

THE STORY OF CHITRAL.

THE HEROIC DEFENSE FOR SEVEN WEEKS BY THE BRITISH
GARRISON OF FORT CHITRAL ON THE INDIAN BORDER.

BY CHARLES LOWE.

ON January 10, 1895, there reached Calcutta the news that Nizam-ul-Mulk, ruler of Chitral, had been murdered by his younger brother, Amir-ul-Mulk, who had thereupon established himself as *de facto* sovereign, or *Mehtar*—a Persian title signifying «Greater.»

With an estimated area of nine thousand square miles, and a population of about seventy thousand, Chitral has been well described as a «sea of mountains,» and as being the northeast bastion of British India. Its northern boundary is the Hindu-Kush, on the west it is touched by Badakshan, on the east lies Gilgit, while on the south its frontiers march with those of Dir, Bajaur, and the independent republics of the Indus-Kohistan.

Until 1885 Chitral, as being a transfrontier state, had also lain outside the direct sphere of Indo-British influence; but that year brought with it the possibility of war between England and Russia, and then it was determined to open up friendly relations with a state which lay in the direct line of a Muscovite advance on India—relations which, based as they were on a liberal distribution of rupees and rifles, received open expression in the appointment of a native agent at the Mehtar's court; while in 1893, the strategic value of Chitral having meanwhile been enhanced by the eastward advance of the Russians to the Pamirs, or «roof of the world,» the place of this native agent was taken by an English political officer with an armed escort.

At this time the Mehtar of Chitral was Nizam-ul-Mulk, a son of the previous sovereign, Aman-ul-Mulk, who in the previous year had been taken off by one of his seventy children; for the dagger, the tulwar, the *jezuib*, and the poisoned chalice have ever been freely employed in the settlement of all dynastic questions among the Chitralis—a Mohammedan people of Aryan race, distinguished above all others, as one traveler has remarked, by «their unabashed disregard for the sanctity of private life,» so that their chronicles are «artistically diapered with records of intrigue, assassination, and

crime.» But never was the record blacker than in the year succeeding the «removal» of Aman-ul-Mulk, the aforesaid father of seventy children, and the most redoubtable polo-player among all the frontier tribes. The troubled twelvemonth of usurpation, murder, and intrigue among the various claimants to the Chitrali throne finally ended in its acquisition by Nizam-ul-Mulk, under the auspices of the English.

But this youthful Mehtar had only been in possession of his throne for a little over a year when the Chitrali mania for assassination again asserted itself, and he was killed by his brother, Amir-ul-Mulk, while out hawking on New Year's day. Thus again the question of Chitral was suddenly forced upon the attention of the government at Calcutta. In these circumstances one of its first acts was to despatch to Chitral Surgeon-Major Robertson, its political agent at Gilgit, about two hundred and twenty miles eastward of the former place. Dr. Robertson had been to Chitral before, and knew its politics well. On arriving this time, he felt inclined, all things considered, to recognize the usurper Amir-ul-Mulk; but presently the situation was complicated by the sudden appearance of two other Richmonds on the field. One of these was Umra Khan of Jhandol in Bajaur, a mountain chieftain of the Rob Roy type, who, summoning to his standard his warlike clansmen, marched a force of them northward into Chitral, his pretext for this act of invasion being that, as a brother-in-law at once of the murdered and the usurping Mehtar, he was entitled to some voice in the domestic politics of the country.

On the other hand, there simultaneously appeared with equal suddenness in Chitral the «wicked uncle» of the new Mehtar, Sher Afzul, who had shot dead the immediate successor of Aman-ul-Mulk,—he of the seventy children,—but subsequently had lost courage and fled to Kabul. The Ameer of Afghanistan had promised the British government to see to it that this red-handed refugee should not again go free. But the word of an Oriental

despot is ever a slippery thing; and, as a matter of fact, Sher Afzul found no difficulty in escaping from Afghanistan and reappearing on the Chitral stage just at the moment when his return thither was least agreeable to the British government.

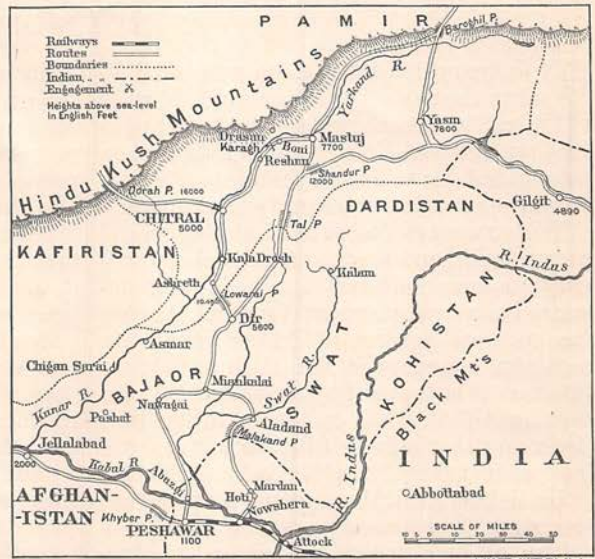
For some little time Dr. Robertson wisely «sat on the fence,» his courage meanwhile yielding precedence to his caution. He entered into negotiations with the three chief native actors in the Chitrali drama, through which there ran as complicated a thread of various motives as ever distracted human judgment. To Sher Afzul Dr. Robertson wrote a polite note; but the «wicked uncle» replied only by sending a confidential emissary, who proved to be a most arrogant person, laying down conditions which were tantamount to the extinction of England's influence. To this demand Dr. Robertson replied by sending British officers with small parties of Indian troops south to Gairat, half-way between Chitral and Kala Drosh, which was being held by a number of Chitralis against the possible designs of Umra Khan and Sher Afzul. But to the side of the latter these fickle Chitralis presently went over; and then the British officers deemed it prudent to retire on Chitral, which they reached on March 1, taking possession of the fort. They had scarcely done so when they were greeted by the ominous tidings that the northward road behind them to Mastuj-Gilgit, held by a detached portion of Dr. Robertson's escort, had been treacherously broken up and closed. Next day Amir-ul-Mulk resigned; and being suspected of surreptitious relations with Umra Khan, he was placed under a guard, while his younger brother, Shujah-ul-Mulk, was recognized by Dr. Robertson as provisional Mehtar pending the final decision of the Indian government.

On the following day, March 3, word was brought in that Sher Afzul and his men were approaching Chitral from the south; and here some description may be given of the locality. The fort and village of Chitral are situated on the river of the same name, in a valley about two miles broad, with high mountains on each side. This part of the valley is dotted with peaceful-looking little hamlets, and covered with trees. The village itself consists of flatroofed houses and hovels, but it boasts of an inclosed serai (bazaar or

inn), the only one in the Kush States, where the Peshawur or Pathan caravans deposit their goods.

