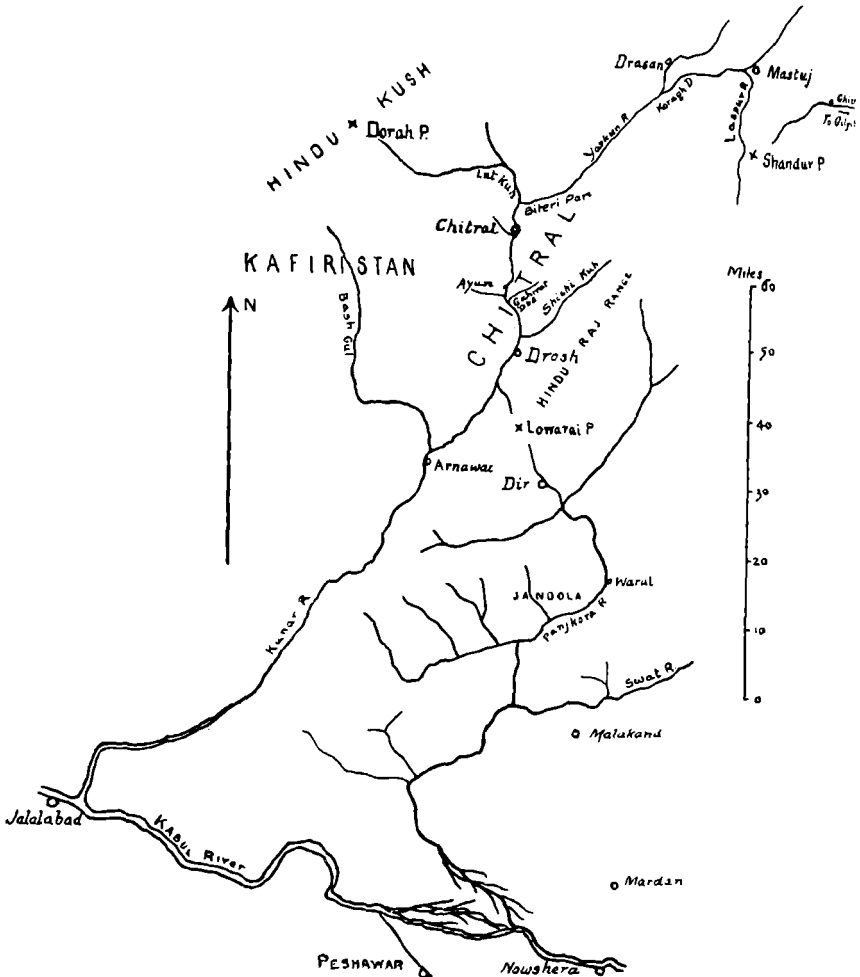
(In 'The Himalayan Journal', vol. v, 1933, Colonel Gurdon described his memories of the events leading up to the Siege of Chitral, and brought his story up to the 7th January 1895, when the detachment of fifty Sikhs under Subadar Gurmukh Singh arrived from Mastuj. Amir-ul-Mulk, who was responsible for the murder of the previous Mehtar, Nizam-ul-Mulk, had seized the Mehtarship, but Colonel Gurdon, as Political representative of the Government of India, had refused to recognize his claims to the throne. Umra Khan, the Khan of Jandol, brother-in-law of Amir-ul-Mulk, was believed to be in Dir, but the latter had secretly sent urgent messages to ask his aid in case of need. Sher Afzal, brother to the late Aman-ul-Mulk, the Lut Mehtar, was a refugee with the Amir of Afghanistan, who had given an undertaking to the Government of India to detain him in the Ghazni district. The only other possible claimant to the throne was Shuja-ul-Mulk,¹ full brother to Amir-ul-Mulk, then a boy of about twelve years of age, and in Chitral at the time.—EDITOR.)

FOR ten days following the arrival of Subadar Gurmukh Singh, I continued to be much occupied in supervising payments for supplies which were coming in most satisfactorily. I also granted interviews to all who expressed a wish to see me. Amir-ul-Mulk had now become less suspicious of my attitude towards him and he also visited me more than once in my room. He was invariably accompanied by the Kalash Kafir, who had fired the fatal shot at Nizam-ul-Mulk. I objected very much to the presence of this ruffian in my room, but I felt that my position was still too insecure to permit of my forbidding his admission. Such an order might, I thought, have led Amir-ul-Mulk to conclude that he had no chance of enlisting my support of his claim to be recognized as Mehtar, and he might have prevented more supplies from coming in. As I now knew that Mr. Robertson had started with a considerable force from Gilgit to come to my assistance, I realized that I must redouble my efforts to obtain adequate supplies; and it behoved me therefore to be as diplomatic as possible.

After the arrival of Subadar Gurmukh Singh's detachment, no event of special importance occurred until the 22nd January, when I was astounded to hear that Umra Khan with a *lashkar* of between three and four thousand men had crossed the Lowari (or Lawarai) pass (10,243 feet) from Dir into Chitral territory. My position was

¹ His Highness Shuja-ul-Mulk, Mehtar of Chitral, was elected a Member of the Himalayan Club during 1933.

thus once more rendered critical. Mr. Robertson was, I knew, advancing by forced marches, but he was still some eighty miles distant. All I could do was to urge Amir-ul-Mulk to make every



possible effort to check Umra Khan's further progress. I did not feel, however, that there was much prospect of an effective Chitral opposition. Amir-ul-Mulk inspired no confidence in any one, which is not to be wondered at when it is remembered that his principal supporters, and I myself, knew that he had warned Umra Khan to be ready to come to his assistance.

The disregard of the warning against aggression on Chitral communicated to him in 1893 by the Commissioner of Peshawar¹ and the fact that he had not hesitated to expose his followers to the

¹ See *Himalayan Journal*, vol. v, p. 7.

rigours of a march across a pass deep in snow in mid-winter, showed that Umra Khan was very confident. He knew that the Chitralis were divided, and he counted doubtless on the Government of India hesitating to mobilize a sufficient number of troops to force the Malakand pass and advance up the Panjkora valley. It should be remembered that at this time our most northerly cantonment in this section of the frontier was Mardan, the head-quarters of the Guides Cavalry and Infantry, and that we had attempted no advance in this direction since the Ambela affair of 1863, in which, by the way, the expeditionary force had had some hard fighting before they succeeded in bringing the campaign to a 'tolerably satisfactory conclusion'.¹ On the 23rd January Umra Khan burnt the Kalash Kafir village of Utzun on the right bank of the Chitral river and about five miles below Drosh. There was long standing enmity between the Jandolis and the Kafirs, and Umra Khan probably took this action mainly with the object of pleasing the Mullas of Dir and Jandol. I may also mention that in one of his letters to Mr. Robertson or myself the Jandol Chief wrote that he thought he felt fully justified in punishing the Kafirs for the numerous murders of his subjects, committed by them; and he pointed out that he could not do this without crossing the Chitral river. The next news I had of Umra Khan's movements was brought in by Chitrali fugitives who had taken part in a skirmish on the 25th January in front of Drosh fort, in which about thirty of their fellow countrymen had been killed or wounded. It was fortunate for the latter that we had a hospital assistant with an adequate supply of medical stores at Chitral, and all who required relief were well cared for. I visited the wounded in the hospital. The Chitrali resistance in this fight was reported to me to have been very half-hearted and to have resulted in an easy victory for the Pathans owing mainly to the treacherous behaviour of one of Amir-ul-Mulk's half-brothers, who joined the enemy at the critical moment. Umra Khan now proceeded to besiege Drosh fort.

On the 29th January I received a letter from Mr. Robertson directing me to retire and attempt to join him, if the danger of an attack by Umra Khan on Chitral fort should become imminent. I was very thankful that I did not have to make this attempt to join Mr. Robertson. In order to reach either Mastuj or Drasan I should have been obliged to march by way of the Biteri Pari, and it would have been a very simple matter for the Chitralis to wipe out my party with little or no loss to themselves.

On the 31st January Mr. Robertson, accompanied by Captains Colin Campbell and C. V. F. Townshend of the Central India Horse, 150 men of the 4th Kashmir Rifles, Captain Whitchurch, I.M.S., and

¹ The quotation is from the *Oxford History of India*, by Vincent A. Smith, C.I.E.

Lieutenant H. K. Harley with the rest of his company of the 14th Sikhs (about 40 men), arrived at Chitral.

This ends my narrative of the events which occurred while I was the sole British officer resident at Chitral.

In view of the fact that I am now the sole survivor of the British officers of the Garrison of Chitral fort it may seem invidious if I write any more. I think, however, that some further details regarding my own share in subsequent events connected with the siege may be of interest, and I wish to take this opportunity of recording my own views for what they may be worth, on some of the opinions of other writers. I record these views in no captious spirit, but merely with the object of stating the truth so far as my memory and judgement enable me to do so.

On the 31st January, the date on which Mr. Robertson reached Chitral, the military position was as follows:

Amir-ul-Mulk with several hundred Chitralis was holding the Gahirat *darband*¹ some sixteen miles below Chitral, and Umra Khan was besieging Drosh fort about nine miles farther down the valley.

The attitude of the Afghan Amir was now of paramount importance. Could he or could he not be trusted? During the first few days after his arrival Mr. Robertson did not appear to me to attach sufficient importance to the reports I had submitted with reference to the probability of Sher Afzal arriving on the scene. He has written that the possibility of that prince's return was not thought of. It is easy of course to be wise after the event, but I remember that I agreed at the time with Rab Nawaz Khan in thinking that such a complication was not only possible but probable.² My reason for coming to this conclusion was that I had been reliably informed that Mr. Udny, our Boundary Commissioner in the Afghan Sipah Salar's camp, was so closely guarded and the movements of the other British officers with him were so restricted that it was impossible for them to obtain any information, and I did not therefore attach any importance to the reassuring messages sent by him with reference to Sher Afzal, to which Mr. Robertson has referred. It may be noted here that Mr. Udny admitted later (in April) in a report to the Government of India that, 'situated as he was in a camp surrounded by Afghan pickets it was almost impossible for him to obtain information independently of Ghulam Haidar, the Sipah Salar'. Mr. Udny and his officers were indeed practically prisoners. The Sipah Salar's excuse for treating the British officers in this fashion was no doubt that he was responsible for their safety and there was no other way of protecting them from the attacks of religious fanatics. Rab

¹ A Persian expression meaning 'closed doors'.

² *Himalayan Journal*, vol. v, p. 10.

Nawaz Khan was convinced that the Afghan Sipah Salar had other reasons for watching Mr. Udny and his officers so closely, and he was confident that the Amir would not hesitate to disregard the promise he had made to the Government of India, that he would prevent Sher Afzal from returning once more to Chitral. The fact also that many of Sher Afzal's most important Chitrali supporters were already in Umra Khan's camp seemed to me to show that they had good reason to believe that Sher Afzal was on his way to join them. I do not think Mr. Robertson ever put so much faith in Rab Nawaz Khan's report as I did. The Jemadar was an excitable little man, but wonderfully reliable and brave, as he showed later so convincingly on the 3rd March when he stood almost alone, attempting with his express rifle, to cover Mr. Robertson's retreat. On this occasion he was left for dead after receiving no less than eighteen *talwar* wounds, one of which rendered his left wrist and hand permanently useless.¹ Owing to his long residence in the country and his marriage with the daughter of one of the Mehtar's most capable officials, Rab Nawaz Khan had excellent opportunities of learning all that went on. Also the fact that he was a soldier with excellent manners made it, in my opinion, easier for him than for the ordinary civilian Indian official to gain the respect of the aristocracy of the country. I almost invariably found his forecast of events to be correct. Mr. Robertson certainly did justice to his bravery, but, as regards his capacity for obtaining information, compared him unfavourably with the Indian Political Attaché who accompanied himself on his mission to Chitral in 1893. This was, I think, unfortunate. Both these Indian officials were Muhammadans and most useful, each in his own way, but they did not get on well together, and this I think was the origin of Mr. Robertson's preference for the civilian. The latter also failed to hit it off with a Sikh Assistant Settlement Officer at Gilgit, and I remember Sir Walter Lawrence (formerly Settlement Officer in Kashmir and at the time Private Secretary to Lord Curzon, the Viceroy) complaining to me of the Muhammadan's intrigues against his Sikh assistant.² In this case I thought the Sikh was most to blame. The jealousies of minor Indian officials may not seem of much importance, but I mention these cases, as they are typical of one of the chief difficulties British officers in the East have to contend with in their efforts to appraise the value of the reports received from their Indian subordinates.

¹ Late on the night of the 3rd March he was brought to the fort by one of the illegitimate Chitrali princes, who begged that his charitable action would be remembered. The Jemadar, thanks to Captain Whitchurch's careful treatment, eventually recovered and was able to continue to serve us in Chitral.

² I was at the time on a visit to Calcutta with the present Mehtar of Chitral and the chiefs of the Gilgit Agency.

The first event of interest after Mr. Robertson's arrival was the surrender of Drosh fort and 200 Snider rifles to Umra Khan. The Chitrali commander in the fort, Mehtarjau Khokand Beg, was a warm supporter of Sher Afzal and Mr. Robertson is right in saying that he made no pretence of fighting.¹ The loss of the rifles was a serious matter. It was calculated that not more than 200 of the 700 rifles given by the Government to the old Mehtar Aman-ul-Mulk now remained in the possession of the Chitralis. A breech-loading rifle is a very precious possession on the Indian frontier, often more precious indeed than a wife, and the fact that these much prized weapons had been handed over so readily showed very clearly that Sher Afzal's party was making common cause with Umra Khan. No doubt it was hoped that the Jandol Chief could be persuaded to retire to his own country after he had helped to establish Sher Afzal as ruler of Chitral. I doubt, however, whether Umra Khan would have been got rid of so easily. I remember that when I was sent to meet General Gatacre's brigade near the Lowari pass after the siege of Chitral fort had been raised, I was astonished to find that Umra Khan had almost completed the construction of a new fort at Drosh close to the old Chitrali fort. It seems highly improbable that he would have troubled to build a new fort if he had intended to abandon his hold on this portion of Chitral territory. It is more likely that he intended to retain Drosh in the same way as he had held on to Dir after driving into exile the rightful ruler, Mohamed Sharif Khan.

On the 15th February Mr. Robertson sent a detachment of Kashmir Rifles under Captain Townshend² to occupy the block-house on the left bank of the Chitral river at Gahirat, with the object of watching the behaviour of the Chitralis with Amir-ul-Mulk and of showing them that we were prepared to co-operate with them in opposing Umra Khan's further advance. At the same time I was ordered to join the Chitralis, who were watching the mouth of the valley on the right bank of the river, by which the *darband* could be turned by the enemy. The Chitralis on my side of the river were mostly men from upper Chitral and among them were many supporters of Nizam-ul-Mulk, who were disposed to fear rather than to welcome Sher Afzal; it was hoped, therefore, that they would prove more reliable than the men on the left bank of the river, led by Amir-ul-Mulk. I found them, however, in a state of great depression,

¹ *Chitral: the Story of a Minor Siege*. By Sir George S. Robertson, K.C.S.I. London: Methuen & Co., 1898, p. 85. In the account that follows I shall frequently refer to this book.

² Afterwards Major-General Sir Charles Townshend, who commanded the Garrison of Kut in the Great War.

which was not perhaps to be wondered at in view of the treacherous behaviour of their fellow countrymen at Drosh and the uninterrupted success which had hitherto attended the warlike adventures of Umra Khan. They also seemed to doubt whether we British officers were really prepared to expose ourselves alongside of them to the fire of the invader, and lastly they thoroughly distrusted and despised their leader, Amir-ul-Mulk.

I reported these impressions to Captain Townshend and said I thought it might have a good effect if I reconnoitred down the right bank of the river with a small number of mounted men. Captain Townshend agreed to my proposal and accordingly on the 18th February I started off, accompanied by about a dozen of the Chitralis who appeared to me to be the most reliable. Drosh fort was about nine miles distant and we rode several miles down the valley without seeing any sign of the enemy until suddenly, after rounding a sharp turn in the track, we found ourselves close to a temporary winter bridge across the river and within sight of Drosh fort. One of Umra Khan's *tayakhors* (bodyguard) was posted at this bridge and ran to meet us on seeing that we showed no sign of preparing to fire at him. I then asked one of my Chitralis to explain to the sentry that we had no desire to harm him and that we had set out merely with the object of ascertaining the truth of the reports we had received. We then turned our horses' heads in the direction of our camp on the right bank of the river at Gahirat. We had not gone far when we noticed a number of riflemen running up the left bank of the river: they were evidently making for the high ground at the mouth of the Shishi Kuh stream, where the cultivation of Drosh ends and the main valley is appreciably narrower. I realized that unless we increased our speed we might offer a fairly easy target and we then proceeded at the best pace our mounts were capable of. The Jandoli riflemen opened fire when they reached the knoll referred to, but fortunately they were out of breath and we had passed the narrowest part of the valley. None of us or our horses were hit and we soon left the enemy far behind. It was lucky for us that none of the Jandolis were mounted. We had had a narrow escape, as some of the enemy's bullets struck the ground very close to us.

When Mr. Robertson heard of this adventure he not unnaturally expressed his strong disapproval of my lack of judgement in needlessly exposing myself and my companions to such danger. I had undoubtedly acted carelessly in venturing so far down the valley, and I think Mr. Robertson was quite right to reprove me. I may mention here that he had been very generous in his praise of my work during the period between the murder of the late Mehtar and his own arrival at Chitral. 'Here then was that first shot often fateful

and often to be dreaded,' writes Mr. Robertson.¹ Certainly it was the first shot fired by the Jandolis at a British officer, but this does not appear to me to be a very important point. After all, Umra Khan had been repeatedly warned by us that we would not tolerate the violation by him of Chitral territory. His scornful neglect of these warnings could not be allowed to pass unnoticed. We were definitely committed to supporting the Chitralis against Umra Khan, and it should be remembered that already a number of Chitralis had been killed and wounded in opposing the invader. There is also a reference to this incident in *The Relief of Chitral*, by Captains G. J. and F. E. Younghusband, in which the following words appear on page 14:

'Could the British have supported them [the Chitralis] as Lieutenant Gurdon did with a few men in one of these preliminary skirmishes they would have gained heart,' &c. I fear I must, unintentionally, have given a wrong impression to my friend Captain Frank Younghusband when recounting my experiences. My main object in making the reconnaissance in question was certainly to give heart to the Chitralis and show them that the British officers were ready to share the dangers of resisting Umra Khan's invasion, but it was not correct to use the expression 'skirmish' in describing the affair. No shots were fired by my party.