A DISASTROUS RECONNAISSANCE.

WITH what strength and with what intent had Sher Afzul ascended the Chitral Valley



CHITRAL AND THE SURROUNDING COUNTRY.

by its lovely Alpine road? To satisfy his very natural curiosity on these important points, Dr. Robertson determined to send out a reconnoitering force; and for this purpose Captain Colin Campbell of the Central India Horse, commanding the military escort of the political agent, sent out two hundred men of the Fourth Cashmere Rifles (imperial service troops), under Captain Townshend, on the errand of searching into the situation on the southwestern front. Captain Campbell himself, as well as Dr. Robertson, accompanied the reconnoissance, which, though planned with great care, ended in disaster and repulse.

An advance-guard of one section (five-and-twenty men) was thrown forward, under Captain McDonald Baird, a Scottish name of high account in Indian warfare from Seringapatam downward; while a reserve of fifty rifles was left in the serai under a native subahdar (captain); and with the rest of his little force Captain Townshend advanced in extended order. Commanded to block the southward road to Kala Drosh on the right of the river, he occupied the eastern spur of the face on which the British agency stands, dominating

the front with a clear fire-zone of over one thousand yards. Townshend was now ordered to detach another five-and-twenty of his men to reinforce Baird, who had pushed up to some high ground on the right, and then to advance on a house in which it had been said that Sher Afzul would be found. Toward this building, accordingly, about a mile and a half distant, Townshend cautiously pushed half his company (now reduced to one hundred men) in the firing-line, and the other half in support; but on reaching the house he found it empty.

About five hundred yards farther on Townshend could see a number of men moving about among the trees and houses of a hamlet, and toward this village he now continued his reconnoitering advance. At this time he could see Baird's party dotted up on the hillside on the northern slopes of a nullah (watercourse gully), and some men on the southern side, evidently Chitralis. Soon thereafter he heard shots on these hill-slopes; and so, concluding that the men in front of him were enemies, he opened fire on them with a section volley. This was promptly returned from the hamlet; and now Townshend advanced in the ordinary way, bidding his men to use cover as much as possible, and pouring in successive volleys upon the white-robed and standard-waving holders of the village until he got within two hundred yards of it, where he courted the shelter of a revetted bank. But the enemy made excellent practice with their Snider and Martini rifles from behind their loopholed walls, and numbers of Townshend's men began to drop. Nevertheless he held stanchly on to the ground which he had won with his hundred men until Baird, sweeping ever forward and round with his fifty rifles by the west right, should turn the flank of the village, when Townshend would up and at it with the bayonet. But Baird, the Blücher of this little Waterloo, tarried still, and came not—we shall presently see why; and meanwhile small parties of the foe, in knots of four and five, began to overlap Townshend's left flank toward the river, as well as his right toward the hills, and to enfilade him with a galling, well-directed fire.

It was now about 6:30 P. M.,—the reconnaissance had started soon after four o'clock,—darkness would soon fall, the situation was growing serious; and a message to this effect was sent to the rear. Up then came Captain Campbell, and ordered the village to be rushed. The bullets had pinged and whistled long enough, and now for the bayonet. Towns-

hend gave orders to reinforce preparatory to the rush; but the Cashmere supports,—untried troops, who had never enjoyed a very high reputation on the frontier before being taken in hand by English officers,—sheltering themselves among some low walls about one hundred and fifty paces to the rear, did not respond with warlike alacrity to the British call. «I kept on repeating the order,» said Townshend; «but no one came.»

Back, therefore, ran Captain Campbell, to rout them up to the front; but with all his efforts he could manage to bring forward only about a dozen, and, what was much worse, he himself, in leading them up, was struck down by a bullet through the knee. «I then sent Colonel Jagdat Singh,» said Townshend, «who got up only one or two men. It was no good waiting for any more, so I went round among the men, telling them that we must take the houses by rushing straight in, and then I sounded the charge. We were met by a most close and destructive fire as we scrambled over the bank and rushed on. General Baj Singh was shot dead by my side, and Major Bhikham Singh was mortally wounded. After about thirty or forty yards the men began to take cover, lying down behind stones; and the charge could not be carried home, though I tried all I could to get the men on.»

More disgusted than despairing, Townshend now ordered his men to withdraw to the shelter of the revetted bank whence they had made their ineffectual, because half-hearted, rush; and as darkness was falling, and the enemy were fast overlapping him, there was nothing for it but retirement toward the fort. Captain Campbell was set upon a pony, and though suffering intense pain from his wound, he greatly helped Townshend in rallying the men and keeping them together. «I then,» said the latter, «retired my men by alternate parties, keeping up a heavy fire while the men dribbled off to the rear in twos and threes by word of command, remaining with the last myself.» While crossing the polo-ground the party was blazed at from all sides, and one or two of the enemy's swordsmen, who had now swarmed out in the most audacious manner, made a bold but unsuccessful dash at Dr. Robertson, who, though a civilian, had been doing yeoman's service in rallying the men and bringing up ammunition and supports. The gathering darkness alone saved the party from annihilation—the darkness and fifty men of the Fourteenth Sikhs, under Lieutenant Harley, who had been left in

charge of the fort, and who, sallying out to the serai, extended into line, and kneeling with fixed bayonets, fired volleys in the direction of the advancing foe with the utmost coolness until Townshend's men had passed, when they themselves retired by alternate sections in perfect order, belching out their Parthian volleys in the deepening darkness as they went.

It was 7:15 when the fort was regained by Townshend's party, and at eight o'clock Surgeon-Captain Whitchurch also returned, staggering along under the burden of poor Captain Baird, who had been mortally wounded early in the action; hence the failure of his flanking force of fifty men to cooperate at the expected moment with that of Townshend in a bayonet rush upon the loopholed village. But for that most unfortunate wounding of the gallant Baird, the Chitral drama might have taken a very different course. Whitchurch had brought in Baird by a circuitous route of nearly three miles, in the face of great difficulties and dangers. With a little guard of a dozen devoted Ghoorikas, several of whom were killed and wounded, they had to fight their desperate way back to the shelter of the fort. Repeatedly had they to set down their wounded charge and rush with the bayonet on *sungars*, or stone breastworks, thrown up right across their path, Whitchurch himself frequently using his revolver with effect. Baird was again twice hit by bullets. That the little party reached the fort at all was regarded as a miracle. But a still greater miracle, almost, was the coming in, or rather creeping in, two hours later, of Jemidar (Lieutenant) Rab Nawaz Khan of the Fifteenth Bengal Lancers,—Robertson's political news-writer, —who, in crossing the polo-ground, had been set upon by the enemy's swordsmen, and received no fewer than eighteen tulwar slashes, but who lived to tell the tale and positively thrive upon his wounds. Out of the one hundred and fifty of Townshend's two hundred men who had actually been engaged, twenty-three were killed and thirty-three wounded. What the corresponding loss of the foe was could not be ascertained; but the British expenditure of ammunition on this disastrous day had been 15,935 Snider rounds, or about 106 cartridges per man engaged, though much of this was lost through the men lying down with open pouches.