I should mention here that on hearing of the surrender of Drosh fort to Umra Khan with all its rifles and stores, Mr. Robertson had very wisely taken possession of Chitral fort. This action for various reasons was displeasing to most of the Chitralis, but I consider that Mr. Robertson's prompt decision in taking this step cannot be too highly praised. It was the only position in the valley affording both adequate shelter for our force and secure access to the river. The buildings occupied by me before Mr. Robertson's arrival were far too restricted in size for our purpose, and the enemy could easily have cut off our water supply.

On the 20th February we were encouraged by the safe arrival at Chitral of Captain J. McD. Baird of the 24th Punjab Infantry and 100 more men of the 4th Kashmir Rifles.

On the 22nd February a report was received that Sher Afzal had arrived at Drosh on the previous day. Mr. Robertson was inclined to disbelieve this report as he had not heard from Mr. Udny that Sher Afzal had left Kabul. I have already explained that the Afghan Sipah Salar took good care to see that Mr. Udny got no news. It is interesting to note here that by this time Mr. Robertson had made up his mind that Sher Afzal was the only possible Mehtar and he had reported to that effect to the Government of India.² If Sher Afzal had now accepted Mr. Robertson's invitation to a friendly talk

¹ *Chitral*, p. 88.

² *Chitral*, p. 91.

at Chitral it is possible, indeed probable, that there would have been no fighting between us and the Chitralis. Unfortunately Sher Afzal was not a free agent. Instead of coming himself he sent a letter by the hand of an Afghan whom he described as his confidential agent. The latter opened the conversation with Mr. Robertson by remarking that Sher Afzal had escaped from Kabul secretly, a statement which no British frontier officer acquainted with Amir Abdur Rahman's ruthless methods of governing could be expected to credit. He went on to demand our evacuation of Chitral fort and the withdrawal of our troops to Mastuj. Mr. Robertson very rightly declined to comply with the demands voiced by the Afghan in such truculent fashion.

As mentioned above, Mr. Robertson was prepared to accept Sher Afzal as Mehtar notwithstanding the fact that he was the Amir's nominee, but the Chitralis had a bad reputation for treachery, and he would not have been justified in exposing his escort, encumbered as it would have been by a lengthy train of coolies carrying food and ammunition, to destruction in one of the many difficult defiles between Chitral and Mastuj.

There is no doubt, as stated by Mr. Robertson, that Umra Khan and Sher Afzal believed us to be helpless and without a possible chance of reinforcement at Chitral. Mr. Robertson was also amply justified in stating that 'there was a widespread conspiracy starting from the high level of the Afghan Commander-in-Chief and having, as its bed-rock, an invincible suspicion of the real intentions of the Government of India'.¹

In refusing to visit Mr. Robertson or to allow any of his Chitrali supporters to accompany his Afghan agent, Sher Afzal was probably acting in accordance with Afghan instructions. His faint-hearted behaviour in 1892 was remembered and the Afghans no doubt feared that he might be induced to enter into a friendly agreement with the British Agent. Umra Khan had fully committed himself by his capture of Drosh fort, and could, therefore, be easily induced to lend military aid to Sher Afzal. In short, it was a better opportunity for getting rid of the British from Chitral than was ever likely to recur. The opinion expressed by Colonel Sir T. Holdich, the senior survey officer on duty with Mr. Udny, our Boundary Commissioner, with regard to the Afghan Commander-in-Chief's encouragement of Umra Khan's invasion of Chitral, should here be noted. He reminds us that Umra Khan's retention of Narsat fort, of which he was in possession when the joint Boundary Commission arrived in the Kunar valley, would have prevented the realization of the Afghan ambition to annex the whole of Kafiristan. The Sipah Salar could

¹ *Chitral*, p. 97.

easily have turned Umra Khan out of Narsat by resuming hostilities against him. As, however, our Commissioner discouraged him from taking such action, the Sipah Salar probably encouraged Umra Khan to invade Chitral in the hope that such a venture 'could only possibly end in his final discomfiture, and the transfer of the whole Kunar valley up to Chitral limits to Afghanistan'. There can be no reasonable doubt that the Sipah Salar did encourage Umra Khan's venture and subsequent events fully justified such a policy. Not long afterwards Umra Khan was a refugee at Kabul and the Afghan claim to Kafiristan was fully admitted by the Government of India.

On the night of the 27th February Mr. Robertson decided to withdraw from Gahirat and Ayun.¹ This decision was arrived at none too soon. Many Chitralis deserted when they heard of Sher Afzal's arrival and the attitude of those who remained was too doubtful to justify any longer our attempt to hold, with so small a force, a position like the Gahirat *darband*, which could be so easily turned. Mr. Robertson's escort at and below Chitral was at this time distributed as follows:²

At Gahirat	80	of the 14th Sikhs.
„	67	„ 4th Kashmir Rifles.
„ Ayun	80	„ 4th Kashmir Rifles.
„ Chitral	150	„ 4th Kashmir Rifles.
<i>Total</i>	<u>377</u>	rifles.

Of these, the men of the 14th Sikhs were armed with Martini-Henry rifles, while the Kashmir Imperial Service Infantry had Snider rifles. For transport we depended almost entirely on coolies furnished by the nearest villages, and in the circumstances it was always doubtful whether we should obtain sufficient for our purpose. If the enemy had attacked during this withdrawal much of our baggage would probably have fallen into their hands, and it may be imagined how relieved we all were when we found ourselves on the evening of the 1st March safely assembled within the fort at Chitral. Some precious food stores had to be abandoned owing to lack of carriers. This was unfortunate, but it was generally agreed that we were very lucky not to lose more. Sher Afzal's neglect to attack was, I think, as suggested by Mr. Robertson in his book on the siege, due

¹ A large village on the right bank of the river between Chitral and Gahirat, and some nine miles from the former.

² These are the figures given in Mr. Robertson's book, p. 98. According to the Military Report on Chitral, issued by the Intelligence Branch of Army Headquarters, there were 99 of the 14th Sikhs in Chitral fort during the siege, but some of these had been badly frost-bitten on the march to Chitral and not more than 90 at most were fit for duty.

to the fact that he still hoped to induce us to withdraw from lower Chitral without having recourse to hostilities.¹

The setting aside, in view of his treachery, and placing under restraint of Amir-ul-Mulk, who had been conditionally recognized by Mr. Robertson as Mehtar during the retreat from Gahirat and the conditional recognition of his younger brother, Shuja-ul-Mulk, on the 2nd March, is related in chapter xx of Mr. Robertson's book.

By recognizing Shuja-ul-Mulk, Mr. Robertson demonstrated very clearly that he no longer had any hope of persuading Sher Afzal to adopt a more friendly attitude. All that had happened so far showed that Sher Afzal was not a free agent, and, in the circumstances, Mr. Robertson was justified in recognizing Shuja-ul-Mulk, who was the only legitimate prince left with claims to the position of Mehtar. The decision could not well be avoided as it was important to have on our side some nominal Mehtar, to dissipate any fear in the minds of the Chitralis that we intended to annex their country. At the same time we all realized that the prevention of hostilities was thereby rendered decidedly more improbable. The participation of the wily old Kaka Khel timber merchant² from the Peshawar district, in the advice tendered to Mr. Robertson before the durbar at which Shuja-ul-Mulk was installed as Mehtar, is interesting as showing once more how general the opinion was that our position was desperate and that there was still some chance of inducing us to withdraw to Mastuj.³

To my mind the most satisfactory incident at this durbar was the arrest and speedy execution, at the instigation of the new Mehtar's uncles, of the Kalash Kafir who had fired the fatal shot at Nizam-ul-Mulk. It was well that all should understand without further delay that treacherous attacks on the life of the ruler of the country could not be committed with impunity. I may mention that the wretched man had been warned that he would be wise to efface himself and refrain from attending durbars at which British officers were present.

I will now attempt to give an account of my own share in the disastrous fight of the 3rd March, in which we suffered such heavy casualties,⁴ and in which it is no exaggeration to state that we were saved only by darkness from complete annihilation. In order, however, to make clear what happened I feel I must preface the story of my own experiences with some comment as to the causes of our failure on this ill-starred afternoon. Our defeat was I think

¹ *Chitral*, p. 101.

² Mian Rahat Shah, see *Himalayan Journal*, vol. v, p. 26.

³ *Chitral*, p. 189.

⁴ *Casualties*: 25 killed (including Captain Baird) and 30 wounded out of 200 men, of whom only 150 were actually engaged (*vide* military report above referred to). It may be added that Captain Campbell was among those severely wounded.

mainly due, firstly, to the absence of any clear plan of action; secondly, to under-estimation of the military spirit of the enemy; thirdly, to the inferior armament and training of the Kashmir Imperial Service Infantry, who were the only troops actively engaged on our side; and fourthly, to divided control of the operations.

To take the last point first, it should be noted that, although Captain Campbell was in nominal command, Mr. Robertson remained at his side for a considerable time and gave expression to his views as to what action should be taken. This, I think, is fairly clear from Mr. Robertson's own account of what took place.¹ It is unnecessary to labour this point any further. In making these remarks I hope I shall not be misunderstood. It is by no means my wish to belittle Sir George Robertson's deservedly high reputation. I merely wish to point out that in my opinion divided control led to misunderstanding. Sir George Robertson was the life and soul of the defence during the siege, and on the 3rd March he behaved with the greatest gallantry. Also I take this opportunity of gratefully recording the fact that he always vehemently declined to consider for an instant the proposal of the enemy that we should evacuate the fort and thus expose ourselves to the risk of a treacherous attack on the *Biteri pari*,² which he has rightly described as 'those terrible galleries five miles from Chitral'. As a matter of fact the galleries in question had temporarily ceased to exist, as the enemy had destroyed them; and in order to negotiate this portion of the route to Chitral, Lieutenants Edwardes and Fowler and their fellow prisoners, sixteen days later (on the 19th March), had to climb 2,000 feet up the hill-side by a very difficult path and then descend to the river again by a similar path. It was an ideal spot for a repetition on a small scale of the annihilation of General Elphinstone's force in the Afghan war of 1842.

I would further point out that Mr. Robertson fully appreciated the capacity of the Chitralis for rapid movement on the hills, and he also knew that Captain Campbell had had no previous experience of the country. Mr. Robertson's anxiety and temptation to give his advice can, in the circumstances, be readily understood. If, instead of sending me to join Baird, Campbell had detailed me to take the Raja orderlies and their servants and the more reliable of our Chitrali supporters (i.e. those of Nizam-ul-Mulk's party who had good reasons for fearing the enmity of Sher Afzal) and climb the slopes behind my old quarters,³ we might have prevented the enemy from getting above and behind us and would certainly have quickly

¹ *Chitral*, p. 195.

² See description by Lieut. Fowler, R.E., in note on page 11, *Himalayan Journal*, vol. v.

³ Styled 'old mission house' in Mr. Robertson's book.

gained a much better idea of their strength and intentions. The Kashmir sepoy, clad in great-coats, were no match for the Chitralis on precipitous hills. If Mr. Robertson had brought with him from Gilgit fifty of the Hunza levies under their capable leader Wazir Humayun, who knew Chitral and its people so intimately, they would have been invaluable in denying command of the high ground to the enemy. These levies, together with levies from Nagir and Puniyal, rendered admirable service in the advance of Colonel Kelly's force to the relief of Chitral.¹

With regard to the first point, Baird certainly had a very hazy idea of what was expected of him. Moreover, it is clear that Mr. Robertson, at any rate, did not wish Baird to cross the ravine and yet he wrote afterwards that Townshend's idea was that Baird would eventually come down from the high ground on the right and attack the hamlet (i.e. Sher Afzal's main position).² Also, I consider that in view of the very considerable distance intervening between our main body and Baird's detachment, it was unwise to leave the connecting support without a British officer. The result was that, so far as I could see, the support took no part in the fighting.

As regards the failure to appreciate at its true value the military spirit of the enemy, I think both Campbell and Baird failed to allow for the superior activity of the Chitralis on the hills and for their knowledge of the ground. They also, apparently, forgot that they had to contend with Umra Khan's well-armed Jandolis as well, possibly, as with Afghans, in addition to the despised Chitralis. It is of interest to mention here that Lieutenant Fowler, R.E. (now Lieut.-General Sir John Fowler) wrote in his diary that when he and Lieutenant Edwardes passed through Chitral on their way to join Umra Khan after being taken prisoner at Reshun, they noticed that the following Government of India regiments were represented in the besieging force: the 19th, 20th, 21st, and 26th Punjab Infantry, 6th Bengal Infantry, 40th Pathans, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Baluchis, 26th Baluchis, and 8th Bombay Infantry. Evidence as to the presence of Afghan troops (i.e. soldiers in the pay of the Amir of Afghanistan as distinguished from the Pathans in the service of Umra Khan of Jandol) among the enemy is not so convincing, but there were certainly some Afghans (e.g. Sher Afzal's envoy who met Mr. Robertson at Gahirat), and it may be noted here that Colonel Sir Thomas Holdich has recorded good reasons for his belief (*vide* his interesting book, *The Indian Borderland*) that Afghan soldiers were among our besiegers.

Finally with regard to arms, Mr. Robertson correctly describes our Kashmir sepoy's Snider rifles as being little better than smooth

¹ See *With Kelly to Chitral*, by Lieut. Beynon.

² *Chitral*, p. 199.

bores, whereas many of the enemy were armed with Martini-Henry rifles. It is curious how history repeats itself. In the Afghan war of 1842 the muskets with which our troops were armed were described by Kaye, the historian, as being no match for the long *jezails* of the Afghans. Mr. Robertson's remark that the Kashmir sepoy's were hampered on a warm afternoon by their great-coats is also worthy of note.¹ An unsuitable type of pouch for hill warfare was also a severe handicap; and I can testify, from what I saw myself, that much ammunition was almost unavoidably dropped when the men lay down to fire and in the excitement of the moment the fallen rounds were not always picked up again.²

I now come to an account of my own experiences, and here I would invite a perusal of the description of the fight given in Sir George Robertson's *Chitral: the Story of a Minor Siege*, and would draw particular attention to the view of Chitral taken from the village of Danin, which faces page 196 of the same work. This view gives a very clear idea of the scene of the action. As recorded by Mr. Robertson, Campbell gave me a note to deliver to Baird, 'which embodied his [Mr. Robertson's] wishes that a single shot should first be fired over the heads of the men at the farther side of the ravine, when, if they proved to be enemies and not simple villagers, they were to be steadily volleyed at and driven back'.³ Baird commanded the detachment on the extreme right of our lines, and some description of the spot, visible from where I stood with Campbell, is here necessary. Baird had posted his men on the edge of the left bank of a deep ravine and immediately below the highest irrigation channel, which served the cultivation of this portion of the collection of hamlets bearing the name of Chitral. Up to where Baird stood the slope was gentle, but, immediately above, the gradient rapidly became steep and impracticable for a horseman. As I rode to join Baird I noticed a considerable number of armed men moving up the ravine, on the left bank of which Baird had taken up his position. From what Baird told me when I joined him he had not seen these men, and I doubt also whether Campbell had seen them. Directly I saw this movement of the enemy I guessed that as soon as they thought they could no longer be seen, they intended to climb the slopes on the left bank of the ravine and so get above and behind Baird's detachment; this is what they actually did. On joining Baird I told him what I had seen and when he announced his intention of descending into the ravine and climbing the spur on the right bank, I pointed out that if we did so, we would certainly be exposed to fire both from

¹ *Chitral*, p. 212.

² During the day 15,935 rounds of Snider ammunition were expended, viz. about 100 rounds per man (*vide* military report).

³ *Chitral*, p. 195.

above and in rear from the left bank. I also begged that I might be allowed to bring up the men of the support who had been posted some distance to the rear. I thought, and as it turned out eventually, correctly, that we should not get much help from the supporting detachment unless I acted as I suggested. Baird decided that I had better remain with him and expressed the opinion that he was right in interpreting the note, which I had delivered, as meaning that he was to cross the ravine and drive the enemy back from their position on the slopes of the opposite banks. I remember that I heard Baird's decision with astonishment and with a feeling almost akin to despair, as it seemed to me that by acting on it we should be playing into the hands of an agile and elusive enemy, who were not likely to await a charge with the bayonet, and which charge, by the way, in view of the steepness of the hill, could not be delivered with any appreciable degree of momentum. At the same time our opponents themselves would remain invisible to us and in safety, as our own support was so placed as to be unable to keep them under fire. I was very fond of Baird, who was a very lovable character and a very capable and keen officer, and it is most distasteful to me to criticize his action on this day. I cannot, however, well explain what happened without doing so.

I had dismounted on joining Baird and had ordered my *sais*, a very plucky Hazara Pathan, to take my pony away to the rear, to the spot where the supporting detachment was posted. Two of Mr. Robertson's mounted Raja orderlies had accompanied me when I rode off to deliver Campbell's note to Baird. I instructed these orderlies to dismount and station themselves in the ravine, in a spot where they would be hidden from the view of the enemy, but near enough to hear me call should I require their services as messengers. Baird now ordered his detachment to follow him and myself at the double across the ravine. We were immediately exposed to a heavy fire and not more than a dozen sepoy's reached the spur on the opposite bank, the rest becoming casualties or taking cover. After a brief halt to recover our breath we proceeded to climb the steep slope, being exposed all the time to the enemy's fire both from above and from our rear. We had not gone far when we halted again with the intention of trying to take cover.

It was at this moment that poor Baird was hit. The bullet struck the clasp of his belt and penetrated the abdomen. The shock caused by the wound must have been great as he sank into my arms and almost at once seemed to find it difficult to speak. He was evidently suffering great pain and murmured that he thought he would obtain some relief if I could contrive to raise his feet. I then ordered a Gurkha sepoy to support Baird's back while I moved in order to lift his feet. The Gurkha had hardly taken my place when he was shot

dead, the bullet hitting him in the head and scattering his brains. There were too few sepoys left—I think only half a dozen—to admit of any further attempt to close with the enemy, and the only thing now to be done was to move Baird to a less exposed position and to send for Whitchurch, our medical officer, and a stretcher. I now shouted to the two Raja orderlies whom I had posted in the ravine to join me and sent them both off at a gallop to find Whitchurch, who was with our main body. I sent both to make the delivery of the message more certain. I parted with them regretfully as they were devoted to our cause and good shots and cragsmen, and would have been extremely useful to me at this juncture. I did not see them again that afternoon as they quite rightly joined Mr. Robertson. I had already succeeded with the aid of Subadar Badri Nar Singh, a Gurkha officer, in moving Baird behind a large boulder.