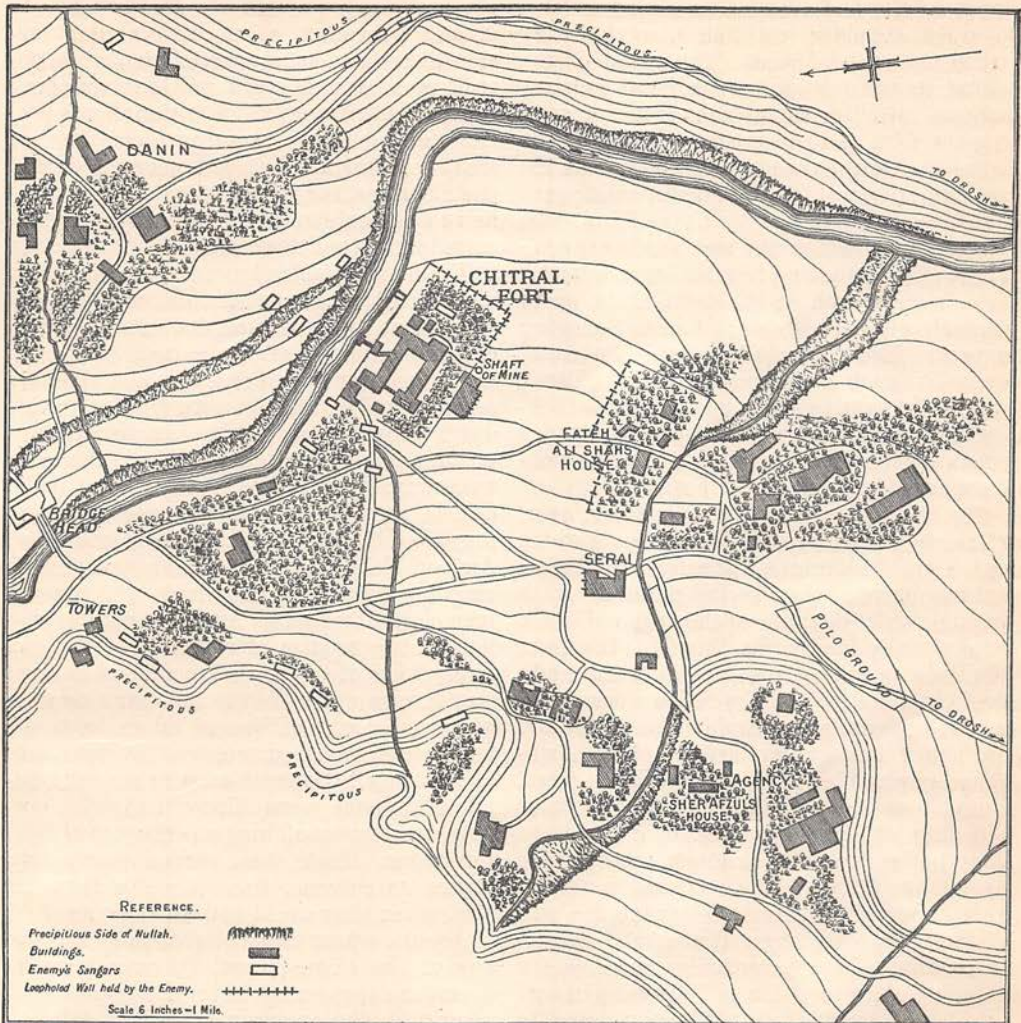
THE FORT AND ITS DEFENDERS.

DR. ROBERTSON'S Indian escort had suffered a serious repulse and Sher Afzul and his

men were loudly jubilant; the fort of Chitral was now in a state of siege. Standing on the right bank of the river, about forty yards from its edge, this gloomy fastness, built like all others in this mountainous region, was a massive structure about eighty yards square. Its walls, eight feet thick, were about twenty feet high, while each of its angles was guarded by a tower as high again as the walls. A fifth tower stood outside the north face of the fort to cover the path down to the river. These walls were made partly of stone, partly of a wooden framework, the stones not being cemented, but held together by cross and longitudinal beams. In the towers, which were very strong, more woodwork was used than in the walls, the corners being entirely composed of blocks of wood. The fort was divided into two parts: one half—the southern—contained the royal apartments, the harem, etc., and, as the keep or redout, commanded the other half. On the south face was a garden inclosed by a wall and summer-house, while on the east face was another wall-surrounded garden, one hundred and forty yards long. As the fort stood in the lowest part of the valley by the river's edge, and the ground ascended from it on either hand, it could be commanded from nearly all sides by Martini-Henry fire, and from some points even by the shorter Snider range. Such, then, was the fort which Captain Townshend, who succeeded to Campbell (wounded) in the command of Dr. Robertson's escort, was now called upon to defend; and on the night of March 3, after the disastrous action of the day, the beleaguered garrison consisted of:

Dr. Robertson.	
Captain Campbell (severely wounded).	
Captain Baird (mortally wounded).	
Captain Townshend.	
Lieutenant Gurdon.	
Lieutenant Harley.	
Surgeon-Captain Whitchurch.	
Fourteenth Sikhs	100
Fourth Cashmere Rifles.	301
Hospital followers, assistants, and servants .	38
Puniyalis	16
Chitralis	52
Munshis and Chupraines (messengers) . . .	12
Commissariat and transport	7
Other Cashmere troops	7
General staff, Cashmere officers, etc. . . .	5
Total	545

But of this force the total fighting strength was only about three hundred and seventy rifles, and the number of Englishmen at their head only five; for Captain Campbell was too severely wounded to be of any use, save in



DRAWN BY LIEUTENANT HARLEY. BY PERMISSION FROM THE "FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW."

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FORT CHITRAL AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

council, while the first morning of the siege opened with the passing of poor Baird. Though in great pain, and aware that he was dying,—for he had been hopelessly wounded in the abdomen,—he remained perfectly tranquil, and his last words to his chief, Dr. Robertson, were: « Good-by, sir; I hope your plan of defense will succeed.» Thanks to the heroic devotion of Whitchurch, who was presently recommended for the Victoria Cross in recognition of as shining an act of bravery before the foe as had ever won that highest and most coveted of all military distinctions in the gift of the Empress-Queen, Baird had enjoyed the felicity of being brought in to die among his brother officers, «to hear their praises of his gallantry, and to have the op-

portunity of sending, through them, one last message to his far-off home in England.» It was simply the fortune of war, he said, and he desired no other than the soldier's death that was before him.

It was in the spirit in which Baird had died that his brother officers now set themselves to the task of holding the fort that was invested by the exultant warriors of Sher Afzul and Umra Khan. Hold it they would till death by steel or starvation, or until the arrival of relief. On half-rations the supplies in the fort would last for two months and a half, and of ammunition there were three hundred rounds per Martini and two hundred and eighty per Snider rifle. On the other hand, it was computed that the enemy had

quite a thousand rifles of both kinds, with a plentiful supply of cartridges, so that they could fire without stint. The worst of the situation was that the foe enjoyed so many natural facilities for attacking and harassing the fort, and the greater portion of the investing force were unrivaled adepts at the art of besieging; for their main contingent had been contributed by Umra Khan, who himself remained in the south to bar the advance of any relieving English force, but sent his chief general, Abdul Majid Khan, up to Chitral, with a body of his best besieging experts. Umra Khan's country is dotted all over with such fastnesses as that of Chitral, which his fighting-men are forever attacking; hence their marvelous display of military science, which soon began to excite the wonder and admiration of the besieged.

The enemy had everything in their favor, more especially in respect of the cover which on all sides surrounded the fort, forming a natural maze of zigzags and parallels up to within a short distance of the very walls. To minimize the danger resulting from this state of things was, therefore, Captain Townshend's first care; and he at once set to work to demolish as much as he could of the walls and outhouses surrounding the fort, though it was found impossible to fell the fine chinar-trees. But this work of demolition was one of great difficulty and danger, as most of it had to be done under fire, and the enemy showed the utmost audacity in the construction of sungars close up to the fort. Their fire, too, was of the most searching and accurate character, so that it became virtually impossible for the defenders to put a rifle-barrel through any loophole which had not been reduced to the smallest possible size.

Strictly speaking, there were only three British officers engaged in the service of the defense—Captain Townshend, with Lieutenants Gurdon and Harley (Whitchurch and Robertson being surgeons); and these three divided the day into watches as on board ship, each going on duty for four hours, though, as a matter of fact, they rarely had the full eight hours off owing to the continuous "excursions and alarms," and the urgent need for constant watchfulness.

INGENIOUS EXPEDIENTS FOR DEFENSE.

CAPTAIN TOWNSHEND made his preparations in the most thorough manner compatible with the limited resources at his command. He organized a fort police, as well as a system of putting out fires—fire being perhaps the

greatest danger which the garrison had to dread. Bheesties (water-carriers) slept beside their filled mussucks (skins), while patrols went round night and day watching for accidents from fire. The stench was horrible, owing to the necessary demolition of what the Chitralis had been pleased to call their latrines, and new sanitary arrangements had to be made to guard against pestilence, more terrible and destructive than the sword.

The sepoys (Indian troops) were spared as much fatigue-work as possible, manual labor being done by the non-combatants. Internal communications were organized, hand-mills were made for grinding grain, and all extra servants and odd hands were allotted to this duty. Pickets were told off to various important points, such as the gates, parapets, waterway, water-tower, and stable; while double guards were placed over the ammunition, the Chitralis, and their late ruler, Amir-ul-Mulk—all these guards and pickets claiming about one hundred and seventy men, so that only two hundred were available for the repulse of attacks, sorties, etc. Every kind of cover that could be devised was thrown up: traverses and paradocs were constructed out of beams taken from the buildings demolished; wooden traverses were erected on all the tower-tops; boxes and commissariat bags were filled with earth; carpets, doors taken off hinges—all were utilized for cover. Tents, too, turned inside out, served as screens, since the enemy never fired when they could not see their mark.

About an hour before dawn on the fourth day of the siege (March 7), having in the meantime thrown up several sungars over against it, the enemy made a bold attempt to fire the outside tower covering the way down to the river on the north front. One or two of the enemy had carried up bundles of wood in the darkness, and under cover of a feint fusillade on another part of the fort,—which was, however, silenced by section volleys from the parapets, the men starting up from their alarm-posts, where they slept,—another Pathan glided up, and fired the fagots in the passage under the water-tower. But Townshend opened the water-gate and sent out bheesties with mussucks to extinguish the flames, which they did to his entire satisfaction, receiving ten rupees apiece afterward for their achievement.

This incident opened Townshend's eyes to the twofold necessity of securing continued access to the river,—for there was no water-supply in the fort itself,—and of taking further precautions against the nocturnal

fring of the towers. Accordingly he at once set about the construction of a covered way down to the water, and the further elaboration of a fire-picket system. Moreover, as the besiegers were clearly bent on using the darkness as a cloak for their incendiary operations, he would abolish darkness altogether by the use of fire-balls, to be thrown over the parapets when an attack was feared. These balls, consisting of resinous wood-shavings, tow, etc., compressed into a bag made of sacking, tied with stout string at the mouth, were kept ready on the parapets, with bottles of kerosene oil and matches close at hand. When the enemy attacked in the darkness, these bags were lighted by a British officer, who soaked them with oil, applied the matches, and hurled them over the battlements. They then gave a clear light for about half an hour; but afterward this method was improved upon by the construction of projecting platforms, on each parapet, to sustain beacon-fires. This proved a great success, as they gave out a capital light in front of the parapets, while not revealing the loopholes, as these were behind the blinding glare of the beacons' blaze. These fires were kept burning every night throughout the siege.

On the night of March 11 Townshend succeeded in knocking down the outer walls of the garden on the west and southwest sides of the fort. Though exposed all the time to a heavy fire, the working party stuck to its task well, and returned without loss. Three nights later the enemy made another determined but unsuccessful attack on the water-tower. A body of men estimated at between two and three hundred sallied forth from the sungars and grove to the eastward, sounding a trumpet, shouting, yelling, and beating their tom-toms. "Come on! come on! let us fire the waterway!" sang out one of their leaders in Pushtu. But Townshend's men were on the alert, and rained down upon their vociferous assailants such a shower of bullets as made them at once desist from their audacious enterprise. After this the waterway was further strengthened and picketed, as on the possession thereof, more than on anything else, depended the safety of the garrison.