As it was impossible to keep an eye on the movements of the enemy from this spot, after detailing two sepoys to remain with Baird, I climbed some distance farther up the hill with Badri Nar Singh to a place giving a view of the hostile riflemen immediately above us. Here we lay down and fired whenever any of the enemy showed themselves. If I remember right I was now armed with a Martini-Henry carbine which I had taken from one of the Raja orderlies. Why the enemy now refrained from attempting to rush us I do not know. Probably, owing to the steepness of the hill, they could not see very clearly and thought my party to be more numerous than it actually was. After what seemed literally ages I saw Whitchurch arrive and carry off Baird in a *doolie*. I waited for some time longer with the Gurkha officer in the position already mentioned, in the hope of continuing to check any rush by the enemy until Whitchurch's party had been given a good start. All this time I could hear the sound of heavy firing from the direction of our main body, but I could not see clearly how the fight was progressing. I guessed, however, from the almost uninterrupted independent firing issuing from the hamlet, which, we supposed, was occupied by Sher Afzal, that our advance had been checked.

It was after 4 p.m. when we started from the fort and it was now beginning to get dark, and, although no bugle had been heard to sound the retreat, I decided that Badri Nar Singh and I must retire across the ravine and attempt to rally the sepoys, who had taken cover when we first advanced, and also to collect the men of the supports. We crept round to the reverse side of the spur, where we were no longer exposed to the fire of the enemy above and behind us, dropped rapidly down to the cultivation, and finally dashed across to the left bank of the ravine. Here we collected some thirty sepoys whom we posted in line, Badri Nar Singh taking charge of the

men at the lower end on the left flank and I myself remaining above on the extreme right. We had not long been in this position when our line was pierced by a large body of the enemy, who, presumably, had been detached from Sher Afzal's main force. Badri Nar Singh and about a third of our sepoy were forced to our left in the direction taken by Whitchurch, whom, I learnt afterwards, they eventually joined. I and the remaining sepoy found ourselves completely surrounded by the enemy.

The darkness had now grown deeper, and it was almost impossible to distinguish friend from foe. I shall feel eternally grateful to that same darkness, to which we undoubtedly owed our escape. I ordered my sepoy to follow me silently in single file, and I led them in the direction of my old quarters adjoining the burial-ground of the Mehtars. My aim was to keep to the high ground as long as possible, as the enemy would probably be massed on the hill above the polo ground, which they would naturally expect to be the line of retreat of our main body. I may mention here that my faithful Hazara *sais* was killed on the polo ground while leading my pony. He had besought me to mount when our line was broken but I felt obliged to remain on foot with the sepoy and to send the pony away, as its presence might disclose our identity to the enemy. The pony was not injured; and as I learnt afterwards it was temporarily appropriated by Mohamed Isa, Sher Afzal's foster-brother, the leader of the Chitralis, who, in company with a party of Umra Khan's Jandolis, attacked and finally made prisoner Lieutenants Edwardes and Fowler at the village of Reshun. The seizure of my pony led to the circulation of a report of my death, which caused my parents unnecessary sorrow. Lord Kimberley, the Secretary of State, actually wrote to condole with my father and I was mourned as dead for about a week. The Chitralis had seen me riding the pony before the siege and they heard that a British officer had died of wounds received on the 3rd March. They assumed, therefore, that I was the deceased officer in question and the Jemadar of Fowler's detachment of Sappers and Miners mentioned this rumour to the Deputy Commissioner at Peshawar, by whom he was interrogated after his release by Umra Khan.

To resume the story of the retreat of my small party. More than once we passed within a few yards of roving parties of Chitralis who, owing probably to the similar appearance in the darkness of the sepoy's great-coats to the long homespun *chogas* worn by themselves, failed to identify us. I had frequently walked all over the ground and my knowledge of the locality was now extremely useful. I succeeded without losing any more men in reaching the Chitral ravine, at a point above the Masjid and my old quarters. We now had to

proceed with extra care, as it was evident from the shouting that the enemy were already in occupation of my old quarters. The banks of the Chitral ravine are fairly steep at the spot above indicated and I realized it would be unwise to climb up the left bank at a point so near to my old house. I accordingly led my men down the bed of the torrent for a distance of about five hundred yards and thence at the double across some fields to the main gate of the fort, without seeing anything more of the enemy.

Any feeling of relief I might have felt in having escaped from what seemed more than once a hopeless situation was immediately turned into one of intense depression, when I learnt from Mr. Robertson, who had returned to the fort only a short time before myself, of the heavy casualties suffered by our main body and of Campbell's serious wound, and above all that he could give me no news of Baird and Whitchurch. At first I blamed myself for not having accompanied Whitchurch when he started to carry off Baird from the spot where he was wounded, and yet I felt sure that I had acted rightly in remaining behind and attempting to rally the scattered remnants of Baird's detachment. Had I not acted as I did, Whitchurch, whose progress with his mortally wounded brother officer was naturally slow, might have failed to get away, and the right flank of our main body might have been turned more rapidly. This was poor consolation at the time. To the intense relief of all, Whitchurch brought poor Baird to the garden gate of the fort about an hour after I had returned myself. He had very wisely refrained from attempting to return to the fort by the shortest route, but had followed down to the river the course of the stream issuing from the ravine, on the right bank of which Baird had been wounded. On reaching the river he continued along the bank until he came to the wall of the garden at the back of the fort. It must have been here that Baird received a third bullet wound which carried away the tip of his nose. In this instance again we were indebted mainly to the darkness for the escape of Whitchurch and the remnants of his party. Had the light been clear enough for the enemy to realize how few they had to deal with, it is incredible that even the devoted bravery and good judgement of Whitchurch, well supported as he was by Subadar Badri Nar Singh and a few other Gurkhas, could have rendered escape from death or capture possible. The safe return of Whitchurch was a piece of inestimable good fortune. His medical skill and devoted care of the wounded during the siege cannot be praised too highly. He had only one Indian Civil Hospital assistant to help him, and the latter was essentially a man of peace, and consequently for some time completely unnerved by the events of our disastrous reconnaissance.

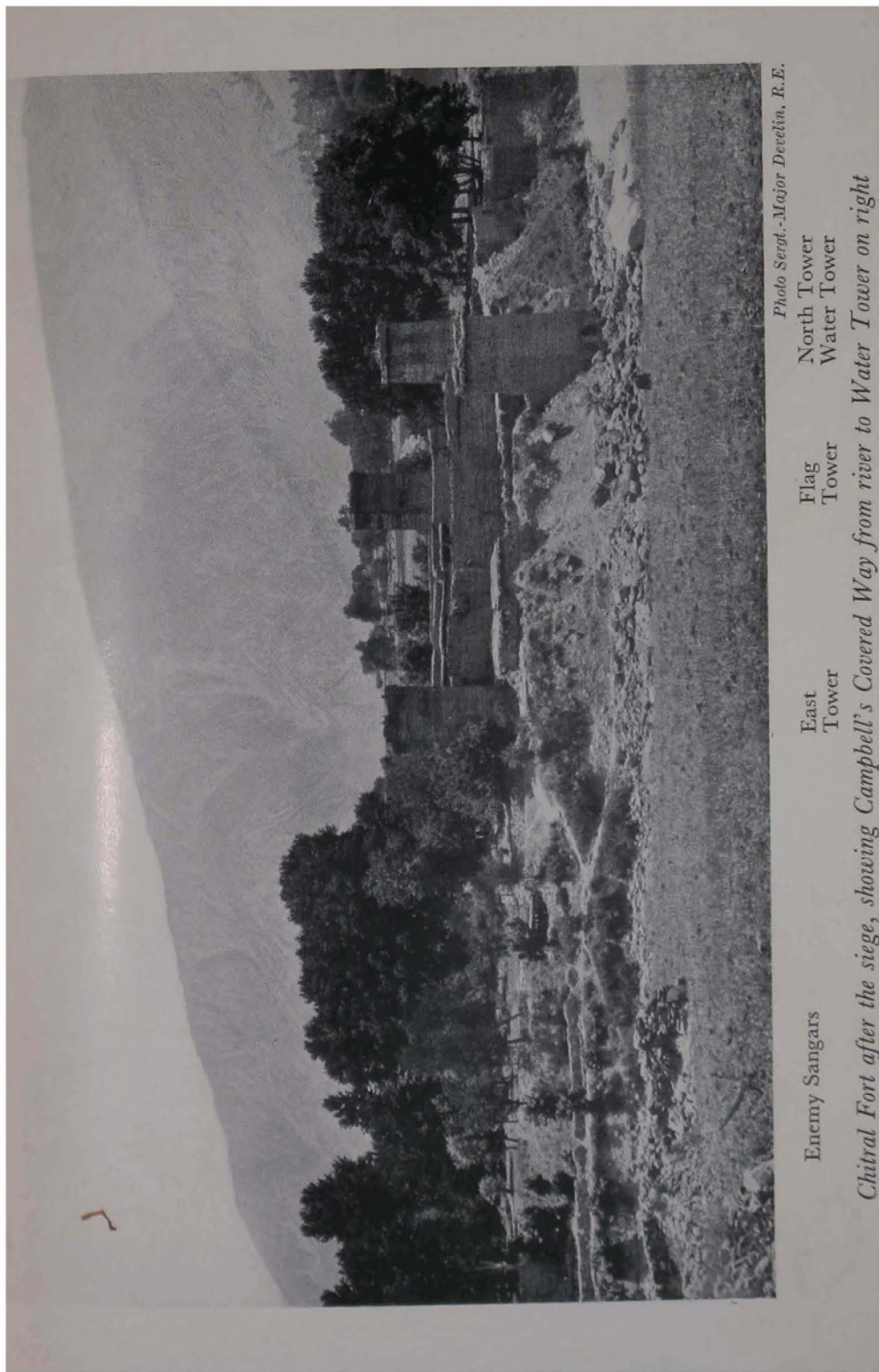


Photo Serpt. - Major Develin, R. E.