"Taking into consideration," said Townshend, "the large number of sentries, guards, and patrols we had to keep going in the fort, that the morale of the Fourth Cashmere Rifles had suffered somewhat from the disaster of the 3d, and that our siege would in all probability be a very long one, I decided in my mind that the energy to be displayed

in sorties must depend on circumstances, and that the energies of the men must be husbanded as much as possible, as in always having to return after a sortie the men would soon be disheartened. Neither could we afford to lose a single man; and there were only three British officers, including myself, doing duty with the garrison. I therefore decided that we should begin sallying as soon as we heard of a force from Gilgit nearing us, or if a sortie meanwhile became absolutely necessary from the close approach of the enemy's sungars."

BAD NEWS OF A RELIEVING COLUMN.

BUT alas! this expected force from Gilgit, or rather from Mastuj, on the road thither, never came. Townshend was aware that Mastuj, sixty-five miles distant, which had formerly been the residence of the political agent and his escort, was still held by a small garrison under several British officers, and from these he doubtless expected some relief; but a day or two after the last attack on the water-tower the disheartening intelligence reached the fort, from the "wicked uncle's" lines, that Captain Ross had been killed in the attempt to lead a party south to Chitral from Mastuj, as well as fifty-six out of his seventy men; and, worse than all, that Lieutenants Fowler and Edwardes, who had similarly started for Chitral two days after the siege began, but without knowing of that circumstance, with a convoy of sixty boxes of Snider cartridges and engineer stores, had been treacherously captured by the enemy. It presently appeared that these two officers had been set upon by the enemy on the Mastuj-Chitral road at a place called Reshun; that they had defended themselves with desperate valor against overwhelming odds for three long days and nights, losing six killed and thirteen wounded; that they had subsequently concluded a truce with the Chitralis, on the false assurance of the latter that peace had now been concluded at Chitral; and that subsequently when witnessing a polo-match to which they had been invited, they were treacherously set upon, thrown to the ground, bound with cords, and haled away into captivity at the camp of Sher Afzul, their men being cut up, and their invaluable stores of Snider cartridges (34,000 rounds) passed on, not to the besieged, but to the besiegers, of Chitral.

"We could hardly bring ourselves to believe the story," said Townshend, "it was so astonishing." A series of palavers now en-

sued between the besiegers and the besieged, Sher Afzul believing that the news, which he had been careful to communicate to the holders of the fort, would so depress their spirits as to incline them to listen with favor to his proposals. But he had entirely mistaken the character of the men with whom he had to deal.

A TRUCE AND ANOTHER RELIEF PARTY.

WHAT Umra Khan's general wanted was the retirement of the garrison to Mastuj; while what Dr. Robertson equally desired was the release of Lieutenants Fowler and Edwardes, whom, dressed in native clothes, the garrison had beheld arriving under an escort from the north; but from all the pourparlers and correspondence on the subject which took place during the truce of six days—a truce which did not make the garrison relax their vigilance in the least—nothing whatever resulted, and at 5:30 P. M. on March 23 the white flag of truce over the fort was hauled down.

But presently a finer and worthier flag was hauled up. This was a Union Jack which the officers in the meantime had managed to patch together out of some tags and scraps of colored material; and which from the top of the north tower, proved a source of added resolution to all in the fort, just as it conveyed the emphatic message, «No surrender!» to those without during the rest of the siege, which was still to last about three weeks longer,—it had already lasted four.

It was a Colin Campbell who led the Highlanders to the relief of Lucknow; it was now the turn of the Highlanders to hurry to the relief of another Colin Campbell at Chitral. Already these Highlanders—the Gordons, the Seaforth's, and the Scottish Borderers, forming the flower of a hastily mobilized field column of fourteen thousand men under General Sir Robert Low—were swiftly marshaling at Peshawur, and were just on the eve of dashing on to storm the Malakand Pass at the point of the bayonet, and then, brushing the hordes of Umra Khan aside, to hurry on to relieve the beleaguered garrison of Chitral. But of the relief which was thus in store for it this garrison had not the faintest surmise. Sher Afzul had taken very good care to communicate to the beleaguered force all the news that was calculated to sap its constancy and power of resistance; but though he and Umra Khan were now aware that the Highland bagpipes would soon be sounding among the mountains of Chitral, and that another relief column was

also on its way from Gilgit under Colonel Kelly, the wily couple took the utmost precaution against the slightest wind of these expeditions reaching the inside of the fort.

REPELLING ASSAULTS BY SAPPING, FIRE, MISSILE, AND ESCALADE.

UTTERLY ignorant as they ever were that relief of this kind was on its way to them, depressed by the disasters which had overtaken the garrison of Mastuj, driven to their wits' end by the exhaustion of their medical stores, reduced to shorter rations than ever, they had, as the letter runs, «to commence eating horse-flesh, so killed and salted ponies.» Harassed by perpetual night attacks, worked upon by the wiles of the «wicked uncle,» and otherwise taught to look upon their situation as desperate, the British officers in the fort nevertheless set their teeth with a calm determination to be true to the traditions of their martial race. Their quiet courage communicated itself to the rest of the garrison, especially to the Sikhs, who were the backbone of the defense, and whose spirits, like those of their officers, seemed to rise in proportion to the deepening gloom of the situation. «But for them,» said the British officers after the siege, «not one of us would be here now.»

The enemy now set to work to approach the fort by something like a regular process of sap, till, on April 6, they had placed a breastwork of fascines—huge bundles of brushwood—only thirty yards from the main gate, and connected this by a covered way with a sun-gar two hundred yards to the rear. Next morning, about five o'clock, Townshend was having a look at the general aspect of things from the flag (north) tower, when a number of the enemy opened a heavy matchlock-fire from the chinar-trees in front. This seemed to him to herald an attack on the covered waterway at last; so he went down to turn out the inlying picket and send all hands to their various alarm-posts. Believing in the efficacy of noise as a means of generating terror, the enemy kept up a din of shouting, yelling, and tom-tomming; but the sepoy's in the water-tower and the Sikhs on the west parapet gave the besiegers steady volleys, which made them decamp toward the bazaar. Some of them had crept up to within about twelve yards of the main gate, and one Sikh was shot through the thigh with a Snider bullet.

But all this noisy demonstration was only a feint. The real object of attack this time was

the gun-tower (southeast), which the enemy had resolved to fire. Rushing out from behind the summer-house with bundles of fire-wood, they piled these against the tower, which was largely constructed of resinous pine; and it was soon well on fire, and blazing up all the more fiercely as there was a strong wind blowing. Things began to look very ominous. Townshend sent up the whole of the inlying picket with their greatcoats full of earth, as well as sacks of earth and water-mussucks. At one time the fire was got under, but it blazed up again, the flames mounting up into the spaces between the

of the incendiary kind. Yet the very next day the besiegers made another attempt to fire the same tower, but were again beaten off by repeated volleys, the beacon platforms having in the meantime been so improved as to allow of a direct plunging fire being brought to bear on any besiegers who might venture up to the base of the walls with their bundles of fagots. For the fifth or sixth time, too, the fire-brigade was re-organized, being now placed under the supervision of Surgeon-Captain Whitechurch.