Enemy Sangars

East Tower

Flag Tower

North Tower
Water Tower

Chitral Fort after the siege, showing Campbell's Covered Way from river to Water Tower on right

For a detailed narrative of the siege itself I would refer the reader to the graphic and accurate description given by Sir George Robertson in his book already referred to, and will content myself with drawing particular attention to a few salient points which appear to me to be deserving of emphasis.

Firstly, in view of the success they achieved on the 3rd March, when our losses amounted to 25 killed (including Captain Baird) and 30 wounded out of 200 engaged, and their own to only 15 casualties in all and including only one man of note among the killed, it may be wondered why the enemy did not press the attack on the fort with more determination. The siege commenced on the 3rd March and was not raised until the 19th April; and during the whole of this period of 46 days the enemy on only two occasions caused us serious loss. I refer to the firing of the Gun-tower on the 7th April when Mr. Robertson was wounded, and the mining of the same tower, which led to the sortie so gallantly led by Harley, in which our casualties amounted to 21 out of 100 engaged. The explanation lies, I think, in the undoubted belief of the enemy that we were short of food supplies, and that consequently a close investment without recourse to attempts to carry our defences by assault was all that was necessary. As will be seen from a perusal of Sir George Robertson's book, we lost no opportunity of fostering this convenient belief whenever negotiations were in progress under a flag of truce. We even went so far as to attempt to bribe the enemy's messengers to bring us food.

Similarly some critics may have been astonished at the failure of the garrison to repel more energetically the closeness of the investment of the fort achieved by the enemy. That the investment was very close was certainly the case. For instance the enemy's great *sangar* in front of the main gate was constructed by night at a distance of only twenty yards from our loopholes. Also the summer-house in the garden behind the Gun-tower, from which the enemy began to dig the mine destroyed by Harley in the sortie of the 17th April, was not more than forty yards distant. In answer to this criticism I cannot do better than quote here the remarks on page 221 of Sir George Robertson's book. After referring to the fact that the messenger sent by Sher Afzal and Umra Khan's lieutenants, the Khans of Shina and Shahi, on the 5th March was dismissed with gifts of money, Sir George Robertson wrote:

This was the initiation of a consistent policy. It was clear that the enemy was too strong for us. The greater part of our troops were still demoralized by defeat; fighting was, therefore, to be avoided when possible. All we could do was to lie low, strive to counter all devices or stratagems of the besiegers, and hope, either that they would in time be disheartened and grow hope-

less, or be driven away by a relieving column from Gilgit. The bad site of the fort, commanded as it was on every hand, and the grave danger there was of it being fired, owing to the large amount of wood used in its construction, made it of supreme importance that our opponents should, if possible, be kept from attacking us determinedly. To accomplish this, the obvious method was to induce a belief that food was scarce.

So far as I am aware only Colonel Sir T. Holditch, the senior survey officer with Mr. Udny's Boundary Commission, gave expression in writing to his astonishment at the success of the enemy in establishing such a close investment of the fort. This opinion was no doubt due to lack of accurate information as to the strength of the garrison and was, no doubt, eventually modified. In justice to the besieged I feel bound, however, to make some reference to it. As an instance of the inaccuracy in question I may quote here the remarks on page 258 of *The Indian Borderland*. Referring to information given to Mr. Udny by the Afghan Commander-in-Chief, Sir T. Holdich wrote:

We knew that there were four hundred good Sikhs inside the fort with provisions for some months, a number that appeared to us sufficient to deal easily with all the Chitralis that Sher Afzal, or all the Pathans that Umra Khan, could possibly bring into the field against them. We knew also that there were two guns with ammunition in the fort and knowing the profound respect that all these hill tribesmen have for guns, we did not believe in a very close investment or in any great pressure on the beleaguered garrison.

As a matter of fact the number of Sikhs fit for duty at the commencement of the siege amounted to only 83. Here I cannot do better than quote the remarks on page 244 of Sir George Robertson's book. He wrote:

On two successive nights fresh works had been built close to us. But even now, after full consideration, I do not see how this could have been prevented. If we had been strong enough and enterprising enough to sortie, we should have destroyed one of the enemy's defences, no doubt; but a second attempt might have easily landed us in a trap, for unless there were the element of surprise in our attack, we might have found ourselves in a dummy *sangar*, exposed to a terrific fire from hidden riflemen—and we dared not risk a second reverse. Practically, we had only the Sikhs who could be relied on absolutely, and not more than eighty of these were fit for work. There were splendid fellows among the Kashmir soldiers, it is true, but in the gloomy downcast looks of most one could read that they still suffered from their former defeat. Again, heroic as were two or three of their officers, the majority were of a distinctly inferior class. We had no British officers to spare [only Townshend, Harley and Gurdon were fit for regular duties], so there was nothing for it but to allow the enemy to develop his plans, and

content ourselves with keeping a sharp outlook for an occasion when a forcible blow might be struck with all the odds in our favour.

Concerning the two seven-pounder guns mentioned by Sir Thomas Holdich, Sir George Robertson has recorded:¹

We had found in the fort two seven-pounders and eighty rounds of ammunition with solid projectiles. The little cannon were in fair order but had no sights—a graduated piece of wood, and a small heaped-up pyramid of flour being used by the Chitralis instead. Only one man in the fort knew anything about artillery, that was the Kashmir Colonel of the Ragunath regiment who formerly served in one of the Maharajah's mountain batteries. His knowledge, however, was limited, and he had all the infantry-man's lack of enthusiasm for ordnance. On this date, the 12th, it was decided to try a shot, but by some unfortunate mistake the detachment told off for the duty carried the gun into the garden to the south-east instead of to the epaulement made for it on the west. Being right in the open, they had only a couple of rounds fired when they had to bolt back into the fort, with one man *hors de combat*. . . . A week or two later, another attempt to utilize the gun was made through an aperture dug during the night in the west wall of Sifat's enclosure. But the morning light revealed that the port was completely blocked by a big tree trunk; so another had to be made. Then one of our solid shot hit the top beam of the nearest hostile sangar, but without doing much damage as far as we could learn, whereupon the military officers decided it was useless to continue the experiment.

As to Sir Thomas Holdich's remark that we had provisions sufficient to last for some months I may point out that almost from the commencement of the siege we were on half rations, consisting mainly of gritty flour, of which each man received one pound a day, and the flesh of our ponies, which latter the Hindu sepoy would not touch; and we had only a limited supply of ghi (clarified butter) and condiments. We had no milk or eggs. There were, however, a few sheep, but these had to be reserved for the sick and wounded in hospital. A small quantity of treacle was made from *gur* for the officers' table. The gritty condition of the flour was due to the difficulty experienced in grinding the corn properly. The only stones available for shaping into hand-mills were of a wrong kind and soft, consequently they were continually wearing away and the flour was always mixed with gritty particles, which caused dysentery and other internal ailments.² This indifferent diet, as Sir George Robertson wrote, led to the Hindus crowding into hospital. The health of the British officers also suffered, as I have good reason to know myself.

I may mention here that we British officers found the want of

¹ *Chitral*, p. 237.

² *Chitral*, pp. 218, 219.

regular sleep one of the greatest trials of the siege. We had only three British officers for regular military duty, viz. Townshend, Harley, and myself, not 'many officers' as Sir Thomas Holdich stated on p. 368 of his book. Campbell was so seriously wounded on the 3rd March as to incapacitate him for duty and Sir George Robertson suffered much from dysentery and was wounded about three weeks before we were relieved. I well remember that, notwithstanding the bad fire discipline of the Kashmir sepoy, who were much given to discharging their rifles by accident in close proximity to one's head, I myself, on several occasions, almost fell asleep when going my rounds. The horrible smells from dead bodies and indifferent sanitation in such a confined space were also very trying. Another and perhaps the worst trial of all, a trial which, by the way, in these days of wireless telegraphy and aeroplanes would not have to be faced, was our complete ignorance, until the day preceding the arrival of Colonel Kelly's column from Gilgit, of the steps being taken by the Government to relieve us. Knowing the country as we did we realized that unless the Government mobilized a force sufficiently strong to overcome opposition in Swat and Bajour, our relief was likely to be long delayed. The opposition to Colonel Kelly's advance would, of course, have been far more determined if Sir Robert Low's force had not been advancing at the same time in the enemy's rear, from the direction of Swat and Dir.