It was toward midnight of April 10 when the silence was suddenly broken by a tre-



AFTER A PHOTOGRAPH BY THOS. FALL, LONDON.

AFTER A PHOTOGRAPH BY BASSANO, LONDON.

SURGEON-MAJOR GEO. SCOTT ROBERTSON.

CAPT. COLIN POWYS CAMPBELL.

CAPT. JOHN MACDONALD BAIRD.

beams and the tower. The beacon platforms became the targets for a perfect hail of Snider bullets from the summer-house, at only fifty yards, which went smashing through the planks, and wounded nine of the defense, including Dr. Robertson, who had rushed up to superintend the putting out of the fire.

The besieged had to keep picking holes in the wall inside the tower and pouring water down as the flames mounted up, while they got above the fire by means of ladders, and worked downward from the top story to meet the flames. After several hours the fire was extinguished. «The enemy,» said Townshend, «showed great courage and enterprise in firing our tower, as our sentries had shown great slackness and want of vigilance.»

Renewed precautions against fire were now taken, wooden pipes being made to let a flow of water on to any part, heaps of earth being piled up for the same purpose, and heaps of stones to be dropped down upon the heads of any more audacious assailants

mendous outburst of yelling, shouting, and drumming to emphasize the rifle-fire which the besiegers now again opened upon the fort from all sides. This was at once met on the part of the garrison by section volleys from the east and west parapets, as well as by a sharp fire at the gun-tower corners. Issuing from their sungars, Sher Afzul's Lutko men had received orders to assault the waterway; but their courage was cowed by the rain of Snider and Martini bullets which was poured down upon them, and presently they sidled off toward the serai, their retiring pace accelerated by some volleys from the Sikhs, who continued to court every opportunity of showing their fellow-sepoys from Cashmere how soldiers ought to behave. On one occasion even those in hospital, throwing aside their bandages and crutches, rushed out to take part in the defense; though this evidence of their enthusiastic bravery failed to save them from a severe rating from their stern old native officer for disobedience

to orders. Six men killed and seventeen wounded was now the sum of the casualties since the beginning of the siege on March 3, and it was already the middle of April.

It was the salvation of the holders of the fort that the enemy were unprovided with artillery of any kind, and had to rely solely upon their rifle- and fagot-fire. But this they now began to vary by slinging stones into the fort, and thus harassing the British officers, who used the courtyard as a mess-room. Safe from the trajectory of rifle-fire, this courtyard could nevertheless be reached by the mortar-like orbit of a sling-projected missile; and the turning on of this fire of stones, which were catapulted in with great velocity, was pretty conclusive evidence to the besieged that their domestic arrangements were well known to the enemy; and that, in spite of all precautions, there must be treacherous correspondence between the inside and the outside of the fort.

On the other hand, not a scrap of news was allowed to filter in, although by this time the besiegers themselves were well aware of the rapid approach of Sir Robert Low's and Colonel Kelly's relieving columns, the former from Peshawur, the latter from Gilgit. Gathering themselves together, therefore, for one last desperate effort, the enemy began to prepare huge scaling-ladders, broad enough to carry two or three men abreast, as well as a huge pent-roof, like an ancient Roman testudo, or tortoise-shell, to prop up against the walls of the fort and afford protection to the escaladers.

Suddenly the besieged heard a great noise—not the yelling and piping and drumming and general hullabaloo which the besiegers had of late been keeping up all night. Jemidar Rab Nawaz Khan, of the Fifteenth Bengal Lancers, gave the opinion that the noise was designed to drown the dull sound of mining.

Thereupon Townshend warned the sentries in the gun (southeast) tower to be on the alert; likewise the sentries in the tambour at the main gate. At midnight on the 16th one of the sentries in the lower story of the gun-tower reported the sound of a dull, subterranean knocking. Townshend went up, and listened for some time, but confessed that

he could hear nothing. About eleven on the morning of the 17th the native officer in the gun-tower reported to the commander that he, like the sentry, could hear the noise of underground picking. Again Townshend mounted to the lower story of the tower, and listened intently. Yes; there it was this time—*pick, pick, pick*. He made a calculation, and found that the mine had already reached within twelve feet of the tower. Dr. Robertson came up to the tower, and he and Townshend agreed that there was but one thing to do: the summer-house must be rushed and the mine destroyed.

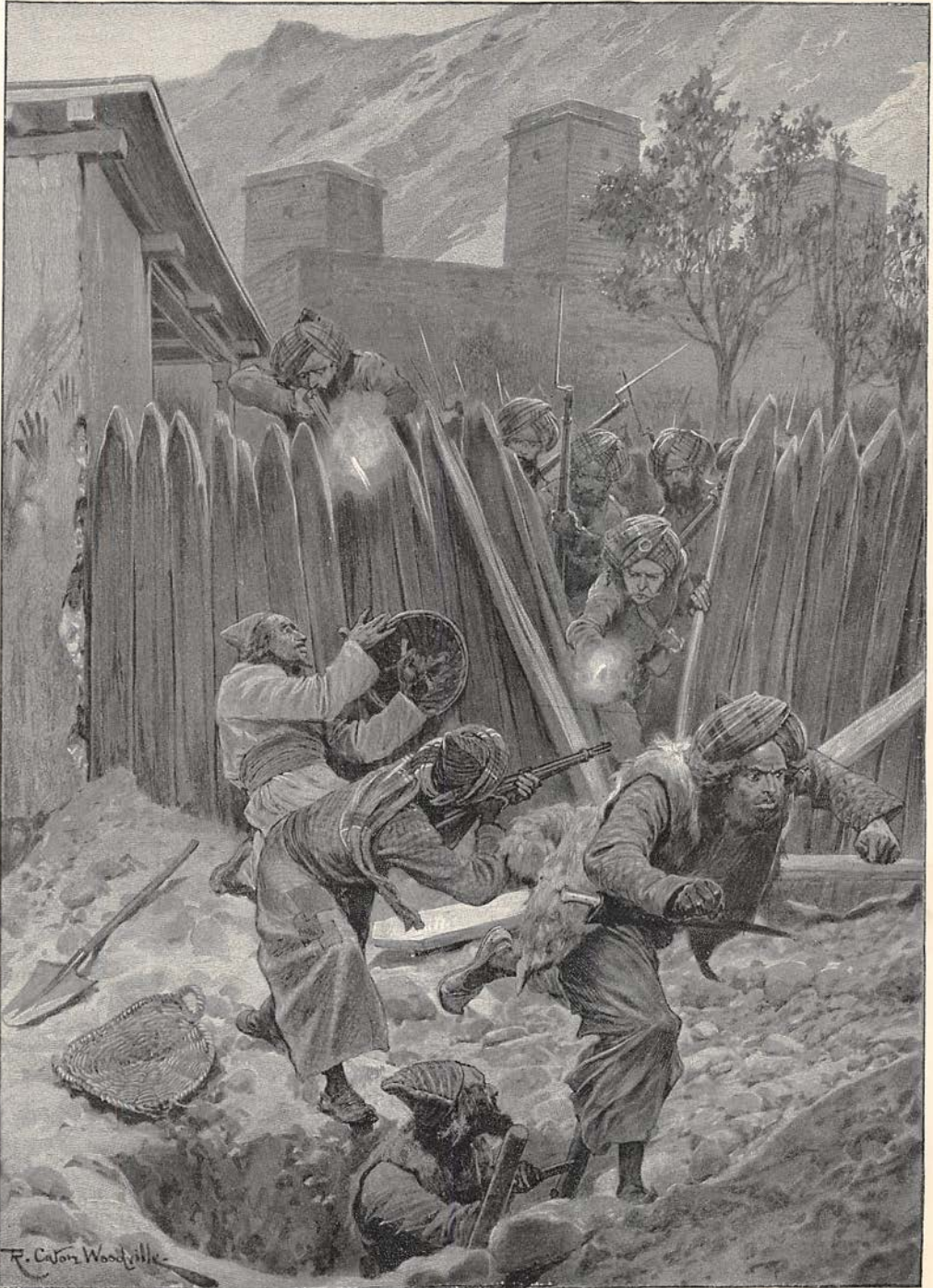
THE SORTIE.

To Lieutenant Harley was assigned the honor of leading this enterprise at the head of a party of forty Sikhs and sixty of the Cashmere Rifles. The latter had rather hung back on the day of disaster which led to the siege; they would now have an opportunity of retrieving their reputation. It was assumed that the shaft of the mine would be found in or about the summer-house, only about fifty yards distant. Men were told off, to carry out three powder-bags each of one hundred and ten pounds, forty feet of powder-hose, matches, picks, and spades. Harley's instructions were to rush the summer-house with the bayonet only, and to reserve his fire for the defense thereof,

forty rounds being issued to each of his men; to go straight for the gap in the wall, with no dividing up of the party and no support; to take a prisoner or two if possible; to hold the garden house on its front toward Fateh Ali Shah's house, and, with the rest of his men, to destroy the mine by pulling down the uprights or wooden supports, if any, or to blow it in, as he saw fit, but without hurry; and if harassed by fire from the garden sungar, to send a party to silence it, first sounding the "cease fire" twice as a sign to the riflemen on the parapets to suspend their supporting fusillade. Townshend sent for all the native officers going out with Harley, and explained to them the object and methods of the sortie. All officers carried matches, while one was told off to bring up the rear and see that none hung back. Harley himself



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY BOURNE & SHEPHERD, INDIA.
CAPTAIN CHARLES VERE FERRERS
TOWNSHEND.



DRAWN BY R. CATON WOODVILLE.

THE SORTIE TO DESTROY THE MINE.

assumed the dress of a native officer, as otherwise he would have become the mark of every rifle in and about the garden house.

It was about 11 A. M. on the 17th when Townshend had at last heard the picking in the mine, and by 4 P. M. everything was ready within the fort to put an end to that picking once and for all. At the latter hour the garden gate was quietly opened, and Harley dashed out at the head of his men—the Sikhs in front—with fixed bayonets. A rush across the fifty yards, a few hurried shots from the garden house, the fall of a couple of Sikhs, who were shot dead on either side of Harley as he raced forward, sword in hand, and the garden house was won. It had been in the holding of about forty Pathans, who, not daring to front this sudden and impetuous outfall of the besieged, had bolted along the garden wall after several of them had been bayoneted. They stopped at the farther end of the garden, threw up fascines, and opened a heavy and sustained fire on the house, Harley's men now replying vigorously. Two Pathans were shot in the house, and two prisoners taken.

In the meantime the garrison had gone to its stations on the parapets, and kept up a lively fire, killing several of the enemy as they ran across toward the bazaar. It was several times reported from the towers that a considerable number of the foe were heading to the river-bank from Fateh Ali Shah's house, as if with intent to make a counter-attack on the waterway; so Townshend took the necessary steps, and at the same time sent three different messages to Harley to hasten his work of destroying the mine.

It had taken some little time to discover this, but at length the shaft was found, carefully overlaid with fascines, just outside the house behind the garden wall. Readily responding to Harley's call for volunteers, several of the Sikhs jumped down with him into the opening, and despatched from thirty to forty of the enemy as they rushed out of the mine—these tulwar-armed Pathans, however fierce, being no match for their sturdy, bayonet-wielding antagonists. The powder was then brought and placed in the mine; but much precious time was lost in laying it, as it was found that the mackintosh sheet-hose had been ruptured. The powder was placed a few feet along the mine, but it was found impossible to open it up, and Harley began to despair for the first time during the siege, the more so as messengers from the fort were now following hard on one