Before concluding my remarks on the events of the siege I should like to add my tribute to the well-merited eulogies of the conduct of the detachment of the 14th Sikhs recorded by Sir George Robertson. It is not too much to state that the discipline and confident bearing of that splendid body of men throughout the siege were a constant source of encouragement to us all. Here I feel I must record an incident which remains very vividly in my memory. When going my rounds one evening after sundown I found all the Sikh non-commissioned officers lined up before Subadar Gurmukh Singh, who was expressing in very strong language his feeling of shame that one of their number had that day disgraced them all by his neglect to obey orders. The old Sikh officer was evidently very wrathful and disturbed in mind by some incident which had not yet been reported to me. I affected not to have heard the Subadar's remarks and pretended that I had urgent business in another part of the fort. About half an hour later I found the Subadar sitting dejectedly by himself and evidently in great distress. When I asked him what was wrong he informed me that his most trusted Lance Naik who was, if I remember right, his near relative, had been found shot through the eye on the west parapet over the main gate. In Whitchurch's opinion the Lance Naik's body had lain two or three hours before it was dis-

covered. The unfortunate man had no doubt peeped through one of the small loopholes facing the enemy's large sangar twenty yards distant and had paid for his temerity with instant death. The men had been forbidden to visit this portion of the parapet in daylight, and the old Subadar was, of course, fully justified in speaking severely to the remaining non-commissioned officers after discovering what had happened. When I surprised him sitting alone later in the evening I marvelled at the self-control and capacity for hiding his personal sorrow which he had displayed when addressing the non-commissioned officers earlier in the afternoon.

I may mention here that out of the detachment of 200 men of the 18th Sikhs which took part in the fighting in Chitral only 110 returned to India. The rest had been killed or had died.

After lasting 46 days the siege came to an end on the night of the 18th April, when, at a late hour, a brother of Aksakal Fateh Ali Shah, bringing news of the flight of Sher Afzal and the Bajauri Khans, was admitted to the fort.

On the morning of the 19th April it was my pleasant duty to take out a strong detachment with the object of obtaining news. I found my old quarters on the far side of the Chitral Gol deserted, and the only persons who came forward to meet we were the Bajauri traders from the bazaar, who tendered gifts of sugar and spices, such as appeal to the Indian soldier. It may readily be imagined what an intense relief it was to be walking once more amid green fields and in air untainted by the horrid smells we had been afflicted with during the siege. I remember that I returned to the fort with reluctance, but I could not delay long. There was much to be done by all of us. Mr. Robertson, naturally, had much writing to do and I had to help him. Whitchurch, who had had the care of more than sixty wounded during the siege, needed rest more than any one, but continued to work as devotedly and cheerfully as ever, though worn out by lack of sleep and malaria. No one, I think, realized how heavy the strain on him had been until the following day, when, on the arrival of Browning Smith, the doctor attached to the 32nd Pioneers, he at last gave in and admitted that he felt unable to carry on any longer. Truly Whitchurch was of the salt of the earth and an honour to his country and profession.

Listening to accounts of the villainous treatment meted out by Sher Afzal and his friends to the wives and relatives of the Chitralis who had been in the fort with us was our most unpleasant experience that day. The cruelties perpetrated were, as Mr. Robertson wrote, too shocking for description, and showed us that though the Chitralis might not be as prone to religious fanaticism as some of the other tribesmen of the North-West Frontier, they could, on occasion, be as

callously cruel. I may mention here that we were credibly informed that on the night of the 3rd March the Chitrali women armed themselves with spears and assisted in killing those of our wounded whom we had been unable to bring back to the fort. It is interesting also to note that when Edwardes and Fowler arrived in Chitral as prisoners on the 19th March they found the bodies of our men, who had been killed on the 3rd March, still lying unburied.¹

Colonel Kelly's force from Gilgit arrived at Chitral on the 20th April and a few days later I was sent to meet General Gatacre's brigade of Sir Robert Low's relief force at the village of Ashreth, near the mouth of the valley leading from the Lowari pass. The object of my journey was to assist in the collection of supplies for the brigade. After the long confinement in the fort I thoroughly enjoyed my ride through a part of the country which I had not yet seen, and which was then looking its best, as the fruit trees were in blossom and the fields green with corn. The villages were mostly deserted, but it did not take long to induce the people to return to their homes.

On the 16th May Sir Robert Low and the head-quarters' staff and an escort of the Seaforth Highlanders reached Chitral, and a review was held of all the troops then at Chitral, which, if I remember right, included the whole of General Gatacre's brigade, Colonel Kelly's force, and the detachment of the 14th Sikhs under Harley which had been in the fort. The Chitralis had not seen a British infantry battalion before and they were immensely impressed by the splendid physique and martial bearing of the Buffs and by the salute of thirteen guns fired by the Derajat Mountain Battery. Shortly after this review Mr. Robertson left for Simla, but, before he started, he directed me, in accordance with orders received from the Government of India, to hand over Amir-ul-Mulk to the Provost-Marshal for deportation

¹ Though it may be considered somewhat irrelevant to an account of our experiences in Chitral so far back as thirty-eight years ago, I cannot resist quoting here an extract from the report of the Peshawar Correspondent of *The Times* regarding the Red Shirt agitation on polling day in the North-West Frontier Province, which appeared in the issue of the paper dated the 18th April 1932. The correspondent writes:

'A disturbing feature of the present agitation is the increasing employment of women, which is most embarrassing to the troops and constabulary. It is estimated that of the Red Shirt army, which invested Mardan on polling day, about eight thousand out of the thirty thousand were women. There was complete accord with Sir Ralph Griffith, the first Governor of the Province under the new system of administration, when he told the Lothian Franchise Committee that the participation of the Moslem women of the Province in local politics was unthinkable. Unfortunately although it may be unthinkable for a Pathan woman to exercise the vote it is apparently quite in order that she should heave a half-brick from a roof top either at voters or at police who are protecting them.'

It will be seen that the militant spirit of the women of the North-West Frontier has still to be reckoned with.

to India. He had been in custody throughout the siege and could not be allowed to remain in Chitral. What a reversal of fortune we have here. A little over four months earlier I had been at the mercy of this young man.

Some account of the arrangements for the government and defence of Chitral after the surrender of Sher Afzal and the restoration of peace is, I think, necessary here. The provisional arrangements made on the termination of the siege and subsequently confirmed on the 2nd September 1895 were as follows:

The whole of Chitral west of the Shandur pass was included in the new Political Agency of Dir, Swat, and Chitral, the head-quarters of which were established at Malakand.

Shuja-ul-Mulk was installed as Mehtar of the Kator districts (i.e. all the country on the right bank of the Mastuj river below the village of Sonoghor, and all the country on the left bank of the same river from and including the village of Barenis down to the Lowari pass and the Afghan border). The Khushwakt districts of Mastuj and Laspur were placed under separate governors directly responsible to the Kashmir Darbar, but included in the charge of the Assistant Political Agent, Chitral. The Khushwakt districts east of the Shandur, viz. Yasin, Ghizr, and Kuh,¹ were similarly placed under governors directly responsible to the Kashmir Darbar, but continued to be included in the charge of the Political Agent, Gilgit.

As Shuja-ul-Mulk was a mere lad, a Council consisting of his uncle, Mehtarjau Bahadur Khan, Aksakal Fateh Ali Shah, and Wazir Inayat Khan, all of whom had been present in the fort during the siege, was formed to advise him.

On the 4th September 1895 orders were issued for the following garrison to be located in Chitral territory:

Two Indian Infantry battalions.

One Company of Bengal Sappers and Miners.

One Section of an Indian Mountain battery with two guns.

Before continuing my narrative I am tempted to record here some observations on certain suggestions regarding the control of this part of the frontier, which were entered in his journal by the late General Lord Rawlinson, then Commander-in-Chief in India, after his visit to Dir, Chitral, and Gilgit in the summer of 1923. The suggestions in question have not, so far as I know, been seriously considered by the Government of India; and as ten years have elapsed since they were made it may seem superfluous to refer to them in a narrative of this kind. I have, however, just been reading the interesting life of Lord Rawlinson by Sir Frederick Maurice, in which the extracts from the

¹ Ghizr and Kuh districts were formed into one governorship.

journal, referred to by me, were published; and the whole subject interests me so greatly that I feel unable to refrain from placing my views on record. Lord Rawlinson wrote: 'The Gilgit Agency has acquired a great reputation for useful work, but it seems to me to have outgrown much of its usefulness, and to be now an unnecessary expense. We took Yasin away from Chitral after the rebellion of 1895; but Chitral is now very loyal and it would be a graceful act to return it.'