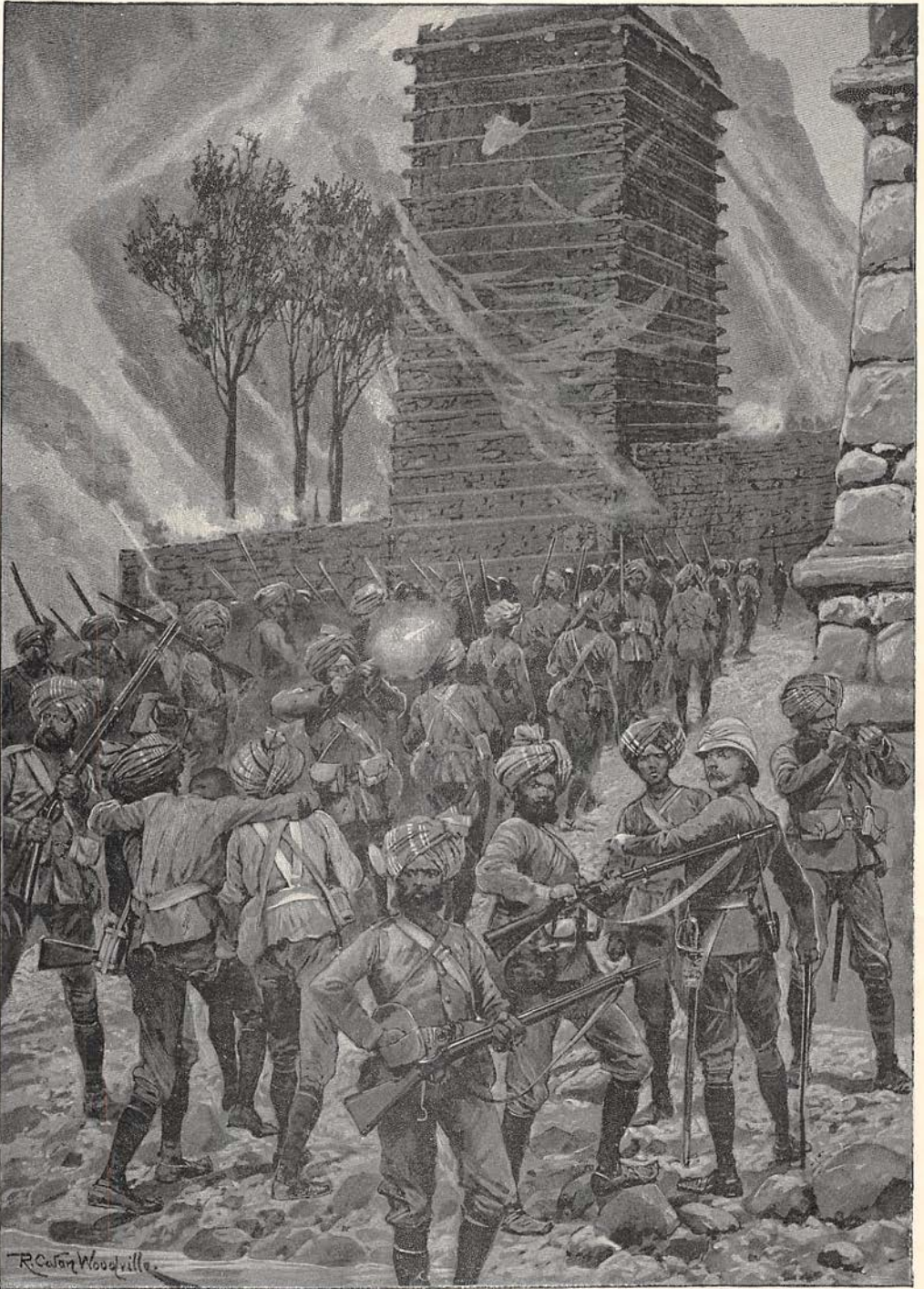
another's heels, calling attention to gathering dangers, and urging him to be quick.

But presently accident came to his aid. Two of the enemy's engineers, who had held back in the mine, came rushing out, and were fired at by the Sikhs; the powder in the mine was ignited by the shots, and a loud explosion followed, knocking down Harley himself, and singeing the clothes of several of his men. Under the impression that his mission had thus unfortunately failed of its main object, the powder being untamped, Harley now sounded the rally, and ordered his men to return to the fort, which they did at a cool, steady double, under a perfect hail of bullets, carrying with them as trophies of their valor all the arms and accoutrements of the enemy's killed and wounded.

But what was Harley's surprise and delight, on regaining the fort, from which he had been absent about an hour and a half, to find that his mission had been completely successful, the whole mine having been burst right open to the foot of the gun-tower, and lying exposed like a trench! Two of the enemy had been killed in the mine by the explosion. Harley and his party had done their work very well, but at a cost of eight killed and fourteen wounded, while the loss of the enemy was estimated at about sixty, the majority of whom had fallen by the bayonet. The next day Townshend set to work to run a subterranean gallery round the tower, so as to bar any future attempt at mining.

ARRIVAL OF KELLY'S COLUMN.

THAT day (the 18th) and night passed very quietly, the besiegers, it was surmised, being busy with the burial of their dead, the tending of their numerous wounded, and the general recuperation of their resources. But about three o'clock on the morning of the 19th, Lieutenant Gurdon, who had the middle watch, reported to his chief that a man had come up to the fort wall, bawling out that he had important news to tell. Was this another of the innumerable wiles which Sher Afzul had practised upon the besieged? All precautions were taken; the man—Roostem by name—was admitted through the main gate; and then he told how Sher Afzul and Umra Khan's general had decamped at the news that a relieving force from Gilgit was within a couple of marches of Chitral. At first the statement was disbelieved; but as nothing of the enemy could be seen or heard, it gradually gained credence, and the famished British officers first showed their joy by sitting down to a good meal. Then they



DRAWN BY R. CATON WOODVILLE.

RETURNING AFTER A SORTIE FROM THE WATER-GATE.

tried to sleep; but not being able to do so in the excitement of success, they got up and fell to a second time, calling the first meal supper and the other early breakfast. At dawn of day patrols were sent out, and returned with corroboration of Roostem's story. All the sungars were deserted, and not a man of the enemy was to be seen about Chitral. The siege, which had lasted forty-six days, and added another leaflet to the laurel crown of England's military glory, was at an end. Out of 370 combatants forming the British agent's escort, the beleaguering, including the affair of the 3d of March, had entailed a loss of 104 killed and wounded of all ranks.

At two o'clock on the afternoon of April



AFTER A PHOTOGRAPH BY E. FATTISON PETT.

LIEUTENANT BERTRAND E. M. GURDON.

20, Colonel Kelly, at the head of a relieving force of about six hundred men and two mountain guns from Gilgit, marched into Chitral, where he could cap the story of the fort, which was modestly told him by its defenders, with the narrative of one of the finest feats of mountain marching and fighting recorded in all the annals of Indian warfare. In the face of incredible natural difficulties and hostile opposition, he had in less than a month marched 220 miles, and crossed the Shandur Pass, 12,400 feet high, the greater part of the route being blocked by deep snow.

Kelly's officers found Townshend and his comrades pale and wan, with a set look, as of men who had gone through a period of great mental and physical strain, but otherwise imbued with the same cheerful and indomitable spirit that had sustained them throughout the six-and-forty days of their



DRAWN BY KENYON COX. PHOTOGRAPH BY CHANCELLOR, DUBLIN.

LIEUTENANT HARLEY.

beleaguering. No wonder the Empress-Queen hastened to send her warmest congratulations and her thanks to all who had been concerned in the defense and relief of Chitral; that the garrison of the fort, officers and men, were awarded six months' extra pay, apart from the other honors awaiting them; and that General Low, on subsequently arriving with his Highlanders and reviewing all the troops—garrison and relieving columns—on the scene of the siege, could hardly find words to express his admiration of the men who had gallantly hauled up the Union Jack, and held the fort so long for England and her Indian empire.



DRAWN BY KENYON COX. PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT KREWALD, BONN.

SURGEON-CAPTAIN WHITCHURCH.