I take first the suggestion that the Yasin valley should be given to the Mehtar of Chitral. This proposal is open to serious objections, and I doubt whether Lord Rawlinson would have made it if he had been more fully informed as to the previous history of the valley in question. I would here refer the reader to my description of the country in *Himalayan Journal*, vol. v, p. 2, to the manner in which Mehtar Aman-ul-Mulk, the father of the present Mehtar, acquired possession of Yasin in 1880, and also to the fact that, for several centuries, the districts of Mastuj, Laspur, Ghizr, and Yasin had been ruled over by members of the Khushwakt branch of the ruling family, while lower Chitral, Torikho, and Mulikho were governed by the Kator branch. It will be seen that the acquisition of Yasin by the ruler of Chitral was of recent origin; and it is extremely doubtful whether Aman-ul-Mulk would have succeeded in retaining the district had it not been for the support he received from the Maharaja of Kashmir. I am confident that, if the people of Yasin had been consulted, they would have objected then as strongly as, I feel sure, they would still object now to being placed under the control of the Mehtar of Chitral. When Mr. Robertson passed through Gupis in 1895 on his way to Chitral, the readiness of the people of Yasin to throw off the yoke of Chitral was very marked; and it is doubtful whether the Kator Governor would have escaped with his life had it not been for Mr. Robertson's intervention.¹

The people of Yasin, although they all know Khowar (i.e. the language of Chitral), speak among themselves the same language (called *Warshikwar* by Chitralis and *Burushaski* in Hunza) as the people of Hunza-Nagir, to whom they are more akin, both as regards origin and customs of life, than to the people of the districts now included in Chitral. Almost the entire population of Yasin is Yeshkun, while in Chitral (i.e. west of the Shandur pass) there are, except for slaves, no Yeshkuns. The Kator Mehtar, Aman-ul-Mulk, and his sons, Nizam-ul-Mulk and Afzal-ul-Mulk, considered that the selling of their subjects into slavery was a legitimate source of revenue; and the people have not yet forgotten how many of their countrymen suffered this fate during the years Nizam-ul-Mulk ruled over them.

¹ *Chitral*, p. 67.

When Nizam-ul-Mulk first met Colonel Durand he informed him that he had sold four hundred of his people into slavery that year, and seemed to think he had shown a good deal of consideration because he had selected them from families in which there were several men, so that it would make no difference as regards the cultivation of the land.

The present Mehtar of Chitral is, no doubt, sorely in need of more revenue, but he is much too civilized to resort to the practice of selling his subjects into slavery; and he is, of course, aware that such oppression would not be tolerated so long as British officers are resident in his State. He wants Yasin and Ghizr (i.e. the district between Yasin and the Shandur pass) as a help in making provision for his numerous sons, and I fully sympathize with his anxieties in this respect; but there is no doubt that the people of the said districts would consider they had suffered a gross betrayal if they were once more placed under his authority; and I sincerely hope that such a policy will never be adopted. Since 1895 a Khushwakt prince has been Governor of Yasin, but he has been expected to defer to the advice of the Political Agent, Gilgit, in all matters of importance. Lord Rawlinson seems to have been under the impression that the Governors of the Khushwakt districts were Indians. This, of course, is quite wrong.

With regard to the larger question, namely, the abolition of the Gilgit Agency, which Lord Rawlinson seemed to favour, I would remark that this also would, in my opinion, be a very grievous mistake. One of my successors in the post of Political Agent, Gilgit,¹ Lieut.-Colonel C. A. Smith, C.I.E., for whose opinion I have the greatest respect, writes:

To do away with the Gilgit Agency in favour of Kashmir would be to invite trouble, intrigue and keen resentment. I believe the tribesmen would at once turn to Russia were the Dogra and Pandit to be in supreme control of the whole country. Recent events in Kashmir afford a striking confirmation of this view, and the people of Gilgit are of a very different class from the 'down-trodden peasants of Kashmir'.

With reference to Lord Rawlinson's remarks as to the nervousness of the authorities at Simla about Bolshevik infiltration through the passes of the Hindu Kush, Colonel Smith writes:

No one, who knows the country, believes it possible that an army from Afghanistan or Russia would invade Gilgit or Chitral or both. But it is possible and I think certain that in the absence of British control and Indian garrisons in both places the petty states might be incited to rise against the Mehtar and the Kashmir Government without a single soldier or gun being

¹ I myself held the post of Political Agent, Gilgit, for three years (1903-6).

moved over the border. That this is no dream is proved by the events in Gilgit and Chitral in the recent Afghan war when such an attempt was made and very nearly succeeded.

It is important to bear in mind that the tribesmen were never subjugated by the Kashmir State. The Hunza-Nagir Chiefs paid a nominal tribute to the Kashmir State, but they were to all intents and purposes independent until early in 1892, when Colonel Durand's force, of which 180 rifles of the 5th Gurkhas and the Hazara Mountain battery formed the backbone, captured the Nilt position in Nagir. There has been no serious trouble in the Gilgit Agency since, but I personally think with Colonel Smith, and I am sure that the other British officers who have been entrusted with the post of Political Agent, Gilgit, would be of the same opinion, that the Chiefs would not willingly submit to direct control by the officials of the Kashmir State. One recent Political Agent in Gilgit has written to me that the Chiefs and the people generally would view the withdrawal of the arbitrament of the British political officer between the Kashmir State and the people, whom the State never succeeded in subjugating, as an act of the blackest treachery.

A British political agent with a British assistant in Chilas and two British officers for duty with the Gilgit Scouts should be retained at all costs. It would be very false economy to withdraw them. If economy is essential I would suggest a reduction in the strength of the Kashmir Imperial Service Infantry and the spending of some of the money saved on the Gilgit Scouts. The provision of more employment and sustenance for the tribesmen would go a long way towards ensuring the continuance of the tranquillity which the Agency has enjoyed for so many years. The Scouts, of course, are the successors of the Levies who rendered such valuable service with the force under Colonel Kelly, which helped to raise the siege of Chitral in 1895. I have no information as to the number of tribesmen now enrolled in the Gilgit Scouts, but I understand that a scheme for the permanent employment of 500 men has recently been suggested. In Chitral the Scouts number 900, but with the exception of those selected as instructors, who serve for longer periods, they are called out for only one month's training in the year. In Gilgit I understand, the period of training is two months. In both Agencies the Scouts are armed with magazine rifles, and I am confident that, so long as they are trained and led by British officers, their mere existence will always be a valuable factor in maintaining peace on the Kashmir frontier. To give a fairly recent instance of the usefulness of the Scouts, I would quote here the opinion expressed by Lieut.-Colonel C. A. Smith with reference to a question from me as to the effect of withdrawing the garrisons from Chitral and Gilgit. It may be noted here

that Colonel Smith was Political Agent in Gilgit when the Third Afghan War was in progress. He writes:

I do not agree that it would be wise to withdraw the Kashmir troops so long as they are under British control.¹ A military force is needed in case of emergency. I have a great respect for the Scouts but, considering the diverse interests and jealousies of their component parts, in time of real trouble, which might arise when new British officers had just joined them, they could not be altogether depended on. For the same reasons I would not withdraw the Government troops from Chitral. We had an anxious time with the Chitralis in the Afghan War and only the presence of a garrison and the arrival of the Gilgit Scouts kept them or some of them from joining the Afghans.

To return to the narrative of my experiences in 1895. Shortly after Mr. Robertson's departure for Simla I handed over charge of the duties of political officer in Chitral to Captain C. F. Minchin. My journey to India via Kashmir was not without interest as, just before I crossed the Burzil pass, I met our Commission under the leadership of the late Major-General Sir Montague Gerard, which was on its way to the Pamirs to meet the representatives of Russia and China with a view to demarcating the spheres of influence of the three Governments in that neighbourhood. On the following day I was much interested to meet Mr. Hastings, who was returning from the ill-fated attempt to climb the great peak, Nanga Parbat, in which that intrepid climber, Mr. A. F. Mummery, described by Brigadier-General the Hon. C. G. Bruce as 'one of the greatest and most adventurous of British mountaineers of all time', and his Gurkha comrades Raghobir and Guman Singh, lost their lives. The other members of the expedition were Professor Norman Collie and Lieutenant the Hon. C. G. Bruce.²

This was my first leave to England since I first went out to India early in 1887; and, as may be imagined, I thoroughly enjoyed myself. Every one was extraordinarily kind; and I recall with particular pleasure a visit to Osborne by command of Her Majesty Queen Victoria and a dinner-party given by Mr. G. N. Curzon, afterwards the Marquess Curzon, in Carlton House Terrace, to all the officers who had taken part in the defence of Chitral fort. Mr. Curzon had kindly asked Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Lord Lansdowne, Lord George Hamilton, and officers who had previously served in Gilgit,

¹ Since the succession to the *Gadi* of the present Maharaja of Kashmir, Sir Hari Singh, there has been some discussion regarding this question of control.

² For interesting accounts of this expedition see Professor Collie's *Climbing on the Himalaya and Other Mountain Ranges* and the article by Brigadier-General the Hon. C. G. Bruce, entitled 'The Passing of Mummery' in the *Himalayan Journal*, vol. iii, 1931.

e.g. Colonels John Biddulph and Algernon Durand, to meet us. Lord Roberts had long been one of my pet heroes and I have always greatly treasured the few kind words of encouragement with which he greeted me that evening. Another interesting fellow guest on this occasion was Mr. Arminius Vambéry. I had made Mr. Curzon's acquaintance in Hunza when I accompanied him and his charming friend, the late Sir Henry Lennard, as far as the summit of the Kilik pass, when they made their expedition to determine the source of the River Oxus in 1894.

I returned to my post in Chitral on the expiration of my three months' leave, and put in there a further period of three years' service before I again took leave to England. In all, my period of service in Chitral lasted nearly eight years